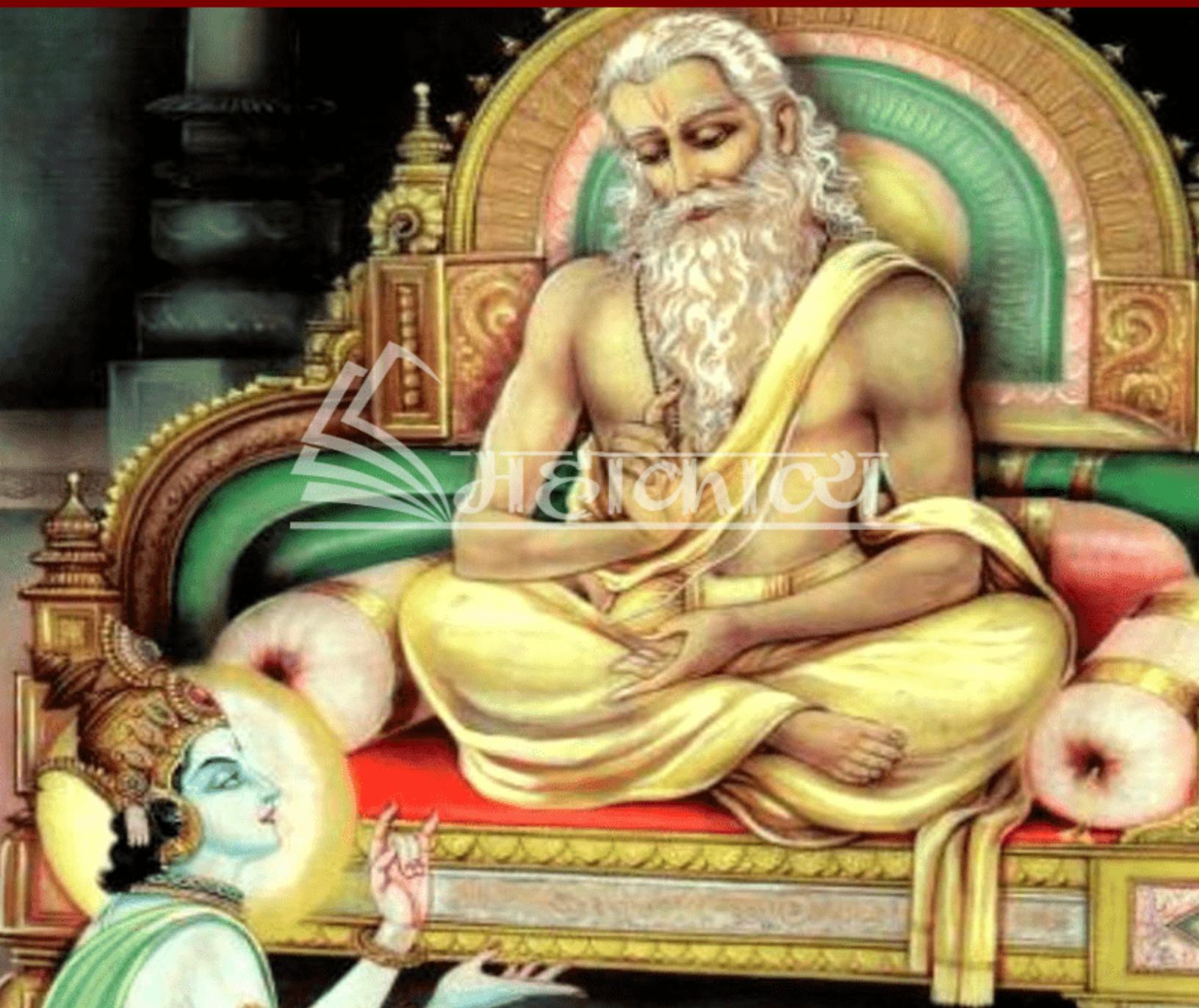


Hindi / English / Gujarati

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મહાચાર્ય

Chapter 1 — Introduction: Sutikshna & Agastya; Karunya & Agnivesya; Suruchi & Divine Messenger; King Arishtanemi, Indra & Valmiki

Hail the Eternal.

¹ Om, salutation to that Reality from whom all beings proceed, by whom they are manifest, upon whom they depend, and in whom they become extinct. ² He is the knower, the knowledge and all that is to be known. He is the seer, the act of seeing, and all that is to be seen. He is the actor, the cause and the effect, therefore salutation to He who is all knowledge himself. ³ Salutation to He who is supreme bliss itself, from whom flow the dews of delight both in heaven and earth, and who is the life of all.

⁴ One Sutikshna, a brahmin whose mind was full of questions, went to the hermitage of Agastya and respectfully asked the sage, ⁵ “O great sage! You are informed in all the ways and truths of virtue, and know all the scriptures with certainty. I am in a great doubt, and I pray you will kindly remove it. ⁶ Tell me, in your opinion, whether liberation results from a man’s acts or his knowledge or both?”

⁷ Agastya replied:—

As the birds fly in the air with both wings, so the highest state of emancipation is attained through both knowledge and acts. ⁸ Neither our acts nor knowledge alone produces liberation, but both together are the means. ⁹ I will recite to you an example from old traditions, a story of a brahmin named Karunya, who was learned in the Vedas in the days of old.

¹⁰ He was the son of Agnivesya and accomplished in the Vedas and all their branches. After finishing his studies with his teacher, he returned to his own home. ¹¹ He remained a skeptic at home, reluctant and impassive to do anything. When his father Agnivesya saw his son so slack in his duties, he upbraided him for his good. ¹² Agnivesya said, “My son, why do you not discharge your duties? Why are you not observing the daily rituals and the injunctions of the holy scriptures? ¹³ Tell me how can you succeed in anything if you remain inactive? How can you attain salvation? Tell me why you are not doing anything.”

¹⁴ Karunya replied, “The offering of daily oblations, and performance of morning and evening devotions during life, are inculcated in the Veda and law as the active duties. ¹⁵ But it is neither by acts or riches, nor by means of children that one obtains his liberation. It is solely by self-denial that the great souls taste the ambrosia (of emancipation). ¹⁶ Tell me my father! Which of these rules am I to observe? Doubtful of this I have become indifferent to acts.”

¹⁷ Agnivesya said, “Hear me, my son.” After so saying, Karunya held his silence. His father seeing him quiet, continued speaking. ¹⁸ “My son, let me tell you a story. When you have fully considered its meaning, you may do as you like.”

Agnivesya speaking:—

¹⁹ There was a lady named Suruchi, the best of the apsara nymphs, who was seated on the mountain peak of Himalaya, surrounded by peacocks. ²⁰ Here kinnaras inflamed by love sported with their mates, and the fall of heavenly streams (Ganga and Yamuna) served to cleanse the gravest sins of men. ²¹ She saw a messenger of Indra making his way through the sky. Then Suruchi, this most

fortunate and best of apsaras, addressed the messenger.

²² Suruchi said, "O you messenger of gods, tell me kindly from where you come and what place are you going at present?"

²³ The divine messenger replied, "Well have you asked, O pretty browed maid, and I will tell you all as it is. The royal sage, King Arishtanemi, has given his realm to his son,²⁴ and with religious indifference to the world, has set out to the forest to practice asceticism. He is performing his austerities on the Gandha-madana Mountains.²⁵ I am now coming from there after discharge of my errand, and returning to Indra's palace to report the matter."

²⁶ Suruchi said, "Tell me, my lord, what has taken place there? I am humbly very curious. You should not cause me the pain of anxiety."

²⁷ The messenger replied:—

Hear me, gentle maid. I will describe everything as it has occurred.

²⁸ On hearing that the king was practicing the utmost rigors of asceticism in that forest, Indra, the lord of gods, asked me to take this heavenly car and proceed at once to the spot.²⁹ "Take this car," said Indra, "bearing the apsaras equipped with all their musical instruments, and furnished with a band of gandharvas, siddha spiritual masters, yakshas and kinnaras.³⁰ Convey them," said Indra, "with all their string instruments, flutes and drums to the woodland mount of Gandha-madana.³¹ There, having placed King Arishtanemi in the car, bring him to the enjoyment of heavenly delight in this city of Amaravati, the seat of immortals."

³² The messenger added:—

Receiving this instruction from Indra and taking the car with all its equipment, I proceeded to that mountain.³³ Having arrived at the mountain and advanced to the king's hermitage, I delivered the orders of the great Indra to him.³⁴ Hearing my words, O happy lady, King Arishtanemi reluctantly spoke to me saying, "I wish to ask you something, O messenger, which I hope you will answer.³⁵ Tell me what good and what evil are in heaven, so that I may decide whether I want to settle there."

³⁶ I answered, saying, "In heaven there is ample reward for merit, conferring perfect bliss (to all); but it is the degree of merit that leads one to higher heavens.³⁷ By moderate virtue, one is certainly entitled to a middle station. Virtue of an inferior order leads a person to a lower position.³⁸ But one's virtue is destroyed by impatience at the excellence of his betters, by haughtiness to his equals, and by joy at the inferiority of others.³⁹ When one's virtue is thus destroyed, he must enter the abode of mortals. These and the like are the effects of good and evil in heaven."

⁴⁰ Hearing this, O good maiden, King Arishtanemi answered, "O divine messenger, I do not like heaven that has such conditions.⁴¹ Henceforth I will practice the most austere form of asceticism and abandon this my unhallowed human frame in the same way as a snake abandons his time-worn skin.⁴² Be pleased, O messenger of the gods, to return with your heavenly car to the presence of the great Indra from where you came. Travel in good fortune."

⁴³ The celestial messenger resumed:—

Thus being bid, I went, O good lady, to the presence of Indra. When I reported the matter, Indra was struck with great wonder.⁴⁴ Then the great Indra again spoke to me with a sweet voice saying, "My messenger, go again to that king and take him to the hermitage of Valmiki.⁴⁵ Valmiki is well acquainted with every truth. Tell him my errand, which is to instruct the dispassionate king, saying,⁴⁶ 'O great sage! Plead with this king who is humble and dispassionate and dislikes the enjoyments of heaven⁴⁷ so that this king, who is aggrieved at the miseries of the world, may gradually come to attain his liberation.' "

⁴⁸ I went and explained my mission to the royal hermit, then took him to sage Valmiki. I delivered great Indra's charge so that the king may practice for his final liberation.⁴⁹ Sage Valmiki welcomed the king with gentle inquiries regarding his welfare.⁵⁰ The king replied, "O great sage, you are informed in all the truths of religion. You are the greatest of those who know the knowable. The very sight of you has given me all that I desired, and therein is all my welfare.⁵¹ Great sage, I wish to learn from you how I may escape the miseries that arise from one's connection with this world. I hope you will reveal this to me without reserve."

⁵² Valmiki said, "Hear me O king! I will relate the entire Ramayana to you. By hearing and understanding you will be saved even while in this life.⁵³ O great and intelligent king, listen as I repeat the sacred conversation that took place between Rama and Vasishta relating the way of liberation, which I well know from my own knowledge."

⁵⁴ The king replied, "O best of sages, tell me precisely who and what this Rama was. What was his bondage and how did he become free of it?"

⁵⁵ Valmiki said, "Vishnu was cursed to take the form of a prince with an assumed ignorance like that of men of little understanding."

⁵⁶ The king said, "Tell me who was the author of that curse, and how it could befall Rama, who was the personification of consciousness and joy, and the very image of wisdom."

⁵⁷ Valmiki replied:—

Sanatkumara, who was devoid of desires, had been residing at the abode of Brahma, to which Vishnu, the lord of the three worlds, was a visitor from Vaikuntha.⁵⁸ The lord god Vishnu was welcomed by all the inhabitants of the Brahmaloka as well as by Brahma himself, except by Sanatkumara. The god Vishnu addressed Sanatkumara,⁵⁹ "Sanatkumara, it is ignorance that makes you forsake your desires for fear of rebirth, therefore you must be born under the name of Sara-janma to be troubled with desires."

⁶⁰ In return, Sanatkumara denounced Vishnu by saying, "Even as all discerning as you are, you shall have to sacrifice your omniscience for some time, and live as an ignorant mortal."

⁶¹ There was another curse pronounced upon Vishnu by the sage Bhrigu who, seeing his wife killed by Vishnu, became incensed with anger and said, "Vishnu you shall have also to be deprived of your wife."⁶² Vishnu was again cursed by Vrinda to be deprived of his wife, on account of his beguiling her (in the form of her husband).⁶³ Again, when the pregnant wife of Devadatta was killed from fear on seeing the man-lion figure of Vishnu (Narasimha),⁶⁴ the leonine Vishnu was denounced by the

husband who was sorely afflicted at the loss of his wife.

⁶⁵ Thus cursed by Bhrigu, Sanatkumara, Devadatta and Vrinda, Vishnu was obliged to be born on this earth in the figure of a human being. ⁶⁶ I have explained to you the causes of all the curses passed on Vishnu. Now I will tell you other things, and you will have to listen carefully.

Chapter 2 — Reason for Writing the Ramayana

¹ Salutation to the Lord, the Universal Soul, shining manifest in heaven, earth and the sky, and both within and without myself.

² He is entitled to read this work who is convinced that he is bound, who desires his liberation, and who is neither wholly ignorant of nor quite conversant with divine knowledge. ³ The wise man, who has well considered this work as the first step, and then comes to think on the means of liberation, truly shall be exempt from rebirth.

Valimiki speaking to King Arishtanemi:—

⁴ Know, O destroyer of your enemies, that I have written the history of Rama in the Ramayana as a preparatory step to salvation. ⁵ I gave that history to my attentive pupil, the obedient and intelligent Bharadwaja, as the sea yields its gems to their seeker. ⁶ The learned Bharadwaja repeated the history of the Ramayana in the presence of Brahma, seated in a certain forest of the Sumeru Mountain. ⁷ Lord Brahma, the great grandfather of the inhabitants of the three worlds, was so highly pleased with him that he addressed him saying, “O my son! Ask the best boon that you wish for.”

⁸ Bharadwaja said, “O lord who is master of the past and future times, grant me the boon of telling me how people are liberated from their miseries.”

⁹ Brahma said, “Go ask your teacher Valmiki to complete the faultless Ramayana that he has undertaken to write. ¹⁰ By hearing this work, men will overcome their many errors in the same way as the bridge that was built by Rama, who was filled with all good qualities, allowed men to cross the sea (to Lanka).”

¹¹ Valmiki said:—

Saying this, Brahma, the supreme maker of all beings, accompanied Bharadwaja to my hermitage. ¹² I eagerly welcomed the god with the *argha* offerings of water and the like, when the lord of truth spoke to me for the good of all creatures. ¹³ Brahma said, “Do not, O sage, give up your undertaking until its final completion. No pain ought to be spared to make the history of Rama as faultless as it ought to be.

¹⁴ By this work of yours men will pass over this repetitive history of the world (*samsara*) in the same manner as one crosses the sea in a vessel.”

¹⁵ Again, the uncreated Brahma said to me, “I come to tell you this very thing, that you complete the work for the benefit of mankind.” ¹⁶ Then, O king, in a moment the god disappeared from my sacred hermitage, just as a wave subsides in water.

¹⁷ I was struck with wonder at the god’s disappearance, then composing my mind, I asked Bharadwaja, ¹⁸ “Tell me, Bharadwaja, what did Brahma tell me in the hermitage?”

Bharadwaja answered, ¹⁹ “The god commanded you to complete the Ramayana for the good of men and as a means for them to cross over the gulf of the world. ²⁰ Now sir,” continued Bharadwaja, “explain to me how the great minded Rama and his brother Bharata conducted themselves amidst the troubles of this world. ²¹ Tell me also how Satrughna, Lakshman and the renowned Sita, and all those who followed Rama, and also the ministers and their highly intelligent sons, conducted themselves on earth. ²² Tell me clearly how they escaped all the miseries of this world so that I may do the same for

the rest of mankind.”

²³ Being thus respectfully addressed by Bharadwaja, I was led, O great king, to carry out the request of my lord Brahma and narrate the Ramayana to him. I said, ²⁴ “Listen, my son Bharadwaja. I will tell you all that you have asked. By hearing, you will become able to cast away the impurity of errors.

²⁵ You are wise and you have to manage yourself in the manner of the blissful and lotus-eyed Rama, with a mind free from worldly attachments.”

²⁶ “It was by this means that Lakshman, Bharata, the great minded Satrughna, Kausalya, Sita, Sumitra, as well as Dasharata, ²⁷ with Kritastra and the two friends of Rama, and Vasishtha and Vamadeva, and the eight ministers of state as well as many others reached the summit of knowledge. ²⁸ The eight ministers of Rama — Dhrishta, Jayanta, Bhasa, Satya, Vijaya, Vibishanah, Sushena and Hanumana, and also Indrajita ²⁹ — are said to have been equally dispassionate in their minds and content with what was their lot. They were great souls, free in their lives.”

³⁰ “Well my son, if you follow the manner in which these men observed sacrificial rites, gave and received their offerings, and how they lived and thought, you are at once freed from the turmoil of life.

³¹ One fallen in this boundless ocean of the world may enjoy the bliss of liberation by the magnanimity of his soul. He shall not come across grief or destitution, but shall remain ever satisfied by being freed from the fever of anxiety.”

Chapter 3 — Valmiki Explains Desires & Describes Rama's Pilgrimage to Bharadwaja

¹ Bharadwaja said, "O brahmin, first tell me about Rama, then enlighten me by degrees with the knowledge of how to attain liberation in this life so that I may be happy forever."

² Valmiki replied:—

Know, holy saint, that the things seen in this world are deceiving, even as the blueness of the sky is an optical illusion. Therefore it is better to efface them in oblivion rather than to keep their memory.³ All visible objects have no actual existence. We have no idea of them except through sensation. Inquire into these apprehensions and you will never find them as real.⁴ It is possible to attain this knowledge. It is fully expounded here. If you will listen attentively, you shall get at the truth and not otherwise.

⁵ The conception of this world is a mistake. Though we actually see it, it never exists. It appears in the same light, O sinless saint, as the different colors in the sky.⁶ The conviction that the objects we see do not exist of themselves leads to the removal of their impressions from the mind. Thus perfected, supreme and eternal bliss of self-extinction springs in the mind.⁷ Otherwise, there is no peace to be had for men like you, rolling in the depths of studies for thousands of years and unacquainted with true knowledge.

⁸ Complete abandonment of desires (*vasana*, mental conditioning) is called the best state of liberation (*moksha*) and is the only pure step towards happiness.⁹ The absence of desires leads to the extinction of mental actions, in the same manner as the absence of cold melts small particles of ice.¹⁰ Our desires uphold our living bodies and bind us tightly to our bodily prison like ropes. These being loosened, the inner soul is liberated.

¹¹ Mental conditioning is of two kinds: pure and impure. The impure ones cause reincarnation, while the pure ones serve to destroy it.¹² An impure desire is like a mist of ignorance, the stubborn feeling that one is the individual ego. The wise say that individual ego is the cause of rebirth.¹³ A pure desire is like a parched seed that is incapable of bringing forth the germ of rebirth. It only supports the present body.¹⁴ Pure desires, unattended with rebirth, reside in the bodies of men who are living-liberated. They are like unmoving wheels.¹⁵ Those who have pure desires are not liable for rebirth. They are said to be knowing in all things that ought to be known. These are called the living-liberated and are of superior intelligence.

¹⁶ I will explain to you how the high minded Rama attained the state of liberation in life. Listen to this so that old age and death may not come upon you.¹⁷ Hear, O highly intelligent Bharadwaja, the auspicious course and conduct of Rama's life, whereby you will be able to understand everything at all times.

¹⁸ The lotus-eyed Rama, after coming out of his school, remained for many days at home in his diversions without anything to fear.¹⁹ In the course of time he took the reins of the government and his people enjoyed all the bliss that absence of grief and disease could impart.

²⁰ At one time, Rama's mind, virtuous as he was, became anxious to see the different places of pilgrimage, cities and hermitages.²¹ So with this view, Rama approached his father's feet. He

touched the nails of his toes like a swan lays hold of lotus buds.²² "O my father," he said, "my mind desires to see the different places of pilgrimage, temples of gods, forests and homes of men.²³ My lord, grant me this petition, as there is no petitioner of yours on earth whom you did ever dishonor."

²⁴ Thus solicited by Rama, the king consulted with Vasishta, and after much reflection granted him the first request that Rama ever made.

²⁵ On a day of lucky stars, Rama set out on his journey with his two brothers, Lakshman and Satrughna, having his body adorned with auspicious marks, and having received the blessings pronounced on him by the priests.²⁶ He was also accompanied by a body of learned brahmins, chosen by Vasishta for the occasion, and by a select party of his associate princes.

²⁷ He started from home on his pilgrimage after he received the blessings and embraces of his mothers.²⁸ As he went out of his city, the citizens welcomed him with the sounds of trumpets, while the bee-like fickle eyes of the city ladies were fixed upon his lotus-like face.²⁹ The beautiful hands of village women threw handfuls of fried paddy rice over his body, making him appear like the Himalayas covered with snow.³⁰ He dismissed the brahmins with honor and went on hearing the blessings of the people. He took a good look at the landscape around him, then proceeded towards the forest.³¹ After making his holy ablutions and performing his asceticism and meditation (tapas), he continued distributing alms as he started from his palace and gradually passed the limits of Kosala.

³² He traveled and saw many rivers and their banks, visiting the shrines of gods, sacred forests and deserts, hills, seas and their shores far and remote from where men lived.³³ He saw the Mandakini River, bright as the moon, the Kalindi River, clear as the lotus, and also the following rivers: Sarasvati, Satadru, Chandrabhaga, Iravati,³⁴ Veni, Krishnaveni, Nirvindhya, Saraju, Charmanvati, Vitasta, Vipasa and Bahudaka.³⁵ He saw also the holy places of Prayaga, Naimisha, Dharmaranya, Gaya, Varanasi, Srigiri, Kedara, and Pushkara.³⁶ He saw Lake Manasa and the northern Mansarovara lakes, and many fiery lakes and springs, the Bada, the Vindhya range and the sea.³⁷ He saw the fiery pool of Jwalamukhi, the great shrine of Jagannatha, the fountain of Indradumna and many other reservoirs, rivers and lakes.³⁸ He visited the shrine of Kartikeya and the Gandaki River of salagramas, and also the sixty-four shrines sacred to Vishnu and Shiva.³⁹ He saw various wonders, the coasts of the four seas, the Vindhya range, the groves of Hara, and the boundary hills and level lands.⁴⁰ He visited the places of the great raja rishis and the Brahma rishis. He went wherever there was any auspicious sanctuary of the gods and brahmins.⁴¹ The party, honoring Rama, travelled far and wide in company with his two brothers and traversed all the four quarters on the surface of the earth.

⁴² Honored by the gods, kinnaras and men, and having seen all the places on earth, Rama, the descendant of Raghu, returned home like Shiva returning to his own world (*shivaloka*).

Chapter 4 — Rama's Return from Pilgrimage

Valmiki speaking:—

¹ Covered with flowers thrown by people by the handful, Rama entered the palace, just like when the beautiful Jayanta, the son of Indra, enters his celestial abode. ² On his arrival, Rama first bowed reverently before his father, then before Vasishta, before his brothers, his friends, the brahmins, and the elderly members of the family. ³ Repeatedly embraced as he was by friends, his father, mothers and brahmins, the son of Raghu bowed his head down to them with joy. ⁴ The assembled people, after their familiar conversation with Rama in the palace, strolled about on all sides highly delighted with his speech that resembled the music of a flute. ⁵ Thus eight days passed in festive mirth after Rama's return, and the elated multitude gave shouts of joy.

⁶ Thereafter, Raghava continued to dwell happily at home, describing to his friends the different customs and manners of the countries he had visited on all sides. ⁷ He rose early in the morning and performed his morning worship according to law. Then he visited his father, seated like Indra in his council. ⁸ He next passed a fourth part of the day in company with Vasishta and other sages, and was greatly edified by their conversations which were full of instruction. ⁹ For sport, he also used to go to the forests full of boars and buffaloes surrounded by a large number of troops as ordered by his father. ¹⁰ Then, after returning home and performing his bath and other rites with his friends, he took his meal with them and passed the night in company with his beloved companions. ¹¹ In these and similar activities he passed his days with his brothers at his father's house, after returning from pilgrimage.

¹² O sinless Bharadwaja, with his conduct becoming a prince, Rama passed his days giving delight to the good men that surrounded him, like the moon that gladdens mankind with his soothing ambrosial beams.

Chapter 5 — Rama's Self-Dejection & Its Cause

¹ Valmiki said:—

Afterwards Rama attained the fifteenth year of his age, and Satrughna and Lakshman, who followed Rama in age, also attained the same age.² Bharata continued to dwell with joy at the house of his maternal grandfather, and King Dasharata ruled the whole earth as usual.

³ The most wise King Dasharata consulted his ministers day after day about the marriage of his sons.

⁴ But as Rama remained at home after his return from pilgrimage, he began to decay day by day like a clear lake in autumn.⁵ His blooming face, with its out-stretched eyes, assumed a paleness by degrees like that of the withering petals of the white lotus beset by a swarm of bees.⁶ He sat silent and motionless, his legs folded in full lotus position (*padmasana*), absorbed in thought with his palm placed under his cheek and neck.⁷ Being emaciated in person and growing thoughtful, sad and distracted in his mind, he remained speechless like a mute figure in a painting.⁸ His family had to repeatedly ask him to perform his daily rites and when he did, he discharged them with a sad face.

⁹ Seeing the accomplished Rama, the mine of merits, in such a plight, all his brothers likewise were reduced to the same condition with him.

¹⁰ The king of the earth, seeing all his three sons dejected and lean, became anxious, as did all his queens.¹¹ Dasharata asked Rama repeatedly in a gentle voice what his anxiety was and what was the cause of his thoughtfulness, but Rama returned no answer.¹² Then being taken up in his father's lap, the lotus-eyed Rama replied that he had no anxiety whatever and held his silence.

¹³ Afterwards King Dasharata asked Vasishta, the best of speakers and well informed in all matters, as to why Rama was so sorrowful.¹⁴ Sage Vasishta thought over the matter and said, "There is, O king, a cause for Rama's sadness, but you need not be anxious about it.¹⁵ Wise men never entertain the fluctuations of anger or grief, or a lengthened delight from frivolous causes, just as the great elements of the world do not change their states unless it were for the sake of some new production."

Chapter 6 — Vishwamitra Arrives at the Royal Court

Valmiki speaking:—

¹ The king was thrown into sorrow and suspense at these words of Vasishta, the prince of sages, but kept his silence for sometime and waited. ² Meanwhile, the queens of the palace kept close watch on Rama's movements with anxious carefulness.

³ At this very time, the famous and great sage Vishwamitra came to visit the king of men at Ayodhya.

⁴ The intelligent and wise sage had his sacrificial rites disturbed by rakshasa demons who were deceitfully powerful and giddy with their strength. ⁵ The sage came to visit the king in order to obtain protection for his sacrifice, because he was unable to complete it in peace by himself. ⁶ The illustrious Vishwamitra, the gem of austere worship, had come to the city of Ayodhya for the destruction of the rakshasas.

⁷ Desirous of seeing the king, Vishwamitra told the guards at the gate to report to the king that Kausika [*i.e.* Vishwamitra], son of Gadhi, had arrived. ⁸ On hearing these words, the guards were struck with fear in their minds and ran as they were bid to the palace of the king. ⁹ Coming to the royal abode, the door-keepers informed the chief-warder that Vishwamitra, the royal sage, had arrived. ¹⁰ The staff-bearer immediately presented himself before the king who was seated among his princes and chiefs in the court house. The staff-bearer reported, ¹¹ “Please, your majesty. Waiting at the door is a mighty person of majestic appearance, bright as the morning sun, with pendant locks of hair like sunbeams.

¹² The brilliance of his body has brightened the place from the topmost flag down to the ground, and made the horses, men and armory shine with a golden color.”

¹³ As soon as the warder appeared before the king, and with hurried words announced the arrival of the sage Vishwamitra, ¹⁴ the best of kings, surrounded by all the ministers and chiefs, rose at once from his throne of gold. ¹⁵ Attended by Vasishta and Vamadeva and his staff of princes and chiefs by whom he was held in honor and regard, the king immediately walked ¹⁶ to where the great sage was waiting, and saw Vishwamitra, the chief of sages, standing at the gate.

¹⁷ Vishwamitra's priestly prowess joined with his military valor made him appear as if the sun had descended on earth for some reason. ¹⁸ He was hoary with old age, rough skinned by the practice of austerities, and covered down to his shoulders by bright red braids of hair that resembled evening clouds over the mountain of his brow. ¹⁹ He was mild looking and engaging in appearance, but at the same time as brilliant as the orb of the sun. He was neither assuming nor repulsive, but possessed of an ineffable gravity and majesty in his person. ²⁰ He was attractive yet formidable in appearance, clear yet vast in mind, deep and full in knowledge, and shining with inner light. ²¹ His lifetime had no limit, his mind had no bounds, and age had not impaired his understanding.

He held an ascetic's pot in one hand, his only faithful companion in life. ²² The compassion of his mind, added to the sweet complacency of his speech and looks, pleased people as if they were actually served nectar drops or sprinkled with ambrosial dew. ²³ His body decorated by the sacred thread and his prominent white eyebrows made him appear as a wonder to the eyes of his beholders.

²⁴ On seeing the sage, the lord of earth lowly bowed from a distance, bowing so low that the gems

hanging from his crown decorated the ground.²⁵ In his turn, the sage immediately greeted the lord of the earth with sweet and kind words, like the sun greeting the lord of the gods.²⁶ Afterwards the assembled brahmins of the court, headed by Vasishta, honored him with their welcomes.

²⁷ The king said, “O holy sage, we are as highly favored by your unexpected appearance and your glorious sight as a bed of lotuses at the sight of the luminous sun.²⁸ O sage, I feel unending happiness at your appearance which knows no bounds.²⁹ This day we must be placed at the front rank of the fortunate, as we have become the object of your arrival.”³⁰ With these and similar conversations that went on among the princes and sages, they proceeded to the court-hall where they took their respective seats.

³¹ The king, awed by seeing the best of sages (Vishwamitra) with his cheerful face and so very prosperous in his asceticism, felt some hesitation to offer the honorary gift reward himself.³² But the sage accepted the *arghya* water offered him by the king, and hailed the king as the king walked around the sage, according to the rules of scripture.³³ Thus honored by the king, he with a cheerful countenance asked the lord of men about the good health of himself and family, and the fullness of his finances.³⁴ Then coming in contact with Vasishta, the great sage saluted him with a smile, as he deserved, and asked him about his health and of those in his hermitage.

³⁵ After their interview and exchanges of due courtesies had lasted for a while to the satisfaction of all in the royal assembly,³⁶ they both took their respective seats. Everyone in the court respectfully greeted the sage of exalted prowess.³⁷ After Vishwamitra was seated, they made various offerings of *padya* [water to wash the feet], *arghya* and cattle to him.

³⁸ Having honored Vishwamitra in due form, the lord of men addressed him in submissive terms with the gladdest mind, his palms pressed open against each other.³⁹ He said, “Sage, your coming here makes me as grateful as one who obtains nectar, as rainfall after a drought, and as the blind gains sight.⁴⁰ Again it is as delightful to me as a childless man who gets a son by his beloved wife, or as gaining possession of a treasure in a dream.⁴¹ Your arrival is no less pleasing to me than meeting with the object of one’s wishes, the arrival of a friend, and the recovery of something that was given for lost.⁴² It gives me joy like that derived from the sight of a deceased friend suddenly returning by the way of the sky. It is thus, O holy brahmin, that I welcome your visit to me.⁴³ Who is there who would not be glad to live in heaven? O sage, I feel so happy at your arrival, and this I tell you truly.”

⁴⁴ “What is your best pleasure? What I may do for you, O scholar who is the best of the virtuous, and the most properly deserving of my services?⁴⁵ Formerly, you had been famed under the title of royal sage, but since, made glorious by dint of your asceticism, you have been promoted to the rank of a Brahma rishi. Therefore, you are truly the object of my worship.”

⁴⁶ “I am so glad at your sight that my inner soul is soothed, just like bathing in the Ganges River cheers the mind.⁴⁷ Free as you are from fears and desires, from wrath and passions and from the feelings of pleasure, pain and disease, it is very wonderful, O holy brahmin, that you should have need of me for anything.⁴⁸ I consider myself as situated at a holy sanctuary, and absolved from all my sins, or as merged in the lunar sphere, O best of the learned in the truths of the Vedas.”

⁴⁹ “I understand your appearance as that of Brahma himself before me, and I confess myself, O sage,

to be purified and favored by your arrival.⁵⁰ Indeed, I am so gratified at your arrival that I deem myself fortunate in this birth, and that I have not lived in vain but led a truly good life.⁵¹ Since I saw you here and made my respectful obeisance to you, my heart cannot contain itself but overflows with joy like the sea at the sight of the moon.⁵² Whatever may be the purpose of your visit, O greatest of sages, know it as already granted, for your commands are always to be obeyed by me.”

⁵³ “You need not hesitate to communicate your request to me, O descendant of Kausika. If you ask, there is nothing I will keep from you.⁵⁴ You need not doubt my performance. I solemnly state that I will execute your request to the last item, as I take you to be the light of a superior divinity.”

⁵⁵ Upon hearing these sweet words from the king, pleasing to the ears and delivered with humility worthy of one knowing himself, the far famed and meritorious chief of the sages felt highly gratified in himself.

Chapter 7 — Vishwamitra Asks for Rama's Help

Valmiki speaking:—

¹ After the illustrious Vishwamitra had heard the unusually lengthy speech from the lion among kings, his hairs stood erect with joy. He said, ² “This speech is worthy of you, O best of kings on earth, and one descended from a royal race, and guided by sage Vasishta himself. ³ Consider well, O king, the deed which I have in mind, and support the cause of virtue.”

⁴ “I am employed, O chief of men, in religious acts for attainment of my consummation, but the horrible rakshasa demons have become my great obstructions. ⁵ Whenever I offer sacrifices to the gods at any place, instantly these nocturnal demons appear to destroy my sacrificial rites. ⁶ On very many occasions when I commence my ceremonies, the rakshasa chiefs fling heaps of flesh and blood on the sacrificial ground. ⁷ Being thus obstructed in my sacrificial duties, I now come to you with a broken spirit, having labored in vain to complete the rites.”

⁸ “The vows of the rite prevent me from giving vent to my anger by curses. ⁹ Such being the sacrificial law, I expect by your favor to gain its great object in peace. ¹⁰ Being thus oppressed I have recourse to your protection, and you should protect me. Otherwise it is an insult for petitioners to be disappointed by the best of men as yourself.”

¹¹ “You have a son, the beautiful Rama, powerful as a fierce tiger and strong as the great Indra himself. He is able to destroy the rakshasas. ¹² May you now deliver that Rama, your eldest son, to me, having his youthful locks of hair like the black plumage of a crow, but possessing the true valor of a hero. ¹³ Protected under my sacred authority and by his prowess, he will be able to sever the heads of the malicious rakshasas. ¹⁴ I will do him an infinity of good services, whereby in the end he will become adored by the inhabitants of all three worlds. ¹⁵ The night-wandering rakshasas cannot abide in the field before Rama, but must fly like stags in the wilderness before a furious lion. ¹⁶ No man other than Rama can make bold to fight with the rakshasas, just as no animal other than a furious lion can stand to fight wild elephants.”

¹⁷ “Elated with their strength, these vicious beings have become like poisoned shafts in fighting. Being delegates of the demons Khara and Dushana, they are as furious as death itself. ¹⁸ They cannot, O tiger among kings, be able to sustain the arrows of Rama, but must settle like flying dust under the ceaseless showers of his arrows.”

¹⁹ “Let not paternal affection prevail over you, O king, as there is nothing in this world which the high-minded will refuse to part with. ²⁰ I know it for certain, and so you also should know, that the rakshasas must be destroyed by him. Wise men like ourselves will never undertake an uncertainty. ²¹ I well know the great soul of the lotus-eyed Rama, and so does the illustrious Vasishta, and all others who are far-seeing. ²² Should the senses of greatness, duty and renown have a seat in your soul, you should deliver my desired object to me, your son.”

²³ “It will take ten nights to perform the rites of my sacrifice, during which Rama shall have to stay with me and kill the rakshasas who are obnoxious to my rites and the enemies of the sacrifice. ²⁴ O King Dasharata, let the ministers headed by Vasishta join and give their assent, and deliver your

Rama to me.²⁵ “O descendant of Raghu, you know that auspicious times must not be allowed to slip away, so you must not allow my time to slip. So may I have Rama? Be blessed and do not give way to sorrow. ²⁶ Even the smallest service, if done in good time, appears to be much, and the best service is of no avail if done out of season.”

²⁷ Vishwamitra, the illustrious and holy chief of the sages, paused after saying these words filled with virtuous and useful intention. ²⁸ Hearing these words of the great sage, the magnanimous king held his silence for some time, with a view to prepare a fitting answer; because no man of sense is ever satisfied with talking unreasonably either before others or to himself.

Chapter 8 — Dasharata's Reply to Vishwamitra

¹ Valmiki added:—

On hearing Vishwamitra's words, Dasharata, the tiger among kings, remained speechless for a moment, and then implored him from the lowliness of his spirit.² "Rama, my lotus-eyed boy, is only fifteen years of age. I do not see he is a match for the rakshasas."

³ "Here is a full *akshauhini* legion of my soldiers, of whom, O my lord, I am the sole commander. Surrounded by them I will offer battle to the rakshasa cannibals.⁴ Here are my brave generals who are well disciplined in warfare. I will be their leader in the height of war with my bow in hand.

⁵ Accompanied with these, I can offer fight to the enemies of the gods, and to the great Indra himself, in the same manner as the lion withstands wild elephants."

⁶ "Rama is only a boy with no knowledge of the strength of our forces. His experience has scarcely stretched beyond the inner apartments to the battlefield.⁷ He is not well trained in arms, nor is he skilled in warfare. He does not know to fight an enemy arrayed in the order of battle.⁸ He only knows how to walk about in the gardens of this city amidst trees and pleasant groves.⁹ He only knows how to play with his brother princes in the flowery parks set apart for his play within the precincts of the palace."

¹⁰ "Recently, O brahmin, by a sad reverse of my fortune, he has become as lean and pale as the withering lotus under the dews.¹¹ He has no taste for his food, nor can he walk from one room to another, but remains ever silent and slow brooding over his inner grief and melancholy.¹² O chief of sages, in my great anxiety about him, I, together with my family and dependants, have been deprived of the gist of our bodies and become like the empty clouds of autumn.¹³ How can my boy, so young as he is and in such an unnatural state of mind, be fit to fight at all, much less with those marauders who rove about at night?"

¹⁴ "O high-minded sage, it is one's affection for his son that affords him far greater pleasure than his possession of a kingdom, or his connection with beautiful women, or even his relish for the juice of nectar.¹⁵ It is from paternal affection that good people perform the hardest duties and austerities of religion, and anything which is painful in the three worlds.¹⁶ Men are even prepared under certain circumstances to sacrifice their own lives, riches and wives, but they can never sacrifice their children. This is the nature of all living beings."

¹⁷ "The rakshasas are very cruel in their actions and fight deceitful warfare. The idea that Rama should fight them is very painful to me.¹⁸ I have a desire to live. I cannot dare to live for a moment separated from Rama. Therefore, you should not take him away."

¹⁹ "O descendant of Kausika, I have passed nine thousand rains in my lifetime before these four children were born to me after much austerity.²⁰ The lotus-eyed Rama is the eldest of these without whom the three others can hardly bear to live.²¹ You are going to deliver this Rama against the rakshasas, but when I am deprived of that son, know me certainly for dead.²² Of my four sons he is the one in whom rests my greatest love. Therefore do not take away Rama, my eldest and most virtuous son, from me."

²³ “If your intention, O sage, is to destroy the force of night wanderers, take me there accompanied by the elephants, horse, chariots and foot soldiers of my army. ²⁴ Describe to me clearly what these rakshasas are, how strong they are, whose sons they be and what are their sizes and figures. ²⁵ Tell me the way in which the rakshasas are to be destroyed by Rama or by my children or by me. Tell me when they are known to be treacherous in warfare. ²⁶ O great sage, tell me all this so that I can calculate the possibility of making a stand in the open field against the fiercely disposed rakshasas, when they are certainly so very powerful.”

²⁷ “The rakshasa named Ravana is heard to be very powerful. He is brother of Kubera himself, and he is the son of the sage Visravas. ²⁸ If it is he, the evil-minded Ravana, who stands in the way of your rites, we are unable to contend with that pest. ²⁹ Power and prosperity in all their flourish come within the reach of the living at times, but they disappear at others. ³⁰ These days we are no match for such foes as Ravana and some others. Such is the decree of destiny.”

³¹ “Therefore, O you who are acquainted with law, do this favor for my son. Unlucky as I am, it is you who are the arbiter of my fate. ³² The gods, asuras, gandharvas, yakshas, huge beasts, birds and serpents are unable to fight with Ravana. What are we human beings in arms to him? ³³ That rakshasa has the prowess of the most powerful. We cannot afford to fight with him, or even with his children. ³⁴ This is a peculiar age in which good people are made powerless. Moreover, I am disabled by old age and lack that spirit, even though I am from the race of the Raghus.”

³⁵ “O brahmin, tell me if it is Lavan the son of Madhu (the notorious asura) who disturbs the sacrificial rites. In that case also, I will not part with my son. ³⁶ If it be the two sons of Sunda and Upasunda who disturb your sacrifice, terrible as they are like the sons of the sun, in that case also I will not give my son to you.”

³⁷ “But after all, O brahmin, should you snatch him from me, then I am also dead and gone with him. I do not see any other chance of a lasting success of your devotion.”

³⁸ Saying these gentle words, the descendant of Raghu was drowned in the sea of suspense with regard to the demand of the sage. Being unable to arrive at a conclusion, the great king was carried away by the current of his thoughts as one by the high waves of the sea.

Chapter 9 — Vishwamitra's Anger & Vasishta's Advice

¹ Valmiki said:—

On hearing this speech of the king with his piteous look and eyes full of tears, Vishwamitra the son of Kausika became highly incensed and replied.² “You are about to break your promise after pledging yourself to its performance, and thus you wish to behave like a deer after having been a lion.³ This is unbecoming of the race of Raghu. It is acting contrary to this great family. Hot rays must not proceed from the cool beamed moon.⁴ If you are so weak, O king, let me return as I came. Live happily with your friends, you promise-breaking descendant of Kakustha.”

⁵ As the high spirited Vishwamitra moved with anger, the earth trembled under him and the gods were filled with fear.⁶ Vasishta, the meek and wise, observant of his vows, knowing that anger influenced the great sage and friend of the world, spoke.

⁷ “O king born of the race of the Ikshvakus, a form of virtue itself, and called Dasharata the fortunate, you are adorned with all the good qualities known in the three worlds.⁸ You are famous for your meekness and strict adherence to your vows. You are renowned in all three worlds for your virtues and fame. You can not break your promise.⁹ Preserve your virtue and think not to break your promise. Comply with the request of the sage who is honored in all the three worlds.¹⁰ Having said you will do it, if you retract your promise, you lose the object of your yet unfulfilled desires. Therefore let Rama depart from you.”

¹¹ “Descended from the race of Ikshvaku, and being Dasharata yourself, if you fail to perform your promise, who else on earth will ever keep his word?¹² It is the standard of conduct of great men like you, that makes even low people afraid to transgress the bounds of their duties. How then do you wish to violate it yourself?”

¹³ “Guarded by this lion-like man (Vishwamitra), like ambrosia by fire, no rakshasa will have power to prevail over Rama, whether he be equipped and armed or not.¹⁴ Behold Vishwamitra is the personification of virtue, the mightiest of the mighty, and superior to all in the world in his intelligence and devotion to asceticism.¹⁵ He is skilled in all warlike arms that are known in the three worlds. No other man knows them so well nor shall ever be able to master them like him.¹⁶ Among the gods, sages, asuras, rakshasas, naagas, yakshas and gandharvas, there is none equal to him.”

¹⁷ “In days gone past when this son of Kaushika used to rule over his realm, he was furnished with all the arms by Krisaswa, and which no enemy can baffle.¹⁸ These arms were the progeny of Krisaswa, and were equally radiant and powerful as the progeny of the Prajapati, and followed him (in his train).¹⁹ Now Daksha had two beautiful daughters, Jaya and Supraja (alias Vijaya), who had a hundred offspring (as personifications of the implements), that are invincible in war.²⁰ Of these, the favored Jaya gave birth to fifty sons who are implacable agents of the destruction of asura forces.²¹ In like manner, Supraja gave birth to fifty sons of very superior qualities, very powerful and terrible in their appearance, and indomitably aggressive.²² Thus Vishwamitra is strengthened and grown powerful. He is acknowledged in the three worlds as a sage, you therefore must not think otherwise than to deliver Rama to him.”

²³ “This mighty and virtuous man and prince of sages being near, anyone in his presence, even one at the point of death, is sure to attain his immortality. Therefore, be not disheartened like an unconscious man.”

Chapter 10 — The Melancholy of Rama

¹ Valmiki related:—

After Vasishta finished speaking, King Dasharata was glad to send for Rama and his brother Lakshman, saying, ² “Chamberlain, go and quickly bring here the truly mighty and long armed Rama with Lakshman, for the praiseworthy purpose of removing the impediments of religious acts.”

³ Thus sent by the king, the chamberlain went to the inner apartment. After some moments, he returned and informed the king, ⁴ “O sire! Rama, whose arms have crushed all his foes, remains rapt in thoughts in his room like a bee closed in a lotus at night. ⁵ He said that he is coming in a moment, but he is so lost in his lonely meditation that he likes nobody to be near him.”

⁶ Thus advised by the chamberlain, the king called one of Rama’s attendants, and having given him every assurance, asked him to relate the particulars. ⁷ On being asked by the king how Rama had come to that state, the attendant replied in a sorrowful mood, ⁸ “Sir, we have also become as lean as sticks in our bodies, in sorrow for the fading away of your son Rama in his body. ⁹ The lotus-eyed Rama appears dejected ever since he has come back from his pilgrimage in company with the brahmins.

¹⁰ When asked to perform his daily rites, he sometimes discharges them with a sad face, and at other times, he wholly dispenses with them. ¹¹ He is adverse, O lord, to bathing, to worshipping the gods, to the distribution of alms, and to his meals also. Even when we troubled him to eat, he does not take his food with a good relish.”

¹² “He no longer allows the playful harem girls to rock him in swinging cradles by, nor does he play under the showering fountains like in rainwater. ¹³ No ornaments beset with the bud-shaped rubies, no bracelets or necklace, O king, can please him now. In the same manner, those who expect their fall from heaven would be pleased by nothing in it.”

¹⁴ “He is sorrowful even while sitting in the tree gardens of vines, entertained by flowery breezes, and amidst the looks of maidens playing around him. ¹⁵ O king, he looks at whatever is good and sweet, elegant and pleasing to the soul with sorrowful eyes, like one whose eyes are already satisfied with viewing them heaped up in piles. ¹⁶ He would speak ill of the girls who would dance merrily before him, and exclaim out, ‘Why should these ladies of the harem flutter about in this way causing grief in me?’ ¹⁷ His doings are like those of a madman who takes no delight at his food or rest, his vehicles or seats, his baths and other pleasures, however excellent they may be.”

¹⁸ “As regards prosperity or adversity, his rooms or any other desirable thing, he says they are all unreal, and then he holds his silence. ¹⁹ He cannot be excited by pleasantries or tempted to taste pleasures. He attends to no business, but remains in silence. ²⁰ No woman with her loosened locks and tresses and the tempting glances of her eyes can please him, any more than a playful fawn can please the trees in the forest. ²¹ Like a man sold to savages, he takes delight in lonely places, in remotest areas, in the banks of rivers and wild deserts.”

²² “O king, his aversion to clothing, conveyance, food and presents indicates that he is following the line of life led by wandering ascetics. ²³ He lives alone in a lonely place and neither laughs nor sings nor cries aloud from a sense of his indifference to them. ²⁴ Seated in the lotus posture with folded

legs, he stays with a distracted mind, reclining his cheek on his left palm.²⁵ He assumes no pride to himself and does not wish for the dignity of sovereignty. He is neither elated with joy nor depressed by grief or pain.²⁶ We do not know where he goes, what he does, what he desires, what he meditates upon, or from where or when he comes and what he follows.”

²⁷ “He is getting lean every day, growing pale day by day. Like a tree at the end of autumn, he is becoming discolored day after day.²⁸ O king, his brothers Satrughna and Lakshman follow all his habits and resemble his very shadow.²⁹ Repeatedly asked about his unsound mind by his servants, brother-princes and mothers, Rama says he has none, and then resumes his silence and detachment.”

³⁰ “He lectures his companions and friends saying, ‘Do not set your mind to sensual enjoyments which are only pleasing for the time being.’³¹ He has no affection for the richly adorned women of the harem, but rather looks upon them as the cause of destruction presented before him.³² He often sings in plaintive notes how his life is being spent in vain cares, estranged from those of the easily attainable state of heavenly bliss.³³ Should some courtier speak of his being an emperor one day, he smiles at him as upon a raving madman, and then remains silent as one distracted in his mind.³⁴ He does not pay heed to what is said to him, nor does he look at anything presented before him. He hates to look upon even the most charming of things.³⁵ ‘As it is imaginary and unreal to suppose the existence of an ethereal lake or a lotus growing in it, so it is false to believe the reality of the mind and its conceptions.’ Saying so Rama marvels at nothing.”

³⁶ “Even when sitting among beautiful maids, the darts of Kama Deva, the god of love, fail to pierce his impenetrable heart, like showers of rain cannot pierce a rock.³⁷ Rama makes his motto, ‘No sensible man should ever wish for riches which are but the seats of dangers,’ and he gives all that he has to beggars.³⁸ He sings some verses to this effect, that ‘It is an error to call one thing prosperity and the other adversity when they are both only imaginations of the mind.’³⁹ He repeats some words to the effect that, ‘Though it is the general cry, ‘O I am gone, I am helpless grown,’ yet it is a wonder, that nobody should take himself to utter detachment.’”

⁴⁰ “That Rama, the destroyer of enemies, the great oak grown in the garden of Raghu, should get into such a state of mind is what causes grief in us.⁴¹ We do not know, O great armed and lotus-eyed king, what to do with him in this state of his mind. We hope only in you.”

⁴² “He laughs to scorn the counsels of the princes and brahmins before him, and spurns them as if they were fools.⁴³ He remains inactive with the conviction that the world which appears to our view is a vanity, and the idea of self is also a vanity.⁴⁴ He has no respect for foes or friends, for himself or his kingdom, mother or riches, nor does he pay any regard to prosperity or adversity.⁴⁵ He is altogether quiet, without any desire or effort and devoid of a mainstay. He is neither captivated by anything nor freed from worldly thoughts. These are the reasons which afflict us most.”

⁴⁶ “He says, ‘What have we to do with riches, with our mothers, with this kingdom and all our activities?’ Under these impressions, he is about to give up his life.⁴⁷ As the swallow grows restless when hurricanes obstruct the rains, so has Rama become impatient under the restraint of his father and mother, his friends and kingdom, his enjoyments and even his own life.”

⁴⁸ “In compassion on your son, incline to root out this annoyance which like a harmful vine has been

spreading its shoots.⁴⁹ For under such a disposition of his mind, and in spite of his possession of all affluence, he looks upon the enjoyments of the world as his poison.⁵⁰ Where is that powerful person on this earth who can restore him to proper conduct?⁵¹ Who is there who will remove the errors that have caused grief in Rama's mind, like the sun removes the darkness of the world?"

Chapter 11 — Consolation of Rama

¹ Vishwamitra said, “If such is the case, you who are intelligent may go at once and persuade that progeny of Raghu to come here, as one deer does others. ² This stupor of Rama is not caused by any accident or affection. I believe it is the development of that superior intellect which rises from the right reasoning of dispassionate men. ³ Let Rama come here for a while and in a moment we shall dispel his delusion, as wind drives away clouds from mountain tops.”

⁴ “After his mental dullness is removed by my reasoning, he will be able to rest in that happy state of mind to which we have arrived. ⁵ He shall not only attain pure truth and a clear understanding of uninterrupted tranquility, but he will also secure a plumpness and beauty of figure and complexion, as one derives from a potion of ambrosia. ⁶ He will then fully discharge the proper course of his duties with all his heart and without exception, which will redound to his honor. ⁷ He will become strong with a knowledge of both worlds, exempt from the states of pleasure and pain. Then he will look upon gold and stones with an indifferent eye.”

⁸ After the chief of the sages had spoken in this manner, the king resumed the firmness of his mind and sent messengers after messengers to bring Rama to him. ⁹ By this time Rama was preparing to rise from his seat in the palace to come over to his father, in the manner that the sun rises from the mountain in the east. ¹⁰ Surrounded by a few of his servants, he came with his two brothers to the hallowed hall of his father, resembling the heaven of the king of gods.

¹¹ From a distance he saw his kingly sire seated amidst the assemblage of princes, like Indra surrounded by the gods. ¹² He was accompanied on either side by the sages Vasishta and Vishwamitra, and respectfully attended by his staff of ministers, all well versed in the interpretation of all scriptures. ¹³ He was fanned by charming maidens waving fine flappers in their hands, equaling in beauty the goddesses presiding over the quarters of heaven. ¹⁴ Vasishta, Vishwamitra and the other sages, with Dasharata and his chiefs, saw Rama coming at a distance as beautiful as Skanda (Subramanyan) himself.

¹⁵ His qualities of mildness and gravity made him resemble the Himalayas, and he was esteemed by all for the depth and clearness of his understanding. ¹⁶ He was handsome and well proportioned, auspicious in his look, but humble and magnanimous in his mind. With loveliness and mildness of his person, he was possessed of all manly prowess. ¹⁷ He was just developed to youth, yet he was as majestic as an elderly man. He was neither sad nor merry, but seemed to be fully satisfied with himself, as if he had obtained all the objects of his desires. ¹⁸ He was a good judge of the world, and possessed of all holy virtues. The purity of his mind attracted all the virtues that met in him. ¹⁹ The receptacle of his mind was filled by magnanimity and honorable virtues, and the candor of his conduct showed him in the light of perfection. ²⁰ Endowed with these various virtues and decorated by his necklace and fine apparel, Rama the support of Raghu’s race, approached with a smiling face.

²¹ He bowed his head to his father with the sparkling jewels trembling in his locks, giving his head the graceful appearance of Mount Sumeru shaken by an earthquake. ²² The lotus-eyed Rama came up to salute the feet of his father, when the lord of the sages, Vishwamitra, was speaking with him. ²³ First of all Rama saluted his father, then the two honorable sages. Next he saluted the brahmins, then his

relations, and lastly his elders and well wishing friends.²⁴ Then he received and returned the salutations of the chiefs and princes as they bowed to him with graceful motions of their heads and respectful addresses.

²⁵ Rama, of god-like beauty and equanimity of mind, approached the sacred presence of his father with the blessings of the two sages. ²⁶ During the act of his saluting the feet of his father, the lord of the earth repeatedly kissed his head and face, and embraced him with fondness. ²⁷ At the same time, Rama, the destroyer of his enemies, embraced his brothers Lakshman and Satrughna with an affection as intense as a swan embracing lotus flowers.

²⁸ "My son, be seated upon my lap," said the king to Rama who, however, took his seat on a fine piece of cloth spread on the floor by his servants. ²⁹ The king then said, "O my son and receptacle of blessings, you have attained the age of discretion, so do not put yourself to that state of self-mortification as the dull-headed do from their crazy understandings. ³⁰ Know that one attains merit by following the course of his elders, guides and brahmins, and not by his persistence in error. ³¹ So long as we do not allow the seeds of error to have access to us, so long will the train of our misfortunes lie at a distance."

³² Vasishta said, "O strong armed prince, you are truly heroic to have conquered your worldly appetites, which are as difficult to eradicate as they are fierce in their action. ³³ Why do you allow yourself, like the unlearned, to be drowned in this rolling sea of errors causing such dull inactivity in you?"

³⁴ Vishwamitra said, "Why are your eyes so unsteady with doubts like trembling clusters of blue lotuses? You ought to do away with this unsteadiness and tell us what is the sadness in your mind.

³⁵ What are these thoughts? What are their names and natures, their number and causes, that infest your mind like mice undermine a fabric? ³⁶ I am disposed to think that you are not the person to be troubled with those evils and distempers to which the base and vile alone are subject. ³⁷ Tell me the craving of your heart, O sinless Rama! They will be requited in a manner that will prevent them from reoccurring to you."

³⁸ Rama, the standard of Raghu's race, having listened to the reasonable and graceful speech of the good-intentioned sage, shook off his sorrow, like a peacock at the roaring of a cloud, in the hope of gaining his object.

Chapter 12 — Rama's Reply

¹ Valmiki related:—

Being thus asked by the chief of the sages with soothing words, Rama answered in a soft and graceful speech replete with good sense.² “O venerable sage, untutored though I am, I will tell you in truth all the particulars as you asked. For who would disobey the bidding of the wise?”

Rama speaking:—

³ Since I was born in this my father's palace, I have remained here, grown up, and received my education.⁴ Then, O leader of sages, desiring to learn good customs, I set out to travel to holy places all over this sea-surrounded earth.⁵ By this time, a series of reflections arose in my mind that shook my confidence in worldly objects.⁶ I employed my mind to discriminate the nature of things, which gradually led me to discard all thoughts of sensual enjoyments.

⁷ What are worldly pleasures good for, and why do men multiply on earth? Men are born to die, and they die to be born again.⁸ There is no stability in the tendencies of beings whether movable or immovable. They all tend to vice, decay and danger, and all our possessions become the grounds of our poverty.

⁹ All objects of sense are detached from each other like iron rods from one another. It is only imagination which attaches them to our minds.¹⁰ It is the mind that pictures the existence of the world as a reality, but if we know the deceptiveness of the mind, we are safe from such deception.¹¹ If the world is an unreality, it is a pity that ignorant men should be allured by it, like deer tempted by a distant mirage of water.¹² We are sold by none, yet we are enslaved to the world. Knowing this well, we are spell-bound with riches, as if by the magic wand of Sambara.¹³ What are the enjoyments in this essence but misery? Yet we are foolishly caught in its thoughts, like bees caught in honey.

¹⁴ Ah! After long, I perceive that we have insensibly fallen into errors, like senseless stags falling into caverns in the wilderness.¹⁵ Of what use is royalty and these enjoyments to me? What am I and where do all these things come from? They are only vanities. Let them continue as such without any good or loss to anybody.¹⁶ Reasoning in this manner, O holy brahmin, I came to be disgusted with the world, like a traveler in a desert.

¹⁷ Now tell me, O venerable sir, is this world is advancing to its dissolution, or continued reproduction, or is it in endless progression?¹⁸ If there is any progress here, is it the appearance and disappearance by turns of old age and decease, and of prosperity and adversity?¹⁹ See how the variety of our trifling enjoyments hastens our decay. They are like hurricanes shattering trees in the mountains.²⁰ Men continue in vain to breathe their vital breath like hollow bamboo wind-pipes having no sense.²¹ The thought that consumes me like wildfire in the hollow of a withered tree is, “How is misery to be alleviated?”

²² The weight of worldly miseries sits heavy on my heart like a rock and obstructs the breathing of my lungs. I have a mind to weep, but I am prevented from shedding tears for fear of my people.²³ My tearless weeping and speechless mouth give no indication to anybody of my inner sorrow. My consciousness is silent witness to my solitude.²⁴ I wait to think on the positive and negative states, as

a ruined man bewails to reflect on his former state of affluence.²⁵ I take prosperity to be a seducing cheat, for it deludes the mind, impairs good qualities, and spreads the net of our miseries.²⁶ To me, like one fallen into great difficulties, no riches, offspring, consorts or home affords any delight, but they seem to be misery.

²⁷ Like a wild elephant in chains, I find no rest in my mind reflecting on the various evils of the world, and thinking on the causes of our frailties.²⁸ There are wicked passions prying at all times, under the dark mist of the night of our ignorance. There are hundreds of objects which, like so many cunning rogues, are about all men in broad daylight, lurking on all sides to rob us of our reason. What mighty champions can we delegate to fight with these other than our own knowledge of truth?

Chapter 13 — Denunciation of Wealth

¹ Rama said:—

O sage, here wealth is reckoned a blessing, yet she is the cause of our troubles and errors. ² She bears away like a river in the rainy season. All high-spirited simpletons are overpowered by her current. ³ Her daughters are anxieties fostered by many a bad deed, like the waves of a stream raised by winds. ⁴ She can never stand steady on her legs anywhere, but like a wretched woman who has burnt her feet, she limps from one place to another.

⁵ Wealth like a lamp both burns and blackens its owner, until it is extinguished by its own flame. ⁶ She is unapproachable like princes and fools, and likewise as favorable as they to her adherents, without scanning their merits or faults. ⁷ She begets only evils in them by their various acts, as good milk when given to serpents serves to increase the strength of their poison.

⁸ Men are gentle and kind hearted to friends and strangers, until their hearts are hardened by their riches, which like blasts of wind serve to stiffen frost. ⁹ As brilliant gems are soiled by dust, so are the learned, the brave, the grateful, the mild and the gentle corrupted by riches. ¹⁰ Riches do not lead to happiness but redound to sorrow and destruction, as the plant aconite when nourished hides fatal poison in itself.

¹¹ A rich man without blemish, a brave man devoid of vanity, and a master lacking partiality are the three rarities on earth. ¹² The rich are as inaccessible as the dark cave of a huge serpent, and as unapproachable as the deep wilderness of Vindhya Mountain inhabited by fierce elephants. ¹³ Riches, like the shadow of night, overcast the good qualities of men, and like moonlight, bring to bloom the buds of their misery. Like a hurricane, they blow away the brightness of a fair prospect. Riches resemble a sea with huge surges. ¹⁴ They bring a cloud of fear and error upon us, increase the poison of despondence and regret, and are like dreadful snakes in the field of our choice.

¹⁵ Fortune is a frost to those who are bound to asceticism, and is like the night to the owls of libertinism. She is an eclipse to the moonlight of reason, and like moonbeams to the bloom of the lilies of folly. ¹⁶ She is as transitory as the rainbow, and as pleasant to see by the play of her colors. She is as fickle as lightening which vanishes as quickly as it appears. Hence none but the ignorant have reliance on her. ¹⁷ She is as unsteady as a well born maiden following a base born man to the woods. She is like a mirage that tempts runaways to fall to it as the doe. ¹⁸ Unsteady as a wave, she is never steady in any place, like the flickering flame of a lamp. So her leaning is known to nobody. ¹⁹ She, like the lioness, is ever quick to fight, and like the leader of elephants, she is favorable to her partisans. She is as sharp as the blade of a sword, and she is the patroness of sharp-witted sharpsters.

²⁰ I see no joy in uncivil prosperity, which is full of treachery and replete with every kind of danger and trouble. ²¹ It is pity that prosperity is like a shameless wench who will again lay hold of a man who has abandoned her for her rival poverty. ²² What is she, with all her loveliness and attraction of human hearts, but a momentary thing obtained by all manner of evil means, and resembling at best a flower shrub growing out of a cave inhabited by a snake, and beset by reptiles all about its stem?

Chapter 14 — Denunciation of Human Life

Rama speaking:—

¹ Human life is as frail as a drop of water trembling on the tip of a leaflet. Life breaking loose from its bodily imprisonment out of its proper season is as irrepressible as a raving madman. ² The lives of those whose minds are infected by the poison of worldly affairs, and who are incapable of judging for themselves, are only causes for their torment.

³ Those knowing the knowable, and resting in the all-pervading spirit, and acquiescing alike to their wants and gains, enjoy lives of perfect tranquility. ⁴ We who have a certain belief that we are only limited beings can have no enjoyment in our transient lives, which are only flashes of lightning in the cloudy sky of the world. ⁵ It is as impossible to confine the winds or tear the sky to pieces or wreath waves into a garland as it is to place any reliance upon our lives. ⁶ Fast as the fleeting clouds in autumn, and short as the light of lamp without oil, our lives appear to pass away as impermanent as rolling waves in the sea. ⁷ Rather attempt to lay hold of the moon's shadow on the waves, or the fleeting lightening in the sky, or the ideal lotus blossoms in the ether, than ever place any reliance upon this unsteady life. ⁸ Men of restless minds, desiring to prolong their useless and toilsome lives, resemble the barren she-mule conceived by a horse.

⁹ This world (*samsara*) is as a whirlpool in the ocean of creation, and every individual body is as impermanent as foam, froth or a bubble, which can give me no relish in this life. ¹⁰ True living is gain which is worth gaining, which has no cause of sorrow or remorse, and which is a state of transcendental tranquility. ¹¹ There is a vegetable life in plants, and an animal life in beasts and birds. Man leads a thinking life, but true life is above thoughts. ¹² All those living beings who being born here once do not return are said to have lived well in this earth. The rest are no better than old asses.

¹³ Knowledge is a burden to the unthinking, and wisdom is burdensome to the passionate. Intellect is a heavy load to the restless, and the body is a ponderous burden to one ignorant of his soul. ¹⁴ A good person possessed of life, mind, intellect and self-consciousness and its occupations, is of no benefit to the unwise, but seem to weigh down on the unwise as if he were a porter. ¹⁵ The discontented mind is the great arena of all evils, and the nesting place of diseases which alight upon it like birds of the air. Such a life is the abode of toil and misery.

¹⁶ As a house is slowly dilapidated by the mice continually burrowing under it, so is the body of the living gradually corroded by the teeth of time boring within it. ¹⁷ Deadly diseases breed within the body, feed upon our vital breath, like poisonous snakes born in caves of the woods consume the meadow air. ¹⁸ As the withered tree is perforated by small worms residing in them, so our bodies are continually wasted by many inborn diseases and harmful secretions. ¹⁹ Death is constantly staring and growling at our face, as a cat looks and purrs at a mouse in order to devour it. ²⁰ Old age wastes us as soon as a glutton digests his food, and it reduces one to weakness as an old harlot left with no charm other than her make-up and perfumes.

²¹ Youth forsakes us as soon as a good man who, after a few days learns of his wicked friend's faults, abandons him in disgust. ²² Death, the lover of destruction and friend of old age and ruin, likes the sensual man, as a lecher likes a beauty.

²³ Thus there is nothing so worthless in the world as this life, which is devoid of every good quality and ever subject to death, unless it is attended by the permanent joy of liberation.

Chapter 15 — Denunciation of Ego

¹ Rama continued:—

Egoism springs from false conceit fostered by vanity. I am much afraid of this enemy, baneful egotism.

² All men in this diversified world, even the very poorest of them, fall into the dungeon of evils and misdeeds under the influence of ego. ³ All accidents, anxieties, troubles and wicked exertions proceed from ego and self-confidence. Hence I deem ego to be like a disease.

⁴ Being subject to that everlasting arch-enemy, the cynic ego, I have refrained from food and drink. What other enjoyment is there for me to partake? ⁵ This world resembles a long continuous night in which our ego, like a hunter, spreads the snare of affections. ⁶ All our great and intolerable miseries, growing as rank as thorny acacia plants, are only the results of our ego. ⁷ It overcasts the equanimity of mind like an eclipse shadows the moon. It destroys our virtues like frost destroys lotus flowers. It dispels the peace of men as autumn drives away the clouds. Therefore, I must get rid of this egoistic feeling.

⁸ I am not Rama the prince. I have no desire, nor should I wish for wealth, but I wish to have the peace of my mind and remain like the self-satisfied old sage Jina. ⁹ All that I have eaten, done or offered in sacrifice under the influence of ego have gone for nothing. The absence of ego is the real good. ¹⁰ So long, O brahmin, as there is ego, he is subject to sorrow at his difficulties. If he is devoid of it, he becomes happy. Hence it is better to be without it. ¹¹ I am free from anxiety, O sage, ever since I have come to know the impermanence of all enjoyments, gave up my sense of egoism, and attained tranquility of my mind.

¹² As long, O brahmin, as the cloud of egoism covers our minds, our desires expand themselves like kurchi plant buds in rain. ¹³ But when the cloud of egoism is dispersed, the lightning of greed vanishes away, just like when a lamp is extinguished, its light immediately disappears. ¹⁴ The mind vaunts with ego, like a furious elephant in the Vindhyan Hills when it hears thunder in the clouds. ¹⁵ Ego is like a lion, living in the vast forest of all human bodies, who ranges about at large throughout the whole extent of this earth.

¹⁶ The self-conceited are decorated with a string of pearls about their necks, of which greed forms the thread and repeated births are the pearls. ¹⁷ Our hostile enemy ego, like a magician, has spread about us the enchantments of our wives, friends and children, whose spells it is hard to break. ¹⁸ As soon as the impression of the word ego is effaced from the mind, all our anxieties and troubles are wiped out of it. ¹⁹ The cloud of ego being dispelled from the sky of our minds, the mist of error which it spreads to destroy our peace will also disperse.

²⁰ I have given up my ego, yet my mind remains stupefied with sorrow from my ignorance. Tell me, O brahmin, what do you think is right for me under these circumstances? ²¹ I have given up this egoism with much trouble, and I would like to not depend upon this source of all evil and worry any more. It retains its seat in the breast only to annoy me, without benefiting me by any good quality of its own. Direct me now, you men of great understandings!

Chapter 16 — The Inability to Control the Mind

Rama speaking:—

¹ Our minds are infested with evil passions and faults, and fluctuate in their observance of duty and service to superiors, like the plumes of a peacock fluttering in a breeze.² Minds eagerly and restlessly rove about at random from one place to another, like a poor village dog running far and wide in search of food.³ It seldom finds anything anywhere, and happening even to get a good store somewhere, it is as little content with it as a wicker vessel filled with water.

⁴ The vacant mind, O sage, is ever entrapped in its evil desires. It is never at rest with itself, but roams at large like a stray deer separated from its herd.⁵ The human mind, as light as the minutest particle, is like an unsteady wave. Therefore it can have no rest in spite of its nature.⁶ Disturbed by its thoughts, the mind is tossed in all directions, like the waters of the milk-white ocean when churned by Mandara Mountain.⁷ I can not curb my mind, resembling the vast ocean in its course, subject to huge surges of passions, with whirlpools of error, and beset by the whales of delusion.

⁸ O brahmin, our minds run afar after sensual enjoyments, like deer running towards tender blades of grass, unmindful of falling into hidden traps.⁹ The mind can never get rid of its wavering state owing to its nature of habitual fickleness, resembling the restlessness of the sea.¹⁰ The mind with its natural fickleness and restless thoughts finds no repose at any place, like a lion in his cage.¹¹ The mind seated in the car of delusion absorbs the sweet, peaceful and undisturbed rest of the body, like a swan sucking up pure milk from amidst the water.

¹² O chief of sages, I grieve much to find the faculties of the mind lying asleep upon a bed of imaginary delights, from which they are hard to awaken.¹³ O brahmin, like a bird in a net, I am caught by the knots of my ego, and held fast by the thread of my greed.¹⁴ Like dried hay on fire, the flame of my anxieties burns in my mind under the spreading fumes of my impatience.¹⁵ Like a clod of cold meat, I am devoured by the cruelty and greed of my heart, like a carcass swallowed by a hungry dog and its greedy mate.

¹⁶ I am carried away, O sage, by the current of my heart, like a tree on the bank carried away by waters and waves beating upon it.¹⁷ I am led afar by my mind, like straw carried off by a hurricane, either to flutter in the air or fall upon the ground.¹⁸ My earthly mindedness has put a stop to my desire of crossing over the ocean of the world, as an embankment stops the course of a stream.¹⁹ The baseness of my heart lifts me up and lets me down like a log of wood tied to a rope and dragged in and out of a well.

²⁰ As a child is seized when his imagination thinks he sees a demon, so I find myself in the grasp of my wicked mind, representing falsities as true.²¹ It is hard to repress the mind, which is hotter than fire, more inaccessible than a hill, and stronger than a thunderbolt.²² The mind is attracted to its objects like a bird to its prey. It has not even a moment's respite, like a boy and his play.²³ My mind resembles the sea both in its dullness and its restlessness, and in its extent and fullness with whirlpools and dragons that keep me from advancing.

²⁴ It is more difficult to subdue the mind than to drink the ocean or upset Sumeru Mountain. It is harder than the hardest thing. ²⁵ The mind is the cause of all exertions, and the source of all that senses the three worlds. Its weakness weakens all worldliness, and requires to be cured with care.

²⁶ Our pains and pleasures arise by the hundreds from the mind, like woods growing in groups upon a hill, but no sooner is the scythe of reason applied to them, than they fall off one by one. ²⁷ I am ready to subdue my mind, my greatest enemy in this world, for the purpose of mastering all the virtues, which the learned say depend upon it. My lack of desires has made me adverse to wealth and the gross pleasures it yields, which are like the tints of clouds tainting the moon.

Chapter 17 — Rama on Greed

Rama speaking:—

¹ I see our vices like a flock of owls flying in the region of our minds, under the darkness of our affections, and in the longsome night of our greed. ² I am parched by my anxieties like wet clay under the sun, infusing an inner heat by extracting its soft moisture. ³ My mind is like a vast and lonesome wilderness, covered under the mist of errors, and infested by the terrible fiend of desire that is continually floundering about it. ⁴ My wailings and tears serve only to expand and mature my anxiety, as the dews of night open and ripen the blossoms of beans and give them a bright golden color.

⁵ Greed by raising expectations in men, serves only to whirl them about, like a vortex of the sea swallows marine animals. ⁶ The stream of worldly greed flows like a rapid current within the rock of my body, with precipitate force and loud resounding waves. ⁷ Our minds are driven by foul greed from one place to another, as dusty dry hay is carried away by winds, and as moisture loving chataka cuckoos are impelled by thirst to fly about.

⁸ It is greed that destroys all the good qualities and grace that we have learned in good faith, just like a mischievous mouse gnaws the strings of a musical instrument. ⁹ We turn on the wheel of our cares, like withered leaves upon water, like dry grass blown by wind, and like autumn clouds in the sky. ¹⁰ Being over powered by greed, we are unable to reach the goal of perfection, like a bird entangled in a snare is kept from flight.

¹¹ I am so greatly burnt by the flame of greed that I doubt whether this inflammation may be relieved even by administration of nectar. ¹² Like a heated mare, greed takes me far and farther still from my place, and brings me back to it again and again. Thus it hurries me up and down and to and fro in all directions forever.

¹³ The rope of greed pulls us up and cast us down again like a bucket into a well. ¹⁴ Man's greed leads him about like a bullock of burden. His avarice bends his heart as fast as the rope does the beast, and it is hard for him to break. ¹⁵ As the hunter spreads his net to catch birds, so does our affection for friends, wives and children stretch snares to entrap us every day. ¹⁶ Greed like a dark night terrifies even the wise, blindfolds the keen-sighted, and depresses the spirit of the happiest of men. ¹⁷ Our appetite is as heinous as a serpent, soft to feel, but full of deadly poison, and bites us as soon as it is felt. ¹⁸ It is also like a black sorceress who deludes men by her magic, then pierces him in his heart to expose him to danger afterwards.

¹⁹ This body of ours, shattered by our greed, is like a worn out lute, fastened by arteries resembling strings, but emitting no pleasing sound. ²⁰ Our greed is like the long fibered, dark and juicy poisonous vine called kaduka that grows in mountain caves and maddens men by its flavor. ²¹ Greed is as vain, empty, fruitless, aspiring, unpleasant and perilous as a dry twig of a tree that bears no fruit or flower, but is hurtful with its prickly point.

²² Venality is like a mean old woman, who from the incontinence of her heart, courts the company of every man without gaining the object of her desire. ²³ Greed is an old actress who plays her various parts in the vast theatre of world in order to please the different tastes of her audience. ²⁴ Parsimony

is like a poisonous plant growing in the wide wilderness of the world, bearing old age and infirmity as its flowers, and producing our troubles as its fruits.²⁵ Our churlishness resembles an aged actress who attempts a manly feat she has not the strength to perform, yet keeps up the dance without pleasing anybody.

²⁶ Our fleeting thoughts are as fickle as peacocks soaring over inaccessible heights under the clouds (of ignorance), but ceasing to fly in the daylight (of reason).²⁷ Greed is like a river during the rains, rising for a time with its rolling waves, and afterwards lying low in its empty bed.²⁸ Greed is as inconstant as a female bird that changes her mates at times, and quits the tree that no longer bears fruit.

²⁹ The greedy are as unsteady as a springing monkey that never rests at any place but moves to places impassable by others, and craves for fruit even when satisfied.

³⁰ The acts of greed are as inconstant as those of chance, both of which are ever on the alert, but never attended with their sequence.³¹ Our venality is like a black bee sitting on the lotus of our hearts where it buzzes above, below and all about.

³² Of all worldly evils, greed is the source of the longest sorrow. She exposes even the most secluded man to peril.³³ Greed, like a group of clouds, is filled with a thick mist of error obstructing the light of heaven and causing a dull insensitivity.³⁴ Penury, which seems to gird the breasts of worldly people with chains of gems and jewels, binds them like beasts with halters about their necks.

³⁵ Covetousness stretches itself long and wide and presents to us a variety of colors like a rainbow. It is equally unsubstantial and without any property as the iris, resting in vapor and vacuum and being only a shadow itself.³⁶ It burns away our good qualities as fire does dry hay. It numbs our good sense as frost freezes the lotus. It grows our evils as autumn does the grass. It increases our ignorance as winter prolongs the night.

³⁷ Greediness is as an actress on the stage of the world. She is like a bird flying out of the nest of our houses, like a deer running about in the desert of our hearts, and like a lute making us sing and dance at its tune.

³⁸ Our desires like great waves toss us about in the ocean of our earthly cares. They bind us fast to delusion like chains bind an elephant. Like the banyan tree, they produce the roots of our regeneration, and like moonbeams they put our budding sorrows to bloom.³⁹ Greed is a jewel-encrusted box filled with misery, decrepitude, death, disorder and disasters like a mad drunken dance.

⁴⁰ Our wishes are sometimes as pure as light and at other times as foul as darkness; now they are as clear as the milky way, and again as obscure as thickest mists.⁴¹ All our bodily troubles are avoided by abstaining from greed, just as we are freed from fear of night demons at the dispersion of darkness.

⁴² As long as men remain in dumbness and mental delirium, they are subject to the poisonous colic of greed.⁴³ Men may get rid of their misery by freeing themselves from anxieties. The abandonment of cares is said to be the best remedy for greed.

⁴⁴ As fish in a pond fondly grasp bait in expectation of a morsel, so the avaricious lay hold on anything, be it wood or stone or even a bit of straw.⁴⁵ Greed like an acute pain excites even the gravest of men to motion, just like the sunshine raises lotus blossoms above water.⁴⁶ It is comparable to bamboo in its length, hollowness, hard knots, and thorny prickles, and yet it is entertained with

hopes that it might yield manna and pearls.

⁴⁷ It is a wonder that high-minded men have been able to cut off this almost un-severable knot of greed by the glittering sword of reason, ⁴⁸ because neither the edge of a sword, nor the fire of lightening, nor the sparks of a red-hot iron are sharp enough to sever the keen greed seated in our hearts. ⁴⁹ It is like the flame of a lamp which is bright but blackening and acutely burning at its end. Fed by the oily wicks, it is vivid but never handled by anybody.

⁵⁰ Penury has the power of demeaning, in a moment, the best of men to the baseness of straw in spite of their wisdom, heroism and gravity in other respects. ⁵¹ Greed is like the great valley of the Vindhya Hills, beset with deserts and impenetrable forests, terrible and full of traps laid by the hunters, filled with dust and mist. ⁵² One single greed has everything in the world for its object, and though seated in the breast, it is imperceptible to all. It is like the undulating Milky Ocean in this fluctuating world, sweeping all things yet regaling mankind with its odorous waves.

Chapter 18 — Denunciation of the Body

Rama speaking:—

¹ This body of ours that struts about on earth is only a mass of humid entrails and tendons, tending to decay and disease, and to our torment alone. ² It is neither quiescent nor wholly sentient, neither ignorant nor quite intelligent. Its inherent soul is a wonder, and reason makes it graceful or otherwise.

³ The skeptic is doubtful of its inertness and exercise of intellect, and unreasonable and ignorant people are ever subject to error and illusion. ⁴ The body is as easily gratified with a little as it is exhausted in an instant. Hence there is nothing so pitiable, abject and worthless as our bodies.

⁵ The face is as frail as a fading flower. Now it shoots forth its teeth like filaments, and now it dresses itself with blooming and blushing smiles as blossoms. ⁶ The body is like a tree. Its arms resemble the branches, the shoulder-blades like stems, the teeth are rows of birds, the eye-holes like its hollows, and the head is like a big fruit. ⁷ The ears are like two woodpeckers. The fingers of both hands and feet are like so many leaves of the branches. The diseases are like parasitic plants, and the acts of the body are like axes felling this tree, which is the seat of the two birds: the soul and intelligence.

⁸ This shady tree of the body is only the temporary resort of a passing soul, whether it be related or unrelated to anybody, or whether reliable or not. ⁹ What man is there, O venerable fathers, who would stoop to reflect that each body is repeatedly assumed only to serve as a boat to pass over the sea of the world? ¹⁰ Who can rely on his body with any confidence, a body like a forest full of holes abounding in hairs that resemble trees? ¹¹ The body composed of flesh, nerves and bones resembles a drum without any musical sound, yet I sit watching it like a cat. ¹² Our bodies are like trees growing in the forest of the world, bearing the flowers of anxiety and perforated by the worms of sorrow and misery, ridden by the apish mind. ¹³ The body with its smiling face appears like a good plant bearing both good and bad fruit, but it has become home for the snake of greed and the crows of anger. ¹⁴ Our arms are like the branches of trees, and our open palms like beautiful clusters of flowers. The other limbs are like twigs and leaves continually shaken by the breath of life. ¹⁵ The two legs are the erect stems and the organs are the seats of the birds of sense. Its youthful bloom is a shade for the passing traveler of love.

¹⁶ The hanging hairs of the head resemble long grass growing on the tree, and egoism, like a vulture, cracks the ear with its hideous shrieks. ¹⁷ Our various desires are like the hanging roots and fibers of a fig tree that seem to support the trunk of its body, but is worn out by labor to become unpleasant.

¹⁸ The body is the big home of its owner's ego, and therefore it is of no interest to me whether it lasts or falls.

¹⁹ This body, linked with its limbs like beasts of burden to labor, the home of its mistress greed painted over by her passions, affords me no delight whatever. ²⁰ This abode of the body, built with its framework of backbone and ribs and composed of cellular vessels tied together by ropes of the entrails, is no way desirable to me. ²¹ This mansion of the body, tied with strings of tendons, built with the clay of blood and moisture, and plastered white with old age is no way suited to my liking.

²² The mind is the architect and master of this bodily dwelling, and our activities are its supports and servants. It is filled with errors and delusions which I do not like. ²³ I do not like this dwelling of the

body with its bed of pleasure on one side, and its childlike cries of pain on the other, and where our evil desires work like its shouting handmaids.

²⁴ I cannot like this body. It is like a pot of filth, full of the foulness of worldly affairs, and moldering under the rust of our ignorance. ²⁵ It is a hovel standing on the two props of our heels, supported by the two posts of our legs. ²⁶ It is no lovely house where the external organs are playing their parts, while its mistress understanding sits inside with her brood of anxieties. ²⁷ It is a hut thatched over with the hairs on the head, decorated with the turrets of the ears, and adorned with jewels on the crest, which I do not like.

²⁸ This house of the body is walled about by all its members, and beset by hairs growing on it like ears of grain. It has an empty space of the belly within which I do not like. ²⁹ This body with its nails as those of spiders, and its entrails growling within like barking dogs, and the internal winds emitting fearful sounds, is never delightsome to me. ³⁰ What is this body but a passage for the ceaseless inhaling and breathing out of the vital air? Its eyes are like two windows continually opened and closed by the eyelids. I do not like a mansion such as this. ³¹ This mansion of the body, with its formidable door of the mouth and ever-moving bolt of the tongue and bars of the teeth, is not pleasant to me.

³² This house of the body, having the whitewash of ointments on the outer skin and the machinery of the limbs in continuous motion, its restless mind burrowing its base like a mischievous mouse, is not liked by me. ³³ Sweet smiles, like shining lamps, serve to lighten this house of the body for a moment, but it is soon darkened by a cloud of melancholy, wherefore I cannot be pleased with it. ³⁴ This body, the abode of diseases and subject to wrinkles and decay and all kinds of pain, is a mansion with which I am not pleased. ³⁵ I do not like this wilderness of the body, infested by the bears of the senses. It is empty and hollow within, with dark groves of entrails inside.

³⁶ I am unable, O chief of sages, to drag my domicile of the body, just as a weak elephant is incapable of pulling another that is stuck in a muddy pit. ³⁷ Of what good is affluence or royalty, this body and all its efforts to a person when the hand of time must destroy them all in a few days?

³⁸ Tell me, O sage, what is charming in this body that is only a composition of flesh and blood both within and without and frail in its nature? ³⁹ The body does not follow the soul upon death. Tell me sage, what regard should the learned have for such an ungrateful thing as this? ⁴⁰ It is as unsteady as the ears of an enraged elephant, and as fickle as drops of water that trickle on their tips. I should like therefore to abandon it before it comes to abandon me.

⁴¹ It is as tremulous as the leaves of a tree shaken by a breeze, and oppressed by diseases and fluctuations of pleasure and pain. I have no relish in its pungency and bitterness. ⁴² With all its food and drink for evermore, it is as tender as a leaflet and it is reduced to leanness in spite of all our cares, and runs fast towards its dissolution. ⁴³ It is repeatedly subjected to pleasure and pain, and to the succession of affluence and destitution, without being ashamed of itself as the shameless vulgar herd. ⁴⁴ Why nourish this body any longer when, after its enjoyment of prosperity and exercise of authority for a length of time, it acquires no excellence nor durability?

⁴⁵ The bodies of the rich and the poor are alike subject to decay and death at their appointed times.

⁴⁶ The body lies like a tortoise in the cave of greed amidst the ocean of the world. It remains there in the mud in a mute and torpid state without any effort for its liberation. ⁴⁷ Our bodies float like heaps of wood on the waves of the world, finally serving as fuel for a funeral fire — except a few which pass for human bodies in the sight of the wise.

⁴⁸ The wise have little to do with this tree of the body, which is beset by evils like harmful orchids about it, and produces the fruit of perdition. ⁴⁹ The body, like a frog, lies merged in the mire of mortality where it perishes no sooner it is known to have lived and gone. ⁵⁰ Our bodies are as empty and fleeting as gusts of wind passing over dusty ground. Nobody knows from where they come or where they go. ⁵¹ We know not the travels of our bodies, as we do not know those of the winds, light and our thoughts. They all come and go, but from where and to where, we know nothing. ⁵² Fie and shame to them who are so giddy with the intoxication of their error that they rely on any state or durability of their bodies.

⁵³ They are the best of men, O sage, whose minds are at rest with the thought that their ego does not exist in their bodies, and that in the end the bodies are not theirs.

⁵⁴ Those mistaken men who have a high sense of honor and fear dishonor, but who take pleasure in the excess of their gains, are truly killers of both of their bodies and souls. ⁵⁵ We are deceived by the delusion of ego, which like a female evil spirit lies hidden within the cavity of the body with all her sorcery. ⁵⁶ Unaided, our reason is kept in bondage by the malicious fiend of false knowledge, like a slave within the prison of our bodies. ⁵⁷ It is certain that whatever we see here is unreal, and yet it is a wonder that the mass of men are led to deception by the vile body, which has injured the cause of the soul.

⁵⁸ Our bodies are as fleeting as the drops of a waterfall. They fall off in a few days like the withered leaves of trees. ⁵⁹ They are as quickly dissolved as bubbles in the ocean. Therefore it is in vain for it to hurl about in the whirlpool of business. ⁶⁰ I have not a moment's reliance in this body, which is ever hastening to decay, and I regard its changeful delusions as a state of dreaming. ⁶¹ Let those who have any faith in the stability of lightning, autumn clouds and ice castles place their reliance in this body.

⁶² In its instability and ability to perish, the body has outdone all other things that are doomed to destruction. It is moreover subject to very many evils. Therefore I value it as nothing, like straw, and thereby I have obtained my rest.

Chapter 19 — Blemishes of Boyhood

Rama speaking:—

¹ One receiving his birth in the unstable ocean of this world, disturbed by the waves of the turmoil of business, has to pass his boyhood in sufferings only.

² The attendants of infancy are a lack of strength and sense, diseases, dangers, muteness and sensual desires, joined with longings and helplessness. ³ Childhood is chained to fretting, crying, fits of anger, craving and every kind of incapacity, like an elephant chained to a post. ⁴ The vexations that tease the infant breast are far greater than those which trouble us in youth and old age, or disturb one in disease, danger or at the approach of death. ⁵ The acts of a boy are like those of young animals, always restless and snubbed by everybody. Hence boyhood is more intolerable than death itself.

⁶ How can boyhood be pleasing to anybody, when it is a semblance of gross ignorance, full of whims and hobbies, and ever subject to improper behavior? ⁷ Silly boyhood is in constant dread of dangers arising at every step from fire, water and air which rarely cause problems in other states of life.

⁸ Children are liable to very many errors in their plays and wicked frolics, and in all their wishes and attempts beyond their capacities. Therefore, boyhood is the most dangerous stage of life.

⁹ Children are engaged in false pursuits and wicked sports, and are subject to all other foolish childishness. Hence boyhood is fit for the rod and not for rest. ¹⁰ All faults, misconduct, transgressions and heartaches lie hidden in boyhood like owls in hollow caves. ¹¹ Shame on those ignorant and foolish people who are falsely led to imagine boyhood as the most pleasant period of life.

¹² How can boyhood appear pleasing to anyone when the mind swings like a cradle towards every object of desire, however wrong it is deemed to be in both worlds? ¹³ The minds of all living beings are ever restless, but those of young people are ten times more at unrest. ¹⁴ The mind is naturally unsteady, and so is boyhood. Say what can save us from that state of life when both these vagrant things combine to our destruction? ¹⁵ The glances of women, the flashes of lightning, the flame of fire, and the ever-rolling waves have all imitated the fickleness of boyhood.

¹⁶ Minority seems to be a twin brother to the mind. They are similar in their unsteadiness and frailty of all their purposes. ¹⁷ All kinds of miseries, misdeeds and improper behavior await on boyhood, as all sorts of men hang upon the rich. ¹⁸ Children are always fond of new things, and when they fail to get them, they fall to a fainting fit, as if from the effect of poison.

¹⁹ A boy like a dog, is as easily tamed as he is irritated at a little, and he is as glad to lie in the dust and play with dirt. ²⁰ A foolish fretful boy with his body daubed in mire, tears in his eyes, appears like a heap of dry clay soiled by a shower of rain.

²¹ Children are subject to fear and voracious appetites. They are helpless but fond of everything they have seen or heard, and equally fickle in their bodies and mind. Hence boyhood is a source of only troubles. ²² The foolish and helpless child becomes sad and sour when he fails to get the object of his fancy and thwarted from the thing desired. ²³ Children have much difficulty to get at the things they want, and which they can ask only by indistinct words. Hence no one suffers so much as children. ²⁴ A

boy is as much irritated by the eagerness of his whimsical desires as a patch of ground in the desert is parched by the summer heat.

²⁵ On entering school, a boy is subjected to corrections, which are as painful to him as goading and chains to an elephant.

²⁶ Boyhood, ever fond of toys and trifles, is continually afflicted by a great many whims and hobbies, and a variety of false fancies. ²⁷ How can it be said that senseless childhood is a happy state of life when the child is led by its ignorance to swallow everything in the world, and to wish to lay hold on the moon in the sky?

²⁸ Say great sage, what difference is there between a child and a tree? Both have sensitivity, but neither is able to defend themselves from heat and cold. ²⁹ Children are like birds, subject to fear and hunger, and ready to fly about when impelled by them. ³⁰ Boyhood is the home of fear from all sides; such as from the tutor, father, mother, elder brother and elderly children, and from everybody besides.

³¹ Hence the hopeless state of childhood, full of faults and errors, and addicted to sports and thoughtlessness, cannot be satisfactory to anybody.

Chapter 20 — Denunciation of Youth

¹ Rama continued:--

The boy, having passed his state of blemishes, gladly steps into youth with hopes of gaining his objects that tend only to his ruin.² At this time the unconscious youth feels the wanton inclinations of his loose mind and goes on falling from one tribulation to another.³ He is overcome like one subdued by the power of delusive Kama Deva (Goddess Desire) lying hidden in the cavity of the heart.⁴ His ungoverned mind gives rise to loose thoughts like those of voluptuous women, and these serve to beguile him like magic black collyrium eye-liner in the hands of children.⁵ Vices of the most heinous kind overcome persons of such minds in their youth and lead them to their ruin.

⁶ The paths of youth lead through a maze of errors to the gate of hell. Those who have been left uncorrupt by their youth are not to be corrupted by anything else.⁷ Whoever has passed the dreadfully enchanted coast of youth, filled with various flavors and wonders, is said to be truly wise.

⁸ I take no delight in our unwelcome youth, which appears to us in the form of a momentary flash of lightning, soon followed by the loud roaring of the clouds (of manhood).⁹ Youth, like rich wine, is sweet and delicious, but becomes bitter, insipid and harmful in a short time. Hence it is not delectable to me.¹⁰ Youth appearing as a reality, is found to be a false, transient thing, as deceptive as a fairy dream by night. Hence I like it not.¹¹ It is the most charming of all things to men, but its charm is soon lost and fled. Therefore the magic lantern show of youth is not pleasing to me.

¹² Youth is like an arrow shot: pleasant to see, but painful to feel. Hence I do not like youth that produces heat in the blood.¹³ Youth is like a harlot: charming at first sight, but soon turns heartless. Hence it is not to my liking.

¹⁴ As the efforts of a dying man are all for his torment, so the exertions of the young are portentous of his destruction.¹⁵ Puberty advances like a dark night spreading the shadow of destruction. It darkens the heart and mind by its hideous appearance, and intimidates even the god Shiva himself.

¹⁶ Errors growing in youth, upsetting good sense and giving no value to approved good manners, cause copious mistakes in life.¹⁷ The raging fire in the hearts of the young, caused by separation from their mates, burns them down like trees in a wildfire.¹⁸ As a clear, sacred and wide stream becomes muddy during rains, so does the mind of man, however clear, pure and expanded it may be, gets polluted in his youth.¹⁹ It is possible for one to cross a river made terrible by its waves, but no way possible for him to get over the boisterous expanse of his youthful desires.

²⁰ O how one's youth is worn out with the thoughts of his mistress, her swollen breasts, her beautiful face and her sweet caresses!²¹ The wise regard a young man afflicted with the pain of soft desire as no better than a fragment of straw.²² Youth is the stake of haughty self-esteem, as the rack is for the immolation of the elephant giddy with its frontal pearl.²³ Youth is a lamentable forest where the mind, as the root of all, gives growth to jungles of (love sick) groans, sighs and tears of sorrow. The vices of this time are like venomous snakes of the forest.

²⁴ Know that a person's youthful bloom resembles a blooming lotus of the lake. One is as full of affections, bad desires and evil intents as the other is filled with bees, filaments, petals and leaves.

²⁵ The new bloom of youth is the playground of anxiety and disease, which like two birds with their (black and white) plumage of vice and virtue, frequent the fountain of the young man's heart.

²⁶ Early youth resembles a deep sea disturbed by the waves of numberless amusements, transgressing all bounds, and regardless of death and disease. ²⁷ Youth is like a furious gust of wind over-loaded with the dust of pride and vanity which sweeps away every trace of good qualities. ²⁸ The rude dust of the passions of youth disfigures their faces, and the hurricane of their sensualities cover their good qualities.

²⁹ Youthful vigor awakens a series of faults and destroys a group of good qualities by increasing the vice of pleasures. ³⁰ Youthful bloom confines the fickle mind to some beautiful person, like bright moonbeams serve to trap the flitting bee in the dust of a closing lotus. ³¹ Youth, like a delightful cluster of flowers growing in the garden of the human body, attracts the mind to it like a bee and makes it giddy (with its sweets). ³² The human mind anxious to derive pleasure from the youthfulness of the body, falls into the cave of sensuality, like a deer running after the mirage of desert heat falls down into a pit.

³³ I take no delight in moon-like youth which gilds the dark body with its beams and resembles the stern mane of the lion-like mind. It is a surge in the ocean of our lives. ³⁴ There is no reliance upon youth that fades away as soon as summer flowers in this desert of the body. ³⁵ Like a bird, youth soon flies away from our bodily cage. It is like the philosopher's stone that quickly disappears from the hands of the unfortunate.

³⁶ As youth advances to its highest pitch, so the feverish passions wax stronger for our destruction only. ³⁷ As long as the night (delusion) of youth lasts, the fiends of our passion rage in the desert of the body. ³⁸ Pity me, O sage, in this state of youth which is so full of agitation as to have deprived me of the sight of reason. O pity me as you would for your dying son. ³⁹ A foolish man who ignorantly rejoices at his transient youth is considered to be like a human beast. ⁴⁰ A foolish fellow who is fond of his youth, flushed with pride and filled with errors, soon comes to repent.

⁴¹ Those who have safely passed over the perils of youth are great minded men honored on earth.

⁴² With ease one can cross over a wide ocean that is the horrible home of huge whales, but it is hard to pass over our youth that is so full of vices and waves (of our passions). ⁴³ It is very rare to have a happy youth filled with humility and spent in the company of respectable men. Such youth is distinguished by feelings of sympathy and is joined with good qualities and virtues.

Chapter 21 — Denunciation of Women

¹ Rama added:—

What beauty is there in the body of a woman composed of nerves, bones and joints? She is a mere statue of flesh and a frame of moving machinery with her ribs and limbs.² Separated from its flesh, skin, blood and water, can you find anything beautiful in the female form that is worth beholding? Then why dote upon it?³ This fairy frame consisting of hair and blood cannot engage the attention of a high-minded man to its blemishes.⁴ The bodies of females, so covered with clothing and repeatedly smeared with paints and perfumes, are (in the end) devoured by carnivorous (beasts and worms).

⁵ The breasts of women, decorated with strings of pearl, appear as charming as the pinnacles of Mount Sumeru washed by the waters of the Ganges falling upon them.⁶ Look at these very same breasts in the end, having become a lump of food to be devoured by dogs in cemeteries and on the naked ground.

⁷ There is no difference between a woman and a young elephant that lives in the jungle. Both are made of blood, flesh and bones. Then why hunt after her?⁸ A woman is charming only for a short time. I look upon her merely as a cause of delusion.⁹ There is no difference between wine and a woman. Both tend equally to produce high-flown mirth and jollity, creating revelry and lust.¹⁰ Overindulgent men are like chained elephants among mankind. They will never come to sense however goaded by the hooks of reason.

¹¹ Women are the flames of vice. Their black-dyed eye and hair are their smoke and soot. Though pleasing to the sight, they are as intangible as fire. They burn a man like fire consumes straw.

¹² Though they appear soft and juicy to sight, they burn from afar and are as dry as bones. They serve as fuel for the fires of hell, and they are dangerous with their charm.

¹³ The woman resembles a moonlit night, veiled over by her loosened locks, and looking through her starry eyes. She shows her moon-like face amidst her flowery smiles.¹⁴ Her soft dalliance destroys all manly energy, and her caresses overpower the good sense of men, like the shade of night does the sleeping (world).¹⁵ A woman is as lovely as a vine in its flowering time. Her palms are the leaves and her eyes are the black bees. Her breasts are like the uplifted tops of the plant.¹⁶ A lovely maiden is like a poisonous vine, fair as the filament of a flower but, by causing inebriation and unconsciousness, destructive of life.

¹⁷ Like the snake-catcher entices the snake by his breath and brings it out of its hole, so does a woman allure a man by her meddlesome civilities and gets him under her control.¹⁸ Sexual desire, like a huntsman, has spread his nets in the form of women for the purpose of ensnaring deluded men like silly birds.¹⁹ The mind of man, though as fierce as that of a furious elephant, is tied fast by the chain of love to the fulcrum of women, just as an elephant is fastened to the post where he remains dull and dumb forever.

²⁰ Human life is like a pool in which the mind moves about in mud and mire. Here it is caught by the bait of woman, and dragged along by the thread of its impure desires.²¹ The beautiful eyed maiden is a bondage to man, as the stable is to the horse, the fastening post to the elephant, and as spells are to the snakes.

²² This wonderful world, with all its delights and enjoyments, began with woman and depends on women for its continuance. ²³ A woman is a casket full of all gems of vice. She is the cause of our chain to everlasting misery, and she is of no use to me. ²⁴ What shall I do with her breast, her eyes, her loins, her eyebrows, the substance of which is only flesh and which therefore is altogether unsubstantial? ²⁵ Here and there, O brahmin, her flesh and blood and bones undergo a change for the worse in course of a few days.

²⁶ Sage, you can see those dearly beloved mistresses, so much fondled by foolish men, lying at last in the cemetery, their body parts all mangled and falling off. ²⁷ O brahmin, those dear love objects, the faces of maidens so fondly decorated by their lovers with paints and pastes, are at last to be burned on the piles. ²⁸ Their braided hairs hang like fly-whisks on the cemetery trees, and after a few days, their whitened bones are strewn about like shining stars. ²⁹ Behold their blood sucked in by the dust of the earth, voracious beasts and worms feeding upon their flesh, jackals tearing their skin, and their vital air dispersed in the vacuum. ³⁰ This is the state to which the members of the female body must shortly come to pass. You say all existence is delusion. Therefore tell me, why do you allow yourselves to fall into error? ³¹ A woman is nothing but a form composed of the five elements, so why should intelligent men be fondly attached to her?

³² Men's longing for women is like the suta vine which stretches its sprigs to a great length, but bears plenty of bitter and sour fruit. ³³ A man blinded by greed (for his mate) is like a deer that has strayed from its herd, not knowing which way to go, lost in the maze of illusion. ³⁴ A young man under the control of a young woman is as lamentable as an elephant in pursuit of his mate that has fallen into a pit of Vindhya Mountain.

³⁵ He who has a wife has an appetite for enjoyment on earth, but one without her has no object of desire. Abandonment of the wife amounts to abandonment of the world, and forsaking the world is the path to true happiness.

³⁶ I am not content, O brahmin! with these unmanageable enjoyments which are as flickering as the wings of bees, and are as soon at an end as they are born. From my fear of repeated births, decay and death, I long only for the state of supreme bliss.

Chapter 22 — Denunciation of Old Age

Rama speaking:—

¹ Boyhood has scarcely lost its boyishness when it is overtaken by youth, which is soon followed by a ruthless old age that devours the other two. ² Old age withers the body like frost freezing a lake of lilies. It drives away the beauty of the body like a storm does autumn clouds. It pulls down the body like a current carries away a tree from the bank.

³ An old man with his limbs slackened and worn out by age, his body weakened by infirmity, is treated by women as a useless beast. ⁴ Old age drives away a man's good sense, just like a step mother drives away a good wife. ⁵ A man in tottering old age is ridiculed as a imbecile by his own sons and servants, and even by his wife, friends and relations.

⁶ When their appearance grows uncouth and their bodies become helpless and devoid of all manly qualities and powers, then insatiable greed alights on the heads of the aged like a greedy vulture.

⁷ Appetite, the constant companion of my youth, is thriving along with my age, accompanied with her evils of indigence, and heart-burning cares and restlessness.

⁸ Ah me! What must I do to remove my present and future pains? This fear increases with old age and finds no remedy. ⁹ What am I that I am brought to this extremity of senselessness? What can I do in this state? I must remain dumb and silent. Given these reflections, there is an increased sense of helplessness in old age.

¹⁰ How and when and what shall I eat, and what is sweet to taste? These are the thoughts that trouble the mind when old age comes. ¹¹ There is an insatiable desire for enjoyments, but the powers to enjoy them are lacking. It is lack of strength which afflicts the heart in old age. ¹² Hoary old age sits and shrieks like a heron on the top of the tree of this body which is infested within by the serpents of sickness.

¹³ As the grave owl, the bird of night, appears unexpectedly to our sight as the evening shades cover the landscape, so the solemn appearance of death overtakes us in the eve of our life. ¹⁴ As darkness prevails over the world in the evening, so death overtakes the body at the eve of the life. ¹⁵ Death overtakes a man in his hoary old age, just like a monkey alights on a tree covered with pearly flowers.

¹⁶ Even a deserted city, a leafless tree and parched up land may present a fair aspect, but never does the body look well that is pulled down by hoary age. ¹⁷ Old age with its hooping cough lays hold of a man, just as a vulture seizes its prey with loud shrieks in order to devour it. ¹⁸ As a girl eagerly lays hold of a lotus flower whenever she sees one, then plucks it from its stalk and tears it to pieces, so does old age overtake a person's body and breaks it down at last. ¹⁹ As the chill blast of winter shakes a tree and covers its leaves with dust, so does old age seize the body with a tremor and fill all its limbs with the rust of diseases.

²⁰ The body overtaken by old age becomes as pale and battered as a lotus flower beaten by frost becomes withered and shattered. ²¹ As moonbeams contribute to the growth of kumuda flowers on the top of mountains, so does old age produce grey hairs resembling casia flowers on the heads of men (with inward phlegm and gout). ²² Death, the lord of all beings, views the grey head of a man as a ripe

pumpkin seasoned with the salt of old age, and devours it with zest.

²³ As the Ganges upsets a neighboring tree by its rapid course, so old age destroys the body as the current of our life runs fast to decay. ²⁴ Old age preys on the flesh of the human body and takes as much delight in devouring its youthful bloom as a cat does feeding on a mouse. ²⁵ Decrepitude raises its ominous hoarse sound of hiccough in the body, like a jackal sending forth her hideous cry in the forest. ²⁶ Old age is an inner flame that consumes the living body like a wet log of wood, which thereupon emits its hissing sounds of hiccough and hard breathing, and sends up the gloomy fumes of sorrow and sighs.

²⁷ The body like a flowering vine, bends down under the pressure of age, turns to grey like the fading leaves of a plant, and becomes as lean and thin as a plant after its flowering time is over. ²⁸ Like an infuriated elephant that can uproot a white plantain tree in a moment, so does old age destroy the body that becomes as white as camphor all over.

²⁹ Senility, O sage, is as the standard bearer of the king of death, flapping his fly-whisks of grey hairs before him and bringing an army of diseases and troubles in his train. ³⁰ The monster of old age will even overcome those who were never defeated in wars by their enemies, and those who hide themselves in the inaccessible caverns of mountains.

³¹ As infants cannot play in a room that has become cold with snow, so the senses can have no play in a body stricken with age. ³² Old age, like a juggling girl, struts on three legs at the sound of coughing and whiffing, beating like a kettledrum on both sides. ³³ The tuft of grey hairs on the head of an aged body represents a fly-whisk fastened to the top of a handle of white sandalwood that serves to welcome the despot of death.

³⁴ As hoary age makes his advance like moonlight over the body, he calls forth hidden death to come out of it, as moonlight makes water lilies unfold their buds. ³⁵ Again as the whitewash of old age whitens the outer body, so debility, diseases and dangers become its inmates in the inner apartment.

³⁶ The extinction of being is preceded by old age. Therefore I as a man of little understanding can have no reliance in old age (though extolled by some.) ³⁷ What then is the good of this miserable life, which lives subject to old age? Senility is irresistible in this world, and it defies all efforts to avoid or overcome it.

Chapter 23 — The Vicissitudes of Time

Rama speaking:—

¹ By their much idle talk, ever doubting skepticism and schisms, men of little understandings are found to fall into grave errors in this pit of the world. ² Good people can have no more confidence in the network of their ribs than little children like fruit reflected in a mirror. ³ Time is a rat that gnaws off the threads of all thoughts that men may entertain about the contemptible pleasures of this world.

⁴ There is nothing in this world which the all-devouring time will spare. He devours all things like an undersea fire consumes the overflowing sea. ⁵ Time is the sovereign lord of all, and equally terrible to all things. He is ever ready to devour all visible beings. ⁶ Time as master of all, spares not even the greatest of us for a moment. He swallows the universe within himself, whence he is known as the Universal Soul.

⁷ Time pervades all things, but has no perceptible feature of his own, except that he is imperfectly known by the names of years, ages and millennia (kalpas). ⁸ All that was fair and good and as great as Mount Meru has gone down into the womb of eternity, like snakes gorged by the greedy garuda.

⁹ There was no one ever so unkind, hard-hearted, cruel, harsh or miserly, whom time has not devoured. ¹⁰ Time is ever greedy even though he devours mountains. This great gourmand is not satisfied with gorging himself with everything in all the worlds.

¹¹ Time, like an actor, plays many parts on the stage of the world. He abstracts and kills, produces and devours and at last destroys everything. ¹² Time is constantly picking up the seeds of all four kinds of living beings from this unreal world, like a parrot picks up ripened fruit from under the cracked shell of a pomegranate and nibbles at its seeds.

¹³ Time uproots all proud living beings in this world, like a wild elephant uses its tusks to pull up the trees of the forest. ¹⁴ This creation of God is like a forest, having Brahma for its foundation and its trees full of the great fruits of gods. Time commands this creation throughout its length and breadth.

¹⁵ Time glides along constantly as a creeping plant, its parts composed of years and ages and the dark nights like black bees chasing after them.

¹⁶ Time, O sage, is the subtlest of all things. It is divided though indivisible. It is consumed though incombustible. It is perceived though imperceptible in its nature. ¹⁷ Time, like the mind, is strong enough to create and demolish anything in a trice, and its province is equally extensive. ¹⁸ Time is a whirlpool to men; and man being accompanied with desire, his insatiable and uncontrollable mistress, and delighting in illicit enjoyments, time makes him do and undo the same thing over and over again.

¹⁹ Time is prompted by his rapacity to appropriate everything for himself, from the meanest straw, dust, leaves and worms, to the greatest Indra and Mount Meru itself.

²⁰ Time is the source of all malice and greed, and the spring of all misfortunes, and cause of the intolerable fluctuations of our states. ²¹ As children play with balls in a playground, so does time play with his two balls of the sun and moon in his arena of the sky.

²² Upon the end of a kalpa age, time will dance about with the bones of the dead hanging like a long

chain from his neck to the feet.²³ At the end of a kalpa age, the gale of desolation rising from the body of this world destroyer causes the fragments of Mount Meru to fly about in the air like the rinds of the bhoja-petera tree.²⁴ Time then assumes his terrific form of fire to dissolve the world in empty space, and the gods Brahma and Indra and all others cease to exist.²⁵ As the sea shows himself in a continued series of waves rising and falling one after another, so it is time that creates and dissolves the world, and appears to rise and fall with the rotation of days and nights.²⁶ At end of the world, time plucks the gods and demigods from their great tree of existence like ripe fruit.

²⁷ Time resembles a large sacred fig tree (*ficus religiosa*) studded with all the worlds as its fruit, resonant with the noise of living beings like the hissing of gnats.²⁸ Time accompanied by action as his mate, entertains himself in the garden of the world, blossoming with the moonbeams of the Divine Spirit.²⁹ As the high and huge rock supports its body upon the earth, so does time rest itself in endless and interminable eternity.

³⁰ Time assumes to himself various colors of black, white and red (at night, day and midday) which serve for his vestures.

³¹ As the earth supports the great hills that are fixed upon it, so time supports all the innumerable ponderous worlds that constitute the universe.³² Hundreds of great kalpa ages may pass away, yet there is nothing that can move eternity to pity or concern, or stop or expedite his course. It neither sets nor rises.³³ Time is never proud to think that it is he who, without the least sense of pain or labor, brings this world into play and makes it exist.

³⁴ Time is like a reservoir in which the nights are mud, the days lotuses, and the clouds bees.

³⁵ As a covetous man, with worn out broomstick in hand, sweeps over a mountain to gather particles of gold strewn over it, so does time with his sweeping course of days and nights collect all living beings in the world in one mass of the dead.³⁶ As a miserly man trims and lights a lamp with his own fingers in order to look for his stores in each corner of his rooms, so does time light the lamps of the sun and moon to look for living beings in every nook and corner of the world.

³⁷ As one ripens raw fruit in the sun and fire in order to devour them, so does time ripen men by their sun and fire worship, to bring them under his jaws at last.

³⁸ The world is a dilapidated cottage and men of parts are rare gems in it. Time hides them in the casket of his belly, as a miser keeps his treasure in a coffer.³⁹ Good men are like a garland of gems, which time puts on his head for a time with fondness, and then tears and tramples it down.⁴⁰ Strings of days, nights and stars, resembling beads and bracelets of white and black lotuses, are continually turning around the arm of time.

⁴¹ Time looks upon the world like the carcass of a ram, with its mountains, seas, sky and earth as its four horns, and the stars as its drops of blood which it drinks day by day.⁴² Time destroys youth as the moon shuts the petals of the lotus. It destroys life like a lion kills the elephant. There is nothing so insignificant that time does not steal.

⁴³ After sporting for a kalpa period in the act of killing and crushing of all living beings, time comes to lose its own existence and becomes extinct in the eternity of the Spirit of spirits.⁴⁴ After a short

rest and respite, time reappears as the creator, preserver, and destroyer of all who remembers all. He shows the shapes of all things whether good or bad, keeping his own nature beyond the knowledge of all. Thus does time expand and preserve and finally dissolve all things by way of sport.

Chapter 24 — The Ravages of Time

¹ Rama continued:—

Time is a self-willed sportsman, like a prince, who is inaccessible to dangers and whose powers are unlimited.² This world is like a forest and a sporting ground of time where the poor deluded worldlings are caught in his snare like bodies of wounded stags.

³ The ocean of universal deluge is merely a pleasure-pond for time, and its undersea fires bursting there are merely lotus flowers.⁴ Time makes his breakfast of this vapid and stale earth, flavored with the milk and curd of the seas of those names.⁵ His wife Chandi with her train of Matris (the Furies) ranges all about this wide world like a ferocious tigress.⁶ The earth with her waters is like a bowl of wine in the hand of time, dressed and flavored with all sorts of lilies and lotuses.

⁷ In the hand of time, the lion with his huge body and startling mane, his loud roaring and tremendous groans, seems like a caged bird of sport.⁸ Mahakala (Transcendent Time), like a playful young cuckoo, appears in the figure of the blue autumn sky, warbling as sweet as the notes of a lute of gourd (in the music of the spheres).

⁹ The restless bow of death is found flinging its sorrowful arrows with ceaseless thunder claps on all sides.¹⁰ This world is like a forest in which sorrows range about like playful apes, and time like a sportive prince in this forest, is now wandering, now walking, now playing and now killing his game.

Chapter 25 — The Play of Death

¹ Time stands the foremost of all deceitful players in this world. He acts the double parts of creation and destruction, and of action and fate. ² The existence of time is known to us only through action and motion, which bind all beings (in the succession of thoughts and acts).

³ Fate is that which frustrates the acts of all created beings, like the heat of the sun serves to dissolve a snow pack. ⁴ This wide world is the stage on which the giddy mob dances about (in their appointed times). ⁵ Time has a third name of a terrifying nature known as Kritantah (Fate), who in the form of a Kapalika (one holding human skulls in his hand), dances about in the world. ⁶ This dancing and loving Kritantah (Fate), is accompanied by his consort called Destiny to whom he is greatly attached.

⁷ Time (as Shiva) wears on his bosom of the world, the triple white and holy thread composed of the serpent named Ananta (Infinite) and the Ganges River, and on his forehead the digit of the moon (*i.e.*, the zodiacal belt; the milky way, and the lunar astrological divisions, phases). ⁸ The sun and the moon are the golden armlets of time, who holds the mundane world in his palm like the paltry plaything of a flower bouquet. ⁹ The sky with its stars appears like a garment with colored spots. The clouds called Pushkara and Avarta are like the skirts of that garment, washed by time in the waters of the universal deluge.

¹⁰ Before him his beloved Destiny with all her arts forever dances to beguile the living who are fond of worldly enjoyments. ¹¹ People hurry up and down to witness the dance of Destiny, whose unrestrained motion keeps them at work, and causes their repeated births and deaths. ¹² People of all worlds are studded like ornaments about her person, and the sky stretching from the heaven of gods to the infernal regions serves for the veil on her head. ¹³ Her feet are planted in the infernal regions, and the hell-pits ring at her feet like trinkets, tied by the string of evil deeds and sins. ¹⁴ The god Chitragupta has painted her from head to foot with ornamental marks prepared by her attendants, and perfumed with the essence of those deeds. ¹⁵ She dances and reels at the nod of her husband at the end of the kalpas, and makes the mountains crack and crash at her foot-falls. ¹⁶ Behind her dance the peacocks of the god Kumara (Subramanyan) and Kala, the god of death, staring with his three wide open eyes, utters his hideous cries (of destruction).

¹⁷ Death dances about in the form of the five-headed Hara (the “Destroyer”, Shiva), with the loosened braids of hair upon him, while Destiny in the form of Gauri (Shiva’s consort), her locks adorned with mandara flowers, keeps her pace with him.

¹⁸ In her war-dance, this Destiny bears a large gourd representing her big belly, and her body is adorned with hundreds of hollow human skulls jingling like the alms-pots of Kapali mendicants.

¹⁹ She has filled the sky with the emaciated skeleton of her body and her terrible, destructive figure.

²⁰ The various shapes of skulls of the dead adorn her body like a beautiful garland of lotuses. They sway to and fro during her dance at the end of a kalpa age.

²¹ The horrible roaring of the giddy clouds Pushkara and Avarta at the end of the kalpa serves to represent the beating of her damaru drum, and puts to flight the heavenly choir of Tumburu. ²² As death dances along, the moon appears like his earring, and the moonbeams and stars appear like his crest made of peacocks’ feathers. ²³ The snow-capped Himalayas appear like a crown of bones in the

upper loop of his right ear, and Mount Meru as a golden ring in his left.²⁴ Under their lobes are suspended the moon and the sun, like pendant earrings glittering over his cheeks. The mountain ranges called the Lokaloka are fastened like chains around his waist.

²⁵ Lightning bolts are the bracelets and armlets of Destiny, which move to and fro as she dances along. The clouds are her dressing gown that fly about her in the air.

²⁶ Death is furnished with many weapons, like clubs, axes, missiles, spears, shovels, mallets and sharp swords, all of which are sure weapons of destruction.²⁷ Mundane enjoyments are no other than long ropes dropped down by the hand of death that keep all mankind fast bound to the world. He wears the great thread of infinity (*ananta*) as his wreath of flowers.²⁸ Death wears the seven oceans as bracelet-belts bracelets resplendent with the living sea-animals and the bright gems contained in their depths.²⁹ The great vortices of customs, the successions of joy and grief, the excess of pride and the darkness of passions, form the streaks of hair on his body.

³⁰ After the end of the world, he ceases to dance, and creates anew all things from the lowest animal that lives in the earth, to the highest Brahma and Shiva.³¹ By turns, Destiny as an actress acts her parts of creation and destruction, diversified by scenes of old age, sorrow and misery.

³² Time repeatedly creates the worlds and their woods, with the different abodes and localities teeming with population. He forms the moveable and immovable substances, establishes customs and again dissolves them, as children make their dolls of clay and break them soon afterwards.

Chapter 26 — The Acts of Destiny

¹ Rama said:—

Such being the all destructive conduct of time and others, what confidence, O great sage, can men like me have in them? ² We all remain here, as slaves sold to Fate and Destiny, and we are deceived by their allurements as beasts of the forest.

³ This Fate whose conduct is so very inhuman is ever eager to devour all beings. He is constantly throwing men into the sea of troubles. ⁴ He is moved by his malicious attempts to inflame minds with excessive desires, as the fire raises its flames to burn down a house.

⁵ Destiny, the faithful and obedient wife of Fate, is naturally fickle on account of her being a female. She is always bent on mischief and disturbing patience.

⁶ As the heinous serpent feeds upon the air, so does cruel Death ever swallow the living. He ripens the body with old age to create his zest, and then devours all animals warm with life. ⁷ Death is called a relentless tyrant, having no pity even for the sick and weak, nor any regard for anyone in any state of life.

⁸ Every one in this world is fond of affluence and pleasures, not knowing that these are only calculated to lead him to his ruin. ⁹ Life is very unsteady. Death is very cruel. Youth is very frail and fickle, and boyhood is full of dullness and unconsciousness. ¹⁰ Man is defiled by his worldliness, his friends are ties to the world, his enjoyments are the greatest of his diseases in life, and his greed and ambition are his ever alluring the mirage.

¹¹ Our very senses are our enemies, before which even truth appears as falsehood. The mind is the enemy of the mind and self is the enemy of self. ¹² Self-esteem is stained, intelligence is blamed for its deception, our actions are attended with bad results, and our pleasures tend only to effeminacy. ¹³ All our desires are directed to enjoyments. Our love of truth is lost, our women are the symbols of vice, and all that was once so sweet has become tasteless and vapid. ¹⁴ Things that are not real are believed as real. They have become the cause of our pride by hardening us in untruth and keeping us from the light of truth.

¹⁵ My mind is at a loss to think what to do. It regrets its increased appetite for pleasure, and for its lack of self-denial. ¹⁶ My sight is dimmed by the dust of sensuality. The darkness of self-esteem prevails over me. I am never able to reach purity of mind, and truth is far away from me. ¹⁷ Life has become uncertain and death is always advancing near. My patience is disturbed, and there is an increased appetite for whatever is false.

¹⁸ The mind is soiled by dullness, and the body is filled with overindulgence in eating and is ready to fall. Old age exults over the body, and sins are conspicuous at every step. ¹⁹ Youth flies fast away despite all our care to preserve it. The company of the good is at a distance. The light of truth shines from nowhere, and I can have recourse to nothing in this world.

²⁰ The mind is stupefied within itself, and its contentment has fled. There is no rise of enlightened sentiments in it, and meanness makes the mind's advance to enlightened sentiments only more distant.

²¹ Patience is converted into impatience. Man is subject to the states of birth and death. Good

company is rare, but bad company is always within everyone's reach.

²² All individual existences are liable to appear and disappear. All desires are chains to the world, and all worldly beings are constantly seen to be led away to where, necessarily, no one can tell.

²³ What reliance can there be on human life when the points of the compass become indistinct and indiscernible, when countries and places change their positions and names, and when even mountains are liable to be dilapidated? ²⁴ What reliance can there be on man when the heavens are swallowed in infinity, when this world is absorbed in nothingness, and the very earth loses her stability? ²⁵ What reliance can there be on men like ourselves when the very seas are liable to be dried up, when the stars are doomed to fade away and disappear, and when the most perfect of beings are liable to dissolution?

²⁶ What reliance can there be on men like us when even the demigods are liable to destruction, when the polar star is known to change its place, and when the immortal gods are doomed to mortality?

²⁷ What reliance can there be on men like us when Indra is doomed to be defeated by demons, when even Death is hindered from his aim, and when air currents cease to move? ²⁸ What reliance can there be on men like us when the very moon is to vanish with the sky, when the very sun is to be split into pieces, and when fire itself is to become frigid and cold?

²⁹ What reliance can there be on men like us when the very gods Hari and Brahma are to be absorbed into the Great One, and when Shiva himself is to be no more? ³⁰ What reliance can there be on men like us when the duration of time comes to be counted, when Destiny is destined to her final destiny, and when all emptiness loses itself in infinity?

³¹ That which is inaudible, unspeakable, invisible, and unknowable in his real form, displays to us these wonderful worlds by some fallacy. ³² No one conscious of himself can disown his subjection to that Being that dwells in the hearts of every one. ³³ This sun, the lord of worlds, is compelled to run over hills, rocks and fields, like an inert piece of stone, hurled down from a mountain and carried away by a current stream. ³⁴ This globe of earth, the seat of all the suras and asuras and surrounded by a luminous sphere like a walnut is covered by its hard shell, exists under the His command. ³⁵ The gods in the heavens, the men on earth, and the serpents in the nether world are brought into existence and led to decay by His will only. ³⁶ Kama Deva, who is arbitrarily powerful and has forcibly overpowered the entire living world, derives his unconquerable might from the Lord of worlds.

³⁷ As the heated elephant regales the air with his spirituous flowing, so does the spring perfume the air with his profusion of flowers, unsettling the minds of men. ³⁸ So are the loose glances of loving maidens directed to inflict deep wounds in the heart of man, which his best efforts are unable to heal.

³⁹ One whose best endeavor is always to do good to others, and who feels for others' sorrows, is really intelligent and happy under the influence of his cool judgment.

⁴⁰ Who can count the number of beings resembling the waves of the ocean, and on whom death has been darting the undersea fire of destruction? ⁴¹ All mankind is deluded to entrap themselves in the snare of greed and be afflicted with all evils in life, as the deer entangled in the thickets of a jungle.

⁴² The duration of human life in this world is being decreased in each generation in proportion to the increase of wicked acts. The desire of pleasure is as vain as the expectation of reaping fruit from a

vine growing in the sky. Yet I know not why men of reason would not understand this truth.⁴³ “This is a day of festivity, a season of joy and a time of procession. Here are our friends. Here are the pleasures and here are a variety of our entertainments.” Thus do men of vacant minds amuse themselves with weaving the web of their desires, until they become extinct.

Chapter 27 — The Vanity of the World

¹ Rama said:—

O sage! This seemingly pleasing but actually unpleasant world has nothing in it that produces anything that can afford tranquility to the soul.² After playful boyhood is over, the mind wastes itself in the society of women like a deer fallen into a pit, then the body bends down under old age, and man has only to grieve.³ As the body is stricken with the frost of old age, its beauty flies away like the bloom of a fading lotus flower, and then the fountain of man's worldliness dries up.⁴ As the body declines, death rejoices. The body grows lean with grey hairs upon the head, just as a vine fades away with flowers upon it.

⁵ All living creatures are carried away by the stream of greed that flows for ever in this world, eroding its bank and upsetting the tree of contentment growing on it.⁶ The human body is like a vessel covered with skin floating on the ocean of the world, tossed about by sensual pleasures, swamped by water pressured by its whale-like passions.⁷ The world is a wilderness abounding in vines of greed and trees of sensuality, with hundreds of desires as their branches. Our minds are like monkeys that pass their time wandering about this forest without finding fruit.

⁸ Those who do not yield to grief during troubles, who are not elated with prosperity or smitten at heart by women, are rare in this world.⁹ Those who fight boldly in battlefields and withstand war-elephants are not so very brave, in my opinion, as those who withstand the surges of the mind amidst the streams of carnal appetites.¹⁰ I see no deeds in the world that endure to the final liberation of men. Actions proceeding from a fool's desire for results serve only for their restlessness on earth.

¹¹ Men who have filled the corners of the world with their fame and valor, who have filled their houses with true riches acquired by honest means and an unwavering patience, are rare in the world.

¹² Good and bad fortune always overtake a man, even if he hides in the cracks of a rock or in the walls of mountains, and even if he were enclosed within an iron closet.

¹³ Our sons and riches are mere objects of delight to us. To expect them to be of any good to us in the end is as false as to expect any benefit from distilling poison.¹⁴ Old people, in the decline of life, their bodies in pitiful decay, are greatly tormented by thoughts of their bad deeds.¹⁵ Men, having passed their early days in the gratification of their desires and other worldly pursuits at the expense of the acts of virtue and piety, are much troubled with anxieties at the end. Their minds are seized with trembling like the breeze shakes the plumage of a peacock. How then can a man attain tranquility at anytime?

¹⁶ To the worldly minded, all wealth — whether forthcoming or unattainable, whether gotten by labor or given by fortune — is as deceitful as the flooding of a river, swelling only to subside.¹⁷ The constant thoughts of men are that such and such desirable acts are to be done to please their sons and wives, until they are worn out with age and become crazy in their minds.

¹⁸ Like leaves on trees that grow to fall, and falling make room for others to shoot forth, men devoid of reason die away daily to be born again.¹⁹ Men having travelled here and there and far and near, at the end of the day return to their homes. But none can have rest by day or night except the virtuous few who live by honest dealings.

²⁰ After quelling his enemies and getting enough riches in his clutches, a rich man just sits down to enjoy his gains, and death comes upon him to interrupt his joy. ²¹ The infatuated mob sees the vile trash of worldly gains earned and accumulated by the basest means to be transitory, but they do not perceive their approaching dissolution. ²² Loving their own lives, and making faces at others' deaths, men are like a herd of sheep bound to the stake, staring at the slaughter of their fellows, yet still feeding themselves to fall as death's fattened victims. ²³ Multitudes of people on earth forever appear and disappear like the waves of a sea. Who can tell from where they come or where they return?

²⁴ Women are as delicate as poisonous vines with their red petal lips and garments, their eyes as busy as fluttering bees. They are killers of mankind and stealers of their ravished hearts. ²⁵ Men are like passengers in a procession who wander from side to side to join at the place of their meeting. Such is the delusive union of our wives and friends.

²⁶ As the burning and extinguishing of the lamp depend on the wick and its moistening oil, so does our course in this transitory world depend on our acts and affections. Nobody knows the true cause of this mysterious existence. ²⁷ The revolution of the world is like a potter's wheel and the floating bubbles of rainwater. They appear lasting only to the ignorant observer. ²⁸ The blooming beauty and graces of youth are destined to be snatched away at the approach of old age. The youthful hopes of men fly away like the blooms of lotus buds in winter.

²⁹ The tree ordained to be useful to mankind by the loads of flowers and fruit that it produces, in the end is also fated to be hewn down by a cruel axe. How then can good men expect to avoid the cruel hand of death?

³⁰ Society with relatives is as dangerous as a poisonous plant. It is pleasant for its domestic affections, which in reality are only delusions of the soul. ³¹ What is there in the world without fault in it? What is there that does not afflict or grieve us? What is born that is not subject to death? What acts are free from deceit?

³² Those living for one kalpa aeon are reckoned short-lived as compared with those living for many kalpa aeons, and they again are short-lived compared to Brahma. Hence all the parts of time are finite and the ideas of length or shortness are all false.

³³ Things called mountains are made of rocks, those called trees are made of wood, and those made of flesh are called animals, and man is the best of them. But they are all made of matter and doomed to death and decay. ³⁴ Many things appear to be endowed with intelligence, and the heavenly bodies seem to be full of water. But physicists have found out by analysis that everything is made up of minute matter. ³⁵ No wonder that all this should appear miraculous to the mind because even men's dreams appear so very fascinating to them.

³⁶ Even in old age, those corrupted by their greed will not accept sermons on their eternal concerns. They think they are as false as a flower or a vine growing in the sky. ³⁷ People's minds are deluded to want the state of their superiors, but as they try to lay hold of the fruits of a green vine that is out of their reach, they fall still lower, like beasts from the top of a hill.

³⁸ Young men who spend their wealth on personal gratifications are as useless as plants growing in the bowels of a deep and inaccessible cavern, spreading their leaves, branches, flowers, fruit and

shade to the use of nobody.³⁹ Men are found to resemble black antelopes in their wanderings. Some of them wander about the sweet, soft and beautiful sceneries of the country. Others roam in sterile tracts and boundless forests.

⁴⁰ The diverse daily acts of nature are all inherently pernicious. For a time they appear pleasant and ravishing to the heart, but they are attended with pain in the end, and they fill the mind of the wise with dismay.⁴¹ Man is addicted to greed and is prone to a variety of wicked shifts and plots. Now a good man cannot be found even in a dream. There is no act which is free from difficulty. I know not how to pass this state of human life.

Chapter 28 — Mutability of the World

¹ Rama said:—

Whatever we see in the world, living or inert, are all as impermanent as things seen in a dream.² The hollow desert that appears as the dried bed of a sea today will be found tomorrow to be a running flood from the accumulation of rainwater.³ What today is a mountain reaching the sky covered with extensive forests is in course of time leveled to the ground, and afterwards is dug into a pit.⁴ The body that today is clothed with garments of silk, decorated with garlands and fragrance, tomorrow is to be cast away naked into a ditch.⁵ What is seen to be a city today, busy with the bustle of various occupations, passes in the course of a few days into the condition of an uninhabited wilderness.⁶ The man who is very powerful today and presides over principalities, in a few days is reduced to a heap of ashes.

⁷ The very forest that is so formidable today, appearing as blue as the blue skies, with the passage of time turns into a city with its banners hoisted in the air.⁸ In time a formidable jungle of thick forests becomes a tableland like Mount Meru.⁹ Water becomes land and land becomes water. Thus the world with all its contents composed of wood, grass and water becomes something else in course of time.

¹⁰ Our boyhood and youth, bodies and possessions are all only transient things. They change from one state to another like the ever fluctuating waves of the ocean.¹¹ Our lives in this world are as unsteady as the flame of a lamp placed by the draft of an open window. The splendor of all objects in the three worlds is as flickering as the flash of lightning.

¹² As a granary stored with heaps of grains is exhausted by its continued waste, so is the stock of life spent away by its repeated respirations.

¹³ The minds of man are as fluctuating as a flag waving in the air. They are filled with the dust of sin, indicating their wavering between the paths of heaven and hell.¹⁴ The existence of this delusive world is like an actress on the stage, shuffling her vests as she trudges along in her dancing.¹⁵ Its scenes are as changing and fascinating as those of a magic city. Its dealings are as bewitching and momentary as the glances of a juggling girl.¹⁶ The stage of the world presents us with a scene of continued dancing, and the deceptive glances of her eyes resemble the fleeting flashes of lightning.

¹⁷ The days of great men, their glories and deeds, are retained only in our memories and in a short time, such must be with us also.¹⁸ Many things are decaying and renewing day by day. In this ever-changing world there is no end to this accursed course of events.¹⁹ Men degenerate into lower animals, and those again rise to humanity. Gods become no-gods. There is nothing that remains the same.

²⁰ The sun's rays reveal everything in light and it watches over the rotations of days and nights. Like time, it is a witness to the dissolution of all things.²¹ The gods Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva and all material productions are reduced to nothing, like an undersea fire that exists under the waters of the deep.²² Heaven, earth, the air, the sky, the mountains, the rivers, and all the quarters of the globe are subject to destruction like dry fuel by the all-destroying fire of the last day.

²³ Riches and relatives, friends, servants and wealth are of no pleasure to him who is in constant dread of death. ²⁴ All these are delightful to a sensible man only so long as the monster of death does not appear before the eye of his mind. ²⁵ We have prosperity at one moment, succeeded by adversity at another. We have health at one time, followed by sickness soon after. ²⁶ What intelligent being is there who is not misled by these delusions of the world which show things other than what they are and serve to bewilder the mind?

²⁷ The world is as varying as the face of the skies. One moment it is as black as dark clay, and the next it is bright with the golden colors of fair light. ²⁸ It is now overcast by blue clouds resembling the blue lotuses of a lake. It roars loudly for a time and then suddenly is dumb and silent. ²⁹ Now it is studded with stars, then glowing with the glory of the sun, then graced by the pleasant moonbeams, and finally no light at all. ³⁰ Who is there so sedate and firm that he is not terrified at these sudden appearances and disappearances, at the momentary durations and final dissolution of worldly things? ³¹ What is the nature of this world in which we are overtaken by adversity at one moment and elated by prosperity at another, where one is born at one time and dies at another?

³² One that was something else before is born as a man in this life, then is changed to another state in course of a few days. Thus there is no being that remains steadily in the same state. ³³ A pot is made of clay, and cloth is made of cotton, and they are still the same dull materials of which they are composed. Thus there is nothing new in this world that was not seen or known before. There is nothing that does not change its form. ³⁴ The acts of creation and destruction, of diffusion, production and preservation follow one another like the revolutions of day and night appear to man.

³⁵ Sometimes it happens that a weak man slays a hero, or one individual kills hundreds. So also a commoner becomes a noble man. Thus everything is changeful in this varying world. ³⁶ These bodies of men are always changing their states and are like bodies of waters rising and falling in waves whipped by the motion of winds. ³⁷ Boyhood lasts only a few days, then it is succeeded by youth which is as quickly followed by old age. If there is no identity for the same person, how can one rely on the uniformity of external objects?

³⁸ The mind that gets delighted one moment, becomes dejected in the next, then assumes its equanimity at another is indeed as changeful as an actor. ³⁹ The creator, who in his work of creation is ever turning one thing into another, is like a child who makes and breaks his doll without concern. ⁴⁰ The actions of producing and harvesting, of feeding and destroying, come by turns to mankind like the rotation of day and night. ⁴¹ Neither adversity nor prosperity is of long duration with worldly people. They are ever subject to appearance and disappearance by turns.

⁴² Time is a skilful player and plays many parts with ease. But he is chiefly skilled in tragedy and he often plays his tragic part in the affairs of men. ⁴³ All beings, according to their past good and bad deeds, are produced like fruit in the great forest of the universe. Time like a gust of wind blasts them day by day before their maturity.

Chapter 29 — Unreliability of Worldly Things

Rama speaking:—

¹ Thus my heart is consumed by the wildfire of those great worldly evils, and there rises in me no desire of enjoying them, as there rises no mirage from a lake. ² My existence on earth gets bitter day by day, and though I have got some experience in it, yet its associations have made me as sour as the neem plant by its immersion in water. ³ I see wickedness on the increase and righteousness on the decline in the mind of man, which like the sour karanja (crab fruit) becomes more sour every day.

⁴ Every day I see honor being eaten up by men arguing with each other, using harsh words as they crack nuts with their teeth.

⁵ Equally prejudicial to our welfare is too much eagerness for royalty and worldly enjoyments. We loose our future prospects by the former, and our present happiness by the latter. ⁶ I take no delight in my gardens nor have any pleasure in women. I feel no joy at the prospect of riches, but I enjoy solace in my own heart and mind. ⁷ Frail are the pleasures of the world, and greed is altogether intolerable. The bustle of business has broken down my heart, and I know not where to find tranquility. ⁸ Neither do I praise death or love my life. I remain as I do, devoid of all anxiety and care.

⁹ What do I have to do with a kingdom and all its enjoyments? Of what avail are riches to me, and what is the end of all our exertions? All these are only the requirements of self-love from which I am entirely free. ¹⁰ The chain of births is a bond that binds all men by its strong knots of the senses. The best of men are those striving to break loose from this bondage for their liberation.

¹¹ These haughty maidens whom the god of love employs to ravage the hearts of men resemble a group of elephants trampling a lotus bed under their feet. ¹² Curing the mind with pure reason is neglected in youth. Afterwards with age, the mind is hard to heal and admits of no cure.

¹³ The worldliness of man is his true poison, while real poison is no poison to him. It is the poison of worldliness that destroys his future life, while real poison is only locally injurious to him. ¹⁴ Neither pleasure nor pain, nor friends nor relatives, not even life and death can bind a mind that has received the light of truth.

¹⁵ O brahmin, the best of the learned, teach me the art of the mysteries of past and future. Teach me so that I may soon become like one devoid of grief and fear and worldly troubles so that I may have the light of truth beaming upon me.

¹⁶ The forest of ignorance is laid over with the snare of desire. It is full of the thorns of misery, and it is the dreadful seat of destruction and the danger of repeated births. ¹⁷ I would suffer myself to be put under the jaws of Death, with his rows of saw-like teeth, but I cannot bear the deadly pains of worldly cares and anxieties.

¹⁸ It is a gloomy error in this world to think, “I have this and have not the other.” It serves to toss our minds about, like a gust of wind disperses dust. ¹⁹ It is the thread of greed that links together all living beings like a garland of pearls. The mind serves to twirl this chain, but pure consciousness sits quietly observing its rotation.

²⁰ I who am devoid of desires would like to break this ornamental chain of worldliness that hangs

about me like a deadly serpent, like a lion tears apart a net.²¹ O most learned sage, scatter the mist that has clouded the forest of my heart. By the light of true knowledge, scatter the darkness that has overcast my mind.²² There are no anxieties, O sage, which cannot be put to an end by the company of good minded men. The darkness of night is dispelled by moonbeams.

²³ Life is as fickle as a drop of water in a mass of clouds blown by the winds. Our enjoyments are as unsteady as lightning flashing in the clouds. The pleasures of youth are as slippery as water. With these reflections in my mind, I have subdued them all under the province of peace and tranquility.

Chapter 30 — Self-Disparagement

Rama speaking:—

¹ Seeing the world swallowed up in the abyss of hundreds of rising dangers and difficulties, my mind is immersed in a mire of anxieties. ² My mind wanders everywhere and I am struck with fear at everything. My limbs shake with fear like the leaves of a withered tree. ³ My mind is bewildered by impatience for its lack of true contentment, just as a young woman alone in a desert is afraid without her strong handed husband.

⁴ The thoughts of my mind are entangled in my desire for worldly enjoyments, like stags caught in a pit covered with grass. ⁵ The senses of an unreasonable man are always running astray to the wrong and never turning to the right way. The eyes of a blind man lead him to fall into a pit. ⁶ Human thoughts are linked to the animal soul like consorts to their lords. They can neither sit idly nor ramble at liberty, but must remain as wives under the control of their husbands.

⁷ My patience is almost worn out, like that of a vine under winter frost. It is decayed and neither lives nor perishes at once. ⁸ Our minds are partly settled on worldly things and partly fixed on their Giver. This divided state of the mind is called its half-waking condition. ⁹ My mind is in a state of suspense, being unable to ascertain the real nature of my soul. I am like one in the dark who sees a tree stump in the distance and is deceived to think it a human figure. ¹⁰ Our minds are naturally fickle and wandering all about the earth. They cannot forsake their restlessness, as the vital airs cannot exist without being in motion.

¹¹ Tell me, O sage, what state of life is dignified above others, is not associated with troubles, is unqualified by the conditions of humanity, is apart from errors, and in which grief is unknown?

¹² How have Janaka and other good men, conspicuous for their ceremonious acts and distinguished for their good conduct, acquired their excellence? ¹³ O source of my honor, how can a man be cleansed who has smeared the dirt of worldliness all over his body? ¹⁴ Tell me what is the knowledge by which the serpents of worldliness can be freed from their worldly crookedness and become straight in their conduct? ¹⁵ Tell me how the foulness of my heart, soiled by errors and tainted with evils, like a lake disturbed by elephants and polluted with dirt, can regain its clarity? ¹⁶ How is it possible for someone engaged in worldly affairs to be untainted with its blemishes and remain as pure and intact as a drop of water on a lotus leaf? ¹⁷ How can one attain excellence by dealing with others as with himself, and regarding others' property to be like straw, and remaining aloof from love?

¹⁸ Who is that great man that has crossed the great ocean of the world, whose exemplary conduct exempts one from misery? ¹⁹ What is the best of things that ought to be pursued, and what fruit is worth obtaining? Which is the best course of life in this inconsistent world?

²⁰ Tell me how I can have knowledge of past and future events of the world, and the nature of the unsteady works of its Creator. ²¹ Do so, that my mind which is like the moon in the sky of my heart may be cleared of its impurities. ²² Tell me what is most delectable to the mind, and what is the most abominable, and how this fickle and inconstant mind may become fixed like a rock. ²³ Tell me what is that holy charm that can remove this choleric pain of worldliness attended with numberless troubles?

²⁴ Tell me how can I entertain the blossoms of the tree of heavenly happiness within my heart that

sheds the coolness of full moonbeams.

²⁵O you good men who are present here and learned in divine knowledge, teach me so that I may obtain the fullness of my heart and may not come to grief and sorrow anymore. ²⁶My mind is devoid of that tranquility which results chiefly from holy happiness. My mind is perplexed with endless doubts that disturb my peace like dogs molest smaller animals in the desert.

Chapter 31 — Rama's Questions

¹ Rama said:—

I have no trust in the durability of life which is as transient as a drop of water on the edge of a shaking leaf on a lofty tree, and as short as the cusp of the moon on Shiva's forehead. ² I have no faith in the durability of life which is transient as the swelling in the pouch of a frog as it croaks in the meadow. Nor do I have any trust in the company of friends which is as dangerous as the treacherous traps of hunters.

³ What can we do under the misty cloud of errors that raise our tempestuous desires flashing forth in lightning bolts of ambition and bursting out in the thunder claps of selfishness? ⁴ How shall we save ourselves from the temptations of our desires that dance around us like peacocks? How shall we save ourselves from the bustle of the world that breaks in on us as thickly as the blossoms of the kurchi plant? ⁵ How can we fly from the clutches of cruel Fate who, like a cat in the twinkling of an eye, suddenly springs upon his prey and kills the living as if they were poor mice? ⁶ To what expedient, what course, what reflections, and what refuge must we have recourse in order to avoid the unknown tracks of future lives?

⁷ There is nothing so trifling in this earth below or in the heavens above which you gifted men cannot raise to consequence. ⁸ How can one relish this accursed, troublesome and vapid world unless he is infatuated by ignorance? ⁹ It is the fusion of desires that produces the milky beverage of contentment and fills the earth with delights like spring adorns it with flowers.

¹⁰ Tell me, O sage, how the mist of our desires, which darkens the moon of our intellects, is to be dispelled from our minds to make it shine forth in its full brightness. ¹¹ How are we to deal with this wilderness of the world, knowing well that it is destructive both of our present and future interests?

¹² Who is there who moves about in this ocean of the earth and who is not buffeted by the waves of his passions and diseases, and by the currents of his enjoyments and prosperity?

¹³ Tell me, O best of sages, how one who has fallen into the furnace of this earth may escape unburned like mercury. ¹⁴ How can one be rid of the world when it is impossible for him to avoid dealing with it, in the same manner as it is impossible for aquatic animals to live without their native element?

¹⁵ Even our good deeds are not without affection and hatred, pleasure and pain, just like no flame is unaccompanied by its power of burning.

¹⁶ Without right reasoning, it is impossible to restrain the mind from thinking on worldly matters, so therefore deign to communicate to me the dictates of sound reason for my guidance. ¹⁷ Give me the best instruction for warding off miseries, either by confronting or renouncing the affairs of life. ¹⁸ Tell me about that man of enlightened understanding who attained the highest state of holiness and tranquility of his mind, and the deeds and manner by which he achieved the same. ¹⁹ Tell me, good sage, how the ancient saints fled out of the reach of misery so that I may learn the same to suppress my false conceptions. ²⁰ Or, if there be no such knowledge in existence or, if there is, whether it is to be kept secret from to me.

²¹ Should I fail to attain that highest state of tranquility, then I must remain inactive and avoid my sense of egoism altogether. ²² I will refrain from eating and drinking even water, and from clothing

myself. I will cease from all my actions of bathing and making my offerings, as also from my diet and the like.²³ I will attend to no duty, nor care about prosperity or calamity. I will be free from all desires except that of the abandonment of this body.²⁴ I must remain aloof from all fears, sympathies, selfish feelings and emulation, and continue to sit quietly as a figure in painting.²⁵ I will gradually do away with the inspiration and respiration of my breath and outward sensations until I part with this trifle, the seat all of troubles, this the so called body.

²⁶ I do not belong to this body, nor does it belong to me, nor is anything else mine. I shall be null and void like a lamp without oil and abandon everything to do with this body.

²⁷ Valmiki said:—

Then Rama, who was as lovely as the moon and whose mind was well filled with reasoning, became silent before the assemblage of eminent men, like a peacock, in awe, ceases his screaming before gathering clouds.

Chapter 32 — Praise for Rama's Speech

¹ Valmiki said:—

When Prince Rama concluded his speech, calculated to remove all ignorance from the mind,² all men in the assembly had their eyes beaming with wonder. The hairs on their bodies stood erect and pierced through their garments as if wishing to hear the speech.³ For a moment, after their stoic detachment and in their eagerness, the assembly seemed to have lost their worldly desires and be rolling in a sea of nectar.⁴ The audience remained motionless, like figures in a painting, enraptured with internal delight having heard the sweet words of fortunate Rama.

⁵ There were Vasishta and Vishwamitra with other sages, and prime minister Jayanta and other royal counselors then seated in that assembly.⁶ There were also King Dasharata and his subordinate kings, citizens and foreign delegates, chieftains and princes, together with brahmins and men learned in the Vedas and divine knowledge.⁷ These accompanied by their friends and allies, with birds in their cages and royal antelopes and steeds about the palace, had listened to Rama with fixed and mute attention.⁸ Likewise Queen Kausalya and other ladies adorned with their best jewels were seated at the windows, all mute and motionless.

⁹ Besides these, the birds on the trees and vines of the princely pleasure garden were listening to Rama without fluttering their wings or making any motion or sound.¹⁰ Also present were masters and aerial beings, tribes of celestial musicians (gandharvas and kinnaras), together with Narada, Vyasa and Pulapa, the lords of the sages.¹¹ There were also some of the gods and chiefs of gods, demigods (vidyadharas) and the divine cobras (naagas) who heard Rama's speech full of meaning and clarity.

¹² Rama, his eyes beautiful as lotuses, his face lovely as the moon, the star in the sky of Raghu's family, held his silence.

¹³ From heaven, divine beings showered flowers upon him with loud cheers and blessings.¹⁴ People in the assembly were delighted with the sweet scent and beauty of these flowers from paradise filled with humming bees.¹⁵ When blown into the air by the breeze of heaven, these flowers appeared like clusters of stars, which after their fall, brightened the ground with their beauty like the beaming smiles of heavenly maids.¹⁶ They appeared like raindrops falling from clouds, ablaze with the light of silent lightning, and scattering like balls of fresh butter.¹⁷ They also resembled particles of snowballs, like the beads of a necklace made of pearls, like beams of moonlight, like small waves in a sea of milk, or like drops of ice-cream.¹⁸ Flowers were carried by the loose and sweet winds of heaven, some lotuses with long filaments attended by clusters of bees humming and flying about them.¹⁹ Among them were heaps of ketaki, kairava, kunda and blue lotus flowers falling and shining brightly.²⁰ These flowers covered the court hall, the roofs of houses and their courtyards. Men and women in the city raised their heads to behold them falling.²¹ The sky remained quite unclouded as flowers fell constantly from above. A sight like this, never before seen, struck people with wonder.²² The shower of flowers fell for quarter of an hour, but the masters from whose hands they fell were unseen all the while.

²³ When the falling of flowers ceased, after the assembly was covered with them, they heard the following words from the divine beings in the sky,²⁴ “We have been travelling everywhere in bodies

as spiritual masters (*siddhas*) from the beginning of creation, but nowhere have we ever heard any speech as sweet as this.²⁵ Even the gods such as ourselves have never heard such a magnanimous speech of detachment as Rama, the moon of Raghu's race, has just now spoken.²⁶ We account ourselves truly blessed to have heard today this highly charming and wonderful speech from the mouth of Rama himself.²⁷ Indeed we are awakened and edified by attending diligently to Rama's truly excellent speech on the ambrosial bliss of asceticism, and leading to the highest joy of men."

Chapter 33 — Association of Celestial & Earthly Beings

¹ The spiritual masters (*siddhas*) said, “It behooves us to hear the decision of the great sages in reply to the holy sermon delivered by the chief of Raghu’s race. ² Come forward, you great chiefs of the sages, you Narada, Vyasa, Pulaha and all you other great sages, and be ready. ³ Let us descend to the full open court of Dasharata, which is as bright as gold and free from stain, like bees alighting on an immaculate, golden lotus.

⁴ Valmiki said:—

So saying, the whole company of divine sages left their celestial abode for that court. ⁵ There Narada, the chief of sages, sat foremost playing on his lute. In the midst was Vyasa with his dark blue complexion resembling a rainy cloud. ⁶ Moreover, the court was adorned with the presences of the chief sages Bhrigu, Angiras, Pulastya and others, with Chyavana, Uddalaka, Usira, Saraloman and many more with them.

⁷ Their deer skin garments hung loosely as they embraced one another. Their rudraksha beads moved in one hand, and their water pots shook in the other. ⁸ Their bodies shed a luster in the royal assembly-hall resembling the yellow starlight, like the beams of so many suns blazing upon one another. ⁹ They appeared like a shower of moonbeams or like a halo about the full moon, or like a circle about the orb of the sun out of its season. ¹⁰ They looked like a circlet of gems of varied colors, or like a necklace of pearls of great luster. ¹¹ At the place where he sat, Vyasa appeared to be like dark cloud amidst the stars. Narada on his seat seemed like the white orb of the moon among stars. ¹² Here Pulastya shone like Indra among the gods, and there Angira blazed like the sun amidst heavenly bodies.

¹³ On seeing the body of masters descending from the sky to the earth, the entire court of King Dasharata rose up to greet them. ¹⁴ There was a mixed assemblage of the celestial and earthly sages, whose commingled glory spread a luster to the ten sides of the court.

¹⁵ Some of them held bamboo sticks in their hands and others had lotuses in theirs. Some had put sacred grass in their crests, while others had inserted some gems in the braids of their hair. ¹⁶ Some had matted and tawny brown hairs on their heads, and others wore garlands of flowers on theirs. Some had strings of beads for their bracelets and others wore wristlets made of jasmine flowers.

¹⁷ Some were clothed in tatters, and others wore garments made of bark, while yet others wore clothes of silk. Some were girt with girdles of grass and skin about their waists, and others wore waistbands with pendant strings of pearl.

¹⁸ Vasishta and Vishwamitra honored the celestials one by one with respectful offerings, water and courteous address. ¹⁹ The great body of the celestials also honored Vasishta and Vishwamitra in their turn, with water and offerings worthy of them, and with polite speeches. ²⁰ The king also honored the gods and the body of the spiritual masters, who in return greeted the monarch with inquiries about his welfare. ²¹ Then the heavenly and earthly saints exchanged greetings with one another with cordial welcomes and gestures, and were all seated afterwards on seats made of kusa grass. ²² They next honored Rama, who lay bowing before them, with gentle words and congratulations accompanied with offerings of flowers.

²³ Seated in that assembly were the sages Vishwamitra, Vasishta, Vama Deva and the ministers of state. ²⁴ Also there were Narada, the son of Brahma, Vyasa, the greatest of sages, Marichi, Durvasa and Angira. ²⁵ Kratu, Pulastya, Pulaha, Saraloma, the great sage Vatsayana, Bharadwaja, and Valmiki the great bard and sage, were all there, ²⁶ as were Uddalaka, Richika, Sarjati as well as Chyavana.

²⁷ These and many others versed in the various branches of the Vedas, knowing all things worth knowing, were the leading members of that assembly.

²⁸ Then Narada and others joined with Vishwamitra and Vasishta in addressing Rama, who was sitting silent with his face turned downwards. They said, ²⁹ “We admire the prince’s blessed and graceful speech dignified with the spirit of detachment that breathes through the whole of it. ³⁰ It is full of thought. It is perspicuous, elegant, clear, dignified, sweet and worthy of noble minded men by its lucid style and lack of faults. ³¹ Who is not struck with admiration at Rama’s speech? It expresses his thoughts well, correct in its diction, plain, sweet and agreeable to all.”

³² “It is rare to find one man among a hundred who is so eloquent, combining dignity and force with clarity and sweetness such that they command the admiration of all. ³³ Who has such a clear head as our prince, a head that is as penetrating as the best pointed arrow, and as fruitful and beautiful as a creeping vine plant? ³⁴ He is truly a man whose intellectual light, like that of Rama, burns like the flame of a lamp within himself and enlightens all about him.”

³⁵ “Man’s blood, flesh and bones serve as machines to supply him with sensations of external objects, but there is no intelligence in them. ³⁶ Life and death, old age and troubles, repeatedly overtake every man, but they are beasts who are so infatuated that they never to think of these. ³⁷ There is scarcely any man to be seen who has an understanding as clear as Rama, who can use the past to judge the future. ³⁸ Rama is the most excellent, admirable, useful and well shaped person among men, like the mango tree among the many useful plants. ³⁹ It is only today that we see a man of Rama’s age having acquired so much experience of the world and who is so extraordinarily mature in understanding.”

⁴⁰ “In every place there are many trees found growing that are beautiful to see, easy to climb, and abundant in flowers and leaves, but there is no tree of paradise growing on earth. ⁴¹ In every forest trees grow with good flowers and leaves, but the extraordinary and fair clove tree is not always to be found. ⁴² Rama has displayed the wonder of his knowledge, like the moon displays her cooling beams, and good trees their clusters of blossoms, and like flowers diffuse their fragrance all about. ⁴³ It is very difficult to get the essence of true knowledge in this accursed world constructed by the uncontrollable and dominant predestination (of our past acts).”

⁴⁴ “Only those are reckoned the best of men and leaders of the good who try their best to gain the essence of truth, and whose minds are fixed on glory as their best treasure. ⁴⁵ We do not see anyone in all this world equal to Rama in discrimination and magnanimity, nor shall there be one like him in future. This is our firm conviction.”

⁴⁶ “If this speech of Rama which has filled every one here with admiration fails to get a reply to the satisfaction of Rama’s mind, it is certain that all of us here must pass for senseless sages.”

BOOK II
The Aspirant Who Longs for Liberation
(*Mumukshu Khanda*)

This section deals with the preparations required of the person who seeks God and the moral and mental qualities necessary to qualify for the spiritual path. Vasishta states that peace of mind (shanti), contentment (santosha), keeping the company of realized sages (satsanga), and inquiry into the nature of the soul (vichara) are the four sentinels that guard the gates to moksha, or liberation. The belief that one is confined by fate is severely condemned and the person who seeks spiritual development is urged to rely on personal efforts for progress on the spiritual path.

The person should not shun action but should learn to be indifferent to its fruits. One should not be affected by the pleasures and pains that are the inevitable accompaniment of action. The person is advised to keep the company of saints and to study the scriptures (shastras), particularly those dealing with self knowledge (atma vidya).

Chapter 1 — The Liberation of Shukadeva: His Need for Confirmation

¹ After Rama delivered his speech before the assembly, sage Vishwamitra, who sat before Rama, tenderly said, ² “Rama, you are the best of the most intelligent, and you have nothing more to learn that you have not already come to know by your own observation. ³ You have an understanding clear like a mirror, and your questions serve to polish and reflect your understanding to others. ⁴ You have a mind like that of Shuka, the son of the great Vyasa, who knowing the knowable by intuition, was yet in need of some teaching to confirm his belief.”

⁵ Rama said, “How was it that Shuka, son of the great Vyasa, did not at first rest assured of his knowledge of the knowable, but then came to be settled in his belief?”

⁶ Vishwamitra answered, “Hear me relate to you, Rama, the story of Shukadeva, whose case was exactly like yours. The narration of this story prevents future births.”

Vishwamitra speaking:—

⁷ There is the great Vyasa sitting on his seat of gold by your father’s side, swarthy in his complexion like a coal-black hill, but blazing in brilliance like the burning sun. ⁸ His son named Shuka was a boy of great learning and wisdom, of a moon-like countenance, with a stature sedate as a sacrificial altar.

⁹ Like you, he reflected in his mind on the vanity of worldly affairs and became equally indifferent to all its concerns. ¹⁰ It was then that this great minded youth was led by his own discriminative understanding to a long inquiry after what was true, which he found at last by his own investigation.

¹¹ Having obtained the highest truth, he was still unsettled in his mind, and could not trust his own knowledge. ¹² His mind grew indifferent to its perceptions of the transitory enjoyments of the world, and, like chataka cuckoos, thirsted only after the dew drops of heavenly bliss.

¹³ Once upon a time the clear sighted Shuka finding his father, sage Krishna Dwaipayana Vyasa, sitting quietly alone, he reverently asked him, ¹⁴ “Tell me, O sage, where does this commotion of the world arise, and how can it subside? What is its cause, how far does it extend, and where is its end?”

¹⁵ Sage Vyasa, who knew the nature of the soul, being asked this by his son, explained to him clearly all that was to be said. ¹⁶ Shuka thought that he already knew all this by his good understanding and therefore did not think much of his father’s instructions. ¹⁷ Vyasa, understanding the thoughts of his son, replied that he himself knew no better than his son about the true nature of these things, ¹⁸ but there was a king in this land named Janaka who well knew the knowledge of the knowable, and from whom Shuka could learn everything.

¹⁹ Being thus directed by his father, Shuka went to the city of Videha at the foot of Mount Sumeru, which city was under the rule of Janaka. ²⁰ The door keeper informed the high minded Janaka of his coming, telling him that Shuka the son of Vyasa was waiting at the gate. ²¹ Janaka who understood that Shuka had come to learn from him, gave no heed to the news but held his silence for seven days afterwards.

²² The king then ordered Shuka to be brought to the outer compound, where he had to remain irritated in spirit for seven more days. ²³ Shuka was then commanded to enter the inner apartment, where he continued a week more without seeing the king. ²⁴ Here Janaka entertained the moon-faced Shuka with

an abundance of food, perfumes and lusty maidens.²⁵ But neither those vexations nor these entertainments could affect the tenor of Shuka's mind, which remained firm as a rock against the blasts of wind.²⁶ He remained there like the full moon, tranquil in his desires, silent and contented in his mind.

²⁷ King Janaka, having come to know the disposition of Shuka's mind, had him brought to his presence, where seeing the complacency of his soul, he rose up and bowed down to him.²⁸ Janaka said, "You have accomplished to the full all your duties in this world, and you have obtained the object of your heart's desire to its utmost extent. What do you now desire for which you are welcome from me?"

²⁹ Shuka said, "Tell me, my guide, what is the source of all this bustle (of worldly life), and tell me also how it may soon subside."

³⁰ Vishwamitra said:—

Being thus asked by Shuka, Janaka told him the same things that he had learned from the great soul that is his father.³¹ Shuka then said, "All this I have come to know long before by my own intuition, and then from the speech of my father in answer to my question.³² You sage, who are the most eloquent of all, have spoken to the same effect, and the same is found to be the true meaning of the scriptures.³³ That the world is a creation of will and loses itself with the absence of our desires, and that it is an accursed and unsubstantial world after all, are the conclusions arrived at by all sages."

³⁴ "Now tell me truly, O long armed prince, so that you may set my mind may be set at rest from its wandering all about the world. What do you think this world to be?"

³⁵ Janaka replied, "There is nothing more certain, O sage, than what you know by yourself and have heard from your father.³⁶ There is but one undivided intelligent spirit known as the Universal Soul and nothing else. It becomes confined by its desires (mental conditioning) and becomes freed by its lack of them."

³⁷ "You have truly come to the knowledge of the knowable, whereby your great soul has desisted from attachment to objects of enjoyment and vision.³⁸ You must be a hero to have overcome your desires for the lengthening chain of attractive enjoyments while still in your early youth. What more do you want to hear?"

³⁹ "Even your father, with all his learning in every science and his devotion to austerities, has not arrived to the state of perfection like you.⁴⁰ I am a student of Vyasa and you are his son, but by your abandonment of the taste for the enjoyments of life, you are greater than both of us.⁴¹ You have obtained whatever is obtainable by the comprehension of your mind. You take no interest in the outer and visible world, so you are liberated from it and have nothing to doubt."

⁴² Being thus advised by the magnanimous Janaka, Shuka remained silent with his mind fixed in the purely supreme object.⁴³ Being devoid of sorrow and fear, and released from all efforts, exertions and doubts, he went to a peaceful summit of Mount Meru to obtain his final absorption.⁴⁴ There he passed ten thousand years in a state of unalterable meditation, until at last he broke his mortal coil, and was extinguished in the Supreme Soul like a lamp without oil.⁴⁵ Thus purified from the stain of

rebirth by abstention from earthly desires, the great soul Shuka sank into the holy state of the Supreme Spirit (*nirvikalpa samadhi*), just like a drop of water mixes with the waters or merges into the depth of the ocean.

Chapter 2 — Vishwamitra's Speech

¹ Vishwamitra said:—

Rama, now it is appropriate that you have your mind properly purified from its doubts, as it was done with Shuka, the son of Vyasa.

² You see, O great sages, how perfectly the knowable is known to Rama, whose good understanding has learnt to feel a distaste for worldly enjoyments as if they were diseases to him. ³ You well know that the fixed principle in the mind of one knowing the knowable is to have an aversion to all the enjoyments of life. ⁴ The desire of results chains a man to the earth. Knowledge of the frailties here serves to dispel his darkness.

⁵ Rama knows that curtailing desires is what the wise call liberty, and the attachment of our desires to earthly objects is our confinement here. ⁶ Spiritual knowledge is easily obtainable by most men, but a distaste for (pleasurable) objects is hard to be had. ⁷ He who fully comprehends a thing is said to know it, and who so knows what is knowable is called a learned man. No earthly enjoyment can be delectable to such high minded men. ⁸ The mind that has no zest for earthly pleasures, except the glory of disinterested deeds, is said to be liberated even in the present life.

⁹ As no vegetable grows in a sterile soil, no disinclination to worldliness grows until one comes to know the knowable reality. ¹⁰ Hence know that this supporter of Raghu's race has truly known the knowable, which has made him disgusted with his princely enjoyments. ¹¹ I tell you great sages that whatever Rama has come to know by his intuition requires confirmation by Vasishta for the tranquility of his mind. ¹² For his repose, Rama requires only a reliance upon the Unity, just as the beauty of autumn depends upon clear skies.

¹³ Let the venerable Vasishta reason with the high minded Rama and restore the peace of his mind, ¹⁴ for he is the master and family teacher for the whole race of the Raghuses. Besides, he is all knowing and all seeing with a clear insight of the three times.

¹⁵ Then addressing himself to Vasishta, Vishwamitra said:—

Sage, you well remember the instruction given us of old for pacifying our mutual enmity and promoting the welfare of the high minded sages, ¹⁶ when our lord the lotus-born Brahma, seated on the tableland of Nishadha Mountain and shaded by sarala trees, delivered his wise lectures to us and the sages. ¹⁷ Through that knowledge of liberation, our worldly desires are dispelled like the darkness of night by sunbeams. ¹⁸ Now please, O brahmin, communicate that rational knowledge of the knowable to your student Rama, whereby he may gain the peace of his mind.

¹⁹ It will not be difficult for you to teach the spotless Rama, whose mirror-like mind is quite clear to take the reflection. ²⁰ The wisdom of the holy, their learning of the scriptures, and the scholarship of the learned are only praiseworthy when they are communicated to a good student and those who are disgusted with the world. ²¹ But instruction given to one who is neither student nor disgusted with the world becomes as polluted as milk stored in a hide vessel. ²² Again, the instruction given by one devoid of passions and affections, fear and anger, pride and sin, serves to infuse tranquility into the mind.

²³ At these words of Vishwamitra, the son of Gadhi, the assembled sages Vyasa, Narada and others honored his speech with exclamations of “bravo”, “well said”, and the like.

²⁴ Then the venerable Vasishta, brilliant like Brahma his father and sitting by the side of the king, spoke in reply. ²⁵ “O sage, I will perform what you have commanded me to do without fail, for who, though mighty, can refuse to perform the requests of the good and wise? ²⁶ I will destroy the mental darkness of Prince Rama and others by the light of knowledge, just like we dispel the gloom of night by the light of a lamp. ²⁷ I well remember the instructions for dispelling the errors of the world that we were given of yore by the lotus-born Brahma on Nishadha Mountain.”

²⁸ Having said so, the high-minded Vasishta made up his mind, as one girds up his loins, to deliver his lecture to Rama in order to dispel his ignorance and show him the state of supreme joy.

Chapter 3 — Repeated Creations of the World; Repeated Incarnations of the Same Personality

¹ Vasishta said, “Rama, I will now expound to you the knowledge that was imparted of old by the lotus-born (Brahma) for the peace of mankind after he created the world.”

² Rama said, “Sage, I know that you will expound to me the subject of liberation in full length, but first remove my false ideas about the frailty of this world. ³ How was it that the great sage Vyasa, the father and guide of Shuka, with all his omniscience, did not attain disembodied emancipation when his son did?”

⁴ Vasishta said, “There is no counting the atoms that proceed from the spirit and form the three worlds both before and after the birth of the glorious sun. ⁵ There is nobody who can even count the millions of orbs that form the three worlds. ⁶ Nor can anyone calculate what numbers of creation will rise from the ocean of divine existence like endless waves.”

⁷ Rama said, “It is needless to talk of worlds gone by or yet to come. Speak of the present.”

⁸ Vasishta said:—

This world consists of brute, human and heavenly beings whose lives, when they are said to perish in any part of it, really exist in the same part.

⁹ The mind is described as ever-fluctuating. In itself, it gives rise to everything in the three worlds. It resides in a void in the form of the heart, and the Uncreated also resides in the empty space of the soul (giving the mind the power to realize the latent ideas of the soul).

¹⁰ The millions of beings who are dead, those who are dying and will die hereafter, are all to be reborn here according to the different desires in their minds. ¹¹ The external world appears as a reality, but in truth it is only a creation of our desires. It is an ideal castle in the air, and a magic view spread before us. ¹² It is as false as an earthquake in a fit of delirium, like a hobgoblin shown to terrify children, like a string of pearls in the clear sky, and like trees on a bank appear moving to a passenger in a boat. ¹³ It is an illusion like the phantom of a city in a dream, and as untrue as the imagination of a flower growing in the air.

It is at the point of death and afterwards that the unreality of the world best appears. ¹⁴ But this knowledge (of the unreality of the world) becomes darkened upon being reborn on earth, when the shadow of this world again falls on the mirror of his sentient soul. ¹⁵ Thus there is a struggle for repeated births and deaths here, and a fancy for the next world after death. ¹⁶ After he shuffles off his body, he assumes another and then another form, and thus the world is as unstable as a stool made of plantain leaves and its coatings.

¹⁷ The dead have no sensation of the earth and other bodies made of the elements, or of the course of the world, but they fall again to these errors upon being reborn here. ¹⁸ There is an interminable ignorance resembling an immense river enveloping the face of creation, and breaking into streamlets of ignorance that are impossible to cross.

¹⁹ Divinity like a sea shoots forth in various waves of creation that rise constantly and plentifully one after the other. ²⁰ All beings here are only the waves of this sea. Some are alike to one another in their minds and natures, while others are half alike, and some quite different from the rest.

²¹ I reckon that sage Vyasa there, on account of his vast knowledge and good looking appearance, is one of thirty-two of these waves. ²² There were twelve possessed of a lesser understanding. They were the patriarchs of men and endued with equal energy. Ten were men of subdued spirits, and the rest were adepts in their family duties.

²³ There will be born again other Vyosas and Valmikis, and likewise some other Bhrigus and Angiras, as well as other Pulastyas and others in different forms. ²⁴ All other men, asuras and gods with all their hosts are repeatedly born and destroyed either in their former or different shapes.

²⁵ Like this there are seventy-two treta cycles in a kalpa age of Brahma, some of which have passed by and others to follow. Thus will there be other people like those who have gone by and, as I understand, another Rama and Vasishtha like ourselves. ²⁶ There have been ten successive incarnations of this Vyasa who has done such wonderful deeds and is famed for his vast knowledge. ²⁷ Myself and Valmiki have been contemporaries many a time, born in different ages and very many times. ²⁸ We have been together many times, and there were others also like myself, and so was I also born in many forms (in many ages).

²⁹ This Vyasa will be born again eight times hereafter, and he will again write his *Mahabharata* and the Purana histories. ³⁰ He will finally attain liberation from the body after he has divided the Vedas, described the acts of Bharata's race (in the *Mahabharata*), and established the knowledge of Brahman (in the *Vedanta*). ³¹ This Vyasa who is devoid of fear and sorrow, and who has become tranquil and emancipated in himself after subduing his mind and discarding the worldly desires, is said to be liberated even in his present lifetime.

³² Those liberated in life may sometimes associate with relatives and estates, his acts and duties, his knowledge and wisdom, and all his exertions, like those of any other men, or he may forsake them all at once. ³³ These beings are either reborn a hundred times in some age or never at all (as in the case of divine incarnations), depending on the inscrutable will (*maya*, or illusion) of God. ³⁴ Souls undergo such changes by repetition, like a bushel of grain that is collected only to be repeatedly sown, then reaped again and again.

³⁵ As the sea heaves its constant surges of different shapes, so all beings are born constantly in various forms in the vast ocean of time. ³⁶ The wise man who is liberated in his lifetime lives with his internal belief (of God) in a state of tranquility, without any doubt in his mind, and quite content with the ambrosia of equanimity.

Chapter 4 — Results Come from Effort, Not Fate or Chance; Acts of the Present Life Are Stronger than Those of Previous Lives

¹ Vasishta said:—

I know, gentle Rama, that liberation of the soul is the same whether in its embodied or disembodied state, just like seawater and its waves are the same liquid substance.² Liberation, whether of embodied or disembodied spirits, consists in their detachment from the objects of sense. Hence the soul unattached to sensual gratification is liberated, having no idea of objects of the senses.

³ We see before us the living liberated sage (Vyasa) as an embodied person, yet we have no doubt of the detachment of his inner soul from this body.⁴ The difference between embodied and disembodied souls, when they are equally enlightened and liberated, is like that of the seawater in its calm and billowy states.⁵ There is no more difference between liberation in the body and without the body than there is between the air in motion and at rest.⁶ Liberation, whether with or without the body, produces unselfishness. We have lost our selfishness ever since we have come to the knowledge of an undivided unity.

⁷ Therefore attend to the true doctrine that I am going to deliver to you, which will be a jewel to your ears as it will dispel the darkness of ignorance.⁸ Know, O son of Raghu, that everything in this world is obtainable by our efforts being properly employed.

⁹ This knowledge — that there is no other way to gain results except but by our efforts — rises like the moon in the human mind and sheds its cooling and delightful influence to the heart.¹⁰ It will become evident that we see the results of our efforts, and that nothing comes from what the dull and mistaken call chance or fate.

¹¹ An effort, when directed according to the counsel and conduct of the good in the exercise of the action of the body and mind, is attended with success. Otherwise it is as vain as the freak of a madman.¹² Thus he who hopes to acquire riches and perseveres in its acquisition surely succeeds in gaining them, or else he stops short midway.

¹³ It was by means of their efforts that some particular persons have obtained the paramount dominion of Indra over the three worlds.¹⁴ It is by effort that one attains the rank of the lotus-born (Brahma), and some by effort even gain the inner joy of the state of Brahma.¹⁵ It is by virtue of effort that somebody becomes the best among men, even as he who bears the flag of the eagle (Vishnu among the gods).¹⁶ It was by the exertion of one's efforts that some succeeded to obtain the form of Shiva accompanied by his female power and adorned by the crescent moon as his crest.

¹⁷ Know our actions to be of two kinds, namely those of former and present lives. Know that the acts of the present life generally supersede those of the past.

¹⁸ Know also that energy joined with constant practice and supported by wisdom and some stimulating force is able to break down Mount Meru and the demerits of acts in men's former lives.

¹⁹ The exertions of a man proceeding from his good efforts and countenanced by the law lead to his success, or else they either go for nothing or turn to his disadvantage.

²⁰ A man laid up in a state of disability is unable to twist his figure to hold a little water in the hollow

of his palm to drink. Meanwhile there is another who (by his well-directed efforts) gets possession of seas, islands, mountains and cities for himself, supports all his dependents and relations, and does not think this earth too great for him.

Chapter 5 — The Necessity of Effort

¹ Vasishta said:—

Will or inclination, even according to the rules of law and scriptures, is the prime instrument of all action, just as the reflection of light gives various colors to things.² If someone uses unlawful acts to attain something that he desires, it becomes as fruitless as the efforts of a madman.

³ Good or evil results depend upon how you try, but according to fatalists, fate and effort are the joint causes of acts.⁴ The truth is, human exertions are either lawful or unlawful. The former lead to success and the latter to dangerous consequences.⁵ Fortune and effort contend with each other like two rams of unequal strength where the mightier overcomes the other.⁶ Therefore man should apply himself diligently and employ his skill and effort in such a way that his today may overcome his tomorrow.

⁷ When two unequal forces contend with one another like two rams, the stronger force, whether of this or that man, overcomes the other.⁸ When one incurs a failure or danger even by his lawful efforts, he should know it to be the result of his misapplied efforts.⁹ By utmost exertion in the right way, like gnashing his teeth, one can overcome his misfortune and that bad luck that sometimes baffle his efforts.

¹⁰ When one finds himself led astray by the demerit of his acts of a former state of existence, he must attempt to subdue them by the greater energy of his present state.¹¹ One should endeavor to exercise his efforts so much that he may beat down the evils resulting from his bad fortune (or predestination).¹² The evils of bad fortune are undoubtedly removed by the meritorious acts of the present life, just like the bad consequence of an act of yesterday is averted by its remedy of today.

¹³ Having trampled over an unfavorable fortune by one's reliance upon his continuous effort, he must attempt to secure to himself every good for his well-being in his present life.¹⁴ Know that tranquility is not to be found through the effortlessness of dull ass-like men. It is the lawful energy of men which is said to secure his welfare in both worlds.¹⁵ One should make his way out of the pit of this world by force of his energy and diligence, just like a lion breaks out from his cage.

¹⁶ Every day one must contemplate that his body is subject to corruption, his beastly acts must be kept back, and man-like acts put forward.¹⁷ Good efforts are attended by good results just like bad ones are followed by bad consequences. Chance is merely a meaningless word.

¹⁸ Do not make your bloom of youth as useless as ashes by sitting idly at home and enjoying the bliss of the harem like a maggot in a wound.¹⁹ He who has no reliance on present objects, but depends upon assumptions from the past, is like a man running in fear from his own hands, supposing them to be snakes.

²⁰ It is a pleasure to men of perverted understanding to think of themselves as guided by their fortunes. Prosperity flies far away from such men who depend on their luck.²¹ Therefore let a man diligently apply himself first to his reason, and then investigate the works of subtle, hidden spiritual knowledge.

²² Those who do not set their hearts to act according to the dictates of the scriptures, but use other means to make efforts to gain (their ends), are accursed as madmen because their efforts are in vain.

²³ But people do not even try to make an effort. They think that effort would be endless, and no amount of effort could make a gem come out of a stone. ²⁴ Know that like all things, there is a limit to both human fate and effort, just like a pot or a picture has a (finite capacity and length). ²⁵ It is by means of good conduct derived from best precepts and the company of the good that one succeeds to his object. A disposition that breaks loose of these is sure to fall to the contrary, to ruin.

²⁶ Again any man who conducts himself in the right course of action will never fail in his attempts at anytime. ²⁷ Some among the best of men had been reduced to misery by their poverty and helplessness. Yet by exertion of their manhood, they have again risen to the eminence of Indra. ²⁸ By learning the scriptures well from boyhood, by keeping company with the good, by possession of good qualities, and by diligent application, a man is sure to gain his object.

²⁹ It has been seen, known, heard and experienced that acts are rewarded with success. They are dull-headed who think of obtaining it through fate or luck. ³⁰ If there were no folly of idleness in this world, what man would fail either to be rich or learned? It is because of idleness that this earth is filled to its utmost limit of the sea with indigent and beastly men. ³¹ After passing his childhood and getting rid of its false and idle playfulness, and when he has attained the age of youthful vigor, let a man apply himself diligently to the company of wise men, and to the cultivation of his understanding by a knowledge of the scriptures and their meanings, and by scanning well his own faults and qualities.

³² Valmiki said:—

After sage Vasishta had said all this, the day passed away, and after taking leave of the assembly the sages went to bathe. With the rising beams of the sun dispelling the gloom of night, they joined again.

Chapter 6 — Fate Is the Result of Former Efforts

¹ Vasishta resumed, saying:—

Fate is nothing but the result of our actions in former existences. Therefore it is possible to leave it at a distance and extricate oneself by keeping good company and studying moral scriptures.² Whatever one attempts to do, he readily meets with its reward. This is the effect of effort. Fate is nothing but the same thing.³ Men laboring hard are heard to exclaim, “O how painful it is!” Men suffering under fate cry out, “O hard is fate!”⁴ Thus fate, being nothing but a name for our past actions, it is as easily overcome (by present acts) as a boy (is subdued) by an adult youth.⁵ As some bad conduct of yesterday is corrected by proper behavior of the present day, so is past fate is removed by present acts.

⁶ Carnal minded libertines who make no effort but depend upon the favor of fortune are perverted in their nature and marked for misery.⁷ Thus, if acts of courage are capable of averting one's misfortunes, then it must be acknowledged that such courage which destroys the other is the mightier of the two.⁸ Just like two fruit growing on the same branch, one empty within and the other full of juice, so does courage render the fruit of fate empty.⁹ Seeing the decay of the best things in the world, we must own the predominant power of the cause of this decay.¹⁰ Like two rams, our fate and efforts are fighting one another. Victory is always on the side of the stronger.

¹¹ In the case of a royal elephant taking up a beggar boy to be made a ruler, its cause is to be attributed more to the vote of countrymen and citizens (than to chance).¹² As a man takes his food and grinds it under his teeth, so is one (depending on fate) crushed by the stronger party relying on his efforts.

¹³ Thus, more active masters employ inferior servants like clods of earth in any work the masters like.

¹⁴ Silly and impotent men seeing the strong thrive by their efforts, whether apparent or unseen, are apt to attribute it to their good luck.¹⁵ The strong efforts of men truly constitute the fortune that governs them, and these two are viewed alike by the wise.

¹⁶ In the case of the a beggar boy who is installed into the position of ruling and protecting the people of a kingdom, it is the unanimous concurrence of the law and ministers and of the elephant and of citizens (that is to be taken as the chief cause).¹⁷ Should it be only the royal elephant who elects the beggar boy, then in that case it would be attributed to the boy's good fortune only.

¹⁸ Present acts destroy those of the past life, and those of the past life can destroy the effect of present acts, but the exertions of a man are undoubtedly successful.¹⁹ Of these two powers, that of the present is manifestly superior to the past. Hence it is as possible for the present to overcome the past just like it is for an adult to overcome a boy.

²⁰ As a hail shower lays waste the cultivation of a whole year, so also does predominant fate sometimes overpower the attempts of this life.²¹ However it does not behoove us to be sorry at the loss of our long earned treasure, for what does it serve to have sorrow for something that is beyond our control?²² If I have sorrow for what I am powerless to prevent, then I may as well weep all the days of my life because death will not spare me.

²³ All our acts are subject to their proper time and place, and to the modes of their operation and

combination according to the course of nature. That is why the more diligent are the most successful.
²⁴ Therefore, in order to cross the ocean of this world, we ought to rely upon our efforts and the clarity of our understanding from the help of scriptures and association with the wise.

²⁵ Actions of the past and present lives are the two fruit trees growing in the garden of humanity. Whichever is cultivated the best thrives and bears most fruit. ²⁶ He who is unable to overcome his false fate by his best efforts is no better than an ignorant beast that has no power over its pain or pleasure. ²⁷ He who thinks of going to heaven or hell by the will of the Maker is also a slave to destiny and is no better than a beast. ²⁸ The man of a noble mind who is employed in acts of goodness, breaks off from the errors of the world like a lion from its cage. ²⁹ Those who vainly imagine themselves to be led about by some supernatural power, and so slight their necessary duties, are to be shunned at a distance as the mean and base.

³⁰ There are thousands of acts that are attended with gain or loss to their doers, but it is the duty of man to do what is right whether they be pleasant or painful. ³¹ He who does not transgress the bounds of law and does not forsake his duties is attended by every blessing abundant as the pearls in the sea.

³² The wise describe courage as devoted diligence in acts leading to one's object. Being guided by the scriptures leads to his success. ³³ An act accompanied by exertion accomplishes one's object, and the company of the wise and the study of good books serve to raise a man by brightening his understanding. ³⁴ The wise know infinite happiness or a tranquil spirit is the supreme good, and those good works are fit for study which lead to that state.

³⁵ The acts of our former lives constitute what we call our fate (*daivam*) or destiny and they return to us from the region of the gods for our good in both worlds. ³⁶ We blame a fate that is the creation of the fancy of the ignorant, who by their adoration of such passivity meet their own destruction. ³⁷ One benefits himself always by his activity in both worlds, as the good acts of today gives a grace to those of yesterday. ³⁸ Therefore, whoever applies himself with diligence to his acts, reaps their fruit like that of an amalaki in his palm, which though it is within his grasp, yet it could not be obtained without the cost of some labor.

³⁹ Only the ignorant depart from the beaten path and fall into the error of fatalism. Therefore give up that false faith in an unreal fate, which is a mere creation of the imagination and devoid of any cause or effect. Apply your manly exertions. ⁴⁰ The fruit of following the scriptures and observing good customs and local usages is long known (to be wholesome), exciting the heart and the exertion of the limbs to action. This is what is called "manly activity."

⁴¹ All wise men, after discussion of the subject of fate and acts, have applied themselves to action by utter rejection of fatality and have accomplished their ends by attendance on the good and the wise.

⁴² Knowing the efficacy of activity, every one should work on personal effort and attain to his highest perfection by attending to good scriptures and the wise counsels of learned men. ⁴³ Knowing that the bondage of our births is full of pain, let people listen to the wise and strive to exercise their efforts to obtain the true and sweet blessing of tranquility.

Chapter 7 — On the Necessity of Activity

Vasishta speaking:—

¹ Having obtained a body free from disease and a mind free from trouble, one should try to know the knowable to prevent further births. ² Whoever wants to avert his destiny through action obtains the acme of his wishes both in this world as well as the next. ³ But whoever is averse to diligence and relies on his luck is an enemy to his own soul and sacrifices all his virtues, riches and hopes.

⁴ The exercise of our faculties of sense and mind as well as of the members of the body are the different modes of our exertions that lead us to success. ⁵ Our perceptions are the cause of our mental activity, and this triggers the body to action whereby we obtain the fruits of our desire. ⁶ Whatever rule exists in the scriptures (*shastras*), it is addressed to our acts and never points us to fate. Even children are well aware of this.

⁷ It was by the exercise of their efforts that Brihaspati became the lord of gods, and Shukra obtained the position of the teacher of the demons. ⁸ There have been many weak, poor and miserable men who have by means of their manly exertions become equal to Indra himself. ⁹ So also there have been many great men on earth who, after enjoyment of a great many extraordinary things and luxuries here, have become guests in hell for lack of exercising their manly virtues. ¹⁰ In this manner all beings have evaded the effects of their various states of want and opulence by means of their own efforts.

¹¹ There are threefold benefits derived from the study of books, from the lectures of a teacher, and from one's own industry, all of which attend our efforts and not destiny. ¹² This is the long and short of all the scriptures (*shastras*), that diligence preserves our minds from all evils by employing them to whatever is good and right. ¹³ To apply with diligence to whatever is excellent, not low or mean and not liable to loss or decay, is the lesson of parents and teachers to their sons and pupils.

¹⁴ I get the immediate fruit of my labor in proportion to my exertion. Therefore I say that I enjoy the fruit of my labor and not of fortune. ¹⁵ Activity gives us success and this is what elevates the intelligent. But men of little understanding in their miserable state rely only in luck.

¹⁶ We have visible evidence (of the efficacy) of activity every day, in the examples of men travelling in distant countries (for the sake of gain). ¹⁷ He who eats becomes satisfied and who does not starves. So he who walks is said to proceed and not one who rests. In like manner, whoever speaks is called a speaker and not the silent man. Thus action makes the man.

¹⁸ Wise men escape from great difficulties by means of their efforts, but not so the mistaken fatalist by his fruitless inertia. ¹⁹ Whoever acts in any manner gets his reward accordingly, but the inactive man has nothing to expect anywhere. ²⁰ By well directed industry a man reaps the best reward, as he meets with its reverse by his misapplied labor. Think upon this, O Rama, and do as you like.

²¹ The reward of industry, which a man meets with sooner or later at anytime or place, is said by the wise to be his fortune. ²² No one can see his fortune, nor has anybody ever seen it, nor is there such a thing to be found in any world. It is only the merit of our acts here which they place in another world.

²³ A man is born on earth to grow up and decay in his time, and no destiny is seen in the same way in his childhood, youth or old age.

²⁴ Application to diligence and action for the attainment of an object are known by the term “effort” by the wise, whereby all things are accomplished. ²⁵ Going from one place to another, holding a thing in the hand, and the movement of limbs are all the acts of effort and not destiny.

²⁶ There is another kind of propensity which is towards acts productive of evil. This sort of action is likened to the attempt of a madman which yields no good.

²⁷ Men of acute understandings raise themselves to elevation by their association with the virtuous, study of good works, and active employment in duties tending to their own good. ²⁸ The boundless joy arising from equanimity is said to constitute one’s supreme good. This blessing also results from a man’s diligent application to the scriptures. ²⁹ Understanding leads to the knowledge of the scriptures, and the scriptures tend towards our right understanding of things. Just so does the lotus serve to beautify a lake, and the lake lends its grace to the lotus. ³⁰ It is also by virtue of one’s deep study and good company in youth that a man later attains his desirable objects.

³¹ It was by means of his actions that Vishnu conquered the demons and established the order of the world. It was by this that he created the worlds, none of which could be the work of fate.

³² Now, O lord of Raghu’s race, employ your efforts to the exertion of your manly activities in such a way that you may live unafraid of being bitten by the snake-like people in this tree of the world (crush the malice of your enemies).

Chapter 8 — Invalidation of Destiny

¹ Vasishta continued saying that:—

What does “destiny” mean? It has no form, no act, no motion or might. It is only a false notion rooted in the (minds) of the ignorant.² “Destiny” is a word that has come into fashion from the idea of karma, the idea of future retribution for one’s past actions and the like.³ From this, ignorant are led to believe that there is such a thing as destiny, something incapable of explanation, which has led them to a fallacy much like mistaking a rope for a snake.

⁴ Yesterday’s misdeed is rectified by the following day’s good action. Therefore let this day supersede the past and employ yourself today to action.⁵ The perverted understanding that believes in destiny is grounded on false conception. One may as well enter fire with the conviction that it will not burn unless it is so destined.⁶ If destiny is the sole cause of everything, then why should a man take actions of bathing and making his offerings, sitting and walking, all of which may be done by his destiny?⁷ What then is the need to advise another to do something if destiny is the director of all? Let them all be silent and say nothing to nobody.

⁸ There is none to be seen on earth who is motionless except the bodies of the dead. If it is action that produces anything, then it is useless to believe in destiny.⁹ Nor is there any co-operative power of invisible destiny that is perceptible in the actions of men. Destiny is only a meaningless word.

¹⁰ Instruments and hands are two things joined together. Each has its separate action, but if the hand is lacking, nothing can be done by destiny.¹¹ Whether in the mind and intellect of a (learned) pundit or (illiterate) cowherd, there is no such idea of destiny. Hence it is a mere non-entity.¹² If destiny does not mean agent, it must mean something else. If it is the same thing as agent, why give it a different name (i.e., “destiny”)? If it can be proved to be an imaginary term, why not imagine your effort to be the agent?

¹³ Immortal destiny, like a void, has no connection with the material body. If it had form or figure it would be visible. Therefore destiny is nonexistent.¹⁴ If destiny were the mainspring of the movements of all beings in the three worlds, then let all creatures rest at ease (with assurance) that destiny will perform their parts.¹⁵ The belief that we are guided by destiny and do as we are led to do is a deception and an excuse. In fact, there is no such thing as destiny.

¹⁶ It is a fool who fancies a destiny to himself and relies upon it to his own disadvantage. The intelligent raise themselves to better states by means of their effort.¹⁷ Say, who is there in this world among the mighty and brave or the intelligent and learned who looks or waits upon destiny?¹⁸ Destiny may be said good if it had the power of saving a man from being beheaded whom fortune-tellers had pronounced by their calculation to be long lived.¹⁹ Again, O Raghava, if a fortune-teller predicts that a man will become learned and he does without being taught, then we can believe fortune is true.

²⁰ Mark, O Rama, how the sage Vishwamitra has cast away his destiny and attained the state of Brahma rishi by his own efforts.²¹ Look at us and others who have become sages. It was by our industry that we became wanderers in the ethereal regions.²² Remember, O Rama, how the chiefs of the Danava race discarded their destinies altogether and used their prowess to establish their empires

on earth.²³ Look again how the chiefs of the gods have wrested the extensive earth from those demons by their valorous deeds of slaying and harassing them (in battle).

²⁴ See Rama, how people use their own industry to make wicker vessels so handsome that they hold water, all without the aid of any destiny.²⁵ In all our works of giving and receiving, walking, resting and the like, we see no causation by destiny in their completion, just as we see medicines causing healing.²⁶ Therefore, O Rama, give up this destiny of your mistaken fancy, which in reality is devoid of its cause or effect and is a false and ideal nothing. Give yourself to your best efforts.

Chapter 9 — Investigation of Acts (Thoughts Are Action; Mind Is Soul)

¹ Rama asked, “Will you sage, who is versed in all knowledge, kindly explain the true sense of destiny (*daivam*) in popular use.”

² Vasishta replied:—

It is a man’s activity and nothing else, O Raghava, that is the cause of all his actions and the recipient of their consequences. Destiny has nothing to do with it.³ Destiny is a mere imaginary thing that neither exists nor acts nor feels (their effects). It is neither seen nor regarded.⁴ Destiny refers to the good or bad results that proceed from action.⁵ People label the wished for and unwished for consequences resulting from the good and bad deeds of human activity as destiny.⁶ The majority of mankind calls human activity, which is the only cause of some unavoidable future consequence, to be destiny.

⁷ Truly, O Raghava, destiny, though empty as a void, appears to be real to somebody who thinks it to be an active agent, while others know it to be inactive.⁸ Again, destiny is a mere saying uttered by men upon the result of some good or bad effect of their actual efforts, that “it is this which has produced the other.”⁹ It is my belief and I know it for certain that destiny is no more than a word uttered by people upon their attainment of the object of their exertions.¹⁰ Destiny is a word of consolation uttered by men to signify the good or evil they encounter and which they call to be the effect of the other.

¹¹ Rama asked, “Sage, how is it that you, who is all wise, now contradict your own assertion that destiny is the result of the stock of our former acts?”

¹² Vasishta answered saying:—

Well said, O Rama. You know everything. But hear me tell you the whole of it, whereby you will have a firm belief in the nonexistence of destiny.

¹³ In the end, even all the various desires that men may have entertained in their minds come to be accounted as his deeds.¹⁴ All animals also act according to their desires, doing nothing for which they have no inclination in their natures.¹⁵ As a villager goes to his village and a townsman goes to town, so it is the nature of desire to lead men to their particular acts.

¹⁶ The keen and firm resolution with which an act was done in a former state of life, that truly is termed destiny in successive births.¹⁷ Thus the acts of all active beings conform to their natures, and the actions of men are in accordance with their desires. Desire is nothing other than the mind itself, and the mind is the same as the human soul.¹⁸ The mind is the soul and cause of all acts which they call the doings of destiny. Certainly, without the mind there is no destiny.¹⁹ This mind is truly the living soul that acts as it desires and accordingly enjoys the fruit. The same is destiny.

²⁰ Rama, know that the mind, the heart, desire, action and destiny are synonymous terms applied by the virtuous to the unascertainable soul.²¹ Now whatever the so-named soul undertakes to do continually and with a firm resolution, it obtains the fruit thereof accordingly.²² O support of Raghu’s race, it is by means of the activity or effort of the soul, and by no other means, that the soul obtains everything. May it lead you to your good only.

²³ Rama said, "Being caught in the net of my pre-existent desire, I remain a captive to them and do as they lead me to. Say then, O sage, what else I can do?"

²⁴ Vasishta replied:—

So then, O Rama, you can reach your lasting good if you exert your efforts for it. There is no other way.

²⁵ Desires are of two kinds: some lead to good and others to evil. Hence the desires of one's prior state must have been of one kind or the other. ²⁶ If pure desires guide you now, gradually you will be led by means of your good acts to attain the state of your lasting welfare. ²⁷ But if wrong inclinations tend to lead you to difficulties, of necessity you must try your best to overcome such propensities.

²⁸ Rama, you are wise, perfectly intelligent, and composed of more than just a dull body. Now if you need another's guidance to waken your intellect, then when is your own intelligence? ²⁹ If you would have someone else enlighten your understanding, then who was the other who illuminated him, and who is the other to illuminate that person also? Therefore, because no one is wholly devoid of understanding, let him improve it himself.

³⁰ The currents of our desires flow between two channels of good and evil. It requires the exertion of our actions to turn them to the right course. ³¹ You who is the mightiest of the mighty must exert the force of your activity to turn your mind away from a direction to the profitless and towards a profitable course. ³² By directing the mind from the wrong to the right way, it will take the right course; and the opposite is true also.

But because the human mind is like a child, it must not be forced. ³³ The training of a child is like that of the mind. It is done slowly by gentleness and indulgence, and not by force or hurry.

³⁴ You have already mastered all your good and bad desires by your constant practice. From now on, you have to direct your tendencies to good only. ³⁵ O victorious Rama, when by your pristine habits you have an aptitude to do good, know that it is the result of your good nature. ³⁶ O sinless Rama, at present your desires are lying dormant in your mind. They require some practice to be employed only to the doing of good. ³⁷ If you will not exert yourself now to improve your dormant desires by constant practice, you can never expect to be happy. ³⁸ When doubtful, incline towards what is good, and as you thrive on this you shall have no evil to fear.

³⁹ Whatever one practices, with time he will become perfect, just like studying from childhood makes the learned free from error. ⁴⁰ When you have good will inside, you must accomplish your purpose by means of your activity and your subjection of the organs of your body. ⁴¹ So long as your mind is imperfect and unacquainted with the state of divine truth, you must attend to your teacher, books and reasoning and act according to their directions. ⁴² Having first finished your acts and known the truth, you must abandon even your meritorious deeds, and all your desires with them.

⁴³ Having known by your good understanding that the virtuous course led by honorable men is truly good, give particular attention to know the nature of God, then forsake even that and remain as silent as an ancient sage (*muni*).

Chapter 10 — Brahma Propounds the Knowledge of Liberation to Vasishta

¹ Vasishta resumed:—

This thing called destiny is as true as the reality of God. It is the cause of causes and effect of effects.

² Now attend to my words, depend on your efforts, and intently apply your ever confident mind to the attainment of your chief good. ³ Use your effort to control your misleading senses from pursuing their objects.

⁴ I will now set out a system for you that contains the essence of the best means for liberation, and which will confer the fruits of your exertions and lead you to your welfare in both worlds. ⁵ Let those who have great minds forsake their worldly desires in order to avoid future births and attend to these lectures with calm contentment. ⁶ Weigh well the meanings of previous discussions and those to come, repress your mind from its worldly cares, and compose yourself in calmness in order to inquire after truth. ⁷ Hear me relate to you, Rama, the way to emancipation which will remove your feelings of pain and pleasure, and which will become the surest means to lead you to supreme happiness. ⁸ On hearing this lecture on liberation in the company of all those reasonable men, you will know that highest state which is free from pain, and of which there is no end. ⁹ This was spoken of old in a former kalpa age by Brahma abiding in the Supreme Spirit. It is the remover of all anxiety and giver of all comfort to the soul.

¹⁰ Rama asked, “Say, O brahmin who is my guide, what cause moved Brahma himself to reveal this knowledge of old, and how did you obtain it?”

¹¹ Vasishta replied:—

The Supreme Soul of infinite manifestations exists by itself. It passes through and supports the whole in the form of void and understanding and as light to all living beings. ¹² From Him who remains the same (unaltered being) in his rest and motion, the great Vishnu was born, like a moving wave on the quiet waters of the sea. ¹³ Then Brahma was produced from the lotus of his heart, having Mount Meru for its seed, the points of the compass for its petals, and the stars for its pistils.

¹⁴ He, being beset by gods and sages acquainted with the Vedas and their meanings, created all the worlds and all minds with their various thoughts. ¹⁵ Then he created groups of men in the Bharata division (India) and in a corner of Jambudwipa (Asia) and subjected them to all manner of diseases and afflictions. ¹⁶ They are also troubled by the possession and desire of many things and their subjection to dangers and diseases. Here all species of created beings are subject to a variety of tribulations and afflictions. ¹⁷ The lord and creator of worlds, seeing the misery of these people, felt compassion for them like a father for his children. ¹⁸ Then, for a moment he pondered within himself, with intensity of thought and for the good of all creatures, how to end the misery of these beings who were subjected to death and despair.

¹⁹ With this thought the lord god Brahma himself established the rules of austerity, piety, charity, veracity and pilgrimage. ²⁰ Having established these, the lord and creator again thought within himself: how to make an end of the many miseries of the men he had created. ²¹ He thought upon self-extinction as the supreme bliss, obtainable only through knowledge of God, and whereby man might

be exempted from repeated births and deaths.²² It was divine knowledge, he thought, that was the only means by which men could cross the ocean of this world. Austerity, charity and pilgrimage were no means to it.²³ With this he said, "I will immediately make a new and sure bridge for the salvation of men and for their liberation from pain."

²⁴ Having thought so, Lord Brahma sitting on the lotus meditated in his mind and produced me from himself.²⁵ Being thus produced, I immediately stood in the presence of my ancestor, like a wave rising from the sea leans towards it.²⁶ Holding a pitcher in one hand and prayer beads made of seeds in the other, I bowed down to the god who held a water-pot in one hand and prayer beads in the other. He addressed me like this.

²⁷ "Come my son," he said, then holding me with his hand, he made me sit on the northern petal of his lotus of truth that shone as brightly as the moon amid silvery clouds.²⁸ Wearing the skin of an antelope and with the voice of a gander addressing a stork, my father Brahma spoke to me who was similarly dressed.²⁹ He said "For a moment I will overpower your fickle-mindedness under a mist of unconsciousness, like a dark cloud obscures the moon."

³⁰ It was under this curse that I lost my reason and forgot everything, even the clear idea I had of God.

³¹ I became as helpless as one out of his wits, and came to be afflicted with distress and sorrow like an indigent person.³² "Ah, how sorrowful is this world," said I. "How did evil come to dwell in it?" With these thoughts I remained in silence.

³³ Then he my father spoke to me saying, "Ah my son, why are you so afflicted? Ask me for a remedy for your affliction and you shall become happy."

³⁴ Then, seated as I was on the gold-colored leaflet of the lotus, I asked the lord creator of all peoples about the medicine for worldly sorrows.³⁵ "How, my lord," I asked, "did this world come to be so full of misery, and how can people be rid of it? This is what I ask of you."

³⁶ I then learnt the most holy wisdom that my father Brahma gave me. Following his advice, I became quite composed.³⁷ Then, seeing me knowing the knowable and restored to my own natural state, the creator of the world and revealer of all causes said,³⁸ "My son, I had turned you to insanity by an illusion in order to make you inquire into the essence of true knowledge for the welfare of mankind."

³⁹ Now you are released from the curse of illusion and you have arrived to your highest state of understanding. You have become as one soul (with the Supreme) and as pure as gold.⁴⁰ Now shut your heart against the world and proceed to the surface of the earth, to the land of Bharata, for the good of mankind.⁴¹ There employ yourself to ceremonial duties to the best of your knowledge and advise others on how to properly conduct rituals.⁴² But those who are disgusted (with the world) in their hearts, and are rational with their elevated understandings, are to be counseled with the esoteric knowledge that confers true joy."

⁴³ Being thus appointed by him who was born in the lotus, I continue to abide here throughout the succession of beings.⁴⁴ I have no duty to perform here but live my life free from all cares. I always do my acts with a mind as tranquil as if it were in a state of sleep. I do my works with the body, but I do nothing here with my soul (which is fixed in God).

Chapter 11 — On the Qualifications of Student and Teacher; the Four Guards at the Door of Liberation

¹ Vasishta continued:—

I have fully related to you about the descent of knowledge on earth, the reason for my birth, and the intention of lotus-born Brahma. ² Now Rama, as you are eager to learn transcendental knowledge, and as you are so anxious for it in your mind, it must be the effect of your pristine merit.

³ Rama said, “Sage, how was it that the supreme lord felt a desire to send down knowledge on earth after his creation (and not with it)?”

⁴ Vasishta replied:—

Brahma in his own nature is the same as the Supreme Brahman. He is born in Him like a wave is born of the waters of the deep. ⁵ This great lord saw the imperfection of his creation and saw its whole course in times past, present and future. ⁶ He saw the decay of ceremonial rites after the end of the age of truth (the golden age) and other ages and considering the error in which men were to fall, he felt pity for them. ⁷ Then the lord thought of giving me true knowledge and sent me to earth to dispel the ignorance of mankind.

⁸ Like me, he has sent other great sages here, like Sanat Kumara, Narada and many others also. ⁹ He has sent them all to redeem mankind from the chains of its ignorance through a series of good acts and through their progress in divine knowledge. ¹⁰ At the end of the past golden age, these great sages saw the gradual decay on earth of the holy rituals. ¹¹ They created rulers at various places on earth in order to regulate the course of duties and observe proper limits. ¹² They made many works on traditional law and sacrificial rules to be observed on earth, and appropriate provision for the accomplishment of religious and temporal duties (in the *smritis*). ¹³ But with time, all these duties became slack in their conduct, and men have no thought other than seeking their daily maintenance.

¹⁴ Every day disputes arise among landowners on account of their estates and properties, and people are subjected to various penalties in large numbers. ¹⁵ Under such conditions, it is not possible to govern without states fighting each other, resulting in rulers and subjects inevitably being reduced to wretchedness. ¹⁶ In order to remove the impotence (of such princes) and lead them to a comprehensive view of things, we have prescribed many excellent precepts of knowledge to them.

¹⁷ This spiritual knowledge was first given to princes, but afterwards it came to be known under the title of royal science (*raja vidhya*, kingly science). ¹⁸ This royal science is of a hidden, esoteric nature. It is also the best kind of spiritual knowledge. Many kings have been set beyond the reach of calamity by knowledge of this science. ¹⁹ It is after many such fair-famed princes had gone by that your mighty self was begotten by the present King Dasharata.

²⁰ O slayer of your enemies, I find a very agreeable and holy kind of apathy growing spontaneously in your most clear understanding. ²¹ There is another kind of cold-heartedness, O Rama, caused in the minds of the virtuous and reasonable men which is called casual detachment. ²² But your unprecedented and astonishing apathy, produced without any cause and only by your reason, is called by the wise to be real detachment.

²³ Seeing the harmfulness of worldly things, what man will not grow adverse to them? The greatest displeasure is that which rises in the mind from one's own judgment. ²⁴ They are reckoned as great and wise men whose detachment springs without cause (of detestation to the world) and whose minds are clear. ²⁵ It is as graceful to see a person whose mind with good discrimination feels a disgust from its own judgment as it is to see a young bridegroom adorned with garlands of flowers. ²⁶ They are esteemed as the best of men who, after judicious consideration of worldly troubles, apply themselves to detachment. ²⁷ It must be by one's repeated and judicious examination of inner and outer illusions that he should forcibly withdraw himself from them.

²⁸ Who is there at the mournful sight of a funeral event who does not feel an aversion to worldliness? However, it is aversion born of itself that is highly commendable. ²⁹ I see that you are sincerely indifferent and reaching the acme of true greatness. You are worthy of the best knowledge as is the moist earth of receiving seeds. ³⁰ It is by the grace of the lord God and Supreme Spirit that a lucky understanding like yours naturally inclines to reason.

³¹ It is by performance of ritual duties and observance of prescribed rules that the demerits of former births are expunged. ³² Upon removing former demerits, understanding turns of itself to become aware of spiritual matters, like the simultaneous flight of a crow towards a falling coconut. ³³ But those devoted only to ritual acts are like people plunged in an eddy in which they whirl up and down until they come to perceive the state of supreme (joy). ³⁴ Seeing this (illusory) state of the world, a man must shake off the delusion of his worldly-mindedness, just as the elephant breaks loose from his chains.

³⁵ It is too intricate, O Rama, to understand the course of this boundless world. Not even the greatest of embodied beings can know it without true knowledge. ³⁶ Know, O support of Raghu's race, that men of great understanding have passed over the un-fordable ocean of the world by means of the raft of their knowledge and reason.

³⁷ Now, with attention and steadiness of mind, hear this rational knowledge for your deliverance from the flood of this world. ³⁸ Without the remedy of right reason, the unceasing excitement of the senses and the fears and miseries of the world will continually disturb the mind. ³⁹ There is nothing other than rational knowledge that can enable holy men to endure the afflictions of the opposite extremes of heat and cold and wind and rain. ⁴⁰ The constant cares and miseries which befall to men at every step sometimes serve to torment the ignorant mind like a flame of fire burns straw. ⁴¹ But the troubles of this world cannot afflict a wise man who knows the knowable and discerns all things; just as it is impossible for the flame of fire to burn wood drenched by rain.

⁴² A man knowing the truth is like a firm oak tree that no whirlwind of disease or distress raised by the hot winds of this desert of the world has the power to upset. ⁴³ An intelligent man who has a mind to know the truth must diligently serve his wise teacher with loving regard. ⁴⁴ What a well-minded teacher says in response to any question must be carefully preserved in the mind, like a piece of fine muslin receives dye.

⁴⁵ O best of the eloquent, you must not receive instruction from one unacquainted with truth. Whoever asks such a person anything is the greatest of fools. ⁴⁶ He is the basest of men who does not carefully

attend to the words of the truth-telling teacher who is asked about anything.⁴⁷ He is the best inquirer who seeks answers from a person who demonstrates by his actions whether he knows the knowable or not.⁴⁸ A person who asks boyish questions without determining the teacher's qualifications is reckoned a vile inquirer incapable of knowing great things.

⁴⁹ When asked, a wise man will reply to him who is able to comprehend the former and later propositions, and who is possessed of a good understanding, but he should make no answer to a vile brutish being.⁵⁰ The teacher who gives his lecture without examining the capacity of the inquirer to grasp his meaning is pronounced unwise by the learned.

⁵¹ O delight of Raghu's race! Our meeting is very congenial. We are well adapted to each other. You as inquirer are an admirer of virtue and I the speaker am well acquainted.⁵² You who understand the meaning of words should well consider everything that I tell you and take them to heart.⁵³ You are truly great and disgusted with the world, and you know the truth among mankind. Whatever is spoken to you must be impressed in your mind like red dye on muslin.⁵⁴ By your attention to what I say and your discrimination of spiritual matters, you can make your understanding receive my instruction like waters reflect sunlight.⁵⁵ Receive all that I say and store them diligently in your mind; or else it is useless to ask me anything.

⁵⁶ The mind, O Rama, is as fickle as an ape in the forest. Correct it carefully and attend to spiritual instruction.⁵⁷ Always keep yourself from the injudicious and ignorant and those addicted to the company of wicked people, and honor the virtuous.⁵⁸ It is by association with good people that we can gain the wisdom that resembles a tree yielding fruits of enjoyment and liberation.

⁵⁹ It is said there are four guards who keep watch at the gate of liberation (*moksha*), namely: peace (equanimity, self-control), judgment (spirit of inquiry), contentment, and company of the good.⁶⁰ All these, or three or two of them, are to be attended with care because they shall open the door leading to the abode of liberation.⁶¹ At least one of them is to be sought with diligence, even at the expense of one's life. Because by securing one of these a man can reconcile and gain all four .

⁶² The wise man is a receptacle of all scriptures, of all knowledge and austerity, and is a gem on earth, just like the sun is the receptacle of light.⁶³ The dull understanding of a senseless man becomes as stiff as a block, and like water freezing as hard as stone.

⁶⁴ Your good nature and good qualities, O Rama, and the counsels of the learned in the scriptures, have made you sit here with a heart blooming like a lotus towards the rising sun.⁶⁵ Your ears lifted to hear these wise lectures have enabled you to repress your thoughts; as the music of the lute attracts the mind of the deer.⁶⁶ Now secure, O Rama, the treasures of peace and good nature by your practice of detachment of which there is no decay.⁶⁷ Your knowledge of the attainment of liberation will be increased by your attending to the scriptures and the society of good men, and also by your practice of austerity and self subjection.⁶⁸ You must know that the sure remedy against ignorance is the study of divine knowledge with a clear understanding.

⁶⁹ Know this world is a poisonous plant and a seat of dangers. It infects the ignorant at all times, unless one will take the pains to dispel his darkness.⁷⁰ Greed accompanied by ignorance moves within the heart in a serpentine course, by turns expanding and contracting it like a blacksmith's

bellows.⁷¹ The true light of things dawns only in the minds of the wise, just as the gentle moon appears only in a clear and cloudless sky.⁷² He is truly called a man who can judge (the truth) by the major and minor propositions, whose mind is expanded and filled with brilliant ingenuity.

⁷³ Rama, the clear wisdom of your mind makes you shine like the full moon dispelling the darkness of the cloudless sky by her cooling and translucent beams.

Chapter 12 — The Greatness of True Knowledge

¹ Vasishta said:—

Rama, I honor you as one of a perfect mind. You know what to ask and you understand what is spoken to you. Therefore I will continue speaking to you respectfully.

² Be still, keep your mind fixed in yourself, and attend to knowledge. Be free of pride and passions and incline yourself to pure truth. ³ You are possessed of all the qualities of an enquirer, and I those of the speaker, in as much as there are gems in the ocean. ⁴ My son, you have gained the detachment that is closely related to reason, like the humidity of the moonstone correlates to gentle moonbeams.

⁵ Rama, your long and early practiced pure virtues and good qualities have raised your fame, like the long stretching white fibers of the stalk exalt the spotless lotus. ⁶ Now hear the words I tell you Rama, for you alone are fit to receive them, as only the moon is able to open the kumuda lotus petals.

⁷ Whatever business or investigation someone undertakes, it must be brought to a happy conclusion that tends towards his peace and tranquility. ⁸ If men of good understanding did not have the solace of philosophy, what rational being could dare bear the misery that ignorance brings in this world? ⁹ All the faculties of the mind are absorbed in contemplation of the Supreme, like solar heat dissolves the rocks of boundary mountains at the end of the world.

¹⁰ Rama, the intolerable stomach cramping pain caused by this venomous world is healed only by yoga meditation, just like the poison of a snakebite is removed by garuda incantations. ¹¹ One obtains the capacity for yoga by discussing the scriptures in the company of good people, which alone can provide us with the great charm of spiritual knowledge.

¹² It must be recognized that we lessen our sorrows by acting with reason. Therefore reasonable men are never to be disregarded. ¹³ A reasoning man gets released from his worldly sickness. He quits his frame which is full of diseases just like a snake casts off his time-worn skin. He looks with a placid mind and calm composure upon the magic scenes of the world. Hence a fully wise man is not subject to the misery of the imperfectly wise.

¹⁴ The rough and uneven pleasure of the world (*samsara*) is a disease that stings like a snake. It cuts men like a sword and pierces them like a spear. It binds them tightly like a rope, and burns them like fire. It blindfolds their understanding like the darkness of the night. It makes them as prostrate and dull as a slab of stone. It destroys one's prudence and lowers his position. It casts men into the pit of error and torments them with greed. Thus there is almost no kind of trouble which does not happen to worldly minded men.

¹⁵ Worldliness is as dangerous a disease as cholera which, unless it is healed in time, is sure to trouble its patient with the torments of hell: ¹⁶ like eating stones; wounded by swords and spears; pelted by stones; burnt by fire; numbed by frost; dislocated limbs; body smeared with blood like sandalwood paste; bored by worms like worm-eaten trees; body pierced by pikes, broomsticks and the fiery shafts and bolts continually falling in battle; toil and drudgery under the sun; the cold wetness of work in a summer fountain house; dumb and deaf without rest or sleep; and, finally, suffering decapitation. ¹⁷ With thousands of such intolerable tortures of worldly life, no one should remain negligent of his release from this state but ought to think that only his reflection on scriptures can

produce his real good.

¹⁸ Rama, look upon this assembly of great sages, rishis, brahmins and princes who have fortified themselves by the armor of wisdom and are liable to no pain or grief, yet they are engaged in the arduous affairs of this world with minds as placid as yours. ¹⁹ Moreover, there are many of the best of men who with their spiritual light and pure understanding reside in this world like the gods Hari (Vishnu), Hara (Shiva) and Brahma above all concerns and fluctuating desires of life.

²⁰ The journey of this world is delightful to one who, after the removal of his errors and dispersion of the cloud of his ignorance, has come to the knowledge of truth. ²¹ When serenity of the mind and calm repose of the heart are secured, all the senses are subjected to peace and everything is viewed in an equal light, and this knowledge of the truth gives delight to our journey in this world.

²² Know also that this body of ours is the car, these organs are its horses, our breaths are the winds blowing upon it, and the mind is the driver who feels the delight of driving. The minute, subtle soul is the rider who is conscious of wandering about the world. Knowledge of this truth makes our earthly journey a pleasant one.

Chapter 13 — On Equanimity (Peace & Tranquility of Mind), the Characteristics of a Saint

Vasishta speaking:—

¹ Intelligent men who have seen the spirit fix their sight upon it and wander about in the world as persons of great and elevated souls. ² They do not grieve, nor do they wish or ask for anything of good or evil (in this world). They do their works with detachment. ³ Those who rely on themselves remain quiet, unaffected by good or evil and acting their parts with a calm serenity. They take no concern for what is harmful or delectable to them. ⁴ They are alike indifferent to coming or not coming, going or not going, doing or not doing, and speaking or not speaking. ⁵ After having come to know their God (as the author of all good), whatever acts or sights may appear pleasant or disgusting to others cease to affect them in any way.

⁶ The mind having rid its desires feels a sweet composure associated with bliss that is like moonlight descending from the heavenly orb all about. ⁷ By being unmindful of worldly affairs and regardless of all its excitements, the soul is filled with a joy resembling the ambrosial waters in the moon. ⁸ He who ceases to act his magical parts (in this playground of the earth) and desists from following his inclinations and childish pranks, shines forth in his spiritual light. ⁹ Such are the powers gained from spiritual knowledge, and by no other means whatever.

¹⁰ Therefore should a man should employ his reasoning powers during life to try to seek and know and adore the Supreme Soul. ¹¹ It is the agreement of one's belief with the teachings of the scriptures and his instructor, joined with his constant meditation, that can give him a full view of the Supreme Spirit.

¹² The fool slighting the scriptures and their instructions and disregarding the counsels of great men is exposed to difficulties and dangers from which he can have no release. ¹³ There is no disease or poison, no trouble or affliction so painful to one in this earth as the ignorance one breeds in himself.

¹⁴ Those whose intellects are purified a little will find this work to be of greater effect to dispel their ignorance than any other scripture. ¹⁵ Everyone who is a friend to good sayings and good sense should diligently attend to this scripture with its beautiful examples, pleasing lessons and lack of inconsistencies.

¹⁶ Lack of dignity, inextricable difficulties, and baseness and degeneracy are all the offspring of ignorance, just like thorns are the offshoots of the prickly ketaki plant. ¹⁷ It is far better, O Rama, to rove about a begging with a pot in hand to the homes of vile chandalas than to lead a life deadened by ignorance. ¹⁸ Rather dwell in dark dismal cells, within dry dreary wells, in the hollows of trees, or remain like solitary blind worms than labor under the miseries of ignorance.

¹⁹ A man receiving the light leading to his liberation will never fall into the darkness of error or gloom of death. ²⁰ As long as the clear light of reason does not shine upon the mind like the sun, so long will the chilly frost of poverty continue to contract the lotus of humanity. ²¹ To liberate oneself from the miseries of the world, one must know the true nature of the soul, both from his teacher and the evidence of the scriptures, and also from friends like ourselves.

²² Try, O Rama, to imitate those who are liberated in their lifetime, who are free to roam about like the gods Hari, Hara and others, and like the holy sages among brahmins. ²³ Here (on earth) our

miseries are as endless as atoms, and our happiness is as small as a drop of water on a piece of straw. Therefore do not fix your sight upon that little happiness which is beset by misery.²⁴ Let an intelligent man diligently apply himself to attain that state of endless happiness which is free from pain and constitutes his highest completion.²⁵ They are reckoned the best of men and deserving of completion whose minds are free from the fever (of worldly cares) and attached to the transcendental state.

²⁶ Those base minded mortals who are satisfied with their enjoyments, eating and drinking, and the pleasures of their worldly possessions, are reckoned as stark blind frogs.²⁷ Those attached to the company of imposters and wicked men, or addicted to the practice of evil deeds, who are enemies in the guise of friendship, or those given up to gluttony,²⁸ all such foolish men of mistaken and stupid minds fall into the hardest of hardships, to the misery of miseries, to the horror of horrors, and to the hell of hells.²⁹ Happiness and misery destroy and succeed each other by turns. They are as fleeting as flashes of lightning. Hence it is impossible to be happy forever.

³⁰ Those great souls who are indifferent and well judging like yourself are known as the most honorable of men, worthy of both temporal enjoyments and spiritual emancipation.³¹ By reliance upon right reasoning joined with a habit of remaining dispassionate, men are able to overcome the dark and dangerous torrents of this world.³² No man of reason who well knows how the illusions of the world derange understanding should allow himself to sleep amid these illusions.³³ Whoever remains neglectful in his worldliness is like a man negligently sleeping on a grassy bed when his house is on fire.

³⁴ A state reached without return, attained so there is no more cause for sorrow, undoubtedly is attainable only by divine knowledge, and that is a certain truth.³⁵ Even if such a future state did not exist, there would be no harm to believe in it. But if such a state exists, belief in it will save you from the ocean of this world (*samsara*).

³⁶ Whenever a man is inclined to think on the means of his salvation, he is sure to soon be entitled to his liberation.³⁷ The undecaying, unerring and fearless state of tranquility is nowhere to be had in the three worlds without union (with the Supreme).³⁸ Having gained that best of gains, no one is liable to the pain from which no wealth, friend or relation can save.³⁹ Neither the actions of one's hands and feet in his offerings and pilgrimage to distant lands, nor the bodily pains of asceticism, nor his refuge in a holy place can serve his salvation.⁴⁰ It is only by means of one's best exertions and the fixing of his mind to one object, and also by the subjection of his desires, that one may arrive at the ultimate state (of bliss).⁴¹ So it is that by means of discrimination, reasoning and ultimate ascertainment of truth, a man may avoid the snares of misery and attain his best state.

⁴² One sitting at ease and meditating within himself attains the blissful state free from sorrow and future birth.⁴³ All holy men are known to be beyond the bounds of frail pleasures. They reckon their best serenity to be their ultimate bliss.⁴⁴ They have given up all thoughts of humanity and heaven, which are as devoid of true joy as a mirage is void of water.⁴⁵ Therefore should one think of subduing his mind and resort to peace and contentment as the means. These joined with an unbounded composure produce true happiness.

⁴⁶ It is not to be had by sitting, or going up and down, or by wandering, or by prostrating (before the altar). It is not to be acquired by rakshasa demons, deities or ignorant men. ⁴⁷ That ultimate joy is born of and obtainable from peace of mind. It is fruit from the blossom of peace of the high tree of reason.

⁴⁸ Those engaged in worldliness without mixing in it are like the all-illumining sun and are known as the best of men. ⁴⁹ The mind at peace and rest, clear and free from errors, and without any attempt or desire neither forsakes nor wishes for the world.

⁵⁰ Hear me tell you about the orders of the guards (equanimity, inquiry, contentment, and good company) at the gate of salvation. If you know these orders, you are allowed to enter.

⁵¹ Thirsting after pleasure is a state of protracted disease, and this world is full of mirage. Only equanimity can cool this dryness like the moistening beams of the moon. ⁵² It is peacefulness that leads to all good and is reckoned the best state of being. Quiet is joy. It is peace and prevents error.

⁵³ The man who lives content with his quiet and a calm clarity of his soul, with a mind filled with detachment, makes friends of his enemies. ⁵⁴ Those whose minds are adorned with the moonlight of peacefulness feel within a flux of beams of purity rising in them like the whitish waves of the Milky Ocean.

⁵⁵ Those holy men who have the lotus-like flower of peacefulness growing in the lotus-shaped receptacle of their hearts are said to have a secondary heart like the two hearts of the god Hari (holding Brahma in one of them). ⁵⁶ They whose untainted faces shine like the moon with the luster of peacefulness are to be honored as the luminaries of their families. Others, seeing the charming beauty of their appearance, honor them as ravishers of the senses.

⁵⁷ Whatever is beautiful in the three worlds, and whatever may be imperial prosperity and grandeur, nothing in them can afford a happiness equal to that of peacefulness. ⁵⁸ Whatever the misery, anxiety or intolerable difficulty, they are all lost in a tranquil mind, like darkness in the sun. ⁵⁹ The mind of no living being is so delighted with moonbeams as that of the peaceful man from his heart-felt joy. ⁶⁰ The virtuous man who is calm and quiet and friendly to all living beings feels the benign influence of highest truths appearing of themselves in his mind.

⁶¹ Just like all children, whether good or bad, have a strict faith in their mother, so all beings here rely upon a man of an even disposition. ⁶² A refreshing drink of ambrosia or the kind embrace of prosperity cannot give such gratification to the soul as one's inner satisfaction of the mind.

⁶³ Whether afflicted by disease or disaster, or dragged by the rope of greed, bear yourself up, O Rama, by the composure of your mind. ⁶⁴ Whatever you do and eat with the calm coolness of your mind, all that is far sweeter to the soul than anything sweet to taste. ⁶⁵ The mind that is overpowered by the ambrosial flavor of peacefulness and desists from activity may have the body lacerated, but it will heal shortly.

⁶⁶ No imp, demon or enemy, and no tiger or snake ever annoys a peaceful man. ⁶⁷ He who has his mind and body well guarded by the invulnerable armor of meekness can never be pierced by the shafts of adversity. He remains like the thunder-stone that is impenetrable by arrows.

⁶⁸ The king seated in his palace is not so graceful to see as a quiet peaceful man who is graced by his

calm and clarity of understanding.⁶⁹ There is nothing in life so delightful to see as the satisfaction one feels at the sight of a contented and peaceful man.⁷⁰ Only he who lives a holy life with his gentle and peaceful conduct is said to be truly living in this world.⁷¹ A sober minded, meek and honest man pleases everyone by all that he does. It is as if he captivates all beings to himself.

⁷² He is called the meek who neither feels pleasure nor pain at the sight, touch, sound or taste of anything good or bad.⁷³ He who is indifferent to all objects and neither leaves nor longs for anything, but keeps his senses and appetites under control, is called a saint.⁷⁴ Whoever knows all things, both internally and externally, with a clear understanding, and who attends and looks to his own concerns, is truly said to be a saint.⁷⁵ He whose mind remains as calm as moonbeams at the approach of either feast or violence, and even at the moment of death, is said to be a saint.⁷⁶ Who, though present, neither rejoices nor murmurs at anything but remains as if he were absent from it, and conducts himself as quietly as if he were fast asleep, such a person is called a saint.

⁷⁷ He whose complaisant look casts a graceful nectar-like radiance on all around him is said to be a saint.⁷⁸ Who feels a cool calmness within himself and is not disturbed or immersed in any state of life, and who though a layman is not worldly minded, such a man is termed a saint.⁷⁹ He who does not take the difficulties of life to his mind, however long or great they may be, or who does not think his body to be himself, is known to be a saint.⁸⁰ The man of the world who has a mind clear as the sky and is not tainted (by worldliness) is said to be a saint.

⁸¹ The quiet man with tranquility of mind shines forth among sages and ascetics, among priests and princes, and among the mighty and learned.⁸² Great and meritorious men whose minds are attached to peacefulness feel a rest arising in their souls like cooling moonbeams.⁸³ Peacefulness is the greatest of all the many virtues and the best decoration of courage. It shines resplendent among all dangers and difficulties.

⁸⁴ O Rama, seek your perfection in the way in which high-minded men have sought and attained their perfect states, by holding fast onto peacefulness as an imperishable virtue, preserved by the respectable, and never to be lost or stolen.

Chapter 14 — On Rational Inquiry, the Necessity of Inquiry & Clear Reasoning

Vasishta speaking:—

¹ It must be the duty of one whose understanding is cleared and purified by a knowledge of the scriptures to argue constantly with a guide who knows how to reason correctly. ² Understanding, when sharpened by reasoning, comes to see transcendence. The only best medicine for the chronic disease of worldliness is reasoning (the second gate-keeper). ³ The world is like a forest of troubles, sprouting endless desires which, being once felled under the saw of reason, will germinate no more.

⁴ O wise Rama, our understandings are shrouded under unconsciousness at the loss of our friends, at times of danger, and even of quiet. Only reason is our companion. ⁵ There is no expedient for the learned and wise except reason. It is by means of reason that the minds of good people can avoid evil and secure their good. ⁶ All our strength and understanding, our valor and renown, and the ends of our actions, result from our reasoning with the intelligent.

⁷ Reason is the lamp to show us right and wrong and the instrument with which we accomplish our desires. By reliance on right reason, one easily crosses over the wide ocean of the world. ⁸ Pure reasoning, like a strong lion, tears asunder the elephants of great error which ravage the lotus beds of the mind. ⁹ If ignorant men have at anytime attained a better state in life, it was all owing to the light of the lamp of their reasoning.

¹⁰ Know, O Raghava, that dominion and fair prosperity, together with our enjoyments and eternal salvation, are all only fruits of the celestial, wish-fulfilling kalpa tree of reasoning. ¹¹ The minds of great men, expanded by reasoning, are never liable to be immersed under the currents of calamity (but float above them) like gourds upon water. ¹² Those who conduct themselves with their intellects shining forth with reason become the recipients of its most liberal gifts. ¹³ Lack of reason is like the thorny and sour karanja plant sprouting forth with blossoms of sorrow, growing in the lakes of ignorant minds in order to shut out their hopes and prospects.

¹⁴ O Raghava, shake off the lethargy caused by your neglect of reasoning. This torpor darkens your vision as if by the black, eye-liner collyrium powder and maddens your mind as if by the drunkenness of wine. ¹⁵ The man of right judgment is not liable to fall into the long and dangerous maze of error, but remains as a blaze of light amidst the gloom (of ignorance). ¹⁶ The reasoning faculties shine like a bed of lotuses in the limpid lake of the mind. Whoever has such a reasoning mind exalts his head as high as the Himalayan heights.

¹⁷ A man having a dull mind and incapable of reasoning with the sharpness of a flash of lightening is like a child who sees false apparitions about him. ¹⁸ Rama, you must shun and keep base, unreasonable men at a distance. They grow as plump as a sugar cane to cause sorrow. They resemble the spring season that grows fresh weeds of evil. ¹⁹ Whatever misdeeds, misconducts and mishaps present themselves to man, they all result from his lack of the light of reason, and they lay hold of him like ghosts appearing in the dark. ²⁰ O support of Raghu's race, shun the unreasonable man at a distance. He is like a solitary wild tree that comes to no good use.

²¹ A mind filled with reason and devoid of the impatience that attends worldly desires feels the light of transcendent quietism shining in the soul with the full luster of the moon. ²² When the light of reason

shines in any person, it imparts the coolness and good grace of moonbeams to all things around him.
²³ The reasoning power of man accompanied with the flag of divine knowledge and the silvery fan of good understanding shines like moonlight in the darkness of night. ²⁴ Men with the good grace of their reason throw a sun-like radiance on all sides about them and dispel the gloom of worldliness.

²⁵ Reasoning serves to destroy the false apparitions of errors which present themselves to the minds of children like ghosts in the night sky. ²⁶ All things in the world appear charming, but they are only unrealities. They are like clods of earth that are broken by the hammering stone of reason. ²⁷ Men torment themselves with the false imaginations of their own minds. Only reason can drive away this deeply rooted apparition from the mind.

²⁸ Know that the fruit of the high tree of reason is the even, unobstructed, interminable and independent happiness called perfect detachment (*kaivalya*). ²⁹ Through reason and its evident influence on the deprivation of (physical) gratifications, there rises an unshaken and exalted disinterestedness in the mind, like the cooling beams of the moon. ³⁰ When a saint has reached his perfection by means of the elixir of judgment seated in his mind, he neither desires for more nor leaves (what he has). ³¹ A mind relying on that state of equanimity and perceiving the clear light has neither its fall nor elevation, but enjoys its inward expansion like that of vacuum forever.

³² One unconcerned with the world neither gives nor receives anything, nor feels himself elated or depressed at any event, but views everything as an indifferent spectator. ³³ He is neither numbingly cold nor does he dwell on anything internally or externally. He is not inactive or merged in activity. ³⁴ He slighted the loss of anything and lives content with what he has. He is neither depressed nor elevated, but remains as full as the sea.

³⁵ It is in this manner that the high-aspiring, great souls who are yogis conduct themselves in this world, with their fullness (of joy) and living as liberated in this life. ³⁶ These saintly sages, having lived as long as they like, abandon it at last, and gain their perfect detachment and eternal unity (*kaivalya*).

³⁷ A wise man should intently consider within who he is, who he belongs to, what is his family, by whom he is surrounded, and think on the remedy (of his worldliness). ³⁸ It is a king, O Rama, who well knows the difficult and doubtful state of the business, and his success or failure depends solely on his right judgment and on nothing else. ³⁹ It is the sayings and information established by the Vedas and the Vedanta that form the grounds of our evidence, and these are to be ascertained by our reason as by the help of a lamp in the gloom of night.

⁴⁰ The bright eyesight of reason, even when it has to view things at a distance, is neither blinded by darkness nor dimmed by the full blaze of daylight. ⁴¹ He who is blind to reason is like one born blind. A demented man is an object of universal pity, but a man with a reasoning soul is said to be possessed of divine eyesight and becomes victorious in all things. ⁴² The miraculous power of reason is acknowledged to be a divine attribute and an instrument to highest joy. Therefore it is not to be lost sight of, even for a moment.

⁴³ A man graced by reason is loved even by the great, just as the delicious and ripe mango fruit is delicious to all. ⁴⁴ Men with their minds illuminated by the light of reason are like travelers

acquainted with their way. They are not liable to pitfalls of constant danger and misery.⁴⁵ Neither a sick man nor one beset by a hundred evils wails as bitterly as an ignorant man whose soul is deprived of reason.⁴⁶ Rather leap like a frog in mud, or creep like a worm in the dirt, or lie like a snake in a dark hole or crawl on the ground than walk like a man devoid of reason.

⁴⁷ Therefore get rid of unreasonableness which is the home of all your dangers, is condemned by the wise, and is the end of all your disasters.⁴⁸ Great men must always be in full possession of their reasoning, because those unsupported by their reason are liable to fall into the pits of darkness.⁴⁹ Let everyone keep his soul under the control of his own reason and by this means deliver the deer of his mind from falling into the mirage of this world.

⁵⁰ It is the province of reasoning to consider logically that it is in one's own self that the evil known as worldliness had its rise.⁵¹ The thick mist of error is only for the continued misery of man, and it prevails on the stony minds of those who are demented by the loss of reason.⁵² Even the wise who hold fast to the truth and forsake all untruth in this world are unable to discern their true nature without the aid of reason.⁵³ It is by means of reason that one comes to the knowledge of truth, and by means of truth that he gets peace of mind, and it is tranquility of mind that dispels the misery of men.

⁵⁴ Now Rama, take delight in such acts as may be productive of utility to the world, and whereby you may arrive to perfection. Weigh all things with the clear eye of reason, which will make you blessed forever.

Chapter 15 — On Contentment

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Contentment (the third gate-keeper) is the chief good. Contentment is called (true) enjoyment, and the contented man, O destroyer of enemies, gets the best repose.² Those who are happy with their prosperity of contentment and possess the calm repose of their souls are like holy saints. They think a kingdom no better than a bit of rotten straw.

³ Whoever retains a contented mind amidst all the affairs of the world is never disturbed or dejected in adverse circumstances, O Rama.⁴ The saints who are satisfied with the ambrosial drink of contentment consider the greatest wealth and enjoyments to be only poison.⁵ Even the waves of liquid nectar fail to afford that pleasure which the sweetest taste of contentment, the healer of all evils, gives to its owner.

⁶ Abandonment of unfruitful desires, and calmness in those desires that are obtained, feeling no pain and having no sense of pleasure, constitute what is called contentment here below.⁷ Until the mind can enjoy contentment rising of itself spontaneously in the soul, troubles will continue to grow like briars and brambles in a bog.⁸ The mind cooled by calm contentment and purified by the light of philosophy is always in its full bloom like a lotus under sunbeams.

⁹ An ungoverned mind, subject to desires and devoid of contentment, does not receive the light of knowledge, like a soiled mirror takes no reflection of the face.¹⁰ A man whose mind is always bright with the sunshine of contentment does not shrivel like a lotus in the dark night of ignorance.¹¹ A man devoid of diseases and anxieties, whose mind is content though he be thoroughly poor, enjoys the happiness of a supreme ruler.¹² He is called contented who does not long after what he does not possess, who enjoys what he has in its right manner, and who is always graceful in his manners.

¹³ There is a beauty that shines in the face of one whose mind has the satisfaction of contentment. His face has a fullness of magnanimity and a purity of thoughts like that of the Milky Ocean.

¹⁴ Let a man rely on his manly efforts and entertain self control within himself to abandon his craving for things.¹⁵ He whose mind is full with the ambrosia of contentment and a calm and cool understanding acquires a perpetual composure within himself, like cooling moonbeams.¹⁶ All great fortunes wait upon him whose mind is strengthened by contentment, as if they were servants attending a king.¹⁷ One remaining content and composed in himself quells all his anxieties and cares, like the rains settle the dust of the earth.

¹⁸ Rama, a man shines by the contentment of his mind and the purity of his conduct, like the cooling and spotless moon when she is full.¹⁹ No one receives so much delight from his accumulation of wealth as he derives from the sight of the beautiful placid countenance (of a contented person).

²⁰ Know, O delight of Raghu's race, that the gods and the sages honor most those best of men who are decorated with grace of equanimity.

Chapter 16 — On the Company of the Virtuous and Good Conduct

¹ Vasishta resumed saying:—

Know, O highly intelligent Rama, that the company of the virtuous (the fourth gate-keeper) is everywhere of the greatest benefit to men for their crossing over the ocean of the world (*samsara*).

² It is the tree of virtuous company (*satsanga*) that produces the fresh blossom of discrimination which, being cherished by men with great souls, yields its fruit of prosperity.³ The society of the learned makes solitude appear as company, and the evil of death as good as a festivity, and converts a difficulty to ease.

⁴ The society of the virtuous wards off all disasters which, like the frost, invade the lotus beds of our hearts. The society of the virtuous baffles the icy breath of ignorance.⁵ Know that the society of the virtuous is the best way to improve understanding, destroy the tree of ignorance, and remove all our mental diseases.⁶ The society of the virtuous produces the light of reason, which is as charmingly fair as a cluster of flowers after being washed by rainwater.⁷ The influence of virtuous company teaches us the best way of living, which is never impaired or obstructed by anything and is ever full in itself.

⁸ Let no man ever keep himself from the association of the virtuous, even though he is involved in utmost distress and cast in irremediable circumstances.⁹ The society of the virtuous lends a light to the right path. It destroys a man's internal darkness by the rays of the sun of knowledge.¹⁰ Whoever has bathed in the cold, clear stream of good company does not need the merit derived from acts of charity, pilgrimage, austerity or sacrifice.¹¹ Of what use is austerity or pilgrimage to one who has the society of virtuous men and whose life is free from passions, sins, doubts and knots (of scruples in the heart)?

¹² Blessed are the peaceful in their minds who people regard with as much devotion as poor men dote fondly upon gems and jewels.¹³ An intelligent mind with its gracefulness derived from good company always shines like the goddess of riches in the company of fairy nymphs.¹⁴ Therefore that blessed man who never abstains from the company of the holy is renowned as having attained the crown of clear understanding.¹⁵ Hence all uncompromising believers, holy men and those who are revered by people are to be served by all means for crossing over the ocean of the world.

¹⁶ The company of the saints is like rainwater that extinguishes the flames of hell. Surely those who neglect the company of the saints serve as dry fuel to hell-fire.¹⁷ The medicine of holy association serves to allay entirely all the afflictions consequent to poverty and death and all tribulations of worldly affairs.

¹⁸ Contentment, society of the virtuous, the practice of reasoning, and remaining undisturbed comprise the means for mankind to cross over the ocean of the world.¹⁹ Contentment is reckoned to be the best gain, good company the right course, reasoning the true knowledge, and remaining undisturbed the highest bliss.²⁰ These are the four surest means to break off the shackles of the world, and whoever is practiced in these has surely passed over the false waters of terrestrial sea.

²¹ Learn, O best of the intelligent, that the practice of any one of these pure virtues leads to a habit of all four.²² Every one of these separately is a leader to the others. Therefore apply yourself diligently to one of these for your success in getting them all.

²³ Association with the good, contentment, right reasoning, and good judgment, joined with peace and tranquility, serve as cargo-ships in the ocean of the world. ²⁴ All prosperity attends on him who is possessed of reason, contentment, peacefulness and the habit of keeping good company, like the fruit of the wish-fulfilling kalpa tree. ²⁵ The man possessed of reasoning, contentment, tranquility and a proclivity to keep good company is attended by every grace, as all the digits unite in the full moon.

²⁶ The happy mind filled with contentment, quietness, reasoning power, and a tendency towards good company meets with prosperity and success, much like kings guided by good ministers.

²⁷ Therefore, O delight of Raghu's race, bravely govern your mind and always diligently practice some one of these virtues. ²⁸ Exert your best courage to subdue your elephantine mind. Know that until you have mastered one of these cardinal virtues, you can make no progress. ²⁹ It must be, O Rama, that you must set your heart to work by the exertion of your courage and the gnashing of your teeth in order to succeed in meritorious deeds. ³⁰ For whether you be a god, yaksha nature spirit, man, or tree, you cannot, O long-armed Rama, have a better course until you master one of these qualities.

³¹ As soon as one of these virtues is strengthened and made fruitful in you, it will serve to weaken the force of the faults of your uncontrollable mind. ³² The cultivation of virtues leads to their full growth and the suppression of vice, but the fostering of vice will lead to the increase of vices and the suppression of good qualities.

³³ The mind is a wilderness of errors in which the stream of our desires flows with full force between its two banks of good and evil where we hold our stand. ³⁴ It bears away and throws a man on the bank which he strives to reach by his own efforts. Therefore O Rama, do as you like to reach either shore. ³⁵ Now with all the exertion of your manly force, try by degrees to turn the course of your desires towards the happy shore in the forest of your mind. Know, O high-minded Rama, that one's own disposition is like a rapid current that must not be permitted to bear him away (to the perilous coast).

Chapter 17 — On the Contents of the *Yoga Vasishta*

¹ Thus, O progeny of Raghu, a reasoning soul is worthy of attending to the words of wisdom, just as a prince (is inclined to listen) to a discourse on polity. ² A clear and high-minded man who has renounced the company of stupid folks is capable of fair reasoning, just like the clear sky has the capacity of receiving moonlight. ³ You who are replete with the entire grace of such quality should now attend to the words that I say to remove the errors of your mind. ⁴ Only he whose tree of merit is bending down with its load of fruit will be interested to hear these words for the sake of his salvation. ⁵ It is only the noble minded, and not the base, who are receptacles of grand and holy sermons conferring the knowledge of their future state.

⁶ This collection of thirty-two thousand couplets (*slokas*, verses of two lines each) is judged to contain the essence of the means to liberation and to confer the final annihilation (of our being). ⁷ As a lamp presents its light to every waking man, so does this work effect the ultimate enlightenment of every person whether he would like it or not. ⁸ One's knowledge of this work, whether by his own perusal or hearing about it from others' repetition, tends to the immediate obliteration of his errors and to the increase of his delight, as if done by the holy river of heaven (Ganges). ⁹ As the fallacy of mistaking a rope for a snake is removed by examining it, so the fallacy of the reality of the world is removed by reading and studying this work, which gives peace to one who is vexed and tired of the world.

¹⁰ It contains six books all filled with sentences full of reason, each distinct from the other in its import. It has many couplets containing chosen examples on all subjects.

¹¹ The first book (*Vairagya Prakaranam*, Chapter on Detachment) treats of detachment and causes the growth of apathy (in the mind) like a tree growing in desert soil. ¹² It contains one thousand five hundred stanzas which, being well considered in the mind, must impart a purity like the luster of a gem after it is polished.

¹³ The next book (*Mumukshu Vyavahara Prakaranam*, Chapter Concerning the Qualities of the Aspirant for Liberation) dwells on the conduct of one longing after his liberation, and contains a thousand couplets arranged in judicious order. ¹⁴ It describes the nature of men desiring their liberation.

Then follows the third book (*Utpatti Prakaranam*, Chapter on Creation) on the creation of the world, filled with stories and examples. ¹⁵ It has seven thousand couplets teaching sound philosophy about the spectator and spectacle of the world in the forms of "I" and "you", designated the ego and non-ego. ¹⁶ It contains a description of how the world was produced from its state of non-existence. A diligent attention to this chapter will convey a full knowledge of this world to the mind of the listener.

¹⁷ This ego and non-ego, and this vast expanse with all the worlds, space and mountains, are to be seen as having no form or foundation as there are no such things. ¹⁸ There are no elements such as the earth and others. They exist only as the fabrications of our minds. They are like phantoms appearing in a dream, or like castles in the air. ¹⁹⁻²⁰ They resemble hills moving on the shore to one passing in a boat, or like hobgoblins appearing to an unsound mind. Such is the appearance of the world which has no seed, source or origin of its own.

²¹ It is like the impression of a tale in the mind, or the sight of a chain of pearls in the sky, or taking a bracelet for its gold, or a wave for the water. ²² Creation is just like the blue of the sky, always apparent to sight, charming to behold, yet never real, there being no color in it. ²³ Thus whatever unreal wonders appear to us in our dreams or in the sky, they are only like a fire in a picture that only seems to be burning and has no fire in it.

²⁴ The word *jagat* (all that moves, the universe) is appropriately applied to the transitory world, which passes like the sea with its heaving waves, appearing as a dancing chain of lotus flowers. ²⁵ It is (as false) as imagining a body of water from the sound of geese, and as useless as a withered forest in autumn when leaves and fruit fall off and the trees yield neither shade nor luscious nutriment. ²⁶ It is full of delirious cravings like men at the point of death, and is as dark as caverns in the mountains. Hence the efforts of men are only acts of their frenzy.

²⁷ It is better to dwell in the clear sky of the autumn harvest of philosophy, after the frost of ignorance has subsided, than to view this world which is no more than an image on a post or a picture on a wall.

²⁸ Know all conscious and unconscious things are made of dust.

Next follows the fourth book on Existence (*Sthiti Prakaranam*). ²⁹ It contains three thousand couplets full of explanations and stories showing the existence of the world to be a form of the essence of the spectator ego. ³⁰ It describes how the spectator (ego) manifests as the spectacle (non-ego), and how the ten-sided sphere of the garden of the world manifests both as subjective and objective (at the same time). ³¹ It has thus arrived at its development which is said to be everlasting.

Next follows the fifth book on peacefulness (*Upashanti Prakaranam*) consisting of five thousand couplets. ³² The fifth is styled the book on holiness, containing a series of excellent lectures and demonstrating the false conception of the world, as “I”, “you” and “he” (as distinct existences). ³³ The suppression of this error forms the subject of this book. Hearing this chapter on peacefulness serves to put an end to our reincarnations in this world.

³⁴ After suppression of the train of errors, there still remain slight vestiges of it, to a hundredth part, just as a picture of soldiers gives us some faint idea of soldiers. ³⁵ Aiming at the object of another person is as vain as looking at the beauty of an imaginary city, or sitting in expectation of an unattainable object. It is like noisily fighting for something in sleep. ³⁶ It is as vain as a man whose desires are not subdued, bursting into a roaring like that of the loud and tremendous thunder-claps. It is like building a city on the model of effaced impressions from a dream. ³⁷ It is as vain as an imaginary city, with gardens, flowers and fruit growing in it. It is like a sterile woman bragging of the valorous deeds of her unborn and imaginary sons. ³⁸ It is like a painter about to draw the chart of an imaginary city on the ground who has forgotten to sketch a plan beforehand. ³⁹ It is as vain as expecting evergreen foliage and fruit in all seasons, and the breeze of an arbor that has not grown or a future ornamental garden, pleasant with the sweets of spring.

⁴⁰ Then follows the sixth book entitled annihilation (*Nirvana Prakaranam*), which is as clear as the waters of a river after its waves have subsided. ⁴¹ It contains the remaining number of couplets (*i.e.*, the remaining 14,500 couplets of the 32,000 total that is the entire work). Knowledge of these verses is pregnant with great meaning. Their understanding leads to the chief good of utter extinction and

pacification of desires.⁴² The intellect that is separated from all its objects presents the manifestation of the soul, full of intelligence and free from all impurity. It is enveloped in the sheath of infinite void and is wholly pure and devoid of worldly errors.

⁴³ Having finished its journey through the world and performed its duties here, the soul assumes a calmness like that of the unbreakably hard column of the sky reflecting the images of the tumultuous world (without changing itself).⁴⁴ It rejoices exceedingly at being delivered from the innumerable snares of the world, and it becomes as light as air by being freed from its desire of looking after endless objects.⁴⁵ The soul that takes no notice of any cause or effect or doing, or what is to be avoided or accepted, is said to be disembodied though encumbered with a body, and to become unworldly in its worldly state.

⁴⁶ An intelligent soul is compared to a solid rock, compact and without any gap in it. It is the sun of intelligence which enlightens all people and dispels the darkness of ignorance.⁴⁷ An ordinary soul, though so very luminous, has become grossly darkened by being confined to the vile fooleries of the world and wasted by the malady of its cravings.⁴⁸ When freed from the imaginary monster of its egoism, a soul becomes incorporeal, even in its embodied state, and beholds the whole world as if it were placed on the point of one of a multitude of hairs, or like a bee sitting on a flower upon Sumeru Mountain.⁴⁹ An intelligent and empty soul contains and beholds in its sphere a thousand glories of the world, shining in each atom, as it was in a mirror.

⁵⁰ It is not even possible for thousands of Vishnus, Shivas and Brahma to equal the great minded sage in the extent of his comprehensive soul because the liberated have their chief good stretched to a far greater limit than any.

Chapter 18 — The Effect of the *Yoga Vasishta*; Its Similes & Examples

¹ Vasishta said:—

The previous parts of this work, as already related, give rise to understanding like seeds sown in a good field never fail to produce a good harvest.

² Even human compositions are acceptable when they instruct good sense because men are always required to abide by reason. Otherwise, the Vedas should be renounced as unreliable. ³ Words that conform to reason are to be received even if spoken by children. Otherwise they are to be rejected as straw even if they are pronounced by the lotus-born Brahma himself.

⁴ Whoever drinks from a well because it was dug by his ancestors, but who rejects the holy water of the Ganges even when placed before him, is an incorrigible simpleton.

⁵ As early dawn is invariably accompanied by light, so is good judgment an inevitable attendant on the perusal of this work. ⁶ Whether these lessons are heard from the mouth of the learned or well studied by oneself, they gradually will make their impressions upon the mind by constant reflection on their sense. ⁷ They will first furnish a variety of Sanskrit expressions, and then spread before him a series of holy and judicious maxims, like so many ornamental vines that decorate a hall. ⁸ They will produce a cleverness joined with such qualifications and greatness as to engage the good grace of gods and kings.

⁹ They are called intelligent who know the cause and effect of things. They are likened to a torch-bearer who is clear sighted in the darkness of the night. ¹⁰ All false and covetous thoughts become weaker by degrees, just as the sky is cleared of mist at the approach of autumn.

¹¹ Your thoughts require only the guidance of reason, as every action needs be duly performed to make it successful. ¹² The intellect becomes as clear as a great lake in autumn and it gets its calmness like that of the sea after its churning by Mandara Mountain. ¹³ Like the flame of a chandelier cleansed of its soot and dispelling the shroud of darkness, refined intellect distinguishes things and shines forth in full brightness.

¹⁴ The evils of penury and poverty cannot overpower those whose strong sight can discern the evils of their opposites (wealth and riches), just like no dart can pierce the mortal parts of a soldier clad in full armor. ¹⁵ No worldly fears can daunt the heart of a wise man, however near they may approach him, just as no arrow can pierce a huge solid stone. ¹⁶ Such doubts as “whether it is destiny or our own merit that is the cause of our births and actions” are removed, just as darkness is dispelled by daylight.

¹⁷ There is a calm tranquility attending the wise at all times and in all conditions. So also does the light of reason, like solar rays, follow the dark night of error. ¹⁸ A man of right judgment has a soul as deep as the ocean and as firm as a mountain, and a cool serenity always shines within him like that of moonlight.

¹⁹ He who arrives slowly at what is called “living-liberation,” who remains calm amid the endless turmoil, and who is quite aloof from common talk ²⁰ has a mind that is calm and cool at everything. It is pure and full of heavenly light, shining serenely like moonlit night in autumn. ²¹ When the sun of

reason illuminates the cloudless region of the mind, no ominous comet of evil can make its appearance.²² All desires are at rest with the elevated. They are pure with the steady and indifferent to the inert, like a body of light clouds in autumn.

²³ The slanders of envious ill-wishers are put out of mind (by the wise), just like the frolics of night demons disappear at the approach of day.²⁴ A mind fixed on the firm basis of virtue and placed under the burden of patience is not to be shaken by accidents but remains like a plant in a painting.²⁵ A knowing man does not fall into the pitfalls that lie all about in the affairs of this world. Who that knows the way will walk into a ditch?²⁶ The minds of the wise are as delighted in acting in accordance with the instructions of good books and the examples of the virtuous as chaste women are fond of keeping themselves within their inner apartments.

²⁷ The detached philosopher views each of the innumerable millions of atoms that compose this universe in the light of it being a world.²⁸ The man whose mind is purified by a knowledge of the precepts of liberation neither regrets nor rejoices at the loss or gain of the objects of enjoyment.

²⁹ Men of unfettered minds look upon the appearance and disappearance of every atomic world as the fluctuating wave of the sea.³⁰ They neither grieve at unwished-for occurrences nor pine for their wished-for chances. Knowing well all accidents are the consequences of their actions, they remain as unconscious as trees.

³¹ These holy men appear just like ordinary people. Their minds remain unconquered and they live upon what they get, whether they receive any manner of welcome or unwelcome.³² They having understood the whole of this scripture, and having read and considered it well, hold their silence like a curse or blessing (which is never uttered by saints).

³³ This scripture is easy to be understood and it is ornamented with figures of speech. It is a poem full of flavors and embellished with beautiful similes.³⁴ One who has a slight knowledge of words and their meanings may be self taught in it, but he who does not understand the meanings well should learn from a pundit.³⁵ After hearing, thinking and understanding this work, one has no more need to practice austerities or meditation or repeating mantras or performing other rites. A man requires nothing else in this world for the attainment of his liberation.³⁶ By deep study of this work and its repeated perusal, a man attains an uncommon scholarship and the purification of his soul.

³⁷ The ego and the non-ego, that is, the viewer and the viewed, are both only imaginary monsters of the imagination. Only their annihilation leads to the vision of the soul.³⁸ The error of the reality of ego and the perceptible world will vanish away like visions in a dream, for who that knows the falsehood of dreams will fall into the error (of taking them for truth)?³⁹ As an imaginary palace gives no joy or grief to anyone, the false conception of the world is the same.

⁴⁰ Just like nobody is afraid of a painting of a serpent, to one who knows, the sight of a living serpent neither terrifies nor pleases.⁴¹ Our knowledge of a picture removes our fear of a painted serpent. Our conviction of the unreality of the world must disperse our mistake of a snake's existence.

⁴² Even the plucking of a flower or tearing of its leaflet requires a little effort, but no exertion whatever is required to gain the blessed state.⁴³ Plucking or pulling off a flower involves an action of the body, but with yoga there is no physical action. You only have to fix your mind.⁴⁴ It can be

practiced with ease by anyone sitting in his easy seat and fed with his usual food who is not addicted to gross pleasures or breaching the rules of good conduct.⁴⁵ You can derive happiness from your own observations at any place and time, as you can from your association with the good whenever it is available. This is an optional rule.

⁴⁶ These are the means of gaining a knowledge of the highest wisdom, conferring peace in this world, and saving us from the pain of being reborn in the womb.⁴⁷ Those who are afraid of this course and are addicted to the vicious pleasures of the world are to be reckoned as too base, no better than feces and worms in their mother's bowels.

⁴⁸ Attend now, Rama, to what I am going to say in another way with regard to advancing in knowledge and improving one's understanding.⁴⁹ Hear now a new method in which this scripture is learned, and its true sense interpreted to people by means of its exposition.

⁵⁰ A simile or example serves to explain the unapparent meaning of a passage by illustration with something that is well known and which may be useful to help understanding.⁵¹ It is hard to understand a meaning without an example, just as it is useless to have a lamp-stand at home without setting a lamp on it at night.⁵² The similes and examples I have used to make you understand are all derived from some cause or other, but they lead to knowledge of the uncaused Brahma.⁵³ Whenever comparisons and compared objects are used to express cause and effect, they apply to all cases except Brahma (who is without a cause).

⁵⁴ The examples that explain the nature of Brahma are to be taken in their partial sense.⁵⁵ The examples given to explain divine nature are to be understood as referring to a world seen in a dream.

⁵⁶ In such cases, no material example can apply to the incorporeal Brahma, and no optional and ambiguous expression can give a definite idea of him.

⁵⁷ Those who find fault with examples of an imperfect or contradictory nature cannot blame our comparison of the appearance of the world to a vision in dream.

⁵⁸ Earlier and later developments of this non-entity (the world) are considered to exist in the present moment. Waking and dreaming states are known from our boyhood.⁵⁹ The comparison of the existence of the world with the dreaming state is exact in all instances because our desires, thoughts, pleasures and displeasures, and all other acts are the same in both states.⁶⁰ This work and all others composed by other authors on the means of salvation have pursued the same plan in their explanation of the knowable.⁶¹ The resemblance of the world to a dream is found also in the scriptures and the Vedanta. It is not to be explained in a word, but requires a continued course of lectures.⁶² Such writings also cite comparisons of the world to the images in a dream or an imaginary paradise of the mind in preference to other similes.

⁶³ Whenever a causality is shown by a simile of something which is no cause, there the simile is applied in some particular and not all its general attributes.⁶⁴ The partial similarity of this comparison with some property of the compared object is unhesitatingly acknowledged by the learned in all their illustrations.

⁶⁵ When the light of the senses is compared with a lamp, the reference is to brightness only and not its stand, holder, oil or wick.⁶⁶ The compared object is to be understood in its capacity of admitting a

partial comparison, as in the instance of sense and light. The simile consists in the brightness of both.
⁶ ⁷ When the knowledge of a knowable thing is derived from some particular property of the comparison, it is the subject of a suitable simile in order to understand the sense of some great saying.
⁶ ⁸ We must not overshadow our intellect by bad logic, or set at nothing our common sense by an unholy skepticism.

⁶ ⁹ We have by our reasoning well weighed the verbosity of our opinionative adversaries and never set aside the holy sayings of the Vedas, even when they are at variance with the opinions of our families. ⁷⁰ O Rama, we have stored in our minds the truths resulting from the unanimous voice of all the scriptures, whereby it will be evident that we have attained the object of our belief, apart from the fabricated systems of heretical scriptures.

Chapter 19 — Interpretation of Comparisons in the *Yoga Vasishta*

¹ It is the similarity of some particular property that constitutes a simile. A complete similarity between the comparison and the compared object destroys their difference. ² From the knowledge of parables follows an awareness of the one soul that is discussed in the scriptures (Vedanta). The peace that attends reflection on the holy word is called extinction (*nirvana*).

³ Therefore it is useless to talk of either complete or partial agreement between example and the exemplar. It is enough for the purpose of the comparison to comprehend the meaning of the holy word in some way or other. ⁴ Know your peace to be the chief good and be diligent to secure it. When you have food to eat, it is useless to talk about how you came by it. ⁵ A cause is compared with something that has no cause at all, and a comparison is given to express its partial agreement in some respect with the compared object.

⁶ We must not be so absorbed in the pleasures of the world as to be devoid of all sense, like some blind frogs that generate and grow fat amidst rocks. ⁷ Be attentive to these parables and learn your best state from them. For their internal peace, all reasonable men should abide by the lessons of religious works, by the teachings of the scriptures, by the rules of humanity, prudence and spiritual knowledge, and by the continued practice of acts of religious merit. ⁹ Let the wise continue their inquiries until they obtain their internal peace and until they arrive at the fourth stage (*turiya*) of joy known by its name of indestructible tranquility. ¹⁰ Whoever has attained this fourth state of tranquil joy, whether he is alive or not, or a house-holder or an ascetic, has really passed beyond the limits of the ocean of the world. ¹¹ Such a man remains steady at his place like the calm sea undisturbed by Mandara Mountain, whether he has performed his duties according to the scriptures and codes of ethics or not.

¹² When there is a partial agreement of the comparison with the nature of the compared object, it is to be considered maturely for the well understanding of the point in question and not to be made a matter of controversy. ¹³ From every form of argument you are to understand the intelligible. The confused disputant is blind both to right and false reasoning.

¹⁴ The notion of self (soul or God) is self-evident within the consciousness of the mind. Anyone who prattles meaninglessly about this truth is said to be defective in his understanding. ¹⁵ It is partly by pride and partly by their doubts that the ignorant are led to argue about their perceptions, and thereby they obscure the region of their inner understanding, just like clouds obscure the clear sky.

¹⁶ The evidence of perception forms the fountain-head of all sorts of proofs, just like the sea is the mainspring of all its waters. It is this alone which is used in this place, as you shall learn below.

¹⁷ The wise say that substance of all sensations is super-conscious apprehension, and it is truly their right concept which is meant by their perception. ¹⁸ Thus the notion, knowledge and certainty of things as derived from words are called the triple perception of the living soul.

¹⁹ This soul is consciousness. The ego with its cognition of the objects as manifested to us is called a category (i.e., dualist; viz. *samvid*, *samvitti* and *padartha*) ²⁰ Consciousness manifests in the form of the passing world by the multiplicity of acts and the shifts of its volition and choices, just like water exhibits itself in the shapes of waves and bubbles. ²¹ It was not caused before, then it developed itself

as the cause of everything in its act of creation at the beginning of creation, and it became perceptible by itself.²² Causation is a product of the discrimination of the living soul, previously in a state of non-existence, until it became manifest as existent in the form of the material world.

²³ Reason says that the same being that destroys the body also produced it of itself and manifests itself in its transcendental magnitude (of intelligence).²⁴ When a man, through the exercise of his reason, comes to know the soul, he finds before him the presence of the indescribable being.²⁵ The mind being free from desire, the organs of sense are relieved from their action and the soul becomes devoid of the results of its past actions.²⁶ The mind being set at ease and freed from its desires, the organs of action are restrained from their acts, like an engine stopped in its motion.

²⁷ Sensuousness is reckoned as the cause that puts the machinery of the mind to work, just as a rope tied to a log and fastened about the neck of a ram propels him to fight.²⁸ The sight of external objects and the purposes of the internal mind set all men at play, just like the inner force of air puts wind in motion.

²⁹ All spiritual knowledge is holy wherever it is found in anyone. It adds a luster to the body and mind like that of the expanded region of the sky.³⁰ He sees the appearances of all visible objects and maintains his own position among them. He views the spirit in the same light in which it presents itself in any place.³¹ Wherever the Universal Soul appears itself in any light, it remains there and then in the same form in which it exhibits itself to us.³² The Universal Soul being alike in all, the looker and the object seen are both the same being. The looker and the looked being one, their appearance as otherwise is all unreal.

³³ Hence the world is without a cause. All existence is evidently Brahma himself, the perceptible cause of all. Hence perception is the basis of evidence, and inference and others as analogy and verbal testimony are only parts of it.

³⁴ Now let the worshippers of fate who apply the term “destiny” to all their efforts cast off their false faith and let the brave exert their courage to attain their highest state.³⁵ Continue, O Rama, to consider the true and lucid doctrines of successive teachers until you can arrive at a clear conception of the infinitely Supreme Being in your own mind.

Chapter 20 — On Wisdom & Good Conduct

¹ It is reasoning in the company of the respectable that leads most efficiently to the improvement of the understanding, and then to the making of a great man who has all the characteristics of greatness.

² Whatever man excels in any quality, that distinguishes him. Therefore learn and improve your understanding from him.

³ True greatness consists in quietness and other virtues. Without a knowledge of this it is impossible, O Rama, to be successful in anything. ⁴ Learning produces quiet and other qualities and increases the virtues of good people. All this is praised because of their good effects on the mind, just like the rain is praised for growing new sprouts. ⁵ The qualities of quietude and other virtues serve to increase the best knowledge, just like a sacrifice with rice serves to produce blissful rains for the harvest. ⁶ As learning produces the qualities of quiet and the like, so do these qualities give rise to learning. Thus they serve to grow each other, just as lake and lotuses contribute to their mutual benefit. ⁷ Learning is produced by right conduct as good conduct results from learning. Thus wisdom and morality are natural helps to one another.

⁸ An intelligent man who is possessed of quietude, meekness and good conduct, should practice wisdom and follow the ways of good people. ⁹ Unless one practices wisdom and good conduct in an equal degree, he will never be successful in either of them. ¹⁰ Both of these should be joined together like the song united with percussion, or like the farmer and his wife sowing seeds and driving away the birds. ¹¹ It is by practice of wisdom and right conduct that good people are enabled to acquire both in an equal degree.

¹² I have already expounded to you, O Rama, the rule of good conduct. Now I will explain to you fully the way of gaining learning.

¹³ Learning leads to fame, long life and the acquisition of the object of your exertion. Therefore the intelligent should learn the good sciences from those who have studied and mastered them. ¹⁴ By hearing (these lectures) with a clear understanding, you will surely attain the state of perfection, just like dirty water is purified by infusion of kata fruit.

¹⁵ A sage who has known the knowable has his mind drawn imperceptibly to the state of bliss. Once known and felt, the impression of that highest state of unbounded joy is hard to loose at anytime.

BOOK III
On Creation
(*Utpatti Khanda*)

This section deals with the origin and nature of the universe. According to Vasishta, this universe with its innumerable objects, its concepts of time and space, and its varied laws is only a creation of ones own mind. Just as the mind creates a world in the dream state, so it also creates an imaginary world in the waking state. The only difference between the dream and the waking states is that dreams are short and the waking state is relatively longer. Time and space are only ideas of the mind. Through the minds perception many thousands of years may pass as a moment, or a moment in time in the waking state may be experienced as years in the dream state. The same is true of the concept of space. All these facts are illustrated by a number of interesting and revealing stories.

Chapter 1 — The Appearance of Creation Is from the Mind of Brahma

¹ It is through both words and lights (*i.e.*, the words of the scripture and the lights of nature and reason) that the knower of the great god perceives the spirit of Brahma appearing within himself, like in a dream. He also knows him as such who understands him according to the holy text, “What this is, that is the self.” ² This passage shows, in short, the visible world at its creation residing in the empty bosom of Brahma. What this creation is, from where it arises, and how it becomes extinct in the end are now to be known in detail. ³ O intelligent Rama, now hear me expound to you all things according to my best knowledge and agreeably to their nature and substance in the order of creation.

⁴ One conscious of himself as a spiritual and intelligent being views the passing world as a dream. This dream simile of the passing world applies equally to our knowledge of ego and non-ego. ⁵ After the book describing the conduct of the seekers of liberation (*mumukshu-vyavahara*) follows the book of evolution (*utpatti*, creation), which I am now going to propound to you.

⁶ Bondage consists in our belief in the reality of the visible world. So our release depends on the negation of phenomena that are apparent to the senses. Now hear me tell you how to get rid of the visible.

⁷ Whoever is born in this world continues to progress until at last he obtains his final liberation (his ultimate perfection) or rises to heaven or falls into hell. ⁸ Therefore I shall expound for your understanding everything relating to the production and continuance of things, and their prior states as they were. ⁹ Now hear me, Rama, give you a brief abstract of this book. Later I will expand upon it so that you may know more of how creation is produced.

¹⁰ Know that all that appears either as living or inert in this world are like appearances in a dream in the state of sound sleep (*susupti*) which becomes extinct at the end of an epoch (*kalpa*). ¹¹ Then there remains a nameless and undeveloped something in a state of deep, dark and dank abyss, without any light or thick-spread (*nebulae*) over it. ¹² The wise give this great self-existence the titles of Reality (*rita*), Self (*atma*), Supreme (*param*), Immense (*brahma*), Truth (*satyam*) and so forth as common expressions to refer to the Great Spirit (*mahatman*).

¹³ Then this same spirit shows itself in another form called the individual soul (*jivatma*), and comes afterwards to be understood in the limited sense of life. ¹⁴ This inert living principle (*jiva*) becomes, just like the word suggests, the moving spirit, which afterwards with its power of thinking becomes the mind, and finally the embodied soul. ¹⁵ Thus the mind is produced and changed from the quiescent nature of the Great Supreme Spirit to a state of restlessness, like that of a surge heaving itself in the ocean.

¹⁶ The mind soon evolves itself as a self-willing power that exercises its desires at all times and through which this extensive magic scene of the world is displayed for our view. This scene is figured as *virajmurti*, or the manifestation of desires from the will of Divine Mind. In the Indian genealogy of gods, it is represented as the offspring of Brahma.

¹⁷ As the word ‘golden bracelet’ signifies nothing other than a bracelet made of gold, so the meaning of the word ‘world’ is not different from its source, the Divine Will. ¹⁸ Again as the word ‘gold’ bears the idea of the substance of which the bracelet is made, so the word ‘Brahma’ conveys the

meaning of the immensity which contains the world. But the word ‘world’ contains no idea of Brahma, and neither does ‘bracelet’ convey the idea of gold. The substance contains the form just as a stone does the statue, but the form does not contain the substance.

¹⁹ The unreality of the world appears as a reality, just as the heat of the sun presents an unreal mirage in the moving sands of the desert as real waves of the sea. ²⁰ It is this fantasy which the learned in all things describe as ignorance (*avidya*), nature (*sansriti*), bondage (*bandha*), illusion (*maya*), error (*moha*), and darkness (*tamas*).

²¹ Now hear me relate to you, O moon-faced Rama, about the nature of this bondage, whereby you will be able to know the mode and manner of our liberation from it.

²² The intimate relation between spectator and spectacle is called his bondage because the spectator’s mind is tightly bound to the object of his sight. Therefore, the absence of visible objects from the mirror of the mind is the only way to his liberation. ²³ Knowledge of the world, which is thinking that individual existence is different from others, is said to be a false view of the soul. There can be no liberation as long as one labors under this blunder of the knowledge of separation. ²⁴ To say that the soul is not this and not that is an endless false dispute over words. Discrimination between alternatives only serves to increase the ardor for objects.

²⁵ Truth is not to be obtained by philosophers chopping logic or by pilgrimage or ceremonial acts, any more than believing in the reality of the material world. ²⁶ It is hard to avoid the sight of the phenomenal world and to repress one’s ardor for it. But it is certain that phenomena can not lead us to Reality, and that the Real cannot mislead us to unreality.

²⁷ Wherever the invisible, inconceivable and intelligent spirit exists, there the beholder views the visible beauty of God shining even in the midst of atoms. ²⁸ The phenomenal world has its rise from Him, yet ignorant people who depart from Him to the adoration of others resemble fools who forsake rice to feed upon gruel. ²⁹ Although this visible world is apparent to sight, yet O Rama, it is only a shadow of that Being who resides alike in the smallest atom and in the mirror of the mind, who receives the image of the largest as well as the minutest things. ³⁰ The spirit is reflected in everything like a figure in the mirror, and it shines equally in rocks and seas and in the land and water as it does in the mirror of the mind.

³¹ The visible world is the scene of constant sorrows, births, decay and death. By turns the states of waking, dreaming and sound sleep present the gross, subtle and impermanent forms of things for our delusion. ³² Here I sit in a meditative mood, having wiped the impressions of phenomena from my mind, but my meditation is disturbed by the recurrence of my memories of phenomena. This is the cause of the endless reincarnations of the soul.

³³ It is hard to maintain meditation beyond form (*nirvikalpa samadhi*) when the sight of the visible world is present before our physical and mental vision. Even the fourth stage of *turiya* — *samadhi* without sense in the state of deep sleep — is soon succeeded by self-consciousness and external awareness. ³⁴ On rising from this state of deep meditation, one finds himself as if roused from sound sleep and he again sees the world full of all its sorrows and imperfections opening wide before him.

³⁵ Then, O Rama, what is the good of this transient bliss which one attains by temporary meditation,

when he again becomes subject to his sense of the sufferings of the world, like a vale of tears? ³⁶ But if one can attain a state of unalterable separation of his thoughts from all worldly objects, as he has in his state of deep sleep, then he is said to have reached the highest level of holiness on earth.

³⁷ Nobody has ever gained anything from reality with its scenes of unreal vanities because whenever his thoughts come in contact with any outward thing, he finds ‘reality’ inseparable from imperfect existence. ³⁸ Should anybody forcibly withdraw his attention from phenomena and, for a while, fix his sight on a stone, afterwards he is sure to be carried away again by phenomena pressing upon his sight.

³⁹ It is well known to all that a yogi’s practice of unflinching meditation, even if it has the firmness of a rock, cannot last owing to his worldly propensities. ⁴⁰ Even steady meditation that has attained the fixedness of a rock cannot advance one step towards the attainment of that tranquility which has no limit. ⁴¹ Thus the sight of phenomena being altogether unavoidable, it is a foolish to think that phenomena can be suppressed by practicing prayers and austerities and similar acts of tapas.

⁴² The idea of the phenomena is as inherent in the mind of the spectator of the visible world as the seeds of the lotus flower are contained in its inner cells. ⁴³ The ideal of the phenomenal world lies hidden in the minds of the spectators of the outer world, just like flavor and moisture are in fruit, oil is in sesame seeds, and sweet scent is innate in flowers. ⁴⁴ Just like the fragrance of camphor and the smells of other substances are inherent in their nature, so the reflection of the visible world resides in the bosom of the intellect.

⁴⁵ As your dreams and desires rise and subside of themselves under the functioning of your intellect, so the idea of a thing always reoccurs to your mind from your original idea of that thing which has been impressed onto your mind, the seat of all that is visible. ⁴⁶ The mental appearance of the visible world deludes its beholder in the same way a fantasy appearance of a ghost or hobgoblin misleads a child.

⁴⁷ The notion of the visible world gradually expands itself, like a seed that germinates in time, sprouts and spreads itself afterwards in the form of a plant. ⁴⁸ As seeds and other minute life forms contained within the bosoms of fruit and the embryos of animals expand themselves to become wonderfully beautiful forms, so does the seed of this world lying hidden in the Divine Mind unfold itself into the wonderful forms of visible phenomena in nature.

Chapter 2 — Description of the First Cause: Yama Explains Air-born Brahma to Death; Will without Form or Action

¹ Vasishta resumed:—

Rama, now listen as I relate the story of Akasaja, the air-born brahmin, which will be precious to your ears and will enable you to better to understand the drift of this book of creation.

² There lived a brahmin named Akasaja who always sat reclined in his meditation and was ever inclined to do good to all creatures. ³ Finding him long-lived, Death thought to himself, “Only I am imperishable, and I devour all things one by one. ⁴ How is it that I cannot stuff myself with this air-born? I find my teeth as blunt on him as the edge of a sword on solid rock.” ⁵ So thinking, he proceeded to the home of the brahmin intent upon making an end of him. For who is not so dull in nature that he is not alert in his practice?

⁶ But as Death was about to enter Akasaja’s house, he was opposed by a fire as powerful as that in the final destruction of the last day of the world’s dissolution. ⁷ He passed through the flames and entered the house where, seeing the holy man before him, he greedily stretched out his hand to grab him. ⁸ Even with his hundred hands, Death was unable to grasp the holy man, just as it is impossible for the strongest to withstand a determined man in his habitual course.

⁹ Death then went to his lord, Yama, the god of the underworld, to answer his question why he could not devour the air-born being. ¹⁰ Yama explained, “Death, do not overly trust your own strength that enables you to destroy the living. It is the act of the dying person that is the chief cause of his death and nothing else. ¹¹ Therefore, be diligent and find out about the acts of the person you intend to kill, because it is only with their assistance that you are able seize your prey.”

¹² Thereupon Death gladly wandered about in all the places under the horizon. He roved over inhabited lands as he did throughout empty and river lands. ¹³ He traversed forests and jungles, marshy and rocky grounds, and maritime coasts. He traveled to foreign lands and islands and pried through their wildernesses, cities and towns. ¹⁴ He searched through kingdoms and countries, villages and deserts. He surveyed the entire earth to find out some act of the brahmin or any part of it.

¹⁵ At last Death, despite all his search and efforts, came to find the acts of air-born brahmin to be as nothing as the offspring of a barren woman, and brahmin’s mind as fixed (in meditation) as if it were a rock.

¹⁶ Then Death returned from his reconnoitering explorations to his all-knowing master Yama and sought his advice, as servants do in matters of doubt and difficulty. ¹⁷ Death addressed Yama saying, “Tell me my lord, where are the acts of the air-born brahmin to be found?”

After much thought, Yama replied as follows. ¹⁸ “Know, O Death, that this air-born seer has no act whatever because he is born of empty air. Therefore his doings are all null and void. ¹⁹ Whoever is born of air is as pure as air itself and has no combination of cause or actions such as all embodied beings. ²⁰ He has no relationship with acts of his prior existence. He is as nothing as the child of a barren woman, like one unborn, uncreated and un-begotten. ²¹ Want of causes has made him a pure empty being, and the lack of prior acts has made him as nothing as an ethereal tree.”

²² “Deprived of former acts, his mind is not ruffled like those of others, nor is there any act in his present state whereby he may become a morsel to death. ²³ Such is the soul seated in the sheath of void, and remaining forever as the simple form of its own causality, and not guided by any extraneous causation whatever. ²⁴ It has no prior deed, nor does it do anything at present, but continues as something like an intelligence with the form of air.”

²⁵ “Our inference that the soul causes the actions of breathing and motion is a mere supposition because the soul is devoid of every thought or tendency towards action. ²⁶ It sits meditating on itself as inseparable from the Supreme Intelligence, just as images are inseparable from the mind of the painter and sculptor. ²⁷ The self-born Brahma is as intimately connected with the objects of his thought as fluidity is associated with water and the void with the sky. ²⁸ His soul is as immanent in the Supreme as motion is inherent in the wind. It has neither the accumulated acts of past lives nor those of its present state. ²⁹ It is produced without the cooperation of accompanying causes and being free from prior motives, it is not subjected to the sufferings that attend human life. ³⁰ It is found to be nothing other than its own cause, and having no other cause for itself, it is said to be self-produced.”

³¹ “Say, how can you lay hold of a being who has done no act and is not in the act of doing anything at present? It is only subject to you when it thinks itself mortal. ³² You are easily able to take anyone who believes his soul to be of this earth and thinks himself to be an earthly being. ³³ Because this brahmin disowns the material body, he is a formless being. Therefore it is as hard for you to enthrall him as it is to use a rope to tie the air.”

³⁴ Death replied saying, “Tell me my lord, how may the unborn (*aja*) or the self-born (*swayambhu*) be produced out of vacuum, and how can an earthly or other elemental body both be and not be?”

³⁵ Yama replied, “This Brahman is neither born nor is nothing at anytime but remains the same forever, like the light of intelligence of which there is no decay. ³⁶ Upon the end of creation, there remains nothing except the tranquil, imperishable and infinite Brahman himself in his spiritual form.

³⁷ This is the nature of the everlasting void, too subtle in its essence and devoid of all attributes, but viewing the present before its mind, the stupendous cosmos in the form of a huge mountain at the beginning of recreation.”

³⁸ “Being of the nature of consciousness it is imperishable, but those who regard spirit to have any material body are liable to perish with it like all embodied beings. ³⁹ Thus in the beginning this Brahman remained in his state of unalterable, empty consciousness in the womb of emptiness. ⁴⁰ It is purely of the nature of empty understanding, and of the form of a vast expanse of omniscience. It has neither body nor organism, no act or agency, nor desire of any kind in itself.”

⁴¹ “That which is simply emptiness and pure light, unlike an embodied being, is never beset by the traps of new desires. ⁴² It has nothing to know or see without itself. The only conception that we can have of it is that it resembles an extended intelligence. ⁴³ Under these circumstances, how is it susceptible to any earthly or other external form? Therefore, O Death, give up your attempts to lay hold of Brahman.”

⁴⁴ Hearing these words from Yama, Death thought upon the impracticability of anyone laying hold on empty void and he sorrowfully returned to his own abode.

⁴⁵ Rama said, "Sage, you said that Brahma is your great father. I think you meant to say that your father is the unborn, self-born Universal Soul and consciousness."

Vasishta speaking:—

⁴⁶ What I had described to you, Rama, is Brahma, and the previous story about the discussion between Death and Yama also regards Brahma.

⁴⁷ Again when Death over the course of a *manvantara* of time had made an end to all living beings, he thought himself strong enough to make an attempt to bear down upon the lotus-born Brahma also. ⁴⁸ It was then that he was rebuked by Yama, saying, "It is your habit that makes you go on your accustomed course of killing. ⁴⁹ But the super-ethereal form of Brahma is beyond your reach because it simply has of the nature of the mind, connected only with its thoughts and having no concern with the actual forms of things."

⁵⁰ Brahma is wonderfully empty consciousness having the faculty of thought. Thus consciousness, being only emptiness, has neither any cause that created it nor any effect created by it. ⁵¹ As the insubstantial principle of will in men manifests itself without being connected with material forms, so the self-born Brahma manifests to all in his own immaterial nature.

⁵² Like strings of pearl appearing in a clear sky, and like the forms of cities seen in a dream, the self-born Brahma is manifest of himself without relation to external objects. ⁵³ As there is no beholder or anything beholding of the solitary Supreme Spirit which is consciousness itself, so the mind manifests of itself. ⁵⁴ It is the mind's capacity to will that is called Brahma. Will being a spiritual faculty, it has no connection with any material substance.

⁵⁵ As the mind of the painter is filled with images of various things, so the mind of Brahma is full of figures of all created beings. ⁵⁶ The self-born Brahma is manifest in his own mind as Brahma is manifested in the empty sphere of his consciousness. He is without beginning, middle or end. He is described as having a male figure when, in reality and like the offspring of a barren woman, he has no body.

Chapter 3 — Subtle & Gross Bodies; Formless Mind (Brahma) Wills the Appearance of Forms

¹ Rama said, “It is even so as you have said, that the mind is a pure essence and has no connection with the earth and other material substances. Mind is truly Brahma itself.² Now tell me, O holy one, why the memory of his former states does not cause his birth, as it is in the case of mine, yours and of all other beings.”

³ Vasishta replied:—

Whoever had a former body, accompanied with the acts of his prior existence, necessarily retains its memories, which are the cause of his being reborn.⁴ But when Brahman is known to have no prior act, how is it possible for him to have memory of anything?⁵ Therefore he exists without any other cause except the causation of his own mind. It is by his own causality that the Divine Spirit is self-born, and is himself his own spirit.⁶ He is everlasting. His body is born of itself from the self-existent Brahman. This unborn or self-born Brahma has no material body whatever, except his subtle spirit body (*ativahika*) or astral body (*linga deha*).

⁷ Rama said, “The everlasting body is one thing and the mortal body is another. Now tell me sage whether all created beings have a subtle body like that of Brahma?”

⁸ Vasishta replied:—

All created beings produced of a cause have two bodies (subtle and gross). But the unborn being which is without a cause has only one body.⁹ The uncreated Brahman is the cause of all created beings, but the uncreated spirit, having no cause for itself, has only one body.¹⁰ The prime lord of creatures has no material body but manifests himself in the empty form of his spiritual body.¹¹ His body is composed of only mind and he has no connection with the earth or any other material substance. He is the first lord of creatures who stretched creation from his empty body.

¹² All creation is only forms of images or ideas in his empty mind. They have no other pattern or originality in their nature. It is a truth well known to everyone that everything is of the same nature with its cause.

¹³ Brahma is a nonexistent being in the manner of perfect consciousness. He is purely a mind form. He is an intellectual entity, not material.¹⁴ He is the prime cause of all material productions in the physical world, and he is born of himself with his prime mobile force in the form of the mind.¹⁵ It was by the first impulse given by the prime moving power that this expanse of creation came to be spread in the same ratio as the currents of air and water are in proportion to the impetus given to them.¹⁶ This creation shining so bright to our sight derives its light from the luminous mind of the formless Brahma, and it appears real to our conceptions.

¹⁷ What we experience in dreams is the best illustration, like the enjoyment of sexual bliss in a dream. In a dream an unreal object of desire presents itself as an actual gain to our fond and false imagination.

¹⁸ The empty, immaterial and formless spirit is described as the self-born and corporeal lord of creatures in the form of the first male.¹⁹ He remains imperceptible in his state of pure consciousness, but becomes manifest to all by the evolution of his will. He cannot be discerned in his absolute state

(of inaction), but becomes conspicuous to us in the display of his nature (in creation).

²⁰ Brahma is the divine power of will. He is personified as the first male agent of creation, but he is devoid of any physical body. He has only the spiritual form of the mind, and he is the sole cause of the existence of the three worlds.

²¹ It is Brahma's will that makes the self-born exert his energies, just as human desires impel all mankind to action, and as the empty mind manifests itself as a mountain of desires. ²² Then it forgets its everlasting and incorporeal nature and assumes to itself a solid material body and shows itself in the shape of a deceptive apparition. ²³ But Brahma, who is of an unsullied understanding, is not involved in forgetting himself. That occurs through the transformation of his unknowable nature to the known state of will. ²⁴ Being unborn of material substance, he sees no appearance like others who are exposed by their ignorance to the misleading errors of falsehood that appear before them like a mirage.

²⁵ As Brahma is merely of the form of the mind, and not composed of any material substance, so the world being the product of the eternal mind is of the same nature as its original source. ²⁶ Again, as the uncreated Brahma has no cause for himself, so his creation has no cause other than himself.

²⁷ Therefore there is no difference between product and its producer, and it is certain that the work must be as perfect as its author.

²⁸ There is nothing like cause and effect to be found in this creation because the three worlds are only prototypes of the archetype of the Divine Mind. ²⁹ The world is stretched out in the model of the Divine Mind. It is not formed by any other holy spirit. Creation is as immanent in the mind of God as fluidity is inherent in water. ³⁰ The mind spreads out this extended unreality of the world, like castles in the air, and builds paradise cities. ³¹ There is no such thing as materiality, which is as false a conception as mistaking a rope for a snake. Hence it is impossible for Brahma and other beings to exist as individual bodies.

³² Even spiritual bodies are nonexistent to enlightened understanding. As for the material body, it has no room in existence. ³³ Man (*manu*), who derives his name from his mind (*manas*), is a form of the will-soul called Virinchi (the Creator, a name of Brahma). His dominion is the mental or intellectual world (*mano-rajyam*) where all things appear in the form of realities. ³⁴ The mind is the creative Brahma (*virinchitvas*) through the exercise of its inherent will (*sankalpa*, intent, volition) for beginning or creation. It displays itself in the form of the visible universe by development of its own essence.

³⁵ This Creator or creative power is of the form of the mind, just like the mind itself is of the form of the Creator. Neither has any connection with any material substance, which is a mere creation of the imagination. ³⁶ All visible things are contained in the bosom of the mind, just as the lotus blossom resides in the seed of the lotus. Hence there is no difference between the mental and visible appearances of things, nor has anyone anywhere ever doubted this.

³⁷ Whatever you see in a dream, whatever desires you have at heart, and all the ideals of your fancy, together with your ideas, notions and impressions of phenomena, know that it is your mind that is the receptacle for them all. ³⁸ But the mind can choose to hold phenomena as desirable, making them as

harmful to their beholder as an apparition is to a child.³⁹ The ideal of phenomena develops itself as the germ contained in the seed and, in its proper time and place, it becomes a large tree.

⁴⁰ If there is no rest with what is real, there can be no peace with phenomena that are full of troubles and give no solace to the mind. It is impossible for the feeling of the perception of phenomena to ever be lost to their perceiver, yet only its subsidence is said to constitute liberation.

Chapter 4 — Nightfall; Creation of Objects

¹ Valmiki describes:—

While Vasishta, the leading sage, was speaking without interruption, the entire assembly was intent upon listening to him with a fixed tone and tenor of their minds.² The string of bells that warriors tie to their waists ceased to jingle. Everyone was motionless. Even the parrots in their cages ceased to warble or flutter.³ The ladies forgot their dalliance and remained quietly attentive to the lecture. Everyone in the royal hall was fixed in attention as if they were paintings and statues.

⁴ Only an hour remained before the closing of the day and the sunbeams became agreeable to all. The busy bustle of the world was dwindling away with the glimmering light of the setting sun.⁵ The beds of full-blown lotuses exhaled their fragrance all around, and soft breezes were playing about, as if to attend the audience.⁶ The sun glided away from his daily course and advanced to the top of the solitary mountain where it set, as if he meant to reflect on all that he had heard.⁷ The shades of night began to cover the landscape. Frost began to spread over forest lands as if they were cooled by the cooling lectures on philosophy.

⁸ Now people failed to gather in all directions, as if they had availed themselves of the sage's instructions to abate the fervor of their exertions.⁹ All objects on earth cast their lengthened shadows, as if they were stretching their necks to hear Vasishta preaching.¹⁰ Then the chamberlain humbly advanced to the monarch of the earth and begged to inform him that the time for the rituals of evening washing and service was about to expire.

¹¹ Upon this, sage Vasishta stopped his sweet speech and said, "Let what has been said, mighty king, be all for this day. I will resume my lecture and speak of other things tomorrow."

¹² The sage held his silence, and the king responded, "Be it so as you will," and rose from his seat.

¹³ For his own good he honored the godly sage and the other seers and brahmins with due respects and offerings of flowers, water, worthy honorary gift rewards, fees, gifts and homage.¹⁴ Then rose the entire assembly with the king and the sages. The gems and jewels that decked princes and people shed their luster on the faces of all.¹⁵ There was a commingled tinkling of bracelets and armlets as the throng mingled in their exit, mixed with the flashes of the necklaces and brocades that decorated their bodies.¹⁶ The jewels attached to the tufts and crests of hair on the tops of their heads emitted a jingling sound resembling the humming of bees amidst their flowery braids.¹⁷ The face of the sky, shining on all sides with a purple color reflected by the golden ornaments on their persons, seemed as if it was pleased with the wise sayings and sense of the sage.

¹⁸ Celestial visitors vanished into the air and earthly guests retired to their homes on earth where they performed their evening rituals.¹⁹ In the meantime, black night made her appearance on earth and, like a bashful young maiden, withdrew to the closet separate from the rest of mankind.²⁰ The lord of the day passed to shine on other lands, for truly it is the avowed duty of every good person to give the benefit of equal light to all.²¹ The shade of evening veiled all sides and uplifted the canopy of the starry sphere on high which, like the spring atmosphere, was emblazoned with star-like kinsuka flowers.

²² The birds of air took to their rest in the hollows of mango trees or on the tops of kadamba trees, like

honest people of fair dealing find their rest in the purity of their minds and the contriteness of their inner hearts.

²³ The skirts of the clouds tinged with red by the slanting beams of the setting sun, and with a shade of yellow color upon them, decorated the western hills with vests of yellow garb while the sky crowned their heads with gemming wreaths of starry groups. ²⁴ The goddess of evening, having departed after receiving her homage (evening prayers), was followed by her train of dark night shades appearing as black-bodied fiends, vetalas.

²⁵ A gentle and cooling breeze was blowing softened by the dew drops of night and opening the petals of kumuda lotus flowers, bearing their fragrance all around. ²⁶ A thick gloom covered the face of nature and the stars were hidden under the mists of night. All the quarters of the skies, with their overhanging loose and hairy mists, seemed like the faces of widows shrouded by the dark disheveled hair of mourning.

²⁷ Now appeared the moist orb of the moon in her ambrosial form in the Milky Ocean of the sky to moisten the mundane heat with her milk-white beams. ²⁸ On her rising, the thick mists of darkness fled from the eastern hemisphere and became invisible in the air, just like the darkness of ignorance is put to flight from the minds of monarchs when they attend to wise sayings.

²⁹ Then the sages and seers, the rulers and priests of the people, took their rest in their respective beds, as the words of Vasishta, full of meaning, rested in the recesses of their hearts.

³⁰ As the thick darkness of night, resembling the dark complexion of death, receded from the arena of the skies, the dewy dawn of day with her slow moving pace followed close on its footsteps.

³¹ Twinkling stars disappeared from the sky, just like flowers on trees are blown away by wind and strewn on the ground like the fallen stars of heaven. ³² The sun became visible to the eyes. His rays roused them from sleep, just as the new-rising faculty of reason becomes conspicuous in the minds of enlightened great souls. ³³ Fragments of clouds shining with sunlight spread a yellow covering over the eastern hills which were still decorated with strings of stars, pendant on the crests of their lofty heads.

³⁴ After the performance of their morning services, all the terrestrial and celestial congress assembled again at the royal hall, in the order and manner of the day before. ³⁵ The full assembly took their seats and sat without moving, like a lake covered with lotus remains calm after a storm.

³⁶ Then Rama addressed Vasishta, the most eloquent of sages, with honey-like words about the subject under investigation. ³⁷ He said, "Tell me plainly, O venerable sir, about the form of the mind, which developed itself in all things of the universe as they were its offshoots."

³⁸ Vasishta replied:—

Rama, the mind has no form that anyone can see. Other than its name, it has nothing substantial, only the formless and irremovable void. ³⁹ The mind as an entity (*sat*) is not situated in any part of the outer body, nor is it within any cavity of the heart or brain. But know it, O Rama, to be situated everywhere as the all encompassing void. ⁴⁰ This world is produced from it, and it is like the waters of the mirage. It manifests itself in the forms of its fleeting thoughts, which are as false as the appearance of secondary moons in mists.

⁴¹ The thinking principle is generally believed to be something between the positive and negative, or real and unreal. You must know it as such and no other. ⁴² That which represents of all objects is called the mind. There is nothing else to which the term mind is applicable. ⁴³ Know that will (volition) is the same as the mind, and that the mind is no different from the will, just as fluidity is the same with water, and as there is no difference between air and its motion in wind. ⁴⁴ For wherever there is any will, there also is that attribute of the mind. Nobody has ever taken will and mind to be different things.

⁴⁵ The representation of any object, whether real or unreal, is mind, and that is to be known as Brahma the great father of all. ⁴⁶ The incorporeal soul in the body is called the mind and it has in itself the knowledge of all senses and everlasting ideas of the physical world. (*I.e.*, the sentient and thinking soul is the same as the mind.) ⁴⁷ The learned have given different names like ignorance, intellect, mind, bondage, sin and darkness to the visible appearance of creation. ⁴⁸ The mind has no form other than a receptacle and reflector of ideas about the visible world which, I repeat, is no new creation, but a reflection of the mind.

⁴⁹ The visible world is situated in an atom of the great mind, just like the germ of the lotus plant is contained within its seed. ⁵⁰ The visible world is as innate in the all-knowing mind as light is inherent in sunbeams, and velocity and fluidity are innate in winds and liquids. ⁵¹ But the visionary ideas of phenomena are as false and fleeting in the minds of their observers as the form of a jewel in gold, or water in a mirage, and they are as wrong as the foundation of a castle in the air, or seeing a city in a dream.

⁵² Because phenomena appear to be real to their observer, O Rama, I will cleanse them from your mind like dirt from a mirror. ⁵³ Just like the disappearance of an appearance makes the observer no longer an observer, know that this is what happens when the mind is in a state of separation (detachment) from whatever is real or unreal in the world. ⁵⁴ Having arrived at this state, all the passions of the soul and the desires of the mind will be at rest, like torrents of rivers at the calm that follows the stillness of the wind. ⁵⁵ It is impossible that things having the forms of space, earth and air will appear the same in the clear light of reason as they do to our ordinary sight.

⁵⁶ Thus when the observer comes to know the unreality of the phenomena of the three worlds, as well as of his own entity, then his pure soul attains knowledge of the solitude of divine existence (*kaivalya*). ⁵⁷ Such a mind reflects the image of God in itself as in a mirror, while all others are like blocks of stone, incapable of receiving any reflection at all.

⁵⁸ After suppression of the sense of “I” and “you” and the error of the reality of the outer world, the observer becomes withdrawn and remains in his sitting posture without seeing external things.

⁵⁹ Rama replied, “If I cannot suppress my perception of entity, or an entity is unable to become a non-entity, or if I am unable to see phenomena as non-existent, ⁶⁰ then tell me, O holy one, how can I to uproot this disease of our eagerness for phenomena from the mind, a disease which bewilders understanding and afflicts us with a series of troubles?”

⁶¹ Vasishta replied:—

Now hear my advice, Rama, for the suppression of this illusion of phenomena, whereby it will surely

die away and become utterly extinct.

⁶² Know Rama, that nothing that is can ever be destroyed or become extinct. Though you remove it, yet it will leave its seed or trace in the mind. ⁶³ This seed is the memory of such things which reopens the ideas of the phenomena in the mind, expanding themselves in the fallacious notions of the forms of big worlds and skies, mountains and oceans. ⁶⁴ These fallacious notions, called faults and defects of understanding, are obstacles in the way to liberation, but they do not affect the sages who are liberated.

⁶⁵ Again, if the world and all other phenomena have real existence, they cannot confer liberation on anyone because phenomena, whether they are situated within or without us, are themselves perishable. ⁶⁶ Learn therefore this solemn truth, which will be fully explained to you in the subsequent parts of this work, ⁶⁷ that all things appearing in the forms of emptiness, elementary forms, the world, and "I" and "you" are non-entities. They have no meaning.

⁶⁸ Whatever is seen as apparent is nothing other than the un-decaying and imperishable essence of the supreme Brahma himself. ⁶⁹ The abundance of creation is an expansion of his fullness, and the quiet of the universe rests in his quietude. It is his quality of sky that is the substance of emptiness, and it is his immensity that underlies the immense cosmos.

⁷⁰ Nothing visible is real, and there is neither spectator nor spectacle here. There is nothing like emptiness or solidity in nature. All this is only a piece of extended Intelligence.

⁷¹ Rama replied, "The proverbs about the son of a barren woman grinding stones, the horns of a rabbit, the dancing of a hill with its arms extended, ⁷² oil flowing from sand, marble dolls reading books, clouds in a painting roaring, and other similar adages apply to your words (on the reality of an unreal essence of God). ⁷³ I see this world to be full of disease, death, trouble, mountains, emptiness and other things. How is it, sage, that you tell me that they do not exist? ⁷⁴ So that I may be certain of this truth, tell me sage, why you describe this world as unsubstantial, unproduced and nonexistent?"

⁷⁵ Vasishta replied:—

Know Rama, that I do not speak contradictions. Hear me explain how unreality appears as real, like the proverb of the son of a barren woman.

⁷⁶ All this was unproduced before and did not exist in the beginning of creation. It comes to appearance from the mind like a city in a dream. ⁷⁷ The mind also was not produced in the beginning of creation and was an unreality itself. Therefore hear me tell you how we come to a notion of it.

⁷⁸ This unreal mind by itself spreads the false and changing scenes of the visible world, just as in a dream we see ever changing unrealities as true. ⁷⁹ Then the mind exerts its will in the fabrication of the body and spreads the magic scene of the phenomenal world far and wide. ⁸⁰ The mind, by the potential of its fluctuations, has many actions of its own, such as expansion, jumping, motion, craving, wandering, diving and seizing, and many other voluntary efforts.

Chapter 5 — On the Original Cause (*Mula-Karana*)

¹ Rama said, “O chief of the sages, what is the cause that leads to our misconception of the mind? How it is produced, and what is the source of its illusion? ² Tell me sage, in brief, about the first production (of the mind), and then, O best of the eloquent, you may say what else there is to be said on the subject.”

³ Vasishta replied:—

Incident to the universal dissolution, when all things are reduced to nothing, this infinity of visible objects remains in a state of calm and quiet before their creation.⁴ There is only great God in existence, who is uncreated and without decay, who is the creator of all at all times, who is all in all and Supreme Soul of all, and who resembles the sun that never sets.⁵ He whom language fails to describe, and who is known only to the liberated, who is termed the soul only by fiction and not by his real nature (which is unknowable).⁶ He is the Cosmic Man (*purusha*) of the Samkhya philosophers, the Brahman of Vedanta followers, the Intelligence of Gnostics, wholly pure and apart from all.⁷ He is known as Vacuum by vacuists, and the One who gives the sun its light. He is truth itself, the power of speech and thought and vision, and all action and passion forever.

⁸ He is who, though ever existent everywhere, appears as nonexistent to the world, and though situated in all bodies, seems to be far from them. He is the Enlightener of our understanding, like the light of the sun to the world.⁹ It is He from whom the gods Vishnu and others are produced, like solar rays from the sun, and from whom infinite worlds have come into existence like bubbles of the sea.

¹⁰ It is He to whom these multitudes of visible creations return, like the waters of the earth to the sea, and who enlightens all souls and bodies like a lamp.¹¹ He is present alike in heaven, in earth, and in the nether worlds, who abides equally in all bodies whether of the mineral, vegetable or animal. He resides alike in each particle of dust as in the high and huge mountain ranges, and He rides as swiftly on the wings of winds as He sleeps in the depths of the earth.¹² He appoints the eight internal and external organs of sense and action to their several functions, and He has made dull and dumb creatures as inert as stones and mute as if they sitting in meditation.¹³ He has filled the skies with emptiness and the rocks with solidity. He has dissolved waters to fluidity and has concentrated all light and heat in the sun.¹⁴ He has spread these wonderful scenes of the world like clouds sprinkle charming showers of rain, both as endless and constant as they are charming and sweet to sight.

¹⁵ It is He who causes the appearance and disappearance of worlds in the sphere of His infinity, like waves in the ocean, and in whom these phenomena rise and set like the running sands of the desert.

¹⁶ His spirit is the indestructible soul that resides as the germ of decay and destruction inside animals. It is so minute as to lie hidden within the body, and so huge as to fill all existence.

¹⁷ His nature (*prakriti*) spreads Herself like a magic vine throughout the space of emptiness and produces the fair fruit in the form of the cosmic egg (*brahmanda*), while the outward organs of bodies, resembling the branches of this plant, keep dancing about the stem (the intelligent soul), shaken by the breeze of life which is ever fleeting.¹⁸ It is He who shines as the gem of intelligence in the heart of the human body, and it is He from whom the luminous orbs constituting the universe continually derive their luster.

¹⁹ It is that colossus of intelligence which like a cloud sheds ambrosial draughts of delight to soothe our souls and showers forth innumerable beings everywhere like raindrops. It bursts into constant flashes showing the prospects of repeated creations which are as momentary as flashes of lightening.

²⁰ It is His wonderful light that displays the worlds to our wondering sight, and it is from His being that both real and unreal derive their reality and unreality.

²¹ The unconscious and ungodly soul turns to the attractions of others against its own purpose, while the tranquil soul rests in itself.

²² It is He who transcends all existences, and by whom all existent beings are bound, in their proper times and places, to their destined actions, as they are also bound to their free actions, motions and efforts of all kinds. ²³ It is He who from His personality of pure consciousness (*cit*, cosmic consciousness), became of the form of emptiness, then by means of His empty mind and empty thoughts filled it with substances, wherein His soul was to reside, and whereon His spirit had to preside.

²⁴ Having thus made the infinite hosts of worlds in the immense sphere of the universe, He is yet neither the agent of any action nor the author of any act in it, but remains ever the same as the sole One alone, in His unchangeable and unimpaired state of self-consciousness, and without any fluctuation, evolution or adhesion of Himself, as He is quite unconcerned with the world.

Chapter 6 — Honest Effort Required to Attain Self Knowledge

¹ Vasishta said:—

It is by the knowledge of this transcendent Supreme Spirit and God of gods that one may become an adept, and not by the rigor of religious austerities and practices. ² Here nothing else is needed than the culture and practice of divine knowledge, and thereby the truth being known, one views the errors of the world like a satisfied traveler looks at a mirage in a clear light.

³ God is not far from or too near us. He is not obtainable by what He is not (such as adoration of images and ritual acts). He is the image of light and joy and is perceivable in ourselves. ⁴ Here austerities and charities, religious vows and observances are of no good whatever. It is only the calm peacefulness of one's own nature that is of value for a person to serve God.

⁵ The best means to attain divine knowledge are fondness for the society of the righteous and devotion to the study of good books. Ritual services and practices serve only to strengthen the trap of our inborn delusions, which only true knowledge can sever. ⁶ As soon as one knows one's own inner light to be God, one gets rid of his miseries and becomes liberated in his living state.

⁷ Rama said, “Having known the Self in himself, one is no more exposed to the evils of life or even of death itself. ⁸ But say, how is this great God of gods to be attained from such great distance (as we are placed from Him), and what rigorous austerities and amount of pains are necessary for it?”

⁹ Vasishta replied:—

He is to be known through your courageous efforts (in knowledge and faith) and by the aid of clear understanding and right reasoning, and never by the practice of austerities or ablutions, or by acts attended with bodily pain of any kind. ¹⁰ For know, O Rama, that all your austerities and charities, your painstaking and mortification, are of no efficacy unless you wholly renounce your passions and enmity, your anger, pride and selfishness, and your envy and jealousy. ¹¹ For whoever with a heart full of vile passions is liberal with money he has earned by defrauding others, the merit of such liberality accrues to the rightful owner of the property and not to its professed donor. ¹² Whoever observes any vow or rite with a mind moved by passions, he passes for a hypocrite and reaps no benefit of his acts.

¹³ Therefore, for putting down the diseases and disturbances of the world, try your manly exertions in securing the best remedies of good precepts and good company. ¹⁴ No other course of action, except to exert one's courage, is conducive to allaying all the miseries and troubles of this life.

¹⁵ Now learn what this courage is so that you may attain wisdom and annihilate the maladies of passions, affections and animosity in your nature. ¹⁶ True courage consists in remaining in an honest calling that conforms with the law and good customs of your country, and in a contented mind that shrinks from savoring the enjoyments of life. ¹⁷ It consists in the exertion of one's energies to the utmost of his power, without bearing any murmur or grief in his soul, and in one's devotion to the society of the good and perusal of good works and scriptures.

¹⁸ He is truly brave who is quite content with what he gets, and spurns at what is unlawful for him to take; who is attached to good company and eager to study faultless works. ¹⁹ They who are of great

mind, and who have known their own natures and those of all others by their right reasoning, are honored by the gods Brahma, Vishnu, Indra and Shiva.²⁰ One should diligently turn towards he who is called righteous by a majority of good people as the best and most upright of men.²¹ The best scriptures are considered to be those which deal primarily with spiritual knowledge. One who constantly meditates on them is surely liberated.

²² It is by means of right discrimination derived from keeping good company and studying holy works that our understanding is cleared of its ignorance, just like dirty water is purified by kata seeds, and as the minds of men are purified by the philosophy of yoga.

Chapter 7 — God Is Pure Consciousness; the Phenomenal World Is Non-Existent

¹ Rama said, “Tell me, O holy one, about this God that you have spoken of, whose knowledge, you said, leads to our liberation. Where is He situated and how can I know Him?”

² Vasishta replied:—

This God of whom I spoke is not at any distance from us. He is situated within these our bodies, and He is known to us as the form of pure Consciousness.³ He is All in all, but all this world is not the omnipresent Himself. He is One alone, but is not all that is visible.

⁴ It is this Consciousness that is in Shiva who wears the crescent moon on his head. It is the same in Vishnu who rides on his garuda eagle, and in Brahma who is born of the lotus. The sun also is a particle of this Intelligence.

⁵ Rama replied, “So it is, and even children say that if the whole world is mere Consciousness, then why call it by another name? What is the use of teaching anyone about it (when everyone is full of Intelligence)?”

⁶ Vasishta replied:—

If you believe pure Consciousness is the same as the intelligent world, then you know nothing about how to get rid of this world.⁷ The world is truly intelligent, O Rama, but the animal soul is called a brutish (*pashu*, animal) observer of things because it looks only after sensual gratifications, which gives rise to only fears of disease, decay and death.⁸ The animal soul (*jiva*), though an incorporeal substance, is an ignorant thing and subject to pain and sorrow. The mind (*manas*) also, though capable of intelligence, has become the root of all evils.⁹ Intellectual liberation from thoughts of the world is one state; unintelligent gazing at it is another. He who knows the better of these two states of the soul has no cause of sorrow.

¹⁰ He who has seen the all surpassing Supreme Being, has all of his heart strings cut asunder and all the questions of his mind driven away. The effects of his acts are washed away.¹¹ The longing after phenomena does not cease unless the perception of phenomena is effaced from the mind.

¹² How then is this perception to be effaced? How is it possible to have a longing after the unintelligible Intelligence without suppressing our longing for phenomena? It is only possible by avoiding the external perceptions of the mind.

¹³ Rama said, “Sage, tell me about that empty animal soul, and how the knowledge of such soul does not enable one to get rid of his reincarnation.¹⁴ Tell me also, who is that man who by company with the good and study of good works has crossed the ocean of the world and beholds the Supreme Soul in himself?”

¹⁵ Vasishta replied:—

Whatever animal souls, having been cast into the wilderness of this life, long after this intelligent soul, they are truly wise and know Him (in themselves).¹⁶ Whoever believes the animal soul to be the life of the world and thinks Consciousness requires pain, he can never know Him anywhere.¹⁷ If the Supreme Soul is known to us, O Rama, the succession of our sorrows is ended, like the fatal cholera after extraction of its poison.

¹⁸ Rama said, "Tell me, O holy one, about the true form of the Supreme Soul, by light of which the mind may escape from all its errors."

¹⁹ Vasishta replied:—

The Supreme Soul is seen in ourselves and within our bodies in the same way as we are conscious that our minds are still be within us after its flight to distant countries. ²⁰ Our notion of the Supreme Spirit is often lost in the depth of our minds in the same way as the existence of the outer world becomes extinct in our consciousness during yoga meditation. ²¹ We lose our sense of seeing and the seen in the knowledge of Him who is a non-empty vacuum or a substantive emptiness. ²² He whose substance appears as a vacuum and in whom exists the empty fullness of the universe, and who appears as emptiness itself, in spite of the multitude of His creation existing in Him, is truly the form of the Supreme Soul. ²³ The form of the Supreme Soul (that you want to know) is He who though full of intelligence, appears to stand before us like an unconscious huge rock, and who, though quite subtle in his nature, seems to be some gross body to our conception. ²⁴ That which encompasses the inside and outside of everything, and assumes the name and nature of everything to itself, is truly the form of the Supreme.

²⁵ As light is connected with sunshine, and emptiness with the sky, and as omnipresence is present with everything and everywhere, such is the form of the Supreme Spirit (that you want to know).

²⁶ Rama asked, "But how are we to understand that He who bears the name and nature of absolute and infinite reality should yet be compressed within anything visible in the world? Such is quite impossible to believe."

²⁷ Vasishta replied:—

The false conception of the creation of the world resembles the false impression of colors in the clear sky. It is wrong, O Rama, to take something as real which does not exist in nature.

²⁸ It is the knowledge of Brahman that constitutes His form, or else there is no act of His whereby He may be known to us. He is entirely devoid of any visible form, and therefore there is no better way for anyone other than to know Him as truth. ²⁹ After all trace of phenomena is gone, there remains a pre-eminent object of conception, which is inborn and manifest of itself. ³⁰ This concept of the Super eminent, having no visible appearance, often has no reflection, and at other times it is reflected in the mirror of the mind.

³¹ Nobody has ever conceived this transcendent Truth in himself, who has not at the same time been convinced of the impossibility of the existence of the visible world.

³² Rama replied, "Tell me, O sage, how the existence of so many extensive worlds composing the visible universe can be thought of as unreal or comprised in the minutiae of the Divine Mind, like Mount Meru in a sesame seed?"

³³ Vasishta replied:—

If you stay in the company of holy men a few days, and if you study sacred scriptures with a steady mind with me, ³⁴ then I will purge this false view of phenomena from your understanding, like a delusive mirage from one's sight. This absence of the view will extinguish your sense of being the

viewer, and restore you to your intelligence alone.

³⁵ When the viewer is united with the view, and the view with the viewer, then duality becomes unity; duality blends into an inseparable unity. ³⁶ Without union of the two there is no success of either. When viewer and the view have disappeared, only one unity remains.

³⁷ I will cleanse the impurity of all your sense of "I" and "you," the world and all other things from the mirror of your mind, by bringing you to your consciousness of self and the total negation of everything else. ³⁸ From nothing never comes a something and from something never proceeds a nothing, so there is no difficulty whatever in removing what does not exist in nature.

³⁹ In the beginning this world which appears so very vast and extensive was not in being. It resided in the pure spirit of Brahma. It has evolved from the mind of Brahma. ⁴⁰ The thing called the world was never produced, it is not in being, and it does not actually appear. It is like gold in the form of a bracelet. It is not difficult to alter and reduce to its gross metallic state.

⁴¹ I will explain it fully by other examples whereby this truth may appear of itself and impress itself irresistibly in your mind. ⁴² How can something be said to exist that was never brought into existence? How can there be water in the mirage, or the ring of an eclipse in the moon? ⁴³ As a barren woman has no son and a mirage has no water, and as the sky has no plant growing in it, so there is no such thing as what we falsely call the world.

⁴⁴ Whatever you see, O Rama, is the indestructible Brahma himself. I have shown you this many times with good reasoning and not just with mere words. ⁴⁵ It is unreasonable, O intelligent Rama, to disregard something a learned man tells you with good reasoning. The dull-headed fellow who neglects to listen to the words of reason and wisdom is deemed as a fool and is subject to all sorts of difficulties.

Chapter 8 — Nature of Good Scriptures; *Yoga Vasishta* as the Treasury of All

¹ Rama asked, “How can it be reasonably shown and established that there is nothing to be known and seen in this world, although we have obvious notions of it supported by sense and right reasoning?”

² Vasishta answered:—

This endemic of fallacious knowledge (of the reality of the world) has been prevalent for a long time. It is only by true knowledge that this wrong application of the word “world” can be removed from the mind.

³ I will tell you a story, Rama, for your success in this knowledge. If you pay attention to it, you will become both intelligent and liberated. ⁴ But if the impatience of a brutish creature makes you get up and leave after hearing only half of this story, then you shall reap no benefit from it. ⁵ Whoever seeks some object and strives after it, he of course succeeds in getting it; but if he becomes tired of it he fails.

⁶ Rama, if you keep to the company of the good and to the study of good scriptures, then surely you will arrive at your state of perfection in course of a few days or mouths, according to the degree of your diligence.

⁷ Rama said, “O you, who are best acquainted with the scriptures, tell me which is the best scripture for the attainment of spiritual knowledge, such that its familiarity may release us from the sorrows of this life?”

⁸ Vasishta replied:—

Know, O high minded Rama, that this work is the best of all others on spiritual knowledge. It is the auspicious (*Yoga Vasishta*) Great Ramayana, the scripture of scriptures. ⁹ This Ramayana is the best of histories, and it serves to enlighten understanding. It is known to contain the essence of all histories. ¹⁰ But by hearing these doctrines one easily finds his liberation coming of itself to him. This is why it is regarded as the most holy writing.

¹¹ All the existing scenes of the world will vanish upon their mature consideration, just like thoughts in a dream are dispersed after waking and realizing one had been dreaming. ¹² Whatever there is in this work can also be found in others, but what is not found here cannot be found elsewhere. Therefore the learned call this the treasury of philosophy. ¹³ Whoever attends to these lectures every day shall have his excellent understanding undoubtedly stored day by day with transcendent knowledge of divinity. ¹⁴ He who finds this scripture to be disagreeable to his polluted taste, may prefer to browse some other scripture that is more wordy and eloquent.

¹⁵ One feels himself liberated in this life by listening to these lectures, just as one finds himself healed of a disease by the potion of some effective medicine. ¹⁶ The attentive hearer of these lessons perceives their efficacy in himself in the same way as one feels the effects of curses or blessings that always have their full effects in time. ¹⁷ All worldly miseries are at an end with he who considers well these spiritual lectures within himself. A similar effect is hard to be produce through charity or austerities, or through performing rituals ordained in the ancient Vedic texts, or through the many hundreds of practices that scriptures describe.

Chapter 9 — Description of Living & Bodiless Liberation; God as the Supreme Cause of All (*Parama Karana*)

¹ Vasishta continued:—

They are truly delighted and gratified who with all their hearts and minds are always devoted to holy conversation among themselves.² Those devoted to the acquisition of knowledge and investigation of spiritual science enjoy the same bliss of liberation in their living state as it is said to attend disembodied souls.

³ Rama said, “Tell me, O holy one, the difference between liberation with and without a body, that I may try to learn with an understanding enlightened by the light of scriptures.”

⁴ Vasishta said:—

Whoever remains as he is and continues intact as emptiness amidst society is called the liberated while in the body (*jivan mukta*).⁵ Who remains employed only in his exercise of intellect and seems to be sleeping in his waking state, though he is conducting his worldly affairs, is called liberated while in the body.⁶ One whose countenance is neither flushed nor dejected in pleasure or pain, and who remains content with what he gets, is called liberated while living.⁷ One whose waking is like the state of sound sleep, who is not awake to the accidents of the waking state, and whose waking state does not sense the desires incident to it, is called liberated in his life.

⁸ Who, though moved by feelings of affection, enmity, fear and the like, is at rest, as clear and undisturbed as emptiness within himself, is called liberated while he is alive.⁹ Who has not an air of pride in him, and is not conceited when he does or refrains to do anything, is called self-liberated in his lifetime.¹⁰ Who with one glance or the wink of his eye has a full view of the whole of creation and the final destruction of the world, like the Supreme Self, is said to be liberated in his lifetime.

¹¹ Whoever is neither feared nor is afraid, and who is free from the emotions of joy, anger and fear, such a person is liberated in life.¹² Who is quiet and quietly disposes his business of this world, and who though he stands as an individual in the sight of men but attaches no individuality to himself, and who though a sentient being is unconscious to all impressions, such a person is the living liberated soul.¹³ Who being full of all possessions, and having everything present before him, remains cold and apathetic to them as if they were useless to him, such a man is liberated in his life.

¹⁴ Now leaving the subject of liberated while in the body, I will describe what they call liberation without body (*videhamukta*) which enters the soul like a breath of wind after it has fled from the mortal body.¹⁵ The disembodied free spirit neither rises nor sets, nor is it subject to wane. It is neither manifest nor hidden. It is not at a distance, nor is it in me, you or in any other person.

¹⁶ It shines forth in the form of the sun and preserves the world like Vishnu. It creates the world in the shape of the lotus-born Brahma, and destroys all as Rudra or Shiva.¹⁷ It takes the form of the sky supported on the shoulders of air that supports all living beings, gods, sages and demigods in the three worlds. It takes the form of boundary mountains that separate earth from sky.

¹⁸ It becomes the earth and supports these numerous types of beings. It takes the forms of trees, plants and grass, and yields fruits and grains for nourishment.¹⁹ It takes the forms of fire and water and

burns and melts in them by itself. It sheds ambrosia in the form of the moon, and causes death in the shape of poison.²⁰ It becomes light with which it fills the sky, and it spreads darkness in the form of dullness (*tamas*). It becomes vacuum to leave empty space for all, while in the form of hills it obstructs their free passage on earth.²¹ In the form of the fleet mind it moves the self-moving animals, and in the form of dull matter it fixes that which is incapable of motion. It girds the earth by its form of the ocean, just like a bracelet encircles the arm.

²² The bodiless spirit takes upon it the great body of the sun and illuminates all the worlds with their minute particles while it remains quiet in itself.²³ Whatever is shining in this universe or ever was or is to be so, in any of the three — past, present and future times — know them all, O Rama, as forms of the Divine Spirit.

²⁴ Rama said, “Tell me, O holy one, why this view of liberation appears so very difficult to me. It makes me believe that liberation is altogether incomprehensible and unattainable by anybody.”

²⁵ Vasishta replied:—

This liberation is called nirvana and it is also called Brahman. Attend now to the means of its attainment.

²⁶ All such visible objects known as “I”, “you”, “this” and the like, because they are unproduced from the eternal being (*sat*) of God, it is impossible to have any conception of them in our minds.

²⁷ Rama said, “I think, O best of them who know the knowable, that the bodiless souls of the liberated, when they pass through the bounds of the three worlds, have to be born again according to the course of nature.”

²⁸ Vasishta replied:—

Those who retain a memory of the three worlds have to move about in them, but those who have lost the idea of their existence are absorbed in infinity.²⁹ For how can one derive knowledge of the unity of God from his belief in duality, the separate existence of the world? Therefore the figurative sense of the cosmos as God (Vishwa) can not give the spiritual and infinite idea of Brahma.

³⁰ He is no other but himself, of the nature of pure intellect, and of the form of the clear and tranquil emptiness. Brahma is said to be the world in order to signify his manifestation of its unreality as a reality to us.³¹ I have well considered a golden bracelet and found nothing as a bracelet in it except its gold.³² I observed the billows and found nothing in them but water. Where there was no water I saw no wave to rise.³³ I see no vibration anywhere except in wind, which is the only force in motion moving all things in the world.

³⁴ As emptiness abides in air and water appears in the burning deserts, and as there is light spread over all creation, so the spirit of Brahma manifests in the three worlds in the forms of the very worlds themselves.

³⁵ Rama said, “Tell me, O sage, what makes this world, with its nature of absolute non-existence, exhibit such distinct appearances in its phenomena?³⁶ Tell me also, if the viewer and the view both become extinct, how can their nirvana or absorption in the deity remain without their personalities?”

³⁷ Again, as it is impossible to conceive the existence of phenomena, say how is it possible to

conceive the existence of the invisible Brahma in his own nature? ³⁸ By what mode of reasoning can this truth be known and ascertained and, this being accomplished, there remains nothing else to be inquired into?"

³⁹ Vasishta replied:—

This false knowledge or predisposition towards the reality of the world has been long prevalent, like a chronic disease, and must be removed only by the specific mantra of reasoning. ⁴⁰ However, it can not be expelled quickly or in a minute. That requires some time, like the ascent and descent of an even sided precipice. ⁴¹ Therefore listen to what I say in order to dispel your fallacy of the world through arguments, logical inferences, and habitual meditation.

⁴² Rama, listen to a tale that I am to tell for your attainment of this knowledge. By hearing it you will become intelligent, wise and liberated. ⁴³ I will now talk about the subject of the production of the world in order to show you that all that is produced serves to bind our souls to the earth, and so that you may live quite free from such bondage. ⁴⁴ I will tell you about creation and how the false conception of the world is as unsubstantial as emptiness itself.

⁴⁵ This world appears to contain moving and unmoving beings and abounds in various races of gods, spirits, kinnaras (body of man and head of horse), ⁴⁶ storm gods and other demigods. All these become invisible and lose themselves in nothing at the ultimate dissolution of the world. ⁴⁷ Then there remains a moist and hollow deep without light and spread with a thick mist, everything undefined and undeveloped, except something that which is Real and lasts forever.

⁴⁸ There was no air or form of anything, no sight or anything to be seen. There were no multitudes of created and material beings that appear to be endless and everlasting to view. ⁴⁹ There was a nameless Self, the fullest of the full in its form. It was neither entity nor non-entity, neither reality nor unreality. ⁵⁰ It was mere Intellect without its exercise of intellect, Infinite without decay, auspicious and full of bliss. It was without beginning, middle or end, eternal and imperishable.

⁵¹ In Him this world is manifest like a pearly goose in a painting. He is and yet is not this creation. He is the soul of both what is real and unreal. ⁵² He is without ears, tongue, nose, eyes or touch, yet He hears, tastes, smells, sees and feels everything in all places and at all times.

⁵³ He is also that (intellectual) light whereby we discern the form of that real and unreal Being in his perspective of creation, as the One without beginning or end, and as presenting an image without color or shade. ⁵⁴ He is that empty Soul who views the worlds as clearly as the yogi with his half closed eyes who fixes his sight between his eyebrows and beholds Him in the form of indescribable light. ⁵⁵ He is the cause of all, He whose cause is as nothing as the horns of a rabbit, and whose works, like so many waves of the sea, are all these worlds.

⁵⁶ His light is ever shining everywhere, and He has his seat in the human heart. It is from the candle light of His Consciousness that all the worlds derive their light. ⁵⁷ It is He without whose light the sun would dwindle into darkness, and whose existence alone gives the world its appearance of a mirage.

⁵⁸ It is His pulsation that vibrates throughout the universe and it is His inertia that stops the course of the whole. It is on that pivot that the world has its revolution, just like a whirling firebrand describes a circle.

⁵⁹ His nature is pure and unchangeable. The works of creation and destruction are mere acts of His will in the persons of Brahma and Hara. ⁶⁰ It is His inertia and force that gives rest and motion to all things, like the ubiquitous course of the winds. But this is only a common belief that He moves. In reality His nature is free from any and all change.

⁶¹ He is always awake in His ever sleeping state, and therefore cannot be said to be waking or sleeping anywhere at anytime. He is both awake and asleep everywhere and at all times. ⁶² His quiescence is attended with bliss and tranquility, and His agitation puts the world in motion and in its course of action, yet He is said to remain unaltered in both states which unite in Him.

⁶³ He is inherent in all things as fragrance is innate in the flower, and He is indestructible like the fragrance remains after the flower is destroyed. He pervades all things, yet is as intangible as the whiteness of linen.

⁶⁴ He, though speechless, is the author of all speech and sound. Though He appears to be as unthinking as a stone, He is full of thought. He, though fully satisfied with His bliss, enjoys all things, although He requires nothing for Himself. ⁶⁵ He, though without body, moves all the members of the body and is described (in the Vedas) as having a thousand arms and eyes. He, having no support for Himself, is yet the support of all, and pervades the whole without being seated anywhere. ⁶⁶ He, having no organs or organic power, is the Organ of organs and performs the functions of innumerable organs. Having no mind that senses, He exhibits endless designs of His Divine Mind in the infinity of creation.

⁶⁷ It is because of our lack of knowledge of Him that we are in constant dread of this delusive world, just as we are afraid of snakes. It is at His sight that all our fears and desires fly far away from us.

⁶⁸ It is in the presence of the clear light of that God of truth that all the wishes of our minds have a better play, just like actors dance best when they have light.

⁶⁹ It is by Him that a hundred types of visible objects arise every moment to our view, like the ceaseless series of waves, billows and surges rising on the surface of the waters. ⁷⁰ It is He who exhibits Himself other than what He is, in hundreds of different shapes to our mistaken minds, just like gold is made to appear in the various forms of bracelets, armlets and a hundred other sorts of trinkets.

⁷¹ He who manifests Himself as the soul abiding in me, you and in every other person, yet is not me, you, he or it, is the Supreme Soul or Self that is the same with and apart from all. ⁷² It is He and the same being, whether you view Him in one or more objects, as it is the same water that heaves itself in this or the other wave. Thus all visible phenomena have their rise from Him. ⁷³ He from whom time has its counting and that which can be seen has its appearance, by whom the mind exercises its thinking powers, and by whose light the world is enlightened, is the Supreme. ⁷⁴ Whatever forms, figures and their actions, whatsoever flavors and odors, and what sounds, touch, feelings and perceptions there are or that you can sense, know them all and their cause also to be the Supreme.

⁷⁵ You will be able to know your own soul, O good Rama, if you can see with the vision that lies between the looker and the object looked upon. ⁷⁶ Know it as uncreated and indestructible, without beginning or end. It is the eternal and everlasting Brahma and bliss itself. It is immaculate and infallible, highly adorable and without fault in its nature. It is beyond all description and a mere void in its form. It is the cause of causes and a notion of something that is unknowable. It is understanding

and the inner faculty of the intellect or the mind.

Chapter 10 — The Emptiness upon Universal Dissolution Is Not Empty; Description of God

¹ Rama said, “That which remains after the universal dissolution is commonly designated by the term ‘formless void.’ ² Then how can you say that there was no void, light or darkness? ³ How could it be without the intellect and the living principle? How could the entities of the mind and understanding be lacking in it? ⁴ How could there be nothing and not all things? You have used other similar paradoxical expressions that have created much confusion in me.”

⁵ Vasishta said:—

You have raised a difficult additional question, Rama, but I shall have no difficulty to solve it, just like the sun is at no pains to dispel the darkness of night. ⁶ At the end of a great kalpa age when there remains that entity of God, it cannot be said to be a void, as I will now explain to you. Attend Rama and hear.

⁷ Like images carved in bas-relief upon a pillar, this world was made in relief upon that Entity. It cannot be said to have been a void. ⁸ Again, when there was the appearance of abundance under the name of the world, and be it real or unreal, it could not have been a void and empty.

⁹ As a pillar with carved or painted figures cannot be said to be devoid of them, so Brahma exhibiting the worlds contained in him can not become a void. ¹⁰ But the world contained in Brahma becomes both something and nothing, just like billows in calm waters may either exist or not exist. ¹¹ Again it happens that the hand of time marks certain figures in some places on some unconscious trees, and these marks are mistaken by people for images. So it comes to pass that certain figures of impermanent matter occur in the eternal mind which men mistake for the real world.

¹² This comparison of the carved pillar, the tree and the world, is a partial and not complete simile. The similarity refers only to the impression of the transient world on the substance of the permanent Brahma. ¹³ But this appearance of the world is not caused by another. It rises, lasts and sets spontaneously and of itself in the same essence of Brahma. It is the nature of the Divine Soul and the mind to raise and set such images in them, like the creations of our imagination.

¹⁴ The meaning of the word void (*shunya*) instead of no void (*ashunya*) or existence is a fiction. It is as false as emptiness is a none-existence in nature. Something must come out of something, and never from a void nothing. How can nothing be reduced to nothing in the end?

¹⁵ In answer to your second question, it has been said “and there was no darkness.” Because the divine light of Brahma (which existed before creation) is not like the light of a material luminary (which is followed by darkness). The everlasting light cannot be hidden by darkness, like sunshine or moonlight or the blazing of fire or the twinkling of stars or our eyes. ¹⁶ What we call darkness is the absence of light from the great celestial suns. God having no material property in his immaterial essence, there could be no such light or darkness with Him before creation.

¹⁷ The light of the empty Brahma is an internal perception of the soul and is only felt and perceived within one’s self, and never externally by anybody. This spiritual light is never clouded by any mist or darkness of temporal objects. ¹⁸ The indestructible Brahma is beyond and free from external and visible light and darkness. He is above the region of emptiness that is contained, as it were, within his bosom, and contains the universe sheathed within His hollow womb.

¹⁹ As there is no difference between the outside and inside of a fruit, so there is no shade of difference between Brahma and the universe. ²⁰ As a wave is contained in and composed of water, and a clay pot of the earth, so the world being contained in Brahma, it can not be said to be null and void but is full of the spirit of God. ²¹ The comparison of earth and water does not agree physically with the spiritual essence of God, whose empty spirit contains and comprises the whole (*vishwa*, universe) within itself, as those elements have their component parts and productions. ²² Now, as the sphere of the intellect is far clearer and brighter than the spheres of air and empty space, so the sense and idea of the word “world” in the Divine Mind is clearer in a far greater degree than this visible world appears to us.

²³ (In answer to the third question with regard to the lack of intellect), it is said that like the pungency of pepper is perceived by one who tastes it and not by him who has never tasted it, so the minutiae of the Intellect are known in the intellectual sphere by a cultivated intelligence, and not by one who is without it.

²⁴ Thus the Intellect appears as no intellect to one who is devoid of Intelligence in himself. So this world is seen in the spirit of God or otherwise according to whether one has cultivated or neglected his spiritual knowledge. ²⁵ The world can be seen either in its outward form as other than Brahma or in a spiritual light as the same with Brahma. The yogi views it in its fourth (*turiya*) state of utter extinction (*susupta*, deep sleep) in his unconscious soul. ²⁶ Therefore the yogi, though leading a secular life, remains in deep sleep in his soul, and tranquil (*shanta*) in his mind. He lives like Brahma unknown to and unnoticed by others, and though knowing all and full of thoughts in himself, he is like a treasury of Knowledge, unknown to the rest of mankind.

²⁷ (In answer to the question how corporeal beings could proceed from incorporeal Brahma,) as waves of various shapes rise and fall in the still and shapeless breast of the sea, so innumerable worlds of various forms float about in the unaltered and formless emptiness of Brahma’s bosom.

²⁸ From the fullness of the Divine Soul (*Brahmatma*) proceeds the fullness of the individual soul (*jivatma*) that also is formless (*nirakriti*). This aspect of Brahma is said to be owing to the purpose of manifesting himself (as living in all living beings). ²⁹ So the totality of worlds proceed from the fullness of Brahma, yet the same totality remains as Brahma himself.

³⁰ Considering the world in our minds as synonymous with Brahma, we find their identity like one finds by taste that pepper and its pungency are the same thing. ³¹ Such being the state of the unreality of the mind and what it can perceive, their reflections upon each other are as untrue as the shadow of a shadow.

³² Know Brahma is smaller than the smallest atom and the minutest of minutest particles. He is purer than air and more tranquil than the subtle ether that is enclosed in him. ³³ Unbounded by space or time, his form is the most extensive of all. He is without beginning or end, an indescribable light without brightness. ³⁴ He is of the form of cosmic consciousness (*chit*) and eternal life, without the conditions and accidents of life. The Divine Mind has its will eternal and it is devoid of the desires of finite minds.

³⁵ Without consciousness there is no life or understanding, no exercise of intellect, no organic action or sensation, and no mental desire or feeling whatever. ³⁶ Hence the Being that is full of these powers,

and who is without decline or decay, is seen by us to be seated in His state of tranquil emptiness, and is more subtle than the rarefied vacuum of the ethereal regions.

³⁷ Rama said, "Tell me again and more precisely about the form of this transcendental Being who is of the nature of infinite intelligence so that I may have more light in my understanding."

³⁸ Vasishta said:—

I have told you repeatedly that there is one supreme Brahma, the cause of causes, who remains alone by Himself when the universe is finally dissolved or absorbed in Him. Listen to me describe Him fully to you.

³⁹ That which the yogi sees within himself in his samadhi meditation, after forgetting his personality and repressing the faculties and functions of his mind, is truly the form of the unspeakable Being.

⁴⁰ The yogi absorbed in meditation without awareness of the visible world or any sense of the viewer or the viewed, and who sees the light shining in himself, is the form of that Being.⁴¹ He who has forgotten the nature of the individual soul (*jiva*) and his tendencies towards phenomena remains in the pure light and tranquil state of his consciousness and is the form of the Supreme Spirit.⁴² He who does not feel wind or the touch of anything upon his body, but lives as a mass of intelligence in this life, is truly the form of the Supreme.

⁴³ Again, that state of the mind which a man of sense enjoys in his long and deep sleep, undisturbed by dreams or gnats, is truly the form of the Supreme.⁴⁴ That which abides in the hearts of emptiness, air and stone, and is the intellect of all inanimate beings, is the form of the Supreme.⁴⁵ Again, whatever irrational and unconscious beings live by nature without soul or mind, the tranquil state of their existence is the nature of the Supreme Lord.⁴⁶ That which is seated in the midst of the intellectual light of the soul, and what is situated in the midst of the ethereal light of the sun, and that which is in the midst of light that we can see is truly the form of the Supreme.

⁴⁷ The soul that is the witness to our knowledge of solar and visual lights and darkness, and is without beginning or end, is the form of the Supreme.⁴⁸ He who manifests this world to us and keeps Himself hidden from view, be He the same or distinct from the world, is the form of the Supreme.⁴⁹ He, though full of activity, is as sedate as a rock and who though not emptiness appears to be empty, such is the form of the Supreme.

⁵⁰ He who is the source and end of our triple consciousness of the knower, known and knowledge, is most difficult of attainment.⁵¹ He who shines forth with the luster of the triple conditions of the knowable, knower and their knowledge, and shows them to us as a large unconscious mirror, is truly the form of the Supreme who is not the cause but the source of the triple category.

⁵² The mind liberated from bodily activities and its dreaming, remaining concentrated in the consciousness abiding alike in all living as well as inert bodies, is said to remain in the end of our being.⁵³ The intelligent mind that is as fixed as an immovable body and is freed from the exercise of its faculties can be compared to the Divine Mind.

Chapter 11 — There Can Be No Creation or Dissolution of Something that Never Existed

¹ Rama said, “Tell me, O holy one, where does this world go after its dissolution when it does not retain its present form or its magnificent appearance?”

² Vasishta answered:—

Tell me, Rama, what is the form of the barren woman’s son? Where does he come from and where does he go? Tell me also, where does a castle in the sky come from and where does it go?

³ Rama replied, “There never was, nor is there, nor will there ever be a son of a barren woman, or a castle in the sky. Why do you ask me about the form and figure of something that is nothing?”

⁴ Vasishta said:—

As there never was a barren woman’s son or a city in the air, so there never existed any scene such as that of the world. ⁵ That which has no existence could not have come from anywhere, nor can it have its dissolution afterwards. So what can I tell you about its origin or demise?

⁶ Rama replied, “The son of a barren woman and a city in the sky are mere fictions, but the visible world is not so and it has both beginning and end.”

⁷ Vasishta replied:—

It is hard to have a comparison where the subject and object of the comparison agree in all respects. The world and its objects allow no comparison other than with themselves. ⁸ The appearance of the world is compared with that of a bracelet because the one is as false as the other. Neither is real.

⁹ And because there is nothing in the sky except negative emptiness, so the existence of the world in Brahma is only a negative idea. ¹⁰ As the black eye-liner collyrium is nothing other than blackness, and as there is no difference between frost and its coldness, so the world is not other than the great Brahma himself.

¹¹ As the property of coldness cannot be denied of the moon and frost, so one cannot describe creation as not being of God. (Literally, creation is not a negative property of Brahma, but essential to His nature.) ¹² As there is no water in a sea of the mirage, or light in the new moon, so this world, as it is (in its gross state) does not abide in the pure spirit of God.

¹³ That which did not exist owing to the lack of any cause has no present existence and cannot be destroyed. ¹⁴ How is it possible for a dull material object to have any cause other than a material one? In the same way it is not the light (but some solid substance) that is the cause of a shadow. ¹⁵ But as none of these works has come into existence without some cause, that cause, whatever it is, is displayed in what it produced. ¹⁶ Whatever appears as ignorance or illusion has some appearance of intelligence or truth, just like the illusion of the world seen in a dream displays the effect of consciousness within us. ¹⁷ Just like the illusion of the world in a dream is not without our inner consciousness of it, in the same way Brahma was not unconscious of the expansion of the world at the beginning of creation.

¹⁸ All that we see about us is situated in the Divine Soul. There is no other world that rises and sets (except what is imprinted in our minds).

¹⁹ As fluidity is another name for water and fluctuation the same with wind, and as sunshine is nothing other than light, so the world is nothing but Brahma (displayed in nature). ²⁰ As the appearance of a city resides in the inner consciousness of a person who is conscious of his dreaming, in the same manner this world is displayed in the Supreme Soul.

²¹ Rama said, "If it is so, then tell me, O holy one, from where do we get our belief of its materiality? How is it that this unreal and visionary impression presents its baneful visible aspect to us? ²² If the view is in existence, there must be its viewer also, and when there is the viewer there is the view likewise. As long as either of these is in existence, there is our bondage. Our liberation chiefly depends on the disappearance of both (which can hardly take place). ²³ It is entirely impossible to be liberated as long as our notion of the view is not lost in our minds. Unless the view is vanished both from the vision of the eyes and mind, no one can even form an idea in his mind of liberation."

²⁴ "Again the representation of the view at first and its obliteration afterwards are not enough for our liberation because the memory of the view is sufficient to bind the soul. ²⁵ Moreover, when the picture of the view is impressed on the soul and reflected in the mirror of the mind, there is no need for its recollection (for what is deeply rooted in the soul comes out of itself). ²⁶ The intellect, which at first was without the notion of phenomena, would be entitled to liberation, but once it has seen, it has taken on the impression of what it has seen."

²⁷ "Now sage, please use your reasoning to remove my hopelessness of liberation which, I imagine, is unattainable by any."

²⁸ Vasishta said:—

Hear me, Rama, explain to you at length how the unreal world with all its contents appears to us as real. ²⁹ For unless it is explained to you by my reasoning, stories and examples, this doubt will not subside in your breast like mud settles in a lake. ³⁰ Then Rama, you will be able to conduct yourself on earth as one assured that the creation and existence of the world are false concepts. ³¹ You will then remain like a rock against the impressions of wealth and poverty and of gain and loss, and whether your relation with anything is fleeting or lasting.

³² Know that there is that only one spirit which is self-existent. All else is mere fiction.

I will now tell you how the three worlds were produced and formed. ³³ It was from Him that all these beings have come to existence, while He of himself is all and everything in it. He likewise appears to us and disappears also, both as forms and their appearances, and as the mind and its faculties, and as figures and their shapes, and as modes and motions of all things.

Chapter 12 — Detailed Description of Original Creation, Elements in Their Subtle Forms

¹ Vasishta said:—

From the state of perfect stillness and tranquility of the supremely holy Spirit, the universe rose to being in the manner that you must hear with your best understanding and attention.

² As sound sleep displays itself in visionary dreams, so Brahma manifests Himself in the works of creation, of which He is the soul and receptacle.³ The world, which of its nature is continually progressive in its course, is identical with the essence of that Being, whose form is selfsame with the indescribable glory of His eternally brilliant Intellect (*chintamani*, the wish-fulfilling jewel).⁴ This Intellect (*chit*, cosmic consciousness), before assuming to itself consciousness or the knowledge of self, gets of itself and in itself an exercise of intellection (a thought). (This is the first stage in perception by the soul).

⁵ Then this thinking Intellect (*chetya-chit*) gets the notions (*bodha*, knowledge or truth) of some faint images (*uhita-rupas*) which are purer and lighter than air, and which receive their names and forms only later. (The innate ideas are born before the embryonic mind or soul).⁶ Afterwards this transcendent essence (Intellect, Consciousness) becomes an intelligent principle (*sacheta*) eager for intelligence (*chetana*). It is now worthy of its name as Intellect or *chit* on account of its having attained what is called intelligence.

⁷ Lastly it takes the form of gross consciousness (*ghana-samvedana*) and receives the name of the individual soul (*jiva* as the living cosmic soul or Hiranyagarbha). It now loses its divine nature by reflecting on itself.⁸ Then this living principle is involved in thoughts relating only to the world, but its nature depends on the divine essence (as the fallacy of the snake depends on the substance of the rope).

⁹ Afterwards an empty space rises into being called *kham* (vacuum) which is the seed or source of the property of sound and which later becomes expressive of meaning.¹⁰ Next in order, the elements of egoism and duration are produced in the individual soul. These two terms are the roots of the existence of future worlds.

¹¹ This ideal knowledge in Divine Spirit of the unreal forms of the network of world was made to appear as a reality by omnipotent power.¹² Thus the ideal self-consciousness became the seed (or root) of the tree of desires that ego fluctuates in the form of air.¹³ The intellect in the form of airy ego thinks on the element of sounds (*shabda tanmatram*, the element of sound in its subtle form) and it becomes by degrees denser than the rarified air and produces the element of mind.

¹⁴ Sound is the seed (or root) of words that later became diverse in the forms of names or nouns and significant terms. Words evolved and became as numerous as shoots on trees, and as varied as inflected speech, sentences, and the collections of Vedas and other scriptures.¹⁵ It is from this Supreme Spirit that all these worlds derived their beauty and the multitude of words (which sprang from the sounds), full of meaning, became widespread.¹⁶ Consciousness expressed as this family of its offspring is described as the living individual soul (*jiva*) which afterwards became the source of all forms of beings known under a variety of expressions.¹⁷ From this individual soul sprang the fourteen kinds of living beings that fill the cells in the bowels of all worlds.

¹⁸ It was then that Consciousness, by a motion and inflation of itself and as instantaneously as a thought, became the subtle-form element (*tanmatra*) of touch and feeling (the air), which was yet without name or action. This breath caused air, which expanded itself and filled all bodies that are objects of touch and feeling.¹⁹ The air, which is the seed (root) of the tree of tangibles, then developed itself into branches composed of the various kinds of winds that cause breath and motion in all beings.

²⁰ Then, at its pleasure and from its idea of light, Consciousness produced the elemental essence of luster, which later received its different names (sunlight, moonlight, starlight, firelight, lightening).

²¹ Then the sun, fire, lightning and others that are the seeds (or roots) of the tree of light, caused the various colors that filled the world.

²² Consciousness reflected on the lack of fluidity and produced the liquid body of waters whose taste constitutes the element (*tanmatra*) of flavor in its subtle form.²³ The desire of the soul for different flavors (*rasa*, bliss) is the seed of the tree of taste, and it is by the relish of a variety of tastes that the world is to go on in its course.

²⁴ Then the self-willed Brahma, wishing to produce the visible earth, caused the property of smell to appertain to it from his own subtle element of it.²⁵ He made his elemental solidity the seed or source of the tree of forms, as he made his own element of roundness underlie the spherical world.

²⁶ These elements are all evolved from Consciousness and remain within Consciousness, just like bubbles of water rise and subside in itself.²⁷ In this manner, all beings remain in their combined states until their final dissolution into simple and separate forms.²⁸ All things, which are only forms and formations of pure Intellect, remain within the sphere of Divine Intelligence, as the subtle form of a big banyan tree resides in the forms of pollen and seed.²⁹ These sprouted forth in time and burst out into a hundred branches. Having been concealed in an atom, they became as big as if they were to last forever.

³⁰ Such is the growth and multiplication of things within Consciousness until development is stopped by its contraction, then weakened in their bodies by its desertion, until they droop down in the end.

³¹ In this way the elements in their subtle forms (*tanmatras*) are produced in Consciousness out of its own volition and are manifested to sight in the form of formless minutiae.³² These five-fold elements are only the seeds of all things in the world. They are seeds of the primary momentum that was given to them (in the beginning). To our way of thinking, they are the seeds of elementary bodies, but in their real nature, they are the uncreated ideal shapes of Consciousness replenishing the world.

Chapter 13 — On the Production of the Self-Born

¹ Vasishta said:—

Rama, when the Supreme Brahman remains in his resplendent and tranquil state (before creation), there is no essence of ethereal light or heat or even darkness produced in the intellectual spirit. (But they lie hidden there as if buried in oblivion).

² The Being (*sat*) that is God begins with the attribute of intellectuality (*chetya*). It is from the exercise of intellect (*chetana*, intuitive consciousness) of his intellectual part (*chetyansa*) that the name of mind (*chitta*, the memory aspect of mind) is attributed to Him. The faculties (*shakti*, power) of his intellect (*chit*, universal consciousness) are called its intelligence (*chetana*, life, spirit, visible, conscious).

³ Cosmic Consciousness (*chit*) or Intellect, from its intelligence (*chetana*), then has the attribute of the individual, the individual soul (*jiva*) and connection with the intelligible objects in nature. Then when it is subject to intelligible objects, having a subtle, elemental form of the sense of individual self (*aham matra*), it can be named *maya* or illusion.⁴ Then from the excess of its egoism (*ahanta*) that is full with the purposes of its mind and of the elements of sound and other sense objects, it has the attribute of understanding (*buddhi*, individual intelligence, the intuitive, faculty of direct intelligence controlling the sense organs, the organ of mind responsible for discrimination and judgment).

⁵ This (living, deluded and self reflecting) ego is puffed up with thoughts of all things and looks upon the great tree of the visible world (as the great garden for its pleasure and gain).⁶ Living souls, like so many impermanent objects seen in a dream, are made to rise and fall one after the other in this great forest of the world surrounded by skies and space.

⁷ But the world is as continuous as a grove of karajna plants that grow from unsown seeds, and its elements of water, fire, earth and air have no regard for anybody (living or dead).⁸ The Consciousness that is the soul of the universe creates the earth and all other things, like one remembers his dreams.⁹ Wherever there is the germ of the world, it develops itself in that place. The live elements are the five-fold seed of the world, but the un-decaying Consciousness is the seed of the five-fold elements (*pancha bhoota*, i.e., earth, water, fire, air and space).

¹⁰ As the seed so is its fruit. Therefore know the world is a form and full of God. Know the spacious sky is the reservoir of the five elements in the beginning of creation.

¹¹ The soul, like the body, is composed of the powers of Consciousness and does not exist of itself, but being inflated by Consciousness, it extends its bulk.¹² But the empty form of Consciousness, seated in the spiritual body of the soul, cannot be composed of solid reality. This is not possible. Therefore nothing can come from an impossibility.

¹³ Again, that which is changeable in its form cannot have its sameness at all times. Therefore, if the substance of the five elements is attributed to Brahma, from an idea within the essence of His spirit, there can be no immaterial and unchanging Brahma. (I.e., Brahma would also have to be material and subject to change.)¹⁴ Therefore know these five elements are the developed Brahma himself as he evolved them in the beginning, and he is their producer for the creation of the world.¹⁵ He being the prime cause of their production, there is nothing that exists without him and the world is no product of

itself.

¹⁶ The unreal appears as real just like a city is seen in a dream, and like a castle built in the air by our hopes. In the same way we place the individual soul in ourselves, which has its foundation in the empty spirit of God. ¹⁷ Thus the brilliant spirit, situated in the Divine Intellect, being no earthly or any other material substance, is called the individual soul and remains in emptiness like a luminous body rising in the sky.

¹⁸ Hear now how this empty individual soul, after its detachment as a spark from the totality of vital spirits, comes to be embodied in the human body within the empty sphere of Divine Consciousness.

¹⁹ At first the soul thinks it is like a minute particle of light, then it considers itself to be growing in the sphere of its consciousness. ²⁰ The unreal appearing real in the end proves to be unreal, just like an imaginary moon becomes nothing. So the soul continues to see itself subjectively and objectively both as the viewer and the view. ²¹ Thus the single self becomes double, just as one sees his own death in a dream. Thus it waxes into bigness and thinks its vital spark is a star. (This is the form of the *linga deha* within the body, the sentient soul, the subtle or astral body.)

²² As the soul continues to think of itself as a microcosm of the universe (*vishwarupa*), it falsely thinks itself to be within such reality, a thought expressed by “*soham*” (so am I). ²³ By thinking of himself this way, a man comes to believe it to be true, just like one believes himself to be a traveler in his dream. So by thinking the soul as a star (light body), he views it so within himself.

²⁴ By continually thinking about his soul this way, he loses his external sensations and views this star in his head. ²⁵ He sees the soul within himself as though it exists without him, just like a mirror reflects the distant hill in itself. He sees the soul confined within him like a body stuck in a well, and like a sound is confined in the hollow of a cave. ²⁶ Consciousness of our dreams and desires is an attribute of the individual soul whose real form is that of a star keeping watch within us.

²⁷ Now this empty life composed of the essences of the mind — understanding and knowledge — resides in the hollow sheath of the star. ²⁸ It appears to me to take flight to the sky in order to see what is passing there. Then it enters the body by two holes which later are named the external organs (of sight). ²⁹ The organs by which the embodied individual soul is to see are called the eyes. That by which it feels is called the skin. Those whereby it hears are ears. ³⁰ The organ of smell is the nose, and that which conducts flavor to the spirit, the sense of taste, is the tongue. ³¹ Then there is breathing air — the breath of life — which moves the energies of the organs of action. It is this air which is the cause of vision and the mover of the internal organs of mind and thought. ³² Vital breath supports the body and the all supporting soul in the emptiness of the body, and fills and kindles it like air kindles a spark of fire.

³³ The word *jiva* or the individual soul has a figurative meaning: “something real in the unreal body.” Hence Brahma is said to be the life and soul of the unreal world. ³⁴ The gross embodied soul is in the form of emptiness, like the mind, yet it imagines itself to reside in an egg-shaped space inside the body, as Brahma is supposed to be seated in the cosmic egg. ³⁵ Some view the spirit of God as floating on the surface of the waters (in the form of Narayana). Others view it in the person of the Lord of creatures (Pashupati, Shiva). There are others who look at the spirit of God as infused

throughout the creation in the figure of Viraj (the primordial man). These are called the subtle and gross bodies of the soul (*sukshma* and *sthula sharira*).

³⁶ The soul or spirit is the spacious womb of production. It is the means of executing its own purposes and of knowing the proper time and place. It is the article and the manner of action. ³⁷ The mind is the inventor of words, expressive of ideas (in the soul), and subjects itself to the arbitrary sounds of its own invention. Hence, in this world of errors, God is falsely said to be embodied in the words (*shabda Brahma*, the Brahma of speech, of Mimansa philosophy).

³⁸ The unproduced and self-born Brahma that has risen of himself (and represents the mind) is as unreal as a man dreaming he is flying in the sky. ³⁹ This all supporting and embodied soul is the creator Lord of Creatures who is said to have formed this illusory frame of the world. ⁴⁰ But in reality, nothing was formed or born, nor is there any substance to be found in the world. It is still the same empty form of Brahma whose essence is known to extend as the infinite space itself.

⁴¹ Things that appear to be real are as unreal as an imaginary city. They present a variety of forms and colors to the fancy, but have not been built or painted by anybody. ⁴² Nothing that is unmade or unthought of can be real, and the gods Brahma and others, being freed from their business at the universal dissolution of existence, could neither resume their functions to make or have materials with which to make. ⁴³ The self-born Brahma, having neither memory of the past nor any material with which to work, would not be able either to form an ideal or to make anything material. Therefore, Brahma producing anything and any formation of the universe are both impossible.

⁴⁴ The earth and all other existence are the eternal ideas of the Divine Mind. They appear to us to be objects in a dream that is our waking state. ⁴⁵ The Divine Spirit is known only as an emptiness, therefore the world must also be emptiness because like produces like. So all waters are liquid, though they are made to pass under different names.

⁴⁶ This creation is everywhere the same in the Supreme Spirit. It is only an evolution of the same and the Creator is always and everywhere unchanging in His nature. ⁴⁷ The empty universe, under the name of the cosmic egg, shines as clearly as the Divine Spirit. It is calm in its appearance and becomes disturbed by causes born in itself. ⁴⁸ It is supported by the unsupported Supporter of all who is one and without a second, but devoid of unity in creation. All this is born in His consciousness and therefore there is nothing new that is produced.

⁴⁹ He who is of the form of unlimited space without any emptiness in it, who is transparent yet teeming with abundance, and who is the whole world without any worldliness in him, truly underlies everything. ⁵⁰ He who is neither the container nor the contained, nor the appearance of the world, who is neither the world nor its creator, and about whom there can be no dispute or disputant, is truly the unknown God. ⁵¹ He who is neither the passing world nor any of its passing things, who is quite at rest yet situated in all things (whether moving or quiescent), is the only Brahma that shines of himself in himself.

⁵² The idea of the fluidity of water allows our minds to form an image of a whirlpool. In the same way, the sight of the world produces the false notion of its reality in the mind. ⁵³ All unrealities become extinct at the end, as we see the death of our frail bodies in dreams. The essential part of our

soul remains unscathed because of its own nature of indestructibility in the form of everlasting consciousness in the atmosphere of our intellects.

⁵⁴ Brahma, the prime Lord of creatures, is ever manifest by himself in the form of emptiness in the Supreme Spirit. He being of a spiritual form, like the mind, has no material body formed of earth or any other material. Therefore He is both real and unborn.

Chapter 14 — No Individual Souls, only One Brahma; Each Is Brahma; Brahma Creates the Rules and Delegates

¹ Vasishta added:—

In this manner the visible world, I, you, and all other things are nothing. Being unmade and unborn, they are nonexistent. It is only the Supreme Spirit that exists of itself.

² The primeval empty soul first is awakened of itself by its own energy from its quietness, then begins to have a motion in itself like the troubled waters of the deep. ³ Then it begins to reflect in itself, like in a dream or imagination, without changing its empty form, like a rock with an inner faculty of thought.

⁴ The body of the great god Viraj (“Untainted”) is also devoid of any material form, whether earthly or any other elemental shape. It is purely a spiritual, intellectual and ethereal form, as transparent as the ether itself. ⁵ It is without decay, steady like a rock, and as airy as a city seen in a dream. It is inert as the line of a regiment painted in a picture. ⁶ All other souls are like pictures of dolls and puppets painted, and not engraved, on the body of Viraj like on a huge pillar. He, standing as an uncarved column in the empty sphere of Brahma, represents all souls (and not bodies) as they are mere pictures on it.

⁷ The prime lord of creatures is said to be self-born. He is known as the uncreated (Brahma) for want of his prior acts to cause his birth. ⁸ The primeval patriarchs (progenitors) who obtain their ultimate liberation at the final dissolution of the world have no antecedent cause to be reborn as unliberated mortals. ⁹ Brahma, who is the reflector of all souls, is himself invisible in the inward mirror of other souls. He is neither the view nor the viewer, and neither the creation nor the creator himself.

¹⁰ Therefore, although Brahma has nothing that can be described, and has nothing that may be affirmed or denied about Him, yet He is the soul of everything that can be described. He is the source of these chains of living beings, just as light is the cause of a line of lighted lamps in illuminations.

¹¹ The will of the gods (Brahma and Viraj), proceeding from the volition of Brahma, is of the same spiritual nature as the other; just as one dream rising in another is equally as insubstantial as the first.

¹² Hence all individual souls evolved from the breathing of the Supreme Spirit are of the same nature as their origin because there is nothing else that could cause or contribute towards cause. ¹³ Lack of a secondary agency produces the equality of effects and their cause. Hence the uniformity of created things proves wholly false any conception of their creation by a secondary cause.

¹⁴ Brahma himself is the prime soul of Viraj and is identical with him, and Viraj is the soul of creation and identical with it. He is the empty vitality of all, and it is from Him that the unreal earth and other things have their rise. (Viraj is the spirit of God diffused in nature.)

¹⁵ Rama said, “Tell me whether the individual soul is a limited thing or an unlimited mass of life? Or does the unbounded spirit of God exist in the shape of a mountainous heap of individual souls? ¹⁶ Are these individual souls like showers of rain falling from above, or like the drizzling drops of waves in the vast ocean of creation, or like the sparks of fire struck out of a red-hot iron? From where do they flow, and by whom are they emitted? ¹⁷ Sage, tell me the truth concerning the profusion of individual souls. Though I have a partial knowledge of it, I require your more complete and clear explanation.”

¹⁸ Vasishta replied:—

There is only one individual soul of the universe so you can not call it a multitude. Therefore your question is quite out of place, like a question about the horns of rabbits.

¹⁹ There are no detached individual souls, O Rama, nor are they to be found in multitudes anywhere, nor was there a mountainous heap of souls known to have existed at anytime. ²⁰ “*Jiva*”, the individual soul, is only a fictitious word with many more fictions heaped upon it, all of which, as you must know for certain, does not apply to the soul.

²¹ There is only one pure and immaculate Brahma who is mere Consciousness (*chinmatram*) and all pervasive. He assumes to himself all attributes by His almighty power. (Here Brahma is represented not only as omniscient and omnipotent, but also as *saguna*, with attributes, by his assumption of all attributes.)

²² Many regard the individual soul as evolving itself from Consciousness into the many visible and invisible forms (*murta-mutam*), just like a plant is seen to develop itself into its fruits and flowers.

²³ They add the attributes of the living principle — understanding, action, motion, mind and unity and duality — to the soul as if these appertain to its nature. ²⁴ But all this is caused by ignorance, while right understanding assigns them to Brahma. The ignorant are bewildered by these different views of the soul, and they will not be awakened to sense. ²⁵ These different believers are lost in their various views like light is lost under darkness. They will never come to the knowledge of truth.

²⁶ Know that Brahma himself is the individual soul without any divisibility or distinction. He is without beginning or end. He is omnipotent and is of the form of the great Consciousness which forms his essence. ²⁷ His lack of minuteness (his fullness) in all places precludes the ability to give him any distinctive name. Whatever attributes are given to him are all to be understood to mean Brahma himself.

²⁸ Rama asked, “How is it, O holy one, that the totality of the individual souls in the world is guided by the will of one Universal Soul that governs the whole and to which all others are subject?”

²⁹ Vasishta replied:—

Brahma, the great individual soul and omnipotent power, remained from eternity with his will to create without partition or alteration of himself. ³⁰ Whatever is wished by that great soul comes to take place immediately. The wish it first formed in its unity became a positive duality at last. Then its wish “to be many” became separate existences afterwards. ³¹ All these dualities of His self-divided powers (the different individual souls) had their several routines of action allotted to them, such as “this is for that,” meaning “this being is for that duty, and such action is for such end.” ³² Thus though there can be no act without effort (by the general rule as in the case of mortals), yet the predominant will of Brahma is always prevailing without effort to action.

³³ Though living beings effect their purposes by exertion of their energies, yet they can effect nothing without acting according to the law appointed by the predominant power. ³⁴ If the law of the predominant power is effective to attain an end, then the exertions of the subordinate powers (the individual souls) to that end must also be successful. ³⁵ Thus Brahma alone is the great individual soul that exists forever and without end, and these millions of living beings in the world are nothing other

than agents of the divine energies.

³⁶ It is with a consciousness of the intellectual soul (the inner knowledge of God within themselves) that all individual souls are born in this world. But losing that consciousness (their knowledge of God) afterwards, they became alienated from him. ³⁷ Hence men of inferior souls should pursue the course of conduct led by superior souls in order to regain their spiritual life (*atmajivatwam*), just like copper becomes transformed into gold (by chemical process). ³⁸ Thus the whole body of living beings that had been as nonexistent as air before comes into existence and rises resplendent with wonderful intellect. ³⁹ Whoever perceives this wonderful intellect in his mind, then gets a body and the consciousness of his egoism, is said to be an embodied individual soul.

⁴⁰ The mind gratified with intellectual delights becomes as expanded as the intellect itself and thinks those pleasures constitute the sum total of worldly enjoyments. ⁴¹ Consciousness is said to remain unchanged in all its succeeding stages, and although it never changes from that state, yet it awakes (develops) by a power intrinsic in itself. ⁴² The uninterrupted activity of Consciousness indulges itself in the amusement of manifesting phenomena in the form of the world.

⁴³ The extent of the intellectual faculty is wider and more rarefied than the surrounding air, yet it perceives its distinct egoism by itself and of its own nature. ⁴⁴ Its knowledge of self springs of itself in itself like water in a fountain. It perceives itself (its ego) to be only an atom amidst endless worlds.

⁴⁵ It also perceives in itself the beautiful and wonderful world which is amazing to understanding and which thereafter is named the universe.

⁴⁶ Now Rama, our egoism, being only a conception of the intellect, is a mere fiction (*kalpana*). The elementary principles being only creatures of egoism, they are also fictions of the intellect. ⁴⁷ Again the individual soul being only a result of our acts and desires, you have to renounce these causes in order to get rid of your knowledge of "I" and "you" and then, after discarding the fictions of the real and unreal, you attain to the knowledge of the true One.

⁴⁸ As the sky looks as clear as before after the shadows of clouds are dispersed from it, so the soul, after its overshadowing fictions have been removed, looks as bright as it existed at first in Consciousness.

⁴⁹ The universe is a vacuum and the world is a name for the field of our exertions. This emptiness is the abode of the gods (Vishwa and Viraj, both of whom are formless). The wonderful frame of plastic nature is only a form of the formless consciousness and nothing else.

⁵⁰ One's nature never leaves him at anytime. How then can a form or figure be given to the formless Divinity? ⁵¹ Divine Intellect is exempt from all the names and forms given to unintelligent worldly things, it pervading and enlivening all that shines in the world. (Intellect or consciousness is the power of understanding.) ⁵² The mind, understanding and egoism, with the five elements, hills, skies and all other things that compose and support the world, are made of essences proceeding from consciousness. (The intellect gathering information contains all things.)

⁵³ Know that the world is the mind (*chitta*) of the consciousness (*chit*) of God because mind does not exist without the world. If the world did not exist, that would prove that the mind and consciousness, which consist of the world, do not exist. (Therefore, the intelligent world is identical to the mind and

intellect of God.)

⁵⁴ The intellect, like the pepper seed, possesses an exquisite property within itself. Like the flavor of pepper, the intellect has the element of the individual soul, which is the element of animated nature.

⁵⁵ As the mind exerts its power and assumes its sense of egoism, it derives the principle of the individual soul from the Intellect, which with its breath of life and action is afterwards called a living being. (The mind is what thinks, moves and acts.) ⁵⁶ Consciousness (*chit*), exhibiting itself as the mind (*chitta*), bears the name of the purpose it has to accomplish which, being temporary and changeable, is different from Consciousness and a non-existence. ⁵⁷ The distinction of actor and act does not consist in Consciousness, it being eternal. Neither is Consciousness the author or the work itself. But the individual soul, which is active and productive of acts, is called *purusha* — the embodied soul residing in the body. It is action which makes a man *purusha*, from which is derived his manhood (*paurusha*).

⁵⁸ Life with the action of the mind constitutes the mind of man. The mind taking a sensitive form employs the organs of sense to their different functions. ⁵⁹ He, the Consciousness whose radiant light is the cause of infinite blessings to the world, is both its author and the workmanship from all eternity. There is none beside Him. ⁶⁰ Hence the ego or individual soul in its essence is indivisible, uninflammable, and incapable of being soiled or dried. It is everlasting and infinite, and as immovable as a mountain.

⁶¹ There are many that dispute this point, as they in their error dispute other matters and mislead others into the same errors. But we are set free from all mistake. ⁶² The dualist (who makes a distinction between eternal and created souls), relying on phenomena, is deceived by their varying appearances. But the believer in the formless unity relies on the everlasting blessed Spirit.

⁶³ Fondness for intellectual culture is attended with the spring blossoms of intellect that are as white as the clear sky and as numberless as the parts of time.

⁶⁴ Consciousness exhibits itself in the form of the boundless and wonderful universal egg, and it breathes out the breath of its own spirit in the same egg. ⁶⁵ Then it shows itself in the wonderful form of the primordial waters, not as they rise from springs or fall into reservoirs, but like those substances that constitute the bodies of the best of beings. ⁶⁶ It next shines forth with its own intellectual light, which shines as bright as the humid beams of the full moon. ⁶⁷ Then as Consciousness rises in full light with its internal knowledge, phenomena disappear from sight. In the same way, Consciousness is transformed to dullness by dwelling upon gross objects, when it is said to be lying dormant. In this state of Consciousness, it is lowered and confined to the earth.

⁶⁸ The world is in motion by the force of Consciousness in whose great emptiness it is settled. The world is lighted by the light of that Consciousness, and is therefore said to both exist and not exist by itself. ⁶⁹ Like the emptiness of that Intellect, the world is said now to exist and now to be nonexistent. Like the light of that Intellect, the world now appears and now disappears from view. ⁷⁰ Like the fleeting wind breathed by that Intellect, the world is now in existence and now nonexistent. Like the cloudy and unclouded sphere of that Intellect, the world is now in being and now not in being. ⁷¹ Like the broad daylight of that Intellect, the world is now in existence, and like the disappearance of that

light, it now becomes nothing. It is formed of the active (*rajas*) quality of the Intellect, like black collyrium eyeliner made from particles of oil.

⁷² It is Intellectual fire that gives warmth to the world. It is the alabaster of the Intellect that causes its whiteness. The rock of Intellect gives it hardness, and its water causes its fluidity. ⁷³ The sweetness of the world is derived from the sugar of the Intellect, and its juiciness from the milk in the Divine Mind. Its coldness is from the ice, and its heat from the fire contained in the same. ⁷⁴ The world is oily by the mustard seeds contained in Consciousness and billowy in the sea of the Divine Mind. It is sweet by the honey and golden by the gold contained in the same. ⁷⁵ The world is a fruit of the tree of Consciousness and its fragrance is derived from the flowers growing in the tree of the mind. It is the existence of Consciousness that gives the world its being, and it is the mold of the Eternal Mind that gives its form.

⁷⁶ The difference is that this world is changing while the clear atmosphere of Consciousness has no change in it. The unreal world becomes real when it is seen as full of the Divine Spirit. ⁷⁷ The unchanging sameness of the Divine Spirit makes the existence and nonexistence of the world the same. The words ‘part’ and ‘whole’ are wholly meaningless because both are full with the Divine Spirit.

⁷⁸ Shame on those who deride ideas as false talk because the world — with its hills, and seas, earth and rivers — is all untrue without the idea of God’s presence in it. ⁷⁹ Consciousness being an unity cannot be mistaken for a part of anything. Though it may become as solid as a stone, yet it shines brightly in the sphere of its emptiness. ⁸⁰ It has a clear empty space in its inside, like a transparent crystal, that reflects the images of all objects, though it is as clear as the sky. ⁸¹ As the lines on the leaves of trees are neither parts of the leaves nor distinct from them, so the world situated in Consciousness is not part of it or separate from it.

⁸² No detached soul is a varied growth, but retains in its nature the nature of consciousness, and Brahma is the primary cause of causes. ⁸³ The mind is of its own nature a causal principle, by reason of its idea of the Intellect, but its existence is hard to prove when it is insensible and unconscious of the Intellect. ⁸⁴ Whatever is in the root comes out in the tree, just as we see seeds shoot forth in plants of its own species.

⁸⁵ All the worlds are as empty as emptiness, yet they appear otherwise because they are situated in the Great Consciousness. All this is the seat of the Supreme, and you must know it by your exercise of intellect.

Valmiki speaking:—

⁸⁶ As the sage spoke these words, the day declined to its evening twilight. The assembly broke with mutual salutations, to perform their evening rituals, and, after dispersion of the nocturnal gloom, met again at the court hall with the rising sunbeams.

Chapter 15 — Story of Leela and Saraswati (Padma's Body on the Shrine)

¹ Vasishta said:—

The world is a void and as null as the pearls in the sky (seen by optical delusion). It is as unreal as the soul in the emptiness of consciousness.² All its objects appear like un-engraved images on the column of the mind that is without any engraving or engraver.

³ As the motion of waters in the sea causes waves to rise of themselves, so phenomena as they appear to us are like waves in the calm spirit of the Supreme.⁴ Like sunbeams seen underwater, and like water appearing in the sands of the desert (mirage), so it is fancy that paints the world as true to us. The world's bulk is like that of an atom appearing like a hill.⁵ The fancied world is no more than a facsimile of the mind of its maker, just as sunbeams underwater are only reflections of the light above, a false idea.

⁶ The ideal world is only a castle in the air, and this earth is as unreal as a dream and as false as the objects of our desire.⁷ In the light of philosophy, the earth that appears solid is no better than the water in the mirage of a sandy desert. It is never in existence.⁸ In this supposed substantial form of the world, the illusive forms of phenomena resemble only castles in the sky and rivers in a mirage.⁹ If the visible scenes of the world were to be weighed on scales, they would be found to be as light as air and as hollow as a vacuum.

¹⁰ The ignorant taken away by the sound of words in disregard of their meanings, when they come to their senses, will find that there is no difference between the world and Brahma.¹¹ The dull world is the issue of Consciousness, like sky is of sunbeams. The light of Consciousness is like the light of the rarified rays of the sun that, like water from huge clouds, causes seeds to shoot into plants.

¹² As a city in a dream is finer than one seen in the waking state, so this world that can be seen is as subtle as an imaginary one.¹³ Therefore know the dream world to be the inverse of the conscious soul, and the substantive world to be the reverse of the insubstantial vacuum. The words fullness and vacuum are both as empty as airy breath because these opposites are only different views of the same Consciousness.¹⁴ Therefore know that this visible world is no production at all. It is as nameless as it is undeveloped, and as nonexistent as its seeming existence.

¹⁵ The universe is the sphere of the spirit of God in infinite space. It has no foundation elsewhere except in that Spirit of which it is only a particle filling a space equal to a bit of infinity.¹⁶ It is as transparent as the sky and without any solidity at all. It is as empty as empty air and like a city pictured in imagination.

¹⁷ Attend now to the story of the Temple which is pleasant to hear and which will impress this truth deeply in your mind.

¹⁸ Rama said, “Tell me at once, O holy one, the long and short of the story of the temple, which will help my understanding of these things.”

¹⁹ Vasishta said:—

In the past, on the surface of the earth, there lived a king named Padma (Lotus) because he was like the blooming and fragrant lotus of his race. Padma was equally blessed with wisdom, prosperity and

good children.²⁰ He observed the bounds of his duties, just as the sea preserves the boundaries of countries. He destroyed the mist of his adversaries, like the sun dispels the darkness of night. He was like the moon to his lotus-like queen, and like burning fire to the hay of evils and crimes.

²¹ He was the asylum of the learned, like Mount Meru is the residence of the gods. He was the moon of fair fame risen from the ocean of the earth. He was like a lake to the geese of good qualities, and like the sun to the lotuses of purity.²² In warfare, he was like a blast to the vines of his antagonists. He was like a lion to the elephants (desires) of his mind. He was the favorite of all learning, a patron of the learned, and a mine of all admirable qualities.²³ He stood fixed like Mount Mandara after it had churned the ocean of the demons. He was like spring season to the blossoms of joy, and like the god of the floral bow to the flowers of blooming prosperity.²⁴ He was the gentle breeze to the shimmering of playful vines, and like the god Vishnu in his valor and energy. He shone like the moon on the florets of good manners, and like wildfire to the brambles of licentiousness.

²⁵ His consort was the happy Queen Leela (Play), playful as her name implied and filled with every grace, as if Lakshmi, the goddess of prosperity, had appeared in person upon earth.²⁶ She was gentle with her submission to her lord, and was sweet in her speech without art. She was always happy and slow in her movements, and ever smiling as the moon.²⁷ Her lovely lotus-white face was decorated with painted spots, and her fair form, fresh as a new blown bud, appeared like a moving bed of lotuses.

²⁸ She was buxom as a playful plant and bright as a branch of kunda jasmine flowers, full of glee and good humor. With her palms red like coral and her fingers white as lilies, she was in her person a collection of spring beauties.²⁹ Her pure form was sacred to touch and conferred joy to the heart, like the holy stream of the Ganges exhilarates a flock of swans floating upon it.

³⁰ Leela was like a second Rati born to serve her lord. Padma was Kama in person on earth to give joy to all souls.³¹ She was sorry at his sorrow and delighted to see him delightful. She was thoughtful to see him pensive. Thus she was an exact picture of her lord, except that she was afraid to find him angry.

Chapter 16 — The Lives of Queen Leela & King Padma; Leela Performs Tapas to Saraswati; Padma's Death

¹ This husband with a single wife enjoyed the pleasure of an undivided and sincere love in the company of his only consort, just as with a heavenly nymph (*apsara*) on earth. ² The seats of their youthful play were gardens and groves, tree gardens of shrubs, and forests of tamara trees. They also played in pleasant tree gardens of vines and delightful alcoves of flowers. ³ They delighted themselves in the inner apartments on beds decked with fragrant flowers, and on walks strewn with fresh blossoms. In spring they amused themselves in the swinging cradles of their pleasure gardens, and in summer heat they rowed in their boats.

⁴ Their favorite summer resorts were hills overgrown with sandalwood and the shade of forests, the groves of nipa and kadamba trees, and canopies of paribhadra and devadaru cedars. ⁵ They sat beside beds of kunda and mandara plants, fragrant with the smell of full-blown flowers, and they strayed about the spring-green woods resounding with the melody of nightingales' notes. ⁶ They enjoyed the glossy beds of grassy tufts, the mossy seats of woods and lawns, and water-falls flooding the level lands with showers of rain. ⁷ They often visited mountain ledges overlaid with gems, minerals and richest stones, as wells as the shrines of gods and saints, holy hermitages and other places of pilgrimage. ⁸ They frequently haunted lakes of full-blown lotuses and lilies, smiling kumudas of various colors, and woodlands darkened by green foliage and overhung with flowers and fruit.

⁹ They passed their time in the amorous dalliances of god-like youths. Their personal beauty was graced by their generous pastimes of their mutual fondness and affection. ¹⁰ They amused each other with clever remarks and witticisms and solution of riddles, with story telling and playing tricks of hold-fists, and with various games of chess and dice. ¹¹ They diverted themselves by reading dramas and stories, and by interpreting stanzas difficult even for the learned. And sometimes they roamed about cities, towns and villages.

¹² They decorated their bodies with wreaths of flowers and ornaments of various kinds. They feasted on a variety of flavors, and moved about with playful negligence. ¹³ They chewed betel leaves mixed with moistened mace, camphor and saffron. They hid the love marks on their bodies under the wreaths of flowers and coral that adorned them. ¹⁴ They frolicked playing hide and seek, tossing wreaths and garlands, and swinging one another in cradles decorated with flowers. ¹⁵ They went on trips in pleasure-boats, and on yokes of elephants and tame camels. They played in their pleasure-ponds by splashing water on one another.

¹⁶ They had their manly and feminine dances: the sprightly tandava and the merry lasya. They sang songs with masculine and feminine voices, the kala and giti. They had enjoyed harmonious and pleasing music, playing stringed and percussion instruments. ¹⁷ In their flowery conveyances they passed through gardens and pathways, by rivers and on highways, and into the inner apartments of their royal palaces.

¹⁸ The loving and beloved Queen Leela, being thus brought up in pleasure and indulgence, at one time thought within herself with a wistful heart, ¹⁹ "How will my lord and ruler of earth, who is in the bloom of youth and prosperity and who is dearer to me than my life, be free from old age and death?

²⁰ And how will I enjoy his company on beds of flowers in the palace, possessed of my youth and free-will, for long, long hundreds of years? ²¹ Therefore I will endeavor with all my vigilance, prayers, austerities and efforts to know how this moon-faced prince may become free from death and decline. ²² I will ask the most knowing, the most austere, and the very learned brahmins how men may evade death."

²³ She accordingly invited the brahmins and honored them with presents, and humbly asked them to tell her how men might become immortal on earth. ²⁴ The brahmins replied, "Great queen, holy men may obtain success in everything by their austerities, prayers and observance of religious rites, but nobody can ever attain to immortality here below."

²⁵ Hearing this from the mouths of the brahmins, she thought again in her own mind, and with fear for the death of her loving lord. ²⁶ "Should it happen that I come to die before my lord, then I shall be released from all pain of separation from him, and be quite at rest in myself. ²⁷ But if my husband should happen to die before me, even after a thousand years of our lives, I shall so manage it that his soul may not depart from the confines of this house. ²⁸ The spirit of my lord will rove about the holy vault in this inner apartment and I shall feel the satisfaction of his presence at all times."

²⁹ "For this purpose, I will start this very day to worship Saraswati, the goddess of wisdom, and offer my prayers to her, and observe fasts and other rites to my heart's content." ³⁰ Having so determined, she began to observe the strict rituals of the scriptures without her lord's knowledge.

³¹ She kept her fasts and broke them at the end of every third night. She entertained the gods, brahmins, priests and holy people with feasts and due honors. ³² She performed her daily ablutions, she distributed alms, and she practiced austerities and meditation. In all of these she was painstakingly observant of the rules of pious devotion. ³³ She also attended to her unaware husband at the stated times. To the utmost, she took care of him and performed her duties as required by law and custom. ³⁴ Thus observant of her vows, with resolute and persevering pains-taking and unfailing austerity, the young queen passed a hundred of her three-night ceremonies.

³⁵ Saraswati, the fair goddess of speech, was pleased at the completion of Leela's hundredth three-night ritual in the goddess' honor, performed with all outward and spiritual courtesy. The goddess spoke to her saying, ³⁶ "I am pleased, my child, with your continued devotion to me, and your constant devotion to your husband. Now ask the boon that you would have of me."

³⁷ Queen Leela replied, "Be victorious, O moon-bright goddess, to end all the pains of our birth and death, and the troubles, afflictions and evils of this world. Like the sun, put to flight the darkness of our affections and afflictions in this life. ³⁸ Save me, O goddess and parent of the world. Have pity on this wretched devotee and grant her these two boons that she begs of you."

³⁹ "The one is that after my husband is dead, his soul may not go beyond the precincts of this shrine in the inner apartment. ⁴⁰ The second is that whenever I call you, you shall hear my prayer, appear before me, and give me your sight and blessing."

⁴¹ Hearing this, the goddess Saraswati said, "Be it so," and immediately disappeared in the air, just like a wave subsides in the sea from where it had come into view.

⁴² The queen being blessed by the presence and good grace of the goddess, was as delighted as a doe at hearing sweet music. ⁴³ The wheel of time rolled on its two semicircles of fortnights, the spikes of months, the arcs of the seasons, the loops of days and nights, and the orbits of years. The axle, composed of fleeting moments, gave constant momentum to the wheel.

⁴⁴ The perceptions of King Padma entered into his subtle body and in a short time, he looked as dry as a withered leaf without its juicy gloss. ⁴⁵ The dead body of the warlike king was laid over a tomb inside the palace. Queen Leela began to fade away at its sight, like a lotus flower without the waters of its birth.

⁴⁶ Her lips grew pale from the hot and poisoned breath of her sorrow. She was in the agony of death, like a doe mortally wounded by an arrow. ⁴⁷ At the death of her lord, her eyes were covered in darkness like a house becomes dark when its light is extinguished. ⁴⁸ In her sad melancholy, she became leaner every moment. She became like a dried channel covered with dirt instead of water.

⁴⁹ She moved one moment and was then mute as a statue. She was about to die of grief, like the ruddy goose at the separation of her mate. ⁵⁰ Then the ethereal goddess Saraswati took pity on the excess of her grief, and showed as much compassion for Leela's relief as the first shower of rain does to dying fishes in a drying pond.

Chapter 17 — Leela Sees Padma and His Court in the Spirit World, Checks Her Own Court to Make Sure It Still Exists

¹ Saraswati said, “My child, move the dead body of your husband over to that shrine, strew those flowers over it, and you shall have your husband again.² Never will this body rot or fade as long as the flowers are fresh over it. Know that your husband will shortly return to life again.³ His individual soul, pure as air, will never leave this cemetery of your inner apartment.”

⁴ The black-eyed queen, her eyebrows resembling a cluster of black-bees, heard the goddess’ consolatory speech and was cheered in spirit, like a lotus-bed upon return of the rains.⁵ She placed the corpse of her husband on the shrine, hid it under flowers, and remained in expectation of its rising, like a poor man fosters hope of finding a treasure.

⁶ It was at midnight of the very day, when all the members of the family had fallen fast asleep, that Leela went to the shrine in the inner apartment.⁷ There, in the recess of her understanding, she meditated on the Goddess of Knowledge and called her in earnest from the sorrow of her heart, when she heard the divine voice addressing her,⁸ “Why do you call me, child? Why are you so sorrowful in your face? The world is full of errors, glaring as false water in a mirage.”

⁹ Leela answered, “Tell me goddess, where does my husband reside at present? What has he been doing? Take me to his presence, as I am unable to bear the load of my life without him.”

¹⁰ Saraswati replied, “His spirit is now wandering in the sky, of which there are three kinds: the physical, the firmament or region of worlds that can be sensed; the other is mental, the region of the mind, the seat of will and creation; and the third is the spiritual region of Consciousness which contains the two others [*bhutakasha*, element-space; *chittakasha*, mind-space; and *chidakasha*, consciousness-space].¹¹ Your husband’s soul is now in the sheath of the region of Consciousness. Things can be found in consciousness-space which do not exist here.”

¹² “As in passing from one place to another you are conscious of standing in between, so you will instantly arrive at the intermediate region of the mental world (lying between the physical and spiritual worlds).¹³ If, after forsaking all your mental desires, you abide in the spiritual world you will certainly come to the knowledge of that spiritual Being who comprehends all in Himself.¹⁴ It is only by your knowledge of the non-existence of the world that you can come to know the positive existence of that Being, as you will now be able to do by my grace, and by no other means whatever.”

¹⁵ Vasishta said:—

So saying, the goddess repaired to her heavenly seat and Leela sat gladly in her mood of steadfast meditation.¹⁶ Within a moment, she left the prison house of her body. Her soul broke out of its inner bound of the mind to fly freely in the air, like a bird freed from its cage.¹⁷ She ascended to the airy region of Consciousness and saw her husband sitting there amidst a group of princes and rulers of the earth.

¹⁸ He (as King Viduratha) was sitting on a throne, hailed with the loud shouts of “Long live the king!” and “Be he victorious!” His officers were prompt in the discharge of their different duties.¹⁹ The royal palace and hall were decorated with rows of flags, and there was an assembly of innumerable

sages, saints, brahmins and rishis at the eastern entrance of the hall.²⁰ At the southern porch stood a throng of princes and chiefs of men without number, and standing at the western doorway, a bevy of young ladies.²¹ The northern gateway was blocked by lines of horses, carriages and elephants.

A guard advanced and informed the king of a war in the Deccan.²² He said that the Karnatic chief had attacked the eastern frontier, and that the chieftain of Surat had subjugated the barbarous tribes on the north, and that the ruler of Malwa had besieged the city of Tonkan on the west.

²³ Then there was the reception of the ambassador from Lanka, coming from the coast of the southern sea.²⁴ Next appeared the spiritual masters (*siddhas*) coming from the Mahendra mountains bordering the eastern main, having traversed the many rivers of their river districts. Next appeared the ambassador of the Guhyaka or yaksha tribes that inhabited the shores of the northern sea.²⁵ Likewise there were envoys visiting from the shores of the western ocean and relating the state of affairs of that territory to the king. The assembly of innumerable chieftains from all quarters filled the entire courtyard with luster.

²⁶ The sounds of brahmins chanting on sacrificial altars were drowned under the sound of tambourines, shouted announcements, and the loud praises of speakers, all re-echoed by the uproar of elephants.²⁷ The vault of heaven resounded to the sounds of vocal and instrumental music, and the dust raised by the procession of elephants and chariots, and the trotting of horses' hoofs, hid the face of the sky like a cloud.²⁸ The fragrance of flowers, camphor and heaps of frankincense perfumed the air, and the royal hall was filled with presents sent from different provinces.²⁹ His fair fame shone forth like a burning hill of white camphor raising a column of splendor reaching to the sky and casting sunlight into shade.³⁰ There were district rulers busily employed in their grave and momentous duties, and great architects who conducted the building of many cities.

³¹ Then the ardent Leela entered the royal assembly hall of the ruler of men. She was unseen by any, just as one void mixes with another void, and as air is lost in the air.³² She wandered about without anyone there seeing her, just like a fair figure formed by false imagination of our fond desires is not to be perceived by anyone outside ourselves.³³ In this manner she continued to walk about the palace unperceived by all, just like a castle in the air built in one's mind is not perceived by another.

³⁴ She saw them all assembled in the royal court in their former forms, and saw all the cities of the princes concentrated in that single city of her lord.³⁵ She viewed the same places, the same dealings, the same concourse of children, the same sorts of men and women, and the same ministers as before.

³⁶ She saw the same rulers of earth and the very same pundits as before; the identical courtiers and the same servants as ever.³⁷ There was the same assembly of learned men and friends as before, and the like throng of citizens pursuing their former course of business.

³⁸ She suddenly saw the flames of wildfire spreading on all sides, even in broad midday light, and the sun and moon appearing both at once in the sky, and the clouds roaring with a tremendous noise, with the whistling of the winds.³⁹ She saw trees, hills, rivers and cities flourishing with population, and the many towns and villages and forests all about.⁴⁰ She saw her royal consort as a boy of ten years of age after shaking off his former frame of old age, sitting amidst the hall with all his former retinue, and all the inhabitants of his village.

⁴¹ Leela, having seen all these, began to reflect within herself whether the inhabitants of this place were living beings or the ghosts of their former individual souls. ⁴² Then having recovered her (ordinary) sense at the removal of her trance, she entered her inner apartment at midnight and found the residents fast bound in sleep. ⁴³ She woke her sleeping companions one by one and said she was anxious to visit the royal hall. ⁴⁴ She wanted to sit beside the throne of her lord and to clear her doubt by seeing the courtiers all alive.

⁴⁵ The royal servants rose up at her call and obedient to her command they said, "Be it so" and attended to their respective duties. ⁴⁶ A group of staff-bearers ran to all sides to call the courtiers from the city, and sweepers came and swept the ground as clean as if the sun had shed his rays upon it. ⁴⁷ A better set of servants cleaned the courtyard as clean as autumn days clear the sky of its rainy clouds. ⁴⁸ Rows of lights were placed about the courtyard, which looked as beautiful as clusters of stars in the clear sky. ⁴⁹ Throngs of people filled the courtyard, like the ancient earth had been covered by the floods of the great deluge.

⁵⁰ Dignified ministers and chiefs attended first and took their respective seats, appearing as if they were a set of newly created rulers of the various peoples of the world, or the regents of the quarters of the sky. ⁵¹ The cooling and fragrant odor of thickly pasted camphor filled the palace, and the sweet-scented breezes profusely breathed the fragrance of the lotus flowers, which they bore from all sides. ⁵² The chamberlains stood all around in their white garbs, appearing like an assembly of silvery clouds hanging over the burning hills under the equator. ⁵³ The morning breeze had strewn heaps of flowers over the ground, bright as the beaming dawn dispelling the gloom of night, and bleached as clusters of stars fallen upon the ground. ⁵⁴ The retinue of the chiefs of the land crowded the palace which seemed like a lake full of full-blown lotuses with fair swimming swans rambling about.

⁵⁵ There Leela took her seat on a golden seat by the side of the throne. She appeared as beautiful as Rati seated in the joyous heart of Kama. ⁵⁶ She saw all the princes seated in their order as before, and the elders of the people and the nobles of men and all her friends and relatives seated in their proper places. ⁵⁷ She was highly delighted to see them all in their former states. Her face shone brightly like the moon to find them all alive again.

Chapter 18 — Leela Wonders which World Is Real; Saraswati Explains

¹ Leela said, "I have much consolation in you, and now will I console my sorrowing heart." So saying, she made a sign for the assembly to break and rose from her royal seat. ² She entered the inner apartment and sat by the side of the dead body of her lord, hidden under the heap of flowers, and began to reflect within herself.

³ She thought, "O the wonderful magic that presents these people of my palace situated in the same manner outside myself as I saw them seated within me in my meditation. ⁴ O how great is the extent of this delusion that contains the same high hills and the same spacious forests of palm and hintala trees situated both outside and within me. ⁵ Like a mirror shows the reflection of hills within itself as they are without it, so the reflector of the intellect presents the whole creation inwardly as it has outside of itself. ⁶ I must now invoke the goddess of wisdom to determine which of these is illusion and which the sober and certain reality."

⁷ So thinking, she worshipped and invoked the goddess, and immediately saw Saraswati in the form of a virgin. ⁸ She made the goddess sit on an elevated seat and, having seated herself low upon the ground before her, asked that divine power to tell her the truth. ⁹ Leela said, "Be gracious, O goddess, and clear this doubt of your suppliant, for it is your wisdom that first framed this beautiful system of the universe and knows the truth. ¹⁰ Tell me, O great goddess, about what I am now going to relate you, for it is by your favor alone that I may be successful to know it."

¹¹ "I saw the pattern of this world in the intellect, which is more transparent than the ethereal sphere and so extensive that it contains millions and millions of miles in its small space. ¹² No definite words can express what is known as the calm, cool and indescribable light. This is called unintelligible intelligence and is without any cover or support (*niravarana nirbhitti*). ¹³ It exhibits the reflections of space and the course of time, and those of the sky and its light, and the course of events concentrating in itself. ¹⁴ Thus the images of the worlds are to be seen both within and outside the intellect, and it is hard to distinguish the real and unreal ones between them."

¹⁵ The goddess asked, "Tell me fair maiden, what is the nature of the real world, and what you mean by its unreality?"

¹⁶ Leela replied, "I know the real is where I find myself sitting here and looking upon you as seated in this place. ¹⁷ What I mean by unreal is the state in which I saw my husband in the ethereal region some time ago, because emptiness has no limit of time or place in it."

¹⁸ The goddess replied, "Real creation cannot produce an unreal figure. A similar cause cannot produce a dissimilar effect."

¹⁹ Leela replied, "But O goddess, we often see dissimilar effects produced from similar causes. The earth and an earthen pot are similar in substance, yet one melts in water and the other holds water."

²⁰ The goddess said, "Yes, when an act is done by the aid of auxiliary means, there the effect is found to be somewhat different from the primary cause." (Thus the earthen pot being produced by the auxiliary appliances of fire, the potter's wheel and the like, differs in its quality from the original clay.)

²¹ "Say, O beautiful maiden, what were the causes of your husband being born in this earth? The same led to his birth in the other world also. ²² When the soul has fled from here, how can the material earth follow him and what auxiliary causes can there be in connection with this cause? ²³ Whenever there is a contributing cause in addition to the apparent cause, everyone usually attributes the result to some unknown prior cause or motive."

²⁴ Leela said, "I think, O goddess, that the expansion of my husband's memory caused of his regenerations, because it is certain that memory is the cause of the reproduction of objects before us."

²⁵ The goddess replied that memory is an aerial substance and its productions are as unsubstantial as itself.

²⁶ Leela said, "Yes I find memory to be an airy thing, and its reproduction of my husband and all other things within me are only empty shadows in the mind."

²⁷ The goddess replied, "Therefore your husband and all those other things that appeared to your sight in your reverie truly were such reproductions, my daughter. And so is the appearance of all things I see in this world."

²⁸ Leela said, "Tell me goddess, in order to remove my conception of the reality of the world, how the false appearance of my formless lord was produced before me by the unreal world."

²⁹ The goddess replied, "As this illusionary world appeared a reality to you before you had memories of it, so you must know that all this is unreal from what I am going to relate to you."

Saraswati speaking:—

³⁰ In some part of the sphere of Consciousness there is the great fabric of the world, with the glassy vault of the firmament for its roof on all sides. ³¹ Mount Meru (the polar axle or mountain) is its pillar, surrounded by the regents of the ten sides, like statues carved upon it. The fourteen regions are like so many apartments of it, and the hollow vault containing the three worlds is lighted by the lamp of the luminous sun. ³² Its corners are inhabited by living creatures resembling ants. They are surrounded by mountains appearing as anthills in the sight of Brahma, the prime lord of creatures and the primeval patriarch of many races of men. ³³ All animal beings are like worms confined in cocoons of their own making.

The blue skies above and below are like the soot of this house, beset by bodies of departed spirits resembling groups of gnats buzzing in the air. ³⁴ The fleeting clouds are the smoke of this house or like spider webs in its corners, and the hollow air is full of aerial spirits, like holes of bamboos filled with flies. ³⁵ There are also the playful spirits of gods and demigods hovering over human houses like swarms of busy, buzzing bees about vessels of honey. ³⁶ Here and there, amidst the cavity of heaven, earth and the infernal regions, lay tracts of land well watered by rivers, lakes and the sea on all sides.

³⁷ In a corner of this land was a secluded piece of ground sheltered by hills and crags about it. ³⁸ In this secluded spot sheltered by hills, rivers and forests, there lived a holy brahmin man with his wife and children, free from disease and care of gain and fear of a ruler. He passed his days in his fire-worship and hospitality with the produce of his cattle and lands.

Chapter 19 — Story of a Former Vasishta & Arundhati

Vasishta relating the story of Leela, Saraswati speaking to Leela:—

¹ In his age and attire, in his learning and wealth, and in all his actions and pursuits, this holy man was equal to his namesake, except in his profession. (The one being a secular man, and the other the priest of the royal family). ² His name was Vasishta.

His wife was Arundhati, fair as the moon and like the star of the same name visible from earth. ³ She resembled her namesake, the priestess of the solar race, in her virtues and parts and in all things, except in her soul and body. ⁴ She passed her time in true love and affection in the company of her husband, and she was his all in the world, with her sweet smiling face resembling a kumuda flower.

⁵ Once this holy man had been sitting under the shady sarala trees, on the tableland of his native hill, when he saw the ruler of the land passing below with his gaudy train. ⁶ He was accompanied by all the members of the royal family and his troops and soldiers. They were going to a hunt with a clamor that resounded in the hills and forests. ⁷ The white flapper fans shed a stream of moonlight, the lifted banners appeared like a moving forest, and the white umbrellas made a canopy of the sky. ⁸ The air was filled with dust raised by the horses' hoofs, and the lines of elephants with their high pavilion saddles seemed like moving towers that protect them from the heat of the sun and the hot winds. ⁹ The loud uproar of the party, resembling the roaring of a whirlpool, made wild animals run on all sides. Shining gems and jewels were flashing all about on the bodies in the party.

¹⁰ The holy man saw this procession and thought to himself, "O how charming is royalty, filled with such splendor and prosperity! ¹¹ Ah, how shall I become the monarch of all the ten sides, and have such a retinue of horse, elephants and foot soldiers, with a similar train of flags, flappers and blazing umbrellas? ¹² When will the breeze gently blow the fragrance of kunda flowers and the powdered dust of lotuses to my bed-chamber to lull me and my consorts to sleep? ¹³ When shall I adorn the faces of my chamber maids with camphor and sandal paste, and enlighten the faces of the four quarters with my fair fame, like the moonbeams decorate the night?"

¹⁴ With these thoughts, the holy man determined that for the rest of his life, he would apply himself vigilantly to the rigid austerities of his religion. ¹⁵ At last, he was overtaken by infirmities which shattered his body, like the sieves of snowfall batter the blooming lotuses in the lake. ¹⁶ Seeing his approaching death, his faithful wife was fading away with fear, like a vine withers at the departure of spring for fear of the summer heat. ¹⁷ Arundhati then began to worship me, as you yourself have, in order to obtain the boon of immortality which is hard to be had.

¹⁸ She prayed, "Ordain, O goddess, that the spirit of my lord may not depart from this tomb after his death." I granted her request.

¹⁹ After some time Vasishta the holy man died and his empty spirit remained in the emptiness of that home. ²⁰ By virtue of the excessive desire and merit of acts in his former state of existence, this aerial spirit of the holy man assumed the shape of a mighty man on earth. ²¹ He became the victorious monarch of the three realms. By his might he subjugated the surface of the earth. By his valor he conquered the high mountains (of the gods). By his kind protection, the nether lands were under his sway. ²² He was like a raging fire to the forest of his enemies, and like the steadfast Mount Meru

amidst the rushing winds of business on all sides. He was like the sun expanding the lotus-like hearts of the virtuous. To the eyes of women he was like the god Kama.²³ He was the model of all learning, and the all giving wish-fulfilling tree to his suitors. He was the footstool of great scholars. He was like the full moon shedding ambrosial beams of enlightened rule all around.

²⁴ But after the holy brahmin had died, and his dead body had disappeared into the forms of elementary particles in air, and his airy spirit had rested in the aerial intellectual soul within the empty space of his house,²⁵ his holy brahmin widow, Arundhati, was pining away in her sorrow, and her heart was rent in twain like a dried pea pod.²⁶ She became a dead body like her husband. Her spirit, by shuffling off its mortal coil, resumed its subtle and immortal form in which it met the departed ghost of her husband.²⁷ She advanced to her lord as rapidly as a river runs to meet the sea below its level. She was as cheerful to join him as a cluster of flowers inhale the spring air.

²⁸ The houses, lands and all the immovable properties and movable riches of this holy brahmin Vasishtha still exist in that rocky village, and it has been only eight days since the souls of this loving pair were reunited in the hollow vault of their house.

Chapter 20 — Saraswati Explains Leela's Former Life as Arundhati

¹ Saraswati said to Leela, "That brahmin whom I described before, the one who became a monarch on earth, is the same as your husband. His wife Arundhati is no other than yourself, the best of women.

² You two are the same pair now reigning over this realm, resembling a pair of doves in your nuptial love, and the gods Shiva and Parvati in your might."

³ "I have related your past lives to you so that you may know the individual soul to be only air, and that knowledge of its reality is an error. ⁴ False knowledge casts its reflection on consciousness and causes its error also. (Errors in the senses breed errors in the mind.) This makes you doubtful of the truth and untruth of the two states (of the material and intellectual worlds). ⁵ Therefore the question, 'Which is true and which is untrue?' has no better answer than that all creations are equally false and unsubstantial."

⁶ Vasishta said:—

Hearing these words of the goddess, Leela was confused in her mind, and with her eyes staring with wonder, she addressed her softly.

⁷ Leela said, "How is it, O goddess, that your words are so incoherent with truth. You make us the same as the brahmin couple who are in their own house. We are sitting here in our palace. ⁸ How is it possible that the small space of the room in which my husband's body is lying could contain those spacious lands and hills and the ten sides of the sky? ⁹ It is as impossible as confining an elephant in a mustard seed, or a gnat fighting with a body of lions in a nutshell. ¹⁰ It is as incredible as to believe a lotus seed contains a hill, or to be devoured by a little bee, or that peacocks are dancing hearing the roaring of clouds in a dream. ¹¹ O great goddess of gods, it is equally improbably to say that this earth, with all its mountains and other things, is contained within the small space of a sleeping room.

¹² Therefore, O goddess, please explain this mystery clearly to me, because it is by your favor only that the learned are cleared of their questions."

¹³ The goddess Saraswati said:—

Hear me, fair maiden! I did not tell you a lie. Transgression of the law is a thing unknown to us. (The law is *nanritam vadeta* — never tell an untruth.) ¹⁴ It is I who established the law when others are about to break it. If I should slight the law, who else is there who would observe it?

¹⁵ The individual soul of the village brahmin saw within itself and in his own house the image of this great kingdom, just as his departed spirit now sees the same in its empty void. (Therefore both these states are equally ideal.) ¹⁶ After death you lost the memories of your former lives, just like one loses memories of waking events when in the dream state. ¹⁷ All are like the appearance of the three worlds in dream, or their formation in the imagination, or like the description of warfare in an epic poem, or like water in the mirage of a sandy desert. ¹⁸ The hills and houses seen in the empty space of the brahmin's house were nothing but the capacity of his own mind to form the images of its fancy and receive the external impressions like a reflecting mirror. ¹⁹ All these, though unreal, appear as real substances on account of the reality of consciousness which is seated in the cavity of the innermost sheath of the body and reflects the images. ²⁰ But these images derived from the memories of unreal objects of the world are as unreal as those objects which cast their reflections upon consciousness.

Waves rising in the river of a mirage are as unreal as the mirage itself.

²¹ Know that this chair sitting in this room of your house, as well as myself and yourself and everything else about us, are only the reflections of our consciousness, without which nothing would be perceptible. ²² Our dreams and fallacies, our desires and fancies, and also our notions and ideas serve as the best evidence to understand this truth (that nothing is true beside the subjective mind, which creates and forms, produces and presents all objects to our view).

²³ The spirit of the brahmin resided in the emptiness of his house (the body), with the seas, forests and the earth within itself, like a bee lives in the lotus. ²⁴ Thus the habitable earth with everything it contains is situated in a small cell in one corner of consciousness, like a spot of flimsy cloud in the sky. ²⁵ The house of the holy brahmin was situated in the same locality of consciousness which contains all the worlds in one of its atomic particles. ²⁶ Every atom of the intelligent soul contains unnumbered worlds within worlds, enough to remove your doubt of the brahmin being able to see an entire kingdom within the space of his intellect.

²⁷ Leela asked, "How can we be the brahmin couple when they died only eight days before and we have been reigning here for so many years?"

²⁸ The goddess replied:—

In reality, there is neither any limit of space or time, nor any distance of place or length of time. Hear me now tell you the reason why.

²⁹ As the universe is the reflection of the Divine Mind, so are infinity and eternity but representations of Himself. ³⁰ Listen to what I tell you about how we form the idea of time and its subdivisions, whether a moment or an age. It is the same way that we make distinctions among the individuals that are me, you and this or that person.

³¹ As soon as one feels the lack of senses after his death, he forgets his former nature and thinks himself to be another being. ³² Then, in the twinkling of an eye, he assumes an empty form in the womb of emptiness and in that container he thinks within himself, ³³ "This is my body with its hands and feet." Thinking about body, he finds it presented before him. ³⁴ Then he thinks in himself, "I am the son of this father and am so many years old. These are my dear friends and this is my pleasant home. ³⁵ I was born and became a boy, and then grew up to this age. There are all my friends and in the same course of their lives." ³⁶ Thus the compact density of the sphere of his soul presents him with many other images that appear to arise in it as in some part of the world. ³⁷ But they neither rise nor remain in the soul itself, which is as transparent as empty air. They appear to consciousness like a vision seen in a dream.

³⁸ A person dreaming remains in one place but sees all manners of things in different places. Everything in the other world appears equally real, just like in his dream. ³⁹ Again, whatever is seen in the other world, the same occurs to men in their present states also. The unreality of the world of dreaming and the reality of this physical world are alike. ⁴⁰ Just like there is no difference among the waves of the same seawater, so the produced visible creation is the same as the unproduced intellectual world, both of which are equally indestructible.

⁴¹ But in reality, the appearance is nothing but a reflection of consciousness which, apart from the intelligible spirit, is merely an empty void.⁴² Although presided over by the intelligible spirit, creation itself is a mere void, its only substance being the intelligible soul, like water is to waves.

⁴³ Waves though formed of water are themselves as unreal as the horns of hares. Their appearance as natural objects is altogether false (because they are the effects of the auxiliary cause of the winds that have raised them).⁴⁴ Therefore, there being no visible object in reality, how can the observer have any idea of materiality which loses its delusion at the moment of his death?

⁴⁵ After the visible outer world has disappeared from sight, the soul, in its inner world of the mind, reflects on its memories of creation according to the proper time and place of everything.⁴⁶ It remembers its birth, its parents, its age and its residence, with its learning and all other pursuits in their exact manner and order.⁴⁷ It thinks of its friends and servants, and of the success and failure of its attempts. The uncreated and incorporeal soul, in its intellectual form, reflects on the events of its created and corporeal state.

⁴⁸ However, it does not remain in this state for long. Soon after death it enters a new body to which the properties of the mind and senses are added afterwards in their proper times.⁴⁹ It then becomes a baby, finds a new father and mother, and begins to grow. Thus whether one may perceive it or not, it is all the product of his former memories.⁵⁰ Then upon waking from this state of trance, like a fruit from the cell of a flower, it comes to find that a single moment appeared to it as the period of an age.

⁵¹ It was in this way that in times past, King Harish Chandra thought one night to be twelve years. One day seems like a year to those who are separated from their beloved objects.⁵² Again, it is all false, whether the birth or death of someone in his dream, or being born and recognizing a father in infancy, or a hungry man imagining he is dining on dainty food.⁵³ So who would believe a satisfied man after eating who says he is starving, or one who declares that he is an eyewitness of something he had not seen, or an empty space full of people, or that someone found lost treasure in his dream?

⁵⁴ But this visible world rests in the invisible spirit of God, like the property of pungency resides in the particles of the pepper seed, and like the painted pictures on a column. But where are the open and clear sighted eyes to perceive this?

⁵⁵ The vision of Leela, called samadhi in yoga and clairvoyance of spiritualism, was the abstract meditation of her lord in her memory that presented her with a full view of everything imprinted on it. Memory is taken for the whole consciousness (*chit*), which is identified with God in whose essence the images of all things are said to be eternally present.

Chapter 21 — Saraswati Explains the Practice of Meditation, Astral Travel

Saraswati continues speaking to Leela:—

¹ Soon after death occasions the lack of physical senses, the sight of the world appears to the soul as if he were seeing it with open eyes when he was living. ² Before him is presented the circle of the sky and its sides with the cycle of its seasons and times. He is shown the deeds of his pious and mundane acts, as if they were to continue to eternity. ³ Objects never before seen or thought of also offer themselves to his view, like the sight of his own death in a dream, as if they were the prints in his memory. ⁴ But the infinity of objects appearing in the empty sphere of the non-physical intellect is mere illusion, and the baseless city of the world, like a castle in the sky, is only the creation of imagination.

⁵ Memory of the past world makes it known to us. Therefore, the length of a kalpa age and the shortness of a moment are only false impressions proceeding from the speed and slowness of our thoughts.

⁶ Therefore knowledge based upon previous memories or otherwise is of two kinds, and things known without their cause are attributed to Divine Intelligence. ⁷ We are also conscious of thoughts that we have not thought of before in our minds, such as we often have in our dreams. Another may remind us of our deceased parents, so we think of them. ⁸ Sometimes genius supersedes the province of memory, as in the first creation or discovery of a thing, which afterwards is continued by its memory.

⁹ According to some, those visible worlds are said to have remained in their ideal state in the Divine Mind. According to others, there were no pre-existent notions of these in the mind of God.

¹⁰ According to some others, the world manifested itself not from memory but by the power and will of God. Still others maintain it to be the production of a sudden, fortuitous combination of intelligence and atomic principles (*kakataliya sanyoga*).

¹¹ Completely forgetting the world is called liberation. That cannot be had if consciousness is attached to what is desirable or is averse to the undesirable. ¹² It is difficult to effect an entire negation of both one's subjective and objective knowledge of his self and the existence of the outer world. Yet nobody can be freed without the obliteration of both.

¹³ As the fallacy of taking a rope for a snake is not removed until the meaning of the word snake is known to be inapplicable to the rope, so no one can have rest and peace of mind unless he is convinced of the illusory nature of the world. ¹⁴ Even with that, a person who is at peace with himself cannot be wholly at rest without divine knowledge because, even though he has rid himself of the devil of worldliness, the ghost of his inner ignorance may overtake him. ¹⁵ The world is certainly a monster in itself without the knowledge of its Author, but the difficulty of knowing the First Cause has rendered it an impassable wilderness.

¹⁶ Leela said, "If memories are the cause of one's reincarnation, then, O goddess, tell me what were the causes of the birth of the brahmin couple, without the vestiges of their past memories?"

¹⁷ The goddess replied:—

Know that Brahma the first progenitor of mankind, who was absolute in himself, did not retain any

vestige of his past memories in him.¹⁸ The first born, who had nothing to remember of a prior birth, was born in the lotus with his own intelligence (*chaitanya*) and not because of his memory.¹⁹ The Lord of Creatures being thus born by chance of his own genius or creative power, and without any assignable cause or design on his part, reflected within himself, "Now I am become another and the source of creation."

²⁰ Whatever is born of itself is like a nothing that was never produced at all, but remains as the absolute intellect itself in the clouds (*chinnabhas*).²¹ The Supreme Being is the sole cause of both types of memories (those caused by vestiges of prior impressions, and those produced by prior desires). Both conditions of cause and effect are combined in Him in the sphere of his consciousness.

²² Therefore our tranquility can only come from knowing that cause and effect are the same and that the auxiliary cause is in Him.

²³ Cause and effect are mere empty words of no significance because it is the recognition of the Universal Consciousness that constitutes true wisdom.²⁴ Nothing seen in the physical world or known in the mental or spiritual worlds is ever produced. Everything exists within the consciousness of one's own soul.

²⁵ Leela said, "What a wonderful sight you have shown me, O goddess. It is as auspicious as morning light and as brilliant as lightning.²⁶ Now goddess, please satisfy my curiosity until I become thoroughly familiar with this knowledge through my intense application and study.²⁷ Kindly take me to that mountainous place where the brahmin couple, Vasishta and Arundhati, lived and show me their house."

²⁸ The goddess replied:—

If you want to see that sight, you have to be immaculate. You must give up your personality and your ego-sense and attain awareness of the unintelligible Consciousness within the soul.²⁹ Then you will find yourself in an empty atmosphere situated in the sky that resembles the prospects of earthly men and the apartments of the firmament (*i.e.*, nothing).³⁰ In this state we shall be able to see them (the field of another's imagination) with all their possessions and without any obstruction. Otherwise this body is a great barrier in the way of spiritual vision.

³¹ Leela said, "Tell me kindly, O goddess, the reason why do we not see the other world with these eyes, or go there with these our bodies."

³² The goddess replied:—

The reason is that you take the true future as false, and you believe the untrue present as true. These worlds that are formless appear to your eyes as having forms, just like you see the form of a ring when its substance is gold.³³ Gold, though fashioned into a circle, has no curve in it. The spirit of God appearing in the form of the world is not the world itself.³⁴ The world is an emptiness full with the spirit of God. Whatever is visible is like dust appearing to fly over the sea.

³⁵ The ultimate substance of the world is all a false illusion. The true reality is the subjective Brahma alone. Our guides in Vedanta philosophy and the conviction of our consciousness are evidence of this truth.

³⁶ The believer in Brahma sees Brahma alone and no other anywhere. He looks to Brahma through Brahma himself, as the creator and preserver of all, and whose nature includes all other attributes in itself. ³⁷ Brahma is known not only as the author of His work of the creation of worlds, but as existent of himself without any causation or auxiliary causation.

³⁸ The practice of meditation trains you to disregard all duality and variety and to rely only on one unity. Until you are trained through your practice of meditation, you are barred from viewing Brahma in his true light. ³⁹ By constant practice of meditation, we become settled in this belief of unity, and we rest in the Supreme Spirit. ⁴⁰ Then we find our bodies to be an aerial substance that mixes with the air, and at last, with these our mortal frames, we are able to come to the sight of Brahma. ⁴¹ Being endowed with pure, enlightened and spiritual frames (astral or subtle bodies), like those of Brahma and the gods, the holy saints are placed in some part of the divine essence.

⁴² Without the practice of meditation, you cannot approach God with your mortal frame. A soul sullied by physical sensation can never see the image of God. ⁴³ It is impossible for one to arrive at another's castle in the sky, when he is unable to see the castle in the sky that he himself imagined.

⁴⁴ Therefore, give up your gross body and assume your light intellectual frame. Immerse yourself in the practice of yoga so that you may see God face to face. ⁴⁵ It is possible to labor and build castles in the air. In the same way, it is possible through the practice of yoga, and in no other way, to behold God, either with this body or without it.

⁴⁶ Ever since the creation of this world (by the will of Brahma), there have been false conceptions of its existence. It has been attributed to an eternal fate, *niyati* (by fatalists), and to an illusory power, *maya shakti* (of Maya *vadis*).

⁴⁷ Leela asked, "O goddess, you said that we both shall go to the abode of the brahmin couple, but I ask you, how is that possible? ⁴⁸ I am able to go there with the pure essence of my sentient soul. But tell me, how will you who are pure intellect (*chetas*) go to that place?"

⁴⁹ The goddess replied:—

I tell you lady, Divine Will is an aerial tree and its fruits are as unsubstantial as air, having no figure or form or substance to them. ⁵⁰ Whatever is formed by the will of God from the pure essence of His intelligent nature is only a likeness of Himself and bears little difference from its original. ⁵¹ My body is the same and I need not lay it aside. I find that place with my body like a breeze finds odors. ⁵² As water mixes with water, fire with fire, and air with air, so does this spiritual body easily join with any material form that it likes. ⁵³ But a physical body cannot mix with an non-physical substance, nor can a solid rock become the same as the idea of a hill.

⁵⁴ Your body has its mental and spiritual parts. It has become physical because of its habitual tendency towards the physical. ⁵⁵ Your physical body becomes spiritual (*ativahika*) by leaning towards spirituality, as in your sleep, your protracted meditation, and your unconsciousness to fancies and reveries. ⁵⁶ Your spiritual nature will return to your body when your earthly desires are lessened and curbed within the mind.

⁵⁷ Leela said, "Say goddess, what happens to the spiritual body after it has attained its compactness

by constant practice of yoga? Does it becomes indestructible or does it perish like all other finite bodies?"

⁵⁸ The goddess replied:—

Anything that exists is perishable and, of course, liable to death. But how can something die that is nothing and is imperishable in its nature? ⁵⁹ Again, once we realize the mistake of thinking a rope to be a snake, the snake disappears of itself and no one mistakes the rope anymore. ⁶⁰ Thus, as the true knowledge of the rope removes the false conception of the snake in it, so the recognition of the spiritual body dispels the misconception of its materiality. ⁶¹ All imagery is at an end when there is no image at all, just like the art of carving statues must cease if there is no more stone.

⁶² We clearly see our bodies as full of the spirit of God. Your gross understanding keeps you from seeing this. ⁶³ In the beginning, when consciousness (*chit*) is engrossed with the imagination of the mind, it loses sight of the One.

⁶⁴ Leela asked, "But how can imagination trace out anything in that unity in which the divisions of time and space and all things are lost in an undistinguishable mass?"

⁶⁵ The goddess replied:—

Like the bracelet in gold, waves in water, the show of truth in dreams, and the appearance of castles in the sky ⁶⁶ all vanish upon an accurate perception, so the imaginary attributes of the unpredictable God are all nothing whatever. ⁶⁷ Just like there is no dust in the sky, no attribute or partial property can be ascribed to God whose nature is indivisible and unimaginable, who is an unborn unity, tranquil and all-pervading. ⁶⁸ Whatever shines about us is the pure light of that Being who scatters His luster all around like a transcendental gem.

⁶⁹ Leela said, "If it is so at all times, then tell me, O goddess, how did we happen to fall into the error of attributing duality and diversity to His nature?"

⁷⁰ The goddess replied:—

It was your ignorance that for so long has led you to error. The natural bane of mankind is the absence of reasoning, and it requires remedying by your attending to reason. ⁷¹ When reason takes the place of ignorance, in a moment it introduces the light of knowledge in the soul instead of its former darkness.

⁷² As reason advances, your ignorance and your bondage to prejudice are put to flight. Then you have an unobstructed liberation and pure understanding in this world. ⁷³ As long as you remained without reasoning on this subject, you were either sleeping or wandering in error.

⁷⁴ Now your reason and liberation are awakened and the seeds for the suppression of your desires are sown in your heart. ⁷⁵ At first, the nature of this physical world was neither apparent to you nor you to it. How long will you reside in it and what other desires have you here? ⁷⁶ Withdraw your mind from its thoughts of the viewer, the visible, and the vision of this world. Settle your mind on the idea of the entire negation of all existence. Fix your meditation solely upon the Supreme Being and sit in a state of unalterable unconsciousness. ⁷⁷ When the seed of renunciation has taken root and germinated in your heart, the sprouts of your likes and dislikes will be destroyed of themselves. ⁷⁸ Then the impression of the world will be utterly effaced from the mind and an unshaken anesthesia will

overtake you all at once.

79 Remaining entranced in your abstract meditation, in process of time you will have a soul as luminous as a star in the clear sky of heaven, free from the links of all causes and their effects for evermore.

Chapter 22 — Practice of Wisdom (*Vijnana-Bhyasa*)

¹ The goddess continued:—

Objects seen in a dream prove to be false on being awaken. Similarly, belief in the reality of the body becomes unfounded upon dissolution of our desires.² As a thing dreamt of disappears upon waking, so does the waking body disappear in sleep, when desires lie dormant in the soul.

³ As our physical bodies awake after dreaming and desiring, so our spiritual bodies awake after we cease to think of our physical states.⁴ In deep sleep we are devoid of desires. Similarly, in the state of renunciation, even though we are awake in our physical bodies, we have the tranquility of liberation.⁵ The desire of men liberated while living (*jivan mukta*) is not properly any desire at all. It is a pure desire relating to universal wellbeing and happiness.

⁶ The sleep in which the will and wish are dormant is called deep sleep, but the dormancy of desires in the waking state is known as unconsciousness to delusion (*moha*) or unconsciousness (*murchha*).

⁷ Again the deep sleep that is wholly devoid of desire is called the *turiya* or the fourth stage of yoga. In the waking state it is called *samadhi* or union with Supreme.

⁸ The embodied man whose life is freed from all desires in this world is called the liberated while living (*jivan mukta*), a state unknown to those who are not liberated.⁹ When the mind becomes a pure essence (as in *samadhi*) and its desires are weakened, it becomes spiritualized (*ativahika*) and it glows and flows, like snow melts to water by application of heat.¹⁰ The spiritualized mind, being awakened, mixes with the holy spirits of departed souls in the other world.

¹¹ When your sense of individual ego is moderated by your practice of meditation, then the perception of invisible will rise of itself clearly before your mind.¹² When spiritual knowledge gains a firm footing in your mind, you will perceive more other worlds than you expect.¹³ Therefore, O blameless lady, try your utmost to deaden your desires. When you have gained sufficient strength in that practice, know yourself to be liberated in this life.

¹⁴ When the moon of your intellectual knowledge shines fully with its cooling beams, you shall have to leave your physical body here in order to see the other worlds.¹⁵ Your fleshy body has no tangible connection with one that is without flesh, nor can the intellectual body (*lingadeha*, astral body) perform any action of the physical system.

¹⁶ I have told you all this according to my best knowledge and the state of things as they are. Even children know that what I say is as effective as the curse or blessing of a god.

¹⁷ The habitual reliance of men upon their gross bodies and their fond attachment to them bind their souls down to the earth. The weakening of earthly desires serves to clothe them with spiritual bodies.

¹⁸ Nobody believes that he has a spiritual body, even at his death bed, but everyone thinks a dying man is dead with his body forever.¹⁹ This body however, neither dies nor is it alive at anytime. Both life and death, in all respects, are mere appearances of aerial dreams and desires.²⁰ The life and death of beings here below are as false as the appearances and disappearance of people in imagination, or dolls in play or puppet shows.

²¹ Leela said, “O goddess, the pure knowledge that you have given me has fallen on my ears acts like

a healing balm to the pain caused by phenomena.²² Now tell me the name and nature of the practice for spiritualization. How it is to be perfected and what is the end of such perfection?"'

²³ The goddess replied:—

Whatever a man attempts to do here at anytime, he can hardly ever complete it without painful practice to the utmost of his power.²⁴ The wise say that practice consists in the association of one thing with another, in understanding it thoroughly, and in devoting oneself solely to his object.

²⁵ Great souls become successful in this world who are disgusted with the world and are moderate in their enjoyments and desires. They do not think about seeking what they lack.²⁶ Those great minds are said to be best trained who are graced with liberal views, are delighted with the relish of unconcern with the world, and are enraptured with streams of heavenly joy.²⁷ Again, they are called the best practiced in divine knowledge who, by the light of reasoning and scripture, are employed preaching the absolute non-existence of any distinction between the knower and what is known in this world.

²⁸ What some call practical knowledge is knowing that nothing was produced in the beginning and nothing that is visible, such as this world or one's self, is true at anytime.

²⁹ The effect of practicing meditation is a strong tendency of the soul towards the spirit of God, which results from an understanding of the non-existence of the visible world and the subsidence of passions.³⁰ But mere knowledge of the nonexistence of the world, without subduing passions, is known as knowledge without practice, and is of no value to its possessor.³¹ Consciousness of the non-existence of the visible world is the true knowledge of the knowable. The practice of meditation makes this knowledge a habit in the mind and leads one to his final extinction (*nirvana*).³² The practice of meditation prepares the mind and awakens the intelligence which lay dormant in the dark night of this world. Consciousness then sheds its cooling showers of reason, like dew drops in the frosty night of autumn.

Valmiki speaking:—

³³ As the sage was lecturing in this manner, the day departed for its evening service and led the assembled train to their evening prayers. After the rising beams of the sun dispelled the darkness of night, they met again with mutual greetings.

Chapter 23 — Saraswati & Leela Meditate & Begin Astral Travel

¹ Vasishta said:—

After this conversation between Goddess Saraswati and the excellent Leela on that night, the two of them found Leela's family and attendants fast asleep in the inner apartment.² Saraswati and Leela entered the shrine that was closely shut on all sides by latches fastened to the doors and windows, and which was perfumed with the fragrance of heaps of flowers.³ They sat beside the corpse decorated with fresh flowers and garments. Their faces shone like the fair full moon and brightened the place.⁴ They stood motionless on the spot, as if they were sculptures engraved on marble columns, or pictures drawn upon the wall.

⁵ They shook off all their thoughts and cares, and became as withdrawn as the faded blossoms of the lotus at the end of the day when their fragrance has fled.⁶ They remained still, calm and quiet and without any motion of their limbs, like a sheet of clouds hanging on the mountain top in the calm of autumn.⁷ They continued in fixed attention without any external sensation, like some lonely vines shriveled for lack of moisture (in samadhi meditation).⁸ They were fully impressed with the disbelief of their own existence, and that of all other things in the world. They were completely absorbed in the thought of an absolute privation of everything at large.⁹ They lost memory of the phantom of the phenomenal world, which is as unreal as the horn of a hare.¹⁰ What had no existence in the beginning is still non-existent at present, and what appears existent is as non-existent as water in a mirage.¹¹ The two ladies became as quiet as inert nature herself, and as still as the sky before the stars rolled about in its ample sphere.

¹² Then they began to move with their own bodies, the goddess of wisdom in her form of intelligence and the queen in her intellectual and meditative mood.¹³ With their new bodies they rose as high as the width of a hand above the ground, then taking the forms of empty consciousness, they began to rise in the sky.¹⁴ Then the two ladies, their playful open eyes and by their nature of intellectual knowledge, ascended to the higher region of the sky.

¹⁵ They flew higher and higher by force of their intellect and arrived at a region stretching millions of miles in length.¹⁶ The pair in their ethereal forms looked around according to their nature in search of some visible objects, but finding no other figure except their own, they became much more attached to each other by their mutual affection.

Chapter 24 — Description of the Astral Journey

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Thus ascending higher and higher, and by degrees reaching the highest station, they continued viewing the heavens with their hands clasped together.

² They saw a vast expanse like a wide extended universal ocean, deep and translucent within, but soft with ethereal mildness. A cooling breeze infused heavenly delight. ³ They dived into the vast ocean of emptiness, all delightful and pleasant. It gave them a delight far greater in its purity than what is derived from the company of the virtuous. ⁴ They wandered about all sides of heaven under the beams of the full moon shining above them. They lingered under the clear vault of clouds covering the mountain tops of Meru, as if under the dome of a huge white washed building.

⁵ They roved by the regions of spiritual masters (*siddhas*, adepts) and male nature spirits (*gandharvas*). They breathed the charming fragrance of mandara garlands and, passing the lunar sphere, they inhaled the sweet scent exhaled by the breeze from that nectar-like lunar orb.

⁶ Tired and perspiring profusely, they bathed in the lakes of showering clouds filled with the blushing lotuses of lurid lightning flashing within them. ⁷ They freely strolled at random on all sides, and alighted on the tops of high mountains like fluttering bees, appearing like filaments of the lotus-like earth below. ⁸ They also roved under the vaults of some cloud fragments scattered by the winds, and raining like the cascade of the Ganges River, thinking them as shower bath-houses in the air. ⁹ Then failing in their strength, they paused in many places with slow and slackened steps.

They saw emptiness full of great and wonderful works. ¹⁰ They saw what they had never seen before, the tremendous depth of the void that was not filled up by the myriads of worlds which kept revolving in it. ¹¹ Over and over and higher and higher, they saw the celestial spheres filled with luminous orbs adorned with their ornamental stars wandering one above and around the other. ¹² Huge mountainous bodies like Mount Meru moved about in empty space and emitted a reddish glare on all sides, like a flame of fire from within their bowels. ¹³ There were beautiful tablelands, like those of the Himalayas, with their pearly peaks of snow. There were mountains of gold spreading a golden color over the land. ¹⁴ In one place they saw mountains of emerald tinting the landscape with a lush green like a field of fresh grass. In other places they saw some dark cloud dimming the sight of the spectator and hiding the spectacle in dark blackness. ¹⁵ They saw also tracts of blue sapphire with vines of parijata flowers blooming like banners in the blue skies.

¹⁶ They saw the minds of spiritual masters (*siddhas*) in flight faster than the swift winds. They heard the vocal music of the songs of heavenly nymphs in their aerial abodes. ¹⁷ All the great bodies in the universe (the planetary system) were in continual motion. Spirits of the gods and demigods moved about unseen by one another. ¹⁸ Groups of spiritual beings, the kushmandas, rakshasas and pisachas, were seated in aerial circles at the borders. Winds and gales blew with full force in their ethereal course. ¹⁹ In some places they heard clouds roaring loudly, like the rumbling wheels of heavenly cars, and the noise of rapid stars resembled the blowing of pneumatic engines.

²⁰ Half burnt masters, having flown too close to the sun, were flying from their burning cars under the solar rays. Solar embers were flung afar by the breath of the nostrils of their horses. ²¹ In some places

they saw the rulers of men and lines of female nature spirits (*apsaras*) hurrying up and down the air. In others, they saw goddesses wandering amidst the smoky and fiery clouds in the firmament.²² Here they saw some sparks of light falling like the jewels of celestial nymphs in their hurried flight to their respective spheres. There they saw the light spirits of lesser masters dwindling into darkness.

²³ Flakes of mists were falling off from the clouds, as if by friction from the bodies of turbulent spirits rushing up and down the skies, and shrouded mountain sides like sheets of cloth.²⁴ Groups of cloud fragments were flying about in the air in the shapes of crows, owls and vultures.

They saw some monsters also, such as *dakinis* heaving their heads in the forms of huge surges in the cloudy ocean of the sky.²⁵ There were bodies of *yoginis* too, their faces resembling those of dogs, ravens, asses and camels, who were traversing the wide expanse of the heavens to no purpose.

²⁶ There were masters and nature spirits sporting in pairs in the dark, smoky and ash colored clouds that spread the four quarters of the skies.

²⁷ They saw the path of the planets (the zodiac) resounding loudly with the heavenly music of the spheres. They also saw the path of the lunar mansions that constantly marked the course of the two fortnights.²⁸ They saw the sons of gods moving about in the air and they viewed with wonder the celestial Ganges (the milky way) studded with stars and rolling with the speed of winds.²⁹ They saw gods wielding their thunderbolts, discuses, tridents, swords and missiles. They heard Narada and Tumburu singing in their aerial abodes on high.

³⁰ They saw the region of the clouds, where there were huge bodies of clouds mute as paintings and pouring forth floods of rain as in the great deluge.³¹ In one place they saw a dark cloud, as high as the mountain-king Himalaya, slowly moving in the air, and at others, clouds of a golden color like the setting sun.³² In one place there were flimsy sheets of clouds, as are said to hover on the peaks of Rishya range; and at another a cloud like the calm blue bed of the sea.

³³ Tufts of grass were seen in some places, as if blown up by winds and floating in the stream of air. In other places, swarms of butterflies with glossy coats and wings were seen.³⁴ In some place, there was a cloud of dust raised by wind appearing like a lake on the top of a mountain.

³⁵ The *matris* were seen in one place, dancing naked in giddy circles, and in another, great *yoginis* sat as if forever giddy with intoxication.³⁶ In one place there were circles of holy men sitting in their calm meditation, and in others, pious saints who had cast away their worldly cares.³⁷ There was a conclave of celestial singers composed of heavenly nymphs, *kinnaras* and *gandharvas* in one place, and some quiet towns and cities situated at others.³⁸ There were the cities of Brahma and Rudra full with their people, and the city of illusion (*maya*) with its increasing population.

³⁹ There were crystal lakes in some places and stagnant pools at others; and lakes with masters seated by them, and others hugged by the rising moon.⁴⁰ They saw the sun rising in one part and the darkness of night veiling the others; the evening casting its shadow on one, and the dusky mists of dusk obscuring the other.⁴¹ There were hoary clouds of winter in some places, and those of rain in others; somewhere they appeared as tracts of land and at another as a sheet of water.

⁴² Bodies of gods and demigods wandered from one side to the other; some from east to west, and others from north to south.⁴³ There were mountains heaving their heads thousands of miles high, and

there were valleys and caves covered in eternal darkness.⁴⁴ In one place there was a vast inextinguishable fire, like that of the blazing sun, and in another, a thick frost covering the moonlight.

⁴⁵ Somewhere there was a great city flourishing with groves and trees, and at another big temples of gods leveled to the ground by the might of demons.

⁴⁶ In some place there was a streak of light from a falling meteor in the sky; in another the blaze of a comet with its thousand fiery tails in the air.⁴⁷ In one place there was a lucky planet, rising in view with its full orb; in another there spread the gloom of night, and full sunshine in another.⁴⁸ Here the clouds were roaring, and there they were dumb and mute. Here were the high blasts driving the clouds in air, and there the gentle breeze dropping clusters of flowers on the ground.⁴⁹ Sometimes the sky was clear and fair without a cloud in it, as transparent as the soul of a wise man delighted with the knowledge of truth.

⁵⁰ The empty region of the celestial gods was so full with the dewy beams of the silvery moon that it appeared like a shower of rain and raised the loud croaking of the frogs below.⁵¹ Flocks of peacocks and goldfinches fluttering about in one place, and vehicles of the goddesses and celestial girls (*vidyadharis*) thronged in another.

⁵² A number of peacocks of Kartikeya (Subramanyan) were seen dancing amidst the clouds, and a flight of greenish parrots was seen in the sky appearing as a green plain.⁵³ Dwarfish clouds were moving like the stout buffaloes of Yama, and others in the form of horses were grazing on the grassy meadows of clouds.⁵⁴ Cities of the gods and demons appeared with their towers on high. Distinct towns and hills were seen separated by distances as if detached from one another by driving winds.

⁵⁵ In some place, gigantic *bhairavas* were dancing with their mountainous bodies; and at another, great garudas were flying like winged mountains in the air.⁵⁶ Huge mountains were tossed about by the blowing of winds; and the castles of the nature spirits (*gandharvas*) were rising and falling with the celestial nymphs in them.

⁵⁷ There were some clouds rising on high, and some appearing like rolling mountains in the sky that were crushing forests below. In one place the sky appeared like a clear lake abounding in lotuses.

⁵⁸ Moonbeams shone brightly in one spot, and sweet cooling breezes blew softly in another. Hot sultry winds were blowing in some place, singeing the forest on mountainous clouds.

⁵⁹ There was a dead silence in one spot caused by perfect calmness of the breeze; while another spot presented a scene of a hundred peaks rising on a mountain-like cloud.⁶⁰ In one place raining clouds roared loudly in their fury; and in another a furious battle was waging in the clouds between the gods and demons.

⁶¹ In some place geese were seen gabbling in the lotus lake of the sky, inviting the ganders by their loud cackling cries.⁶² Forms of fishes, crocodiles and alligators were seen flying in the air as if they had been transformed into aerial beings by the holy waters of the Ganges of their birth.⁶³ Somewhere, as the sun went down the horizon, they saw the dark shadow of the earth eclipse the moon; then they saw the shadow of the moon eclipse the sun.⁶⁴ They saw a magical flower garden, exhaling its fragrance in the air and strewing the floor of heaven with a profusion of flowers, scattered by showers of morning dews.

⁶⁵ They saw all beings contained in the three worlds flying in the air, like a swarm of gnats in the hollow of a fig tree. Then the two excellent ladies stopped their astral journey, intent upon revisiting the earth.

Chapter 25 — Description of Astral Travel over the Earth

Vasishta speaking:—

¹ Then these ladies in their forms of intelligence alighted from the sky and, passing over the mountainous regions, saw the houses of men on the surface of the earth.² They saw the world appearing like a lotus in the heart of Nara (the primeval Man or eternal Spirit pervading the universe). Its eight sides form the flower petals, the hills its pistils, and the center contains its sweet flavor.³ The rivers are the tubes of its filaments, covered with drops of snow resembling their pollen. Days and nights roll over it like swarms of black-bees and butterflies, and all its living beings appear like gnats fluttering about.⁴ Its long stalks, white as bright daylight, are composed of fibers serving for food, and of tubes conducting the drink to living beings.⁵ It is wet with moisture, sucked by the sun, resembling a swan swimming about in the air. In the darkness of night and absence of the sun, it folds itself in sleep.

⁶ The earth, like a lotus, is situated on the surface of the waters of the ocean. At times the motion of the ocean makes the earth shake causing earthquakes. The earth rests upon the serpent Sesha as its support, and is girt about by demons as its thorns and prickles.⁷ Mount Meru and other mountains are its large seeds. There are great hives of human population where the fair daughters of the giant race embraced with the sons of gods and created the race of men.

⁸ It has the extensive continent of Jambudvipa (Asia) situated in one petal, its veins forming its divisions and the tubular filaments its rivers.⁹ The seven elevated mountains, forming the boundary lines of this continent, are its seeds, and in its middle, the great Mount Sumeru reaches the sky.¹⁰ Its lakes are like dewdrops on a lotus leaf, and its forests are like the flower's pollen. The people inhabiting the land all around are like a swarm of bees.

¹¹ Its extent is a thousand leagues (*yojanas*) square, and it is surrounded on all sides by the dark sea like a belt of black bees.¹² It contains nine divisions (*varshas*) ruled by nine brother kings, resembling the regents of its eight petal sides, with the Bharata *varsha* (India) in the midst.¹³ It stretches a million miles with more land than water. Its habitable parts are as thick as frozen ice in winter.¹⁴ The continent is surrounded by the briny ocean twice as large, like a bracelet encircles the wrist.¹⁵ Beyond it lies the circular form of Saka continent, twice the size of Jambudvipa and also encircled by a sea.¹⁶ This is called the Milky Ocean because of the sweetness of its water, and it is double the size of the former salt sea.

¹⁷ Beyond that and double its size is Kusadwipa continent, full of population. It is also circular and surrounded by another sea,¹⁸ the belt of the sea of curds, delectable to the gods and double the size of the continent it encircles.¹⁹ After that lies the circle of Krauncha continent, also twice the size of the former one and surrounded by a sea like a canal surrounds a city.²⁰ This sea is called the sea of butter and is twice as large as the continent it surrounds. Beyond it lies Salmali continent surrounded by the foul sea of wine.²¹ The fair belt of this sea resembles a wreath of white flowers, like the girdle of the Sesha serpent forming the necklace hanging on the breast of Vishnu.²² Thereafter stretches Plaxa continent, double the size of the former and surrounded by the belt of the sea of sugar that appears like the snowy plains of Himalaya.²³ After that lies the belt of Pushkara continent, twice as large as the

preceding one and encircled by a sea of sweet water double its circumference.

²⁴ There, at the distance of ten degrees, they saw the belt of the south polar circle with its hideous cave below, the descent to the infernal regions. ²⁵ The way to the infernal cave is full of danger and fear and ten times in length from the circle of the continents. ²⁶ This cave is surrounded on all sides by a dreadful emptiness, and below it is half covered by a thick gloom, as if a blue lotus were attached to it. ²⁷ There stood Lokaloka Sumeru or South Polar mountain, which is bright with sunshine on one side and covered by darkness on the other, studded with various gems on its peaks, and decked with flowers growing upon it. ²⁸ It reflected the glory of the three worlds situated on its peak, like a cap of hairs.

²⁹ At a great distance from it is a great forest that is not trodden by the feet of any living being. Then proceeding upward, they saw the great northern ocean encompassing the pole on all sides. ³⁰ Further on they saw the flaming light of the aurora borealis which threatened to melt the snowy mountain to water. ³¹ Proceeding onward they met with the fierce north winds, blowing with all their fury and force. ³² They threatened to uproot the mountains as if they were dust or grass. They traversed the empty vacuum with their noiseless motion. ³³ Far away they saw the empty space of vacuum stretching wide all about them. ³⁴ It spreads unlimited and encompasses the worlds like a golden bracelet encircles the wrist.

³⁵ Thus Leela, having seen the seas and mountains, the rulers of the worlds, the city of the gods, the sky above and the earth below in the unlimited vault of the universe, suddenly returned to her own land and found herself in her room again.

Chapter 26 — Return to the Holy Brahmin's House; Description of Gloom; Vasishta Explains Astral Appearance

¹ Vasishta said:—

After the excellent ladies had returned from their visit of physical sphere, they entered the house where the holy brahmin used to live.

² There the holy ladies, unseen by anyone, saw the tomb of the brahmin.³ The maid servants were dejected with sorrow, and the faces of the women were soiled with tears, faded like lotuses with their withered leaves.⁴ All joy had fled from the house, leaving it like the dry bed of the dead sea after its waters were sucked. It was like a garden parched in summer, or a tree struck by lightening.⁵ It was as joyless as a dried lotus torn by a blast or withering under frost; and as faint as the light of a lamp without its wick or oil; and as dim as the eyeball without its light.⁶ The house without its master was as sad as the face of a dying person, or like a forest with its falling and withered leaves, or like dry and dusty ground for lack of rain.

⁷⁻⁸ Then Leela, with her gracefulness of divine knowledge, the elegance of her perfections, and her devotion for truth, thought within herself that the residents of the house might see her and the goddess in their ordinary forms as human beings.⁹ Then the people of the house saw the two ladies as Lakshmi and Gauri, brightening the house with the light of their being.

¹⁰ Wreaths of unfading flowers of various kinds adorned the two women from head to foot. They seemed like the personifications of spring season, perfuming the house with the fragrance of a flower garden.¹¹ They appeared to rise like a pair of moons with their cooling and pleasant beams infusing a freshness to the family, like moonlight does to medicinal plants in forests and villages.¹² The soft glances of their eyes under the long, loose and pendant curls of hair were like a shower of white malati flowers from the dark cloudy spots of their black lined eyes.¹³ Their bodies were as bright as melted gold and as vibrant as a flowing stream. Their brilliance cast a golden color on the spot where they stood, as it did over the forest all around.¹⁴ The natural beauty of Lakshmi's body and the trembling glare of Leela's body spread as it were, a sea of radiance about them in which their bodies seemed to move like undulating waves.¹⁵ Their relaxed arms resembling loose vines, their palms like red leaflets shook like the fresh kalpa vines in the forest.¹⁶ They touched the ground with their feet that resembled the fresh and tender petals of a flower, or like lotuses growing upon the ground.¹⁷ Their appearance seemed to sprinkle ambrosial dews all around and made the dry withered and brown branches of tamara trees sprout new tender leaflets.

¹⁸ On seeing them, the whole family with Jyeshtha Sarma, the eldest son of the deceased brahmin, cried aloud and said, "Hail to the woodland goddesses," and threw handfuls of flowers on their feet.

¹⁹ The flower offerings that fell on their feet resembled showers of dewdrops falling on lotus leaves in a lake of lotuses.²⁰ Jyeshtha Sarma said, "Hail, you goddesses who have come here to dispel our sorrow. It is inborn in the nature of good people to deliver others from their distress."

²¹ The goddesses addressed him gently, "Tell us the cause of your sorrow which has made you all so sad."

²² Then, one by one, Jyeshtha Sarma and others described their sorrows owing to the death of the

brahmin couple.²³ They said, "Know, O goddess pair, there lived here a brahmin and his wife who had been the support of guests and a model for brahmins.²⁴ They were our parents who recently died. They have abandoned us, leaving all their friends and domestic animals here. They have departed to heaven and left us quite helpless in this world."

²⁵ "The birds sitting on the top of the house have been continually pouring their pious and mournful sounds over the bodies of the deceased.²⁶ Mountains on all sides have been lamenting their loss with the hoarse noise of winds howling in their caverns, shedding showers of tears in the courses of the streams issuing from their sides.²⁷ Clouds have poured their tears in floods of rainwater, then fled from the skies. The heavenly quarters have been sending their sighs in sultry winds all around."

²⁸ "The poor village people are wailing in piteous notes, their bodies disheveled from rolling upon the ground. They are trying to yield up their lives with continued fasting.²⁹ The trees are shedding their tears every day in drops of melting snow exuding from the cells of their leaves and flowers, resembling the sockets of their eyes.³⁰ The streets are deserted for lack of passers-by and have become dusty without being watered. They have become as empty as the hearts of men forsaken by their joys of life.³¹ Among the sad notes of cuckoos and the humming of bees, fading plants are wailing and withering from the sultry sighs of their inner grief.³² Snows are melting from the heat of their grief, their waters falling in cataracts that break into a hundred channels as they fall upon stony basins."

³³ "Our prosperity has fled from us, and we sit here in dumb despair of hope. Our houses have become dark and gloomy as a desert.³⁴ Here the humble bees are humming in grief upon the scattered flowers in our garden that now sends forth a putrid smell instead of their former fragrance.³⁵ The vines that twined so gaily round the spring trees are dwindling and dying away with their closing and fading flowers.³⁶ The rivulets, with their loose and low rippling murmur and the light wavelike motion of their liquid bodies on the ground, are running hurriedly in their sorrow to cast themselves into the sea.³⁷ Despite the disturbance of the gnats flying constantly upon them, ponds are as still in their sorrow as men sitting in meditation.³⁸ Truly this day, the presence of our parents is adorning that part of the heaven where heavenly singers, the kinnaras, gandharvas and vidyadharas, welcome them with their music."

³⁹ "Therefore, O Devis! reduce our excessive grief, because the visit of the great never goes for nothing."

⁴⁰ Hearing these words, Leela gently touched the head of her son with her hand, as the lotus bed leans to touch its offshoot by the stalk.⁴¹ At her touch the boy was relieved of all his sorrow and misfortune, just like the summer heat of the mountain is reduced by the showers of rainy season.⁴² All others in the house were as highly gratified at the sight of the goddesses as when a pauper is relieved of his poverty, or the sick are healed by a draught of nectar.

⁴³ Rama said, "Remove my doubt, sage. Why didn't Leela appear in her own form of Arundhati before her eldest son, Jyeshta Sarma?"

⁴⁴ Vasishta answered:—

You forget, O Rama, and think that Leela had a material body or could assume one at pleasure. She

was in an astral form, her form of pure intellect, and it was with her spiritual hand that she touched the inner spirit of the boy and not his material body.

⁴⁵ Belief in materialism leads one to think that his unreal earthly frame is real, just like a boy's belief in ghosts makes him take a shadow for a spirit.⁴⁶ But this belief in one's materiality is soon over upon conviction of one's spirituality, just like the traces of our visions in a dream are removed on the knowledge of their unreality upon waking.⁴⁷ Belief that matter is an empty nothing leads to the knowledge of the spirit. A glass door appears as open space to someone of an irritable temperament. In the same way matter appears as nothing to the wise.

⁴⁸ A dream presents the sights of cities, lands, air and water where there are no such things in actuality. A dream causes the movements of our limbs and bodies for no purpose.⁴⁹ As air appears as earth in dreaming, so the nonexistent world appears to exist in waking. It is thus that men see and talk of things unseen and unknown in their fits of delirium.⁵⁰ Children see ghosts in the air and a dying man sees a forest in it. Others see elephants in clouds, and some see pearls in sunbeams.⁵¹ Those who are panic-struck and deranged in their minds, the half-waking and passengers in vessels, see many appearances like such ghosts and forests and betray what they see (in dreams) by the movements of their bodies.

⁵² In this manner, everyone is of the form of whatever he thinks himself to be. It is only habit that makes him to believe himself as such. He is not so in reality.⁵³ But Leela, who had known the truth of the nonexistence of the world, was conscious of its nothingness and viewed all things as false conceptions of the mind.⁵⁴ Thus he who sees only Brahma filling the sphere of his consciousness has no room for a son or friend or wife.⁵⁵ He who views the whole as filled with the spirit of Brahma, with nothing produced in it, has no room for affection or hatred for anybody in it.

⁵⁶ The hand that Leela laid on the head of Jyeshtha Sarma, her eldest son, was not lain from her maternal affection for him, but for his edification in intellectual knowledge.⁵⁷ Consciousness being awakened, there is all joy attendant upon it. It is more subtle than ether and far purer than vacuum, and leads the intellectual being above the region of air. All other things are like images in a dream.

Chapter 27 — Leela Remembers Her Past Lives

Vasishta speaking:—

¹ Then the two ladies disappeared from that place, leaving the brahmin family in their house in the mountainous village. ² The family exclaimed “We are highly favored by the woodland goddesses.” Then forgetting their grief, they returned to their domestic employments.

³ Then the ethereal goddess spoke to the aerial Leela, who stood fixed in the air over the brahmin’s house in a state of mute astonishment. ⁴ They conversed with each other as familiarly as persons having the same thoughts and desires agree with each another in their views and acts, and as the dreamers of the same dream hold their mutual correspondence, like Usha and Anniruddha. ⁵ Their conversation in their immaterial forms was of the same intellectual kind as we are conscious of in our dreams and imaginations.

⁶ Saraswati said, “Now you have fully known the knowable and you have become acquainted with whatever is visible and invisible. Such is the essence of Brahma. Say now, what more do you want to know?”

⁷ Leela said, “Tell me the reason why I was seen by my son, but wasn’t seen where the spirit of my departed lord is reigning over his realm.”

⁸ Saraswati replied, “Because then you were not perfect by your practice of meditation to have your wish fulfilled, nor had you lost your sense of duality which prevents perfection. ⁹ He who has not known unity is not entitled to the acts and benefits of faith in the true God, as no one sitting in the sun can enjoy the coolness of shade.”

¹⁰ “You were not practiced to forget your identity as Leela. Nor had you learned that it is not your will, but the will of God that is always fulfilled. ¹¹ Later you became pure desire and wished that your son might see you, whereby he was able to see you. ¹² If you should return now to your husband and do the same, you will undoubtedly be successful in your desire.”

¹³ Leela said, “I see within the sphere of this dome (of my mind) that the holy brahmin has been my husband before. I also see that after he died, he became a ruler of the earth. ¹⁴ In my mind I see that spot of the earth, that city and his palace where I sat as his queen. ¹⁵ Within myself I see my lord reigning in that place, and I can even see how he died afterwards. ¹⁶ I see the glory of the ruler of so many countries on earth, and I also see the perfect frankness of his conduct throughout his life.”

¹⁷ “In the inner sky of my mind I see the worlds as they were placed in a casket, just like oil is contained within a mustard seed. ¹⁸ I see the bright orb of my husband ever wandering before me, and now I pray you to contrive some way to place me by his side.”

¹⁹ The goddess replied, “Tell me Leela, to which husband should you go? You have had and will have hundreds of them in your past and future lives, and now there are three of them confined in this earth.

²⁰ The nearest of the three is the brahmin here who is reduced to ashes. The next is the king lying in state and covered with flowers in the inner apartment.”

²¹ “The third is now a reigning king on this earth and has been buffeting in the waves of error in the vast ocean of the world. ²² His intellect is darkened and disordered by the splashing waves of

worldliness. His intelligence is perverted to stupidity. He is converted to a tortoise in the ocean of the world.²³ The management of his very many disordered state affairs has stultified him into a clumsy lout, and he is now fast asleep amidst the turmoil of business.²⁴ The strong chain of his thoughts has bound him to think that he is a lord, mighty and accomplished, and that he is happy and can enjoy his estates forever.”

²⁵ “Now say, O excellent lady, to what husband do you wish to be led like the fragrance of one forest carried by the breeze to another?”

²⁶ “Here you are in one place and they are in others in this vast universe. The states of their lives and manners differ widely from one another.²⁷ These orbs of light in the heaven, though they appear to be placed so near to us, are situated millions of leagues apart from one another and they carry the departed souls.²⁸ All these bodies are as empty as air, though they contain the great mountains Meru and Mandara in themselves.”

²⁹ “All bodies are formed by a combination of atoms constantly proceeding from the Great Intellect, like particles of sunbeams over the universe.³⁰ The great and stupendous fabric of the world is no more than a quantity of paddy rice weighed in a balance.³¹ As the spangled heavens appear like a forest full of brilliant gems, so the world appears to the contemplative mind as full of the glory of God and not composed of earth or other material bodies.³² In the intelligent soul, it is Consciousness alone that shines in the form of world and not any material body that was never brought into being.³³ Like waves in a lake rise and set and rise again, so the rising and falling days and nights present these various scenes to our knowledge.”

³⁴ Leela said, “So it is, O mother of mankind. I come to remember now that my present birth is of a royal kind, neither too pure nor gross in nature.³⁵ I, having descended from Brahma, have undergone a hundred and eight births and, after passing various states, I find myself still in existence.”

³⁶ “I recollect, O goddess, that I was born before in another world, that I was the bride of a demigod (*vidyadhara*) and used to wander about as freely as a bee over flowers.³⁷ Being debased by my lack of moral restraint, I was born in this mortal world and became the mate of the king of the eagle-feathered tribe.³⁸ Having lived in the woods, then I was turned to a woodman’s mate, wearing a garment of leaves on my loins.³⁹ Growing fond of my life, I played wantonly about the forest and was changed into a guluncha plant, delighting the woods with my leafy palms and flowering eyes.⁴⁰ This small tree in a holy hermitage was held sacred by a group of saintly sages.”

“Then, after the woods were burnt down by a wildfire, I was regenerated into the form of an hermit’s child.⁴¹ Here I was taught the formulas for removing the curse of womanhood, and I became a male in the person of the handsome prince of the land of Surashtra (Surat) where I reigned for a hundred years.⁴² “Then, on account of my misconduct in the government, I was denounced to become a weasel covered with leprosy, living in the lowlands of Tali.”

⁴³ “I remember, O goddess, how I became a bullock in Surat and how for full eight years I was goaded by thoughtless cowherd children in their merry sport.⁴⁴ I have in mind that when I was transformed into a bird, with what difficulty I broke the net that was laid by bird-catchers for my destruction. It was in the same manner as we release ourselves from the snares of sinful desires.⁴⁵ I

remember with pleasure when as a bee I landed lightly on the leaflets of blossoms, sipped the honey of the blooming buds, dined on the pistils, and slept in the cups of lotus flowers.⁴⁶ In the form of an antelope I wandered about in pleasant woodlands and lawns with my exalted and branching horns and beautiful eyes, until I was killed by a hunter's arrow.⁴⁷ I have been in the form of a fish, and I was lifted up by the waves of the sea above the surface of the water. I saw how a tortoise was killed by the blow of a club on the neck."

⁴⁸ "I was a tribal (*chandala*, outcaste) hunter once, wandering by the side of the Charmanvati (Chenab River). When tired of roaming, I used to quench my thirst with coconut water.⁴⁹ I also became a stork, delighting in lakes with my mate, filling the air with our sweet cries.⁵⁰ In another birth, I rambled about in groves of palm and tamara trees and fixed my eyes with amorous looks and glances upon my lover."

⁵¹ "Next I was a fairy *apsara* with a form as bright as melted gold and features as beautiful as those of the lotus and lily in which the celestials used to take delight like bees and butterflies.⁵² I remember being on earth, having decked myself in gold, pearls, rubies and other gems, and playing with my youthful consorts in pleasure gardens and groves, and on hills and mountains."

⁵³ "I also remember living long as a tortoise on the borders of a river, and to have been carried away by the waves, sometimes under a tree of vines over-hung with clusters of beautiful flowers, sometimes washed by waves into some wild cave.⁵⁴ I see how I acted the part of a goose covered by feathers, swimming on the high heaving waves on the surface of a lake.⁵⁵ Then, seeing a poor gnat hanging on the moving leaf of a cotton tree (*salmali*) branch, I became its associate and as contemptible a thing as itself.⁵⁶ I became an aquatic crane also, skimming playfully over waters gushing from hills, slightly kissing the crests of waves rising over the rapid torrent."

⁵⁷ "I remember also how I slighted the loves of amorous youths and spurned the lesser demigod (*vidyadhara*) children on the Gandha Madana and Mandara hills.⁵⁸ I remember likewise the pangs of a lovelorn lass as I lay pining in my bed strewn with the fragrance of camphor, and how I was decaying like the disc of the waning moon."

⁵⁹ "Thus I passed through many births in the wombs of higher and lower animals and found them all to be full of pain. My soul has run over the waves of the irresistible current of life, like a fleet antelope pacing its speed with the swiftness of the wind."

Chapter 28 — Leela's Vision in Meditation; Description of the Mountain Hamlet

¹ Rama said, “Tell me sage, how did the goddesses break out of the strongholds of their bodies and the prison-house of this world and pass through infinite space and survey the scenes beyond its confines?”

² Vasishta replied:—

Where is the world and where is its support or solidity? They were all situated in the region within the minds of the goddesses.³ In their minds they saw the hilly tract where the brahmin Vasishta lived and had his desire for royalty.⁴ They saw his deserted house and in their minds they saw the surface of the earth stretching to the seas.

⁵ In that imaginary spot of earth they saw the city of the king and the royal palace which he had enjoyed with Arundhati, his wife.⁶ They saw how she was born under the name of Leela and how she worshipped the goddess of wisdom, Saraswati, by whom she was miraculously conveyed to the delightful region of the sky.⁷ It was in the house situated in that hilly village that she saw the world placed within the space of her mind.

⁸ Having come out of her vision of the world, she found herself sitting in her house, just like one finds himself lying in his own bed after rambling from one dream to another.⁹ All that she saw was mere vision and void. There was no world, no earth, no house, and no distance.¹⁰ It was the mind that showed them these images, just like the mind presents the objects of our desire to our view. Otherwise, there is neither world nor earth in actuality.

¹¹ The sphere of consciousness is infinite and without any covering. If agitated by the powers of one's intellect, it presents all the objects of nature to his view, like the sky when agitated by heat produces the winds.¹² The sphere of consciousness is uncreated. It is ever calm everywhere. Deluded minds suppose the world to exist.¹³ He who understands rightly sees the world is as unsubstantial as air. But whoever is misled by wrong judgment takes it to be like a solid mountain.

¹⁴ As a house and city are manifested to us in our dream, so this unreal world is presented as a reality to our understanding.¹⁵ It is like the misconception of water in the mirage and the mistake of gold in a bracelet. All this unreality appears as a reality to the mistaken mind.

¹⁶ Discoursing in this manner between themselves, the two charming ladies, walked out of the house with their graceful steps.

¹⁷ Being unseen by the village people, they viewed the mountain standing before them, kissing the vault of heaven and touching the orb of the sun with its lofty peaks.¹⁸ It was decorated with flowers of various colors and covered with a variety of trees of various colors. There were waterfalls gushing with their tremendous roaring on one side, and groves resounding with the warbling of birds in another.¹⁹ The clouds were variegated by many colored clusters of flowers sweeping over them, and cranes and storks sat screeching on the cloud-capped tops of guluncha trees.²⁰ There were robust reeds lining the banks of rivers with their wide stretching stems and roots. Strong winds tossed the tender vines growing out of the rocky caves.

²¹ Clouds from the vault of heaven hung over the tops of trees covered with flowers and shed their

pearly drops of rainwater profusely upon them, forming streams below.²² The banks of the streamlets were continually lapped by waves raised by winds playing upon the shaking trees. Branches spread a cooling shade all around.

²³ Standing on that spot, the ladies saw the hilly hamlet in the grass, like a fragment of heaven had fallen on the ground.²⁴ There the rippling streams softly glided by, and here the brimming brooks wobbled in the ground. The birds of the air chirped on the sprays, and aquatic fowls flew about the holes of the seashore.²⁵ There they saw herds of cattle slowly moving and grazing in the plains, filling the echoing woods with their loud lowing. They saw an open space broken with shady groves and trees and green meadows all about.²⁶ The cliffs were white with snow, impenetrable by sunbeams. Hill tops were covered with bushy brambles, forming like braids of hair upon their craggy heads.

²⁷ Cascades falling in torrents in the cavities of rocks, scattering their pearly particles afar like the churning of the Milky Ocean by Mandara Mountain.²⁸ The trees in the glens, loaded as they were with their fruit and flowers, appeared like waiters upon the goddesses, standing to welcome their approach with their rich presents.²⁹ Shaken by gusts of roaring winds, the forest trees were shedding showers of their honey sweetened flowers as offerings to the woodland gods and people.

³⁰ The birds that approached fearlessly to drink the water dropping from the hill now fled for fear because the water seemed like sleet, or the shells and shots of archers.³¹ Birds, parched by thirst and wishing to drink the water dashed by the waves of the rivulet, hovered upon it like stars in the sky.³² There were rows of crows sitting on the tops of tall palm trees from whose sight children were hiding the remains of their sweetmeat.

³³ They saw country lads with garlands of flowers on their heads and garments roaming in the cooling shades of the date, jam and neem trees.³⁴ They saw a lean and hungry beggar woman passing by slowly, clad in cloth of flax with garlands of blossoms over her ears.³⁵ They saw lazy rustics lying in their lonely retreats, talking away from the noisy brooks where they could hardly hear one another.³⁶ They saw naked beggar children crowding in a compound, curd smeared on their faces and hands, cow dung on their bodies, and holding flowery branches of plants in their hands.

³⁷ On the green river banks, waves shook bushes as if they were a swing, leaving their marks on the sandy shore as the waters receded to their bed.³⁸ There was a house full of flies attracted by sweet milk and curds, but children were crying for lack of food.³⁹ Herdswomen were fretting at seeing their bracelets daubed by the cow dung they were spreading to dry. Men were smiling at seeing the eagerness of women tying the loosened knots of their hair.⁴⁰ Crows from the hilltops were alighting to pick up the offerings of the holy sages, and the paths around their houses were strewn with sacred kuru and kurunta leaves.

⁴¹ Every morning flowering plants growing in the caves of the hills and around the house covered the ground heel-deep with heaps of flowers.⁴² There were whisk-tailed cattle and antelope grazing in one part of the forest, and tender young deer sleeping on beds of grass under gunja groves.⁴³ There were young calves lying on their sides shaking their ears to drive away the flies that fluttered around their faces, milk dripping from the sides of their mouths.

⁴⁴ Rooms stored honey collected by driving bees from their hives. Gardens were full of flowering asokas. Rooms were painted with red dye.⁴⁵ Winds moistened by rain showers had brought the garden of trees to bloom, and yellow kadamba buds hung like a canopy over the beds of green grass below.⁴⁶ The ketaka tree grove was blooming white from having its weeds removed, and the water-course glided along with its soft murmuring tune.⁴⁷ Winds whistled in the windows of caves and clouds rested on mountain tops. Ponds were brimful of water covered with lotuses like so many moons.

⁴⁸ A grove of green trees cast its cooling and undivided shade upon the ground where dewdrops trembled on blades of grass and glistened like twinkling stars in the blue sky.⁴⁹ Trees constantly dropped their ripened fruit, dried flowers and leaves of various sorts, like showers of snow on whitened ground.⁵⁰ Some clouds were seen to hang continually over the household compound, like aristocratic girls who never forsake their parents' home. Other clouds hovered over the roof of the house flashing lightening to supply the light.

⁵¹ The altar here reverberated to the loud roaring of winds confined in the caves of mountains. The temple there was graced by twittering swallows and parrots that perched upon it from their numerous flights.⁵² Soft breezes moved slowly as they passed along the lawn loaded with fragrance exhaled by sleepy flowers and gently shaking the leaves of trees.

⁵³ There the ladies listened to Prattling and playful parrots and partridges, and here they heard the melodious notes of the kokila nightingale calling back to the jarring crows on the branches.⁵⁴ Palm and tamara trees were loaded with fruit, and the forest trees were entwined with vines that waved their leafy palms around them.⁵⁵ There were tender ivy vines clasping the branches on one side, and the fragrance of efflorescent kandala and silindhra plants exhaled on the other. Tapering palm and tamara trees rose as high as spires, and a cooling breeze was blowing amidst the flower plants in the gardens.

⁵⁶ There were cattle hastening to drink water in troughs, and garden trees hung with loads of green unripe fruit and beautiful flowers. Running streams were hidden under rows of trees by their banks. Stalks of plants were studded with flowers.⁵⁷ Gardens were perfumed with the nectar fragrance of kunda flowers, and lakes were redolent with the odor of lotuses hiding humble bees giddy with liquor in their honey cells. The air was reddened with rose-colored pollen flying from crimson lotuses, as if mocking the redness of Indra's palace in the sky.

⁵⁸ The scene was enchanted with the gurgling noise of small rivers running precipitately down from the hills, kundu flowers as white as clouds hanging over them, the beauty of the flower gardens around the house, and the musical warbling of songbirds singing joyfully in the air.⁵⁹ Boys were sporting on beds of flowers, and playful maidens were decked with flowery wreaths hanging down to their feet. Everywhere the ground was adorned with sprouting and prickly shrubs and blades of grass. There was a beauty displayed in the clasping of vines about the clumps of reeds.⁶⁰ New shooting buds and blossoms covered the trees and fragments of clouds shrouded the houses below. The ground was decorated by wreaths of icicles, and the flashes of lightning in the clouds over the houses terrified the women within.

⁶¹ There was a sweet fragrance of blue lotuses, and the hoarse lowing of the cattle hurrying to their

green grazing ground. Confident deer and does were lying tamely in the yard, and peacocks danced merrily before waterfalls as if they were showers of rainwater.⁶² Fragrant breezes were blowing giddily with the flavors of the fragrances they bore. Medicinal plants were lending their lights like lamps at night. Bird nests resounded with ceaseless warbling, and the noise of waterfalls deafened the ears of men on the bank.

⁶³ Pearly dewdrops continually falling on the ground from the leaves of trees and blades of grass, the gleaming beauty of the ever blooming blossoms above, and the other everlasting charms of mountain hamlets baffle the description of poets.

Chapter 29 — Description of Leela's Life as Arundhati; Description of Astral Travel in Space

Vasishta speaking:—

¹ Then the two goddesses sat on a cooling village seat, much like the two states of joy and liberation meet in the tranquil spirit of the man knowing the Divine Spirit. ² By this time Leela had become personified to the form of pure consciousness through her knowledge of meditation. She had become a seer of the three times presenting themselves before her. ³ She remembered the whole course of her past life and derived pleasure relating the events of her former life and death.

⁴ Leela said, “By your favor, O goddess, and by sight of this place, I recollect all that I did and thought of in my past life. ⁵ Here I grew up to old age, and here I withered and became lean and thin as a skeleton.”

“I was a brahmani here and had my body scratched by dried sacrificial grass (*kusa*). ⁶ I was the legal wife of my lord and producer of his race. I was employed milking cattle and churning curd. I had been mother of many sons and a kind hostess to my guests. ⁷ I was devoted to the service of the gods, brahmins and good people, and rubbed my body with cow milk and ghee.”

“I cleaned the frying pans and boiling kettles of the house. ⁸ I boiled food daily with a single bracelet of glass and one of conch-shell on my wrists. I served my father, mother, brother, daughters and sons-in-law with their daily meals. ⁹ Working all day and night, my body was emaciated like that of a domestic servant. ‘Haste and hasten’ were the words I used to repeat to myself.”

¹⁰ “Being so busy, I was silly and ignorant. Although I was the wife of a brahmin, I never wondered, not even in a dream, about what I was and what was this world. ¹¹ Fully engaged in the collection of fuel, cow-dung, and sacrificial wood and vegetables, I became emaciated in my body, which was wrapped in a worn out blanket.”

¹² “I used to pick out worms from the ears of the milk cow, and was prompt to water the garden of greens with watering pots in hand. ¹³ Every day I used to go to the lake and get fresh green grass to feed my tender calves. I used to wash and clean the house every morning, and paint the doorway with the white tints of pasted and powdered rice (*gundi*). ¹⁴ I had to correct my servants with gentle rebukes and tell them to keep within their bounds like the waves in the rivers.”

¹⁵ “With my infirm body and ears shaking like dried tree leaves, and supporting myself on a stick, I lived here under the dread of old age.”

¹⁶ As she was speaking in this manner and walking with Saraswati about the village in the valley of the mountain, she was astonished to see her former seats of pleasure, and she showed them to the goddess. ¹⁷ “This was my flowery tree garden, decorated by these torn patala plants, and this was my garden alcove of flowering asokas. ¹⁸ This is the bank of the pond where the calves were loosely tied to the trees. This is my pet calf Karnika, which in my absence has refrained from eating the leaves.

¹⁹ This is my watering woman, now so weak and dirty in her appearance, her eyes daubed in tears from weeping these eight days in my absence.”

²⁰ “This, O goddess, is the place where I used to eat and sit, and where I slept and walked. These are the places where I gave and received the things from my attendants. ²¹ This is my eldest son, Jyeshtha

Sarma, weeping in the house. That is my milk cow, now grazing on the grassy plain in the forest."

²² "I see this portico and these windows, once as dear to me as my own self, smeared with the dry powder of the spring Holi festival. ²³ I see these pulpy gourds, planted with my own hands and dear to me as myself, now spreading themselves over the oven area. ²⁴ I see my relatives wearing rudraksha beads, who before had been the bonds of my life, carrying fuel for fire, eyes tearing from the smoke.

²⁵ I see that stony shore pelting its pebbles against force of the waves that baffle the beach, now covered by bushes. ²⁶ The green meadows were full of leafy plants, dew drops on their tips. The plains were whitened from hailstones falling on them in showers. ²⁷ The midday was covered by sunbeams, like a white mist of frost. The tree groves resounded with humming of bees fluttering about clustering flowers."

²⁸ "The blooming palasa, glowing like reddish coral, covered trees and land with heaps of crimson flowers. ²⁹ Fruit was flowing in the village stream, carried from shore to shore, and rustic lads loudly jumbled together, eager to lay hold on them. ³⁰ The cool shady beach of the stream was strewn with pebbles, washed and carried away by the current and covered by leaves falling from the trees."

³¹ "There I see the altar of my house, so beautifully decorated with flowering vines, clusters of fruits and flowers hanging over its windows. ³² Here lived my husband, whose life in its aerial form has fled to the sky and became lord of the earth reaching the surrounding seas. ³³ I remember how he had fostered the fond wish of obtaining royal dignity, and how ardently he looked forward to its attainment. ³⁴ I see, O goddess, his royal dignity of eight days, which had seemed to be so long in duration."

³⁵ "I see the soul of my husband in the same form as his kingly state residing in the empty space of this house, invisible to all like the air in the sky, and like the odors borne by the winds. ³⁶ It is in this empty space that his soul is contained within the form of a thumb that contains in its bosom the whole extent of my lord's realm stretching thousands of leagues in its circumference. ³⁷ I also see the spacious kingdom of my lord in the space of my consciousness which, by the miraculous power of God called illusion (*maya*), makes room for thousands of mountains."

³⁸ "O Goddess, now I wish to see the earthly city of my lord again. Let us therefore turn our course that way, as no place is distant to the resolute."

³⁹ Vasishta said:—

Having said so, Leela bowed down to Saraswati and entered the shrine. Then, like a bird, she flew into the air with the goddess. ⁴⁰ It was a region devoid of darkness and as fair as a sea of moonlight. Then it became as blue as the body of Narayana and as bright as the back of a locust. ⁴¹ They passed above the regions of the clouds and winds, then beyond the spheres of the orbits of the sun and moon.

⁴² They passed beyond the path of the north star and the limits of the circuits of the *sadhyā* deities, spiritual masters, and other celestial beings. ⁴³ From there they ascended to the higher heavens of Brahma and the Tushita divinities, then upward to the sphere of Golaka (the zodiac), and from there to the world of Shiva and to the sphere of the departed souls of the dead.

⁴⁴ Passing beyond the spheres of embodied living beings and of the bodiless souls of the dead, they

proceeded far and farther to the unknown regions of empty space.⁴⁵ Having passed the ethereal sphere, they saw nothing there except the sun, moon and the stars shining below them.⁴⁶ There was only a deep darkness to be seen, filling the whole void of space and appearing like the basin of the waters of universal deluge, and as compact as the impenetrable cavity of a rock.

⁴⁷ Leela said, "Tell me, O goddess! What happened to the light of the sun and other stars? Where did this darkness, dense like a fist, come from?"

⁴⁸ The goddess replied, "You have arrived at a place so remote from the spheres of heaven that the light of the stars can never reach it.⁴⁹ Just like one at the bottom of a deep dark pit is unable to see the light of a firefly flitting over it, so sunlight is invisible to one behind the great belt of heaven."

⁵⁰ Leela said, "Such a great distance we have come! The great luminary of the sun appears as small as an atom below.⁵¹ Tell me mother, what sort of a place lies beyond this region, and how can we get there after traversing this gloomy expanse?"

⁵² Saraswati said, "Behind this is the great pole of the universe that is scattered with innumerable nebular stars like particles of dust."

⁵³ Vasishta said:—

As they were talking in this manner, they glided imperceptibly to that pole, like a bee saunters over a solitary hut on the height of a mountain.⁵⁴ They were at no pains to come down from that precipice, as there is no pain to effect what must certainly come to pass, even though it appears difficult at first.

⁵⁵ They saw the system of the universe laid naked to their sight, just as a bold navigator beholds a world exposed to his view beyond the wide expanse of waters.⁵⁶ They saw the watery expanse to be ten times greater than the earth and enveloping like the crust of a walnut.⁵⁷ Then there is a latent heat that is ten times as great as the water, and the surrounding air is as much greater than the water, and then the all encompassing space of which there is no end.

⁵⁸ There is no beginning, middle or end to that infinite space. It produces nothing, like a barren woman of her offspring.⁵⁹ It is only an extended expanse, infinite, calm and without beginning, middle or end, situated in the Supreme Spirit.⁶⁰ Its immensity is as immeasurable as a stone flung with full force from its top. It is impossible for a garuda bird, flying with all his might at full speed over the course of an entire kalpa age, to reach from one end to the other .

Chapter 30 — Vasishta Describes the Universe, the Cosmic Egg (*Brahmanda*)

Vasishta speaking:—

¹ Within a moment they passed beyond the regions of the earth, air, fire, water and space and the tracks of the ten planetary spheres. ² They reached boundless space from where the universe appears like an egg. ³ Under its vault they saw millions of luminous particles floating in the air, ⁴ like innumerable bubbles floating on the waters of the unlimited ocean of the sphere of Consciousness.

⁵ Some particles were going downward, and others rising upward; some turning round, and others appeared to their understanding to remain fixed and immovable. ⁶ These different motions were only apparent as they saw them from different sides. ⁷ Here there were no ups or downs, no upside or below, and no going forward or backward. Here there are no directions as men know. ⁸ There is only one indefinite space in nature, as there is only one consciousness in all beings. Yet everything moves in its own way, just like wayward children take their own course.

⁹ Rama said, “Tell me sage, why do we refer to up and down, forward and backward, if there is no such thing in space and nature?”

¹⁰ Vasishta said:—

There is only one space enveloping all things. The worlds seen in the infinite and indiscernible womb of emptiness are like worms moving on the surface of water. ¹¹ All these bodies that move about in the world by their lack of freedom are thought to be up and down relative to our position on earth.

¹² So when there are ants on an earthen ball, all its sides are reckoned below that are under their feet, and those as above which are over their backs. ¹³ Such is this ball of earth in one of these worlds, covered by vegetables and animals moving on it, and by gods, demons and men walking upon it. ¹⁴ It is also covered by cities, towns and mountains and their inhabitants and productions, like a walnut by its shell.

¹⁵ Like elephants appearing as pygmies in the Vindhyan Mountains, these worlds appear as particles in the vast expanse of space. ¹⁶ Everything anywhere is produced from and exists in space. It is always all in all things, which are contained like particles in it. ¹⁷ Such is the pure empty space of Divine Consciousness which, like an ocean of light, contains these innumerable worlds which are forever revolving in it like the countless waves of the sea.

¹⁸ Some of these are hollow within, and others are as dark as the darkness in the end of a kalpa age. They are all moving about in the ocean of emptiness like the waves of the sea. ¹⁹ Some are forever whirling about with a jarring noise that is neither heard or known to anybody. It is like the motion of men addicted by their nature to earthly pursuits.

²⁰ Some worlds are growing in form, as if they were newly created. In their development, they are like sprouts from seeds newly sown in the ground. ²¹ Some are melting away like icicles in heat, or like the mountains that melt at the dissolution of the world from burning sun and heavenly fire.

²² Others have been continually falling downward without reaching any ground, until at last they dwindle and melt into Divine Intellect. ²³ Others are fixed in the air like minuscule animals in water that are moved to and fro by currents but without any sign of motion or sensation in them. ²⁴ Again,

nothing is stable in nature. Everything is as changing as people alter and add to the acts and customs enjoined in the Vedas and scriptures.

²⁵ There are other Brahmans and other patriarchs, and many Vishnus and many Indras, one after the other. We have different kings of men, and sometimes no ruler of them.

²⁶ Some in this multiform creation are like men or lords of others, and some are creeping and crooked living beings on earth. Some kinds are as plenty as the waters of the ocean, and others have become extinct. ²⁷ Some are as hard as solid stones, and others are as soft as poor insects and worms. Some are of godly figures, such as the giants, while others are of puny human forms. ²⁸ Some are quite blind and are suited to darkness. Others are suited to light. Some to both. ²⁹ Some are born as gnats sucking the juice figs. Others are empty within and fly about and feed upon the air.

³⁰ The world is filled with creatures beyond the conception of even yogis. Even we cannot form even a guess of all the beings that fill infinite space. ³¹ This world is the sphere for these living beings, but the great emptiness that spreads beyond is so extensive that the gods Vishnu and others are unable to measure it even if they were to traverse it for the whole of their lives. ³² Every one of these ethereal globes is encircled by a belt resembling a golden bracelet, and each has an attractive power like the earth to attract other objects.

³³ I have told you all about the grandeur of the universe to my best knowledge. I have no knowledge or power to describe anything beyond this. ³⁴ There are many other large worlds, unseen by others, rolling through the immense space of vacuum, like giddy yaksha demons revel in the dark and dismal deserts and forests.

Chapter 31 — Leela & Saraswati Arrive on Earth; Fate of Good & Bad Fallen in War

¹ Vasishta said:—

After having seen the worlds in their aerial journey, the ladies arrived on earth and quickly entered King Padma's inner apartment.² There they saw the king's dead body lying in state under heaps of flowers, Leela's spiritual body sitting beside the corpse.³ It was the dead of night and the residents had fallen into sound sleep one by one. The room was perfumed with the incense of resin, camphor, sandalwood and saffron.

⁴ Leela, seeing the house of her late husband and wishing to enter it, came to his tomb in her assumed body.⁵ Then she passed through the fictitious spacious palace of her lord by breaking out of the confines of her body and head that in yoga terminology are called earthly and worldly environs.

⁶ Then with the goddess she went again to the bright and spacious temple of the world and quickly entered.⁷ She saw her husband's imaginary world (that of King Viduratha) like a dirty and mossy pool, just like a lioness beholds a mountain cave covered by darkness and clouds.⁸ Then the two goddesses entered that empty world with their airy bodies, like weak ants make their passage through the hard crust of the wood-apple.⁹ There they passed through regions of cloudy hills and skies, and reached the surface of the earth, consisting of tracts of land and basins of water.¹⁰ They came to the continent of Jambu (Asia) situated amid the nine-fold petals of the other continents, and from there proceeded to the territories of Leela's husband in the land of Bharata (India).

¹¹ During this time they saw a certain prince (the ruler of Sindh), strengthened by other chiefs, making an attack on this land which was the beauty of the world.¹² They saw the air crowded by people of the three worlds who had assembled to see the conflict.¹³ They remained undaunted, and saw the air crowded by aerial beings in groups like clouds.

¹⁴ There were the spiritual masters (*siddhas*), charana and sura demigods, celestial gandharvas, supernatural vidyadharas, and other celestials and apsara nature spirits in large bodies.¹⁵ There were also bhuta and pisacha demons, and rakshasa demon cannibals; while female vidyadhara were flinging handfuls of flowers on the combatants like showers of rain.¹⁶ The evil-spirit vetalas, yakshas and kushmands were looking at the battle with pleasure, taking the shelter of hills to avoid flying arrows and weapons.¹⁷ The imps were flying from the air to keep out of the path of flying weapons. The spectators were excited by sound of the combatants' war cries.

¹⁸ Leela, who was standing by with a fan in her hand, was frightened at the imminent, dreadful conflict. She smiled in scorn at the boasting on each side.¹⁹ Virtuous people unable to endure the horrid sight took to praying with the chief priests to avert the calamity.

²⁰ Indra's messengers were ready with their decorated elephants to bear the souls of mighty heroes to grace the seats of heaven.²¹ The demigod charanas and gandharvas sang praises of the advancing heroes. Those heavenly apsara nymphs who liked heroism were glancing at the best combatants.²² Voluptuous women wished to embrace the arms of the brave. The fair fame of the heroes had turned the hot sunshine to cool moonlight.

²³ Rama asked, "Tell me, sage, what sort of a warrior is called a hero and becomes a jewel in

heaven, and who is an insurgent?"

²⁴ Vasishta answered:—

He who engages in a lawful warfare and fights for his king, whether he dies or becomes victorious in the field, is called a hero and goes to heaven.²⁵ Whoever otherwise kills men in war for an unjust cause and dies is called an insurgent and goes to hell.²⁶ Whoever fights for unlawful property and dies in battle becomes subject to everlasting hellfire.²⁷ Whoever wages a war justified by law and custom, that warrior is called both loyal and heroic in deed.²⁸ Whoever dies in war with a willing mind to protect cattle, brahmins and friends, and whoever protects his guest and refugee with all diligence, after his death he truly becomes an ornament in heaven.

²⁹ The king who is steadfast protecting his subjects and his own country is called just, and those who die in his cause are called brave.³⁰ They who die fighting on the side of riotous subjects, or in the cause of rebellious princes or chiefs, are doomed to fire.³¹ They who die fighting unjustly against their kings, law-givers and rulers are subjected to the torments of hell.

³² A war that is just serves to establish order, but the unsteady who are mindless of the future destroy all order.³³ 'The hero dying goes to heaven' is the common saying. Scriptures call the lawful warrior a hero, and not otherwise.³⁴ They who suffer wounds while protecting the righteous and good are said to be heroes. Otherwise, they are insurgents.

³⁵ It was in expectation of seeing such heroes that the maidens of the gods were standing in the air and talking among themselves about becoming the wives of such warriors.³⁶ The air was decorated by an illumination on high, and by rows of beautiful heavenly cars of gods and masters, and by the presence of celestial maidens who sang in sweet notes and decorated their hair with mandara flowers.

Chapter 32 — Onset of the War

¹ Vasishta said:—

Leela, standing in air with the goddess of wisdom, saw the *apsara* nymphs dancing with eagerness for the war between combatants below.² She saw the armies assemble in her own territory once governed by her lord. She saw the field of the air no less formidable because of the assembled ghosts.

³ The meeting of the two armies made the ground appear like a billowy sea, or like two clouds meeting in the sky with the appearance of two hostile forces.⁴ The battle array of armored warriors, flashing like the fire of heaven, was followed by their commingled blows resembling the rattling of thunder above, deafening the ears and dazzling the sight.⁵ Then darts and javelins, spears and lances, and many other missiles began to fall on both sides, like showers of raindrops, hailstones and meteorites from the skies.⁶ Showers of shafts fell with a force that would pierce the wings of garuda. As they hit the warriors, they covered the glare of the sun off their armor.

⁷ Combatants stood face to face with their arms lifted, steadily staring at each other as if they were pictures in a painting.⁸ Armies arranged in long regiments, standing in lines opposite each other, repeatedly shouted and answered each another.⁹ The battle array of both armies, and the drums on each side, were stopped by their leaders warnings against striking the first blow.¹⁰ The space that separated the hostile forces was the breadth of two bows, like a bridge from one another. It looked like a gap caused by winds in the middle of the ocean at the universal deluge.

¹¹ Leaders were drowned in thoughts of fear of bloodshed and massacre. Cowardly soldiers groaned in their hearts with the hoarse noise of croaking frogs.¹² There were many brave ones eager to yield their precious lives in a trice. Archers stood with bowstrings drawn to the ear, ready to let their pointed arrows loose at the foe.¹³ Others stood dreadfully fixed to strike their arms upon the enemy. Many with frowning looks stared sternly at their adversaries.

¹⁴ Armor was clashing, the faces of killers were burning with rage, and the faces of cowards turned towards sheltered retreats, ready for flight.¹⁵ All stood in doubt of their lives until the end of the war, and the bodies of old men, like big elephants, were covered with goose bumps.

¹⁶ The silence in anticipation of the first blow resembled the calm of the stormy main or the deep sleep of a city at the dead of night.¹⁷ Musical instruments, drum and conch-shell were all silent, and a thick cloud of dust covered the face of the earth and sky.¹⁸ The retreaters were flying from their stronger assailants, who kept running after them like sharks after shoals of fish in the sea.¹⁹ The glittering fringes of flags put the ethereal stars to blush, and the lifted goads in the hands of the elephant-drivers made a forest of tapering trees in the sky.²⁰ Arrows flew in the air like flocks of the winged tribe, and the loud beating of drums and blowing of pipes resounded in the air.

²¹ A round phalanx attacked a host of wicked demons, and a squadron in garuda formation of right and left wings attacked a body of elephants.²² Somewhere a great howling arose from the vanguard of a body of troops thrown into disorder by a cohort in the form of eagles. In another place, many were seen shouting and attacking each another.²³ Warriors of many legions raised a tremendous noise, and the hands of combatants raised a host of large clubs.²⁴ The glare of dark steel shaded sunbeams like a

cloud. Darts hissing in the air resembled the rustling of breeze amidst the dry leaves of trees.

²⁵ Now began the main battle, like the dashing of clouds upon clouds at the end of a kalpa age. War raged like sea whipped by a hurricane. ²⁶ Big elephants fell in the field like coal-black rocks hurled down by gusts of wind. ²⁷ It seemed like infernal spirits had been let loose from their caves of hell to rage in the battlefield with their horrid and dismal figures. ²⁸ The dark cloud of swords hid daylight and warriors raised their black spears, seemingly bent upon converting the earth into an ocean of bloodshed.

Chapter 33 — The Battle: the Armies Engage

[*The whole of this chapter abounds in onomatopoeian alliterations, and is more a play upon words than display of sense. However, it is interesting for these jingling words and for the names of the weapons in use among the ancients. — V. L. Mitra]*

¹ Rama said, “Sage, describe this warfare to me, as I love stories of this kind.”

² Vasishta said:—

The ladies, in order to have a better view of the battle below, ascended in their imaginary aerial cars to a more retired spot in the higher regions of the sky.

³ At this time, the two armies clashed and mingled, fighting each other with shouts, like waves dashing against one another in a raging sea. ⁴ Viduratha, the lord of the realm (formerly Padma, the husband of Leela), impatient seeing a bold warrior from the other army attack one of his soldiers, used his huge mallet to strike him on the breast. ⁵ Then the battle raged with the impetuosity of rolling waves in a stormy ocean. Arms on both sides flamed with living fire and flashes of fiery lightning.

⁶ Now the edges of waving swords glittered in the sky. Cracking and clashing noises filled the air with a hideous crackling. ⁷ Then flew winged arrows overshadowing sunbeams and emitting a booming noise that hushed the rattling clamor of summer clouds. ⁸ Armor clashed against armor with a clanking noise, shooting sparks of glistening fire. Arms, hacking and slashing against arms, filled the air with their fragments flying like birds in the air.

⁹ The shaking arms and legs of the two armies appeared like a forest moving on the land. The twang of their bows and the rumbling of discs, crackling like the rattling drive of wheels in heaven, drove away the birds of the air. ¹⁰ The hissing of their loosened strings resembled the bee-like buzzing heard in samadhi. ¹¹ Iron shafts pierced the heads of the soldiers like sheets of hailstones, and the crashing of armor broke arms of the mail-clad warriors. ¹² Weapons struck brazen armor with a howling noise and clanking sound. Strokes flying like drifts of rainwater dented the face of the air on all sides.

¹³ Steel striking steel made hands ring with a jingling sound, and the continued rapping on arms and clapping of hands raised chat-chat and pat-pat sounds. ¹⁴ The whizzing noise as swords were unsheathed was like the hissing of sparks from fire. The sounds of arrows and darts flying in all directions were like the rustling of falling leaves in autumn.

¹⁵ The field was filled with blood spouting from throats separated from bodies, mangled limbs and heads, and broken swords. ¹⁶ The flame of fire flaring from armor emblazoned the hairs of the warriors. The sound of weapons as swordsmen fought and fell raised a giddy and loud jingling.

¹⁷ Tall elephants, pierced by spears, poured out torrents of red-hot blood; while their kin gored bodies with shrill cries. ¹⁸ Others, crushed by the ponderous maces of their antagonists, creaked grievously under the blows while heads of slain soldiers swam in rivers of blood over the plain.

¹⁹ Here hungry vultures were pouncing from above, and there the sky was covered by a cloud of dust. Weaponless soldiers fought with their hands, pulling each other down by the hair.

Chapter 34 — The Battle as Seen by Onlookers

Vasishta speaking:—

¹ The generals and ministers of the warring sides, and the aerial spectators of the battles, were talking among themselves this way.

² See, here the ground has become a lake of blood, with heads of slaughtered hosts floating like lotuses upon it. And there the air has become like the starry heaven, glittering with broken weapons flying like birds in the sky. ³ Behold the air is red with the particles of bright red blood borne above by the winds. It is midday, but the sky presents evening clouds with the glow of the setting sun.

⁴ What are these, says one, that are flying like straws in the sky? They are, says the other, no straws but the flight of arrows that have filled the air. ⁵ Another cries that as long as the dust of the earth is wet with the blood of the brave, heroes are entitled to glory and have their home in heaven for myriads of years. ⁶ A scripture says to fear not these dark swords whose blades are worn by the brave like petals of blue lotuses about their breasts, and the brave are favorites in the eyes of the goddess of fortune.

⁷ The heavenly *apsara* nymphs that saw the fighting and felt a desire to embrace the brave. The god of the flowery bow (Kama, the God of Love) was busy loosening their waist bands. ⁸ They beckoned their welcome by waving their reddened palms, by shaking red leaves on trees, by the round glances of their eyes, in the blooming blossoms of plants, and by the perfume of their breath in the honey fragrance of flowers. ⁹ The guardian spirits of the pleasure gardens of paradise sang sweet notes with the woodland choir and danced in the wagging tails of peacocks. ¹⁰ As a brave warrior broke the enemy line with his hardy axe, his beloved was breaking his hard heart and spirit with the soft glances of her eyes.

¹¹ It is by my lance, says the lancer, that I have severed the head of my enemy with rings in his ears, like the head of the ascending node of Rahu approaching the disc of the sun. ¹² Look, there is a champion hurling blocks of stones attached to the end of a chain reaching his feet! There is another, whirling his wonderful log of wood held in his uplifted arm. ¹³ There comes that warrior in the form of Yama, the God of the underworld, appearing from the region of the dead spirits and spreading a horrid devastation all around. Come let us go back the way we came. ¹⁴ Look at these ravenous birds greedily plunging their long necks into the flesh of bodies just separated from their heads, and glutting themselves with the gushing blood. See there the headless trunk of the slain moving to and fro in the field of battle.

¹⁵ The eloquent among the spectators were talking to one another about the frailty of human life and the uncertainty of the time of their meeting in the next world. ¹⁶ O, the stern cannibal of death, says one, that devours entire bodies of armies in one swoop, now weltering in blood, and levels the leveling hosts to the ground.

¹⁷ The showers of arrows falling on the elephants resemble the showers of raindrops on mountain tops. The darts sticking to their front bones are like bolts of lightening piercing the cliff tops. ¹⁸ While a headless body was groveling on the ground for lack of its head, its head was flying on high like a bird of air, proclaiming its immortality in heaven. ¹⁹ The army harassed by stones slung at their heads

cried to entrap the enemy in the snares set at their feet.

²⁰ Wives that had become apsaras (heavenly nymphs) after death, were now eager to claim their husbands, restored to their youth by virtue of falling in the field of battle. ²¹ The glaring light of the line of lances that had reached the skies seemed like a flight of stairs or golden vistas for the ascent of the brave to the gates of heaven. ²² The wife of the slain soldier, now a heavenly goddess, taking possession of her husband's fair gold-like breast, was looking about in search of another.

²³ Generals, arms waving, wailed loudly over their fallen armies in the field. They appeared like cliffs of rocks resounding to the clamorous surges of the sea below. ²⁴ They shouted at warriors to fight their best. They cried out to remove the wounded to the rear and not trample the bodies of their own soldiers, now lying low on the ground.

²⁵ Look! There apsaras are eagerly tying their loosened hair and advancing with sobbing bosoms to receive the departed warriors joining their company in their celestial forms. ²⁶ Ah, receive our guests from afar, says one, on the banks of the rivers of paradise, decorated with golden lotus blossoms, and entertain them with fresh water and cooling breeze. ²⁷ Look! There are groups of weapons broken into pieces like bones by their impact, huddled in the air with a jingling sound and shining like stars in the sky. ²⁸ See the stream of deceased souls flowing in arrow-like currents and rolling in whirlpools of flying discs, rapidly gliding with the pebbles and stones flung in the air from the slings. ²⁹ The sky has become like a lake of lotuses with lotus-form heads of warriors flung aloft in the air, while flying weapons are floating like their stalks with the broken swords all around like their thorns. ³⁰ Flying fragments of flags form the skins of the plants, and the darts sticking to them appear like big black bees fluttering about the flowers moving with the breeze. ³¹ Arrows sticking to the dead bodies of elephants are like ants on mountain tops, and like timid girls clinging to men's bosoms.

³² Winds unfurling the curling locks of supernatural vidyadhara females indicate their approaching nuptials, like in an augury the unfolding plumage of fowls predict success. ³³ Lifted umbrellas shine like so many moons on high, and the moon itself, shining above in the form of fair fame, spreads her light like a white canopy over the earth. ³⁴ The brave warrior, soon after his death, assumes a celestial form framed by his own merit, just like a man in his sleep attains the state he imagined to himself in his waking.

³⁵ Flying spears, lances, clubs and discs are hurtling in the air like shoals of restless fish and sharks moving about constantly in the troubled waters of the sea. ³⁶ Milk-white rags of umbrellas, tattered and shattered by arrow shafts, fly like cranes in the crowded air, appearing like the disc of the moon broken into a thousand pieces. ³⁷ Fans flying in the air with a hoarse gurgling seem like waves of the sea lifted in the air, undulating with a babbling noise in the ocean of the sky. ³⁸ Those scraps of fans and umbrellas, ripped by slashing weapons, appear like the laurels of glory flung aloft and flying in the regions of air.

³⁹ Look, O friends, how these flying arrows and showering spears are approaching us with the hits of their spoil, like bodies of locusts bearing away their green booty in the air. ⁴⁰ Listen to the clanking sound of steel striking by the uplifted arm of an armored soldier, resounding like the loud alarm of the king of death. ⁴¹ Hear the tremendous blows of weapons, like the fury of an all destroying tornado,

throwing down mountain-like elephants, their great ivory tusks lying on the ground like waterfalls.
⁴² Look, there the chariot drivers are stopped in their course struggling to make their way through puddles of blood in which wheels and horses are stuck together like in a bog of quagmire. ⁴³ The jingling of arms and armor and the jangling of swords and steel resound like a lute playing for the dancing of the dire and dreaded dame of death.

⁴⁴ See the skirts of the sky are reddened by the red particles borne by the winds from streams of blood flowing out of the wounds in the bodies of men, horses and elephants lying dead in the field. ⁴⁵ Look at the array of arrows in the air in the shape of a wreath of blossoms, falling like lightning from dark black clouds of weapons hanging on high. ⁴⁶ See the surface of the earth filled with blood-red weapons appearing like faggots of fire strewn over the ground in a universal conflagration. ⁴⁷ A multitude of weapons mingle together clashing and breaking one another into pieces, falling down in showers like the innumerable rays of the sun.

⁴⁸ The fighting of one man among the motionless many is like the play of a magician acting his parts for a bewitched audience. See, there indifferent spectators are viewing the battle as a dream (by their *prajna* or inner vision of the mind).

⁴⁹ The field of battle, where all other sounds are hushed under the clashing of arms, resembles the stage of the martial god Bhairava chanting his pitiless war song in jarring cacophony. ⁵⁰ The battlefield is turned into a sea of blood filled with the sands of pounded weapons and rolling with the waves of broken discuses. ⁵¹ The sky is filled with martial music loudly sounding on all sides. Echoes off the hills seem to challenge one another in their aerial flight and fighting. ⁵² Alas, for shame, says one, that these arrows flung with such force from bowstrings, flying with such loud hissing, glittering like red hot lightning, are foiled in their aim of piercing impenetrable armor and glance off hitting stony hills. ⁵³ Hear me friend. You are tired of the sight. It is time for us to leave this place before our bodies are pierced by these sharp arrows flashing like fire, and before the day runs its course into the evening.

Chapter 35 — The Battle: Description of the Battlefield

[First the battle ground is compared with the sky, then with the sea, next with a forest, and last with the final doomsday. — V.L. Mitra.]

¹ Vasishta said:—

Then waves of cavalry mounting to the sky made the battlefield appear like a raging sea.² Moving umbrellas floated as its foam and froth, and feathered silvery arrows glided like finny pearly fish, while cavalry charges and flights heaved and dashed like surges of the sea.³ Rushing of weapons resembled the running of its currents, and circles of soldiers were its whirlpools. The elephants were like its islets and their motions resembled the rocks moving in it.⁴ Whirling discs were its eddies, and long hair flying on heads its floating weeds. Sparkling sands were its shining waters, and the flash of swords its glassy spray.⁵ Gigantic warriors were its whales and alligators, and the resounding caves like its gurgling whirlpools.⁶ Flying arrows were its swimming fishes, and floating flags resembled its uprising waves and bores.⁷ Shining weapons formed the waters of this ocean and their whirlpools also, while the long lines of forces appeared like the huge and horrible bodies of its whales.⁸ Soldiers clad in black iron armor were like the dark blue waters of the deep, and headless bodies groveling in dust were like the whirling currents of the sea, with scattered weapons like sea weeds.

⁹ Showers of arrows hid the skies with a mist, and the confused rattling of the battlefield was like the roaring of clouds.¹⁰ Flying and falling heads of slain soldiers resembled large drops of rain, and their bodies were like pieces of wood whirling in the eddies of the discs.¹¹ The bold archer, bending his strong bow in the form of a curve and leaping above the ground, resembled the spouting sea rising from under the ground with heaving waves.¹² The unnumbered umbrellas and flags that were moving up and down the field were like the foaming and frothing of the sea, rolling in waves of blood and carrying away the beams and timbers of broken chariots in its current.¹³ The army's march resembled the flow of seawater, and the blood spouting from the wounds of elephants were like its bubbles, while the moving horses and elephants represented the sea animals in their motion.

¹⁴ The battlefield had become like a wonderful field of the air in which the furious war, like a tremendous earthquake, shook hills like moving clouds in the sky.¹⁵ Here the waves were undulating like flights of birds in the air, and groups of elephants falling aground like rocks, and the cowardly ranks murmured like herds of frightened deer.¹⁶ The field has become a forest of arrows. Wounded soldiers are standing fixed on the ground like trees, arrows flying like locusts, and horses moving like antelopes.

¹⁷ Here a loud drum sounded like the humming of bees in the hollows of trees. The army appears like a mist with a bold warrior sprawling like a lion in it.¹⁸ Dust was rising in clouds and forces falling like rocks. Huge, broken chariots looked like hills, and flaming swords shined on all sides.¹⁹ The rise and fall of soldiers' feet flitted like falling flowers on the ground, and flags and umbrellas rose above it like clouds. All was covered with streams of blood, and high-sounding elephants fell like thundering showers of rain.

²⁰ The war was like the last doom of death ready to devour the world, destroying flags, banners, umbrellas and chariots in a confused chaos. ²¹ Shining weapons fell like fragments of the bight sun, burning all things like a burning pain inflames the soul and mind. ²² The stretched bows were like rainbows, and falling arrows like showers of rain. Flying sabers resembled forked lightning, and their falling fragments like sparkling hailstones.

²³ The dire massacre made a sea of blood with hurling stones as its shoals and rocks. Flying arms resembled stars falling from heaven. ²⁴ The sky was like a sea full of whirlpools of discs hurled through the air. There were burning fires performing funerals of the slain. ²⁵ Missiles were like bolts of thunder that struck rock-like elephants dead in the field to block the passage of men. ²⁶ Earth and sky were hidden by a thick cloud of showering arrows, and the army below was a sea of tempestuous warfare and bloodshed. ²⁷ Destructive weapons were flying on all sides, like huge dragons of the sea carried aloft by gusts of wind from the stormy main. ²⁸ The flying arms of bolts, swords, discs, pikes and lances were blazing and breaking one another in the air with such hideous noise that it seemed to be a second deluge, when the last tornado blew up everything on high, scattering them in all directions, crushing and smashing them with a tremendous peal.

Chapter 36 — The Battle: Duels between Equals; Catalogue of Forces

Vasishta speaking:—

¹ Heaps of arrows rising in spires above the ground drove the cowards and the wounded far away from the battlefield. ² Hills of dead bodies of men, horses and elephants, heaving in promiscuous heaps and appearing like clouds fallen upon earth, invited the demon yakshas, rakshasas and carnivorous pisachas to come and play in the wide ocean of blood.

³ Now there commenced a contest between men of equal rank and virtue among those of good character, valor and strength on both sides. All took part in the combat, even holy householders.

⁴ They fought duels like one cloud clashing with another, and like the confluence of two streams discharging their fury against each other. ⁵ As a rib is joined to another, and one side with the other, so met horse against the horse and elephant against elephant in mutual conflict. ⁶ As one forest clasps and clings to another, and as one hill is linked with another in a range, so the duelists struggled with each other like one wave dashing against the other. ⁷ Footmen fought with footmen like reeds crush reeds and bamboo strikes each another in swirling winds. ⁸ Chariots fell upon chariots and broke each another to pieces. Citizens beat rustics, like the gods smote the demons of old.

⁹ The sky which had been clouded by flights of arrows was now emblazoned by the archer's banner resembling a rainbow of various colors. ¹⁰ At last the warriors who were overpowered in their conflict fled from the field, as people do from a fire.

¹¹ Now armor-bearers with discs met in contest with those who shielded against discs, archers opposed archers, and swordsmen challenged the other side's sword fighters. So hookers and crookers challenged their co-rivals with crowbars in hand. ¹² Maces were opposed to maces, and lancers were set against the lance bearers in fighting. Spearmen braved spearmen, and the throwers of missiles were crossed with missiles in hand. ¹³ Mallets fought against mallets, and clubs were opposed by clubmen in the conflict. Combatants with pikes encountered pike men face to face, and iron rods were crossed in strife against pointed tridents. ¹⁴ Fighters with missile weapons counteracted the missiles of their enemies, and those fighting with battleaxes resisted the poleaxes and pickaxes of their foes.

¹⁵ Trappers with their traps and snares attacked the darters of nooses and lassos. Those who threw javelins withstood the javelins of the throwers on the other side. Daggers opposed daggers and cudgels fought cudgels. ¹⁶ Combatants with iron gloves opposed boxers with iron fisticuffs, and those with iron cranes in hand pursued fighters with crooked goads. Warriors with ploughshares attacked ploughmen, and those with tridents fell upon the opposing trident holders. ¹⁷ Champions with chained armor set upon soldiers attired in mail. They poured on the field like flights of locusts or like the waves in the troubled sea.

¹⁸ The air also appeared like a sea, with flying discs whirling like whirlpools and the flight of reeds whistling like gusts of wind. Various flying weapons seemed like sharks and dolphins moving about it. ¹⁹ The sky of the heavens became the great deep of the sea, impassable by celestials owing to the waves of weapons moving like sea monsters in the air. ²⁰ Thus the armies of the two belligerent rulers, each composed of eight divisions as described below, furiously engaged one another.

²¹ Now hear me relate to you, the forces on the side of Padma, now named King Viduratha, and the

allied powers that came to his side from the Central and Eastern districts.²² There came the hardy warriors of Kosala and Benares; those of Magadha and Utkala, situated in the east; and the Mekhalas (of Vindhya range), the Karkars (of Karnatic), and the Madras in the south.²³ The chiefs of Hema and Rudras and the Tamils from the south; the Pragjyotishas, and the horse faced Osmuks and Ambashtha cannibals.²⁴ Then there joined the Varna-koshthas and Viswotras, and the eaters of raw food and flesh and the fish eaters; and those with faces like tigers, the Kiratas, with the Sauviras and one legged people.²⁵ Next came the mountaineers of Malyavana, Sibira and Anjanagiri; and others having the ensigns of bulls and lotuses, and the people of the sun rising mountain in the east.²⁶ Those that joined from the south east, are the following, namely: the Vindharyaris, the Chedis, the Vatsas, the Dasarnas (near the confluence of the ten streams); and the Angas, Bangas and Upabangas (of Upper and Lower Bengal).²⁷ They that met from the south were, Kalingas and Pundras, the Jatharas, Vidarbhas and the hill people; the Sabaras, the outcaste tribals, the Karnas and the Tripura people.²⁸ Those named Kantakas from their thorny district, the unenlightened Komalas; the Canarese, the Andhras, the Cholas and the people on the borders of the Charmanvati river.²⁹ The Kakos or bald-headed and bearded people, and those of the Hemakuta Hills; the frizzled and long necked people, and the inhabitants of Kishkindha and cocoa forests.³⁰ The princes that joined with Leela's husband from the south, were as follows: the Vindh yans, the Kusumians (of Patna), the Mahendras and the Darduras.³¹ The Malays and the solar race, and the Prince of the thirty-three united states and the rich and united cities of Avanti and Sambavati.³² And those of Dasapura of Katha, Chakra, Reshika Cutch and others, and the foresters of Upagiri and Bhadragiri Hills.³³ The prince of Nagore and the chiefs of Dandaka Forest, and the joint states of the people; the Sahas, Saivas, and the hill people of the Rishyamuka and Karkota and the Vimbila foresters.³⁴ Then came the inhabitants from the banks of Pampa, the Kerakas and Karkaviras; with the Kherikas, Asikas and the people of Dhrumapattana.³⁵ Next came the Kasikas and Khallukas, the Yadas and Tamraparnikas; the Gonardas, the Kanakas and the people of Dinapattam.³⁶ The Tamils, Kadambharas, Sahakaras and Deer Hunters, the Vaitundas, Tumbavanalas, and those attired in deer and elephant skins.³⁷ Then came the lotus-like Sibis and Konkans and the inhabitants of Chitrakuta mountains; with the people of Karnata, the Mantas, Batakas and those of Cattak.³⁸ The Andhras and Kola hill people, the Avantis and Chedis; with the Chandas and Devanakas and Krauncha-vahas.³⁹ At last came the people from the three peaks of Chitrakuta mountains, called the Silakhara, Nanda mardana and Malaya, which were the seats of the guardian Bakshasas of Lanka.⁴⁰ Then those of the southwest where there is the great realm of Surat, with the kingdoms of the Sind, Sauvira, Abhira, and Dravidas (in Deccan).⁴¹ Also those of the districts of Kikata, Siddha Khanda, and Kaliruha, and Mount Hemagiri or golden hills and the Raivataka range.⁴² Then the warriors of Jaya Kachchha, and Mewar; as also the Yavanas, the Bahlikas, the Marganas (nomads), and the grey colored Tumbas (on the north).⁴³ Then there came Lahsa races and many hill peoples, inhabiting the borders of the sea, forming the limit of the dominion of Leela's husband on the north.

⁴⁴ Now know the names of the countries belonging to the enemy in the west, and of those composed of the following mountain ranges, namely,⁴⁵ Mount Maniman and the Kurarpana Hills, with the hillocks of Vanorka, Meghabhava, and Chakravana Mountain.⁴⁶ There is the country of the five peoples limiting the territory of the Kasa brahmins, and after that the Bharaksha, the Paraka and Santika

countries.⁴⁷ Thence stretch the countries of the Saivyas, Amarakas, the Paschatyas and Guhutwas; and then the Haihaya country, and those of the Suhyas, Gayas and Tajikas and Hunas.⁴⁸ Then along the side of some other countries, there is the range of Karka Hills, inhabited by barbarous people, devoid of caste, customs and limits of moral duties.⁴⁹ Thence stretches a country hundreds of leagues in length, to the boundary mountain of Mahendra, abounding in rich stones and gems.⁵⁰ After that stands the Aswa Range with hundreds of hills about it; and extending to the dread ocean on the north of the Pariyatra Range.⁵¹ On the north western side, there are countries beyond the boundary mountains (of Asia), where Venupati was the king of the land.⁵² Then there are the countries of the Phalgunakas and Mandavayas and many other peoples; and those of Purukundas and Paras as bright as the orb of the sun.⁵³ Then the races of Vanmilas and Nalinas and the Dirghas; who are so called, from their tall statures and long arms and hairs. Then there are the Rangas, Stanikas with protuberant breasts, and the Guruhas and Chaluhas.⁵⁴ After that is the kingdom of women, where they feed upon bullocks and heifers. Now about the Himalayas and its hills in the north (of India):⁵⁵ these are the Krauncha and Madhuman hills; and the Kailasa, Vasuman and the Sumeru peaks; at the foot of which are the people, known under many names.⁵⁶ Beside these there met the warlike tribes of India consisting of the Madrawars, Malavas and Sura-senas. The Rajputs of the race of Arjuna, the Trigartas and the one legged people and Khudras.⁵⁷ There were the Abalas, Prakhalas, and Sakas. The Hemadhurtas, the Dasadhanas, the Gavasanas and Club Fighters.⁵⁸ The Dhanadas and Sarakas and Batadhanas also, with the islanders and Gandharas and Avanti warriors of Malwa.⁵⁹ The warlike Taxilas, the Bilavas, Godhanas and the renowned warriors of Pushkara.⁶⁰ Then there were the Tikshas and Kalavaras, and the inhabitants of the cities of Kahaka and Surabhuti likewise.⁶¹ There were the people of the Ratikadarsa and Antadarasa also; and the Pingalas, the Pandyas, Yamanas and Yatudhanas demons too.⁶² There were also the races of men, known as Hematalas and Osmuks, together with the hilly tribes, inhabiting the Himalaya, Vasuman, Krauncha and Kailasa Mountains.⁶³ Hear me now relate to you the peoples that came from the north east quarter, which extends a hundred and eighty leagues in its circumference.⁶⁴ There came also the Kalutas and Brahmaputras, the Kunidas and Khudinas, with the warlike Malavas and the champions of the Randhra and forest states.⁶⁵ Then there were the Kedavas and Sinhaputras of dwarfish statures; the Sabas, the Kaccæs, the Pahlavis, the Kamiras and the Daradas.⁶⁶ There were also the people of Abhisa, the Jarvakas, the Pulolas and Kuves; the Kiratas and Yamupatas, together with the poor and rich people of desert lands and tracts of gold.

⁶⁷ Thus Leela in one vision saw the homes of the gods and the forest lands and the earth in all their beauty. She saw all the seats of opulence and the buildings with which they were adorned. She saw the summit of Kailash and the delightful groves at its foot, and the level lands traversed by the aerial cars of *vidyadhara* and other celestial beings.

Chapter 37 — The Battle: Catalogue of Forces Continued

[It is not easy to say whether this lengthy description of the battle is Vasishta's or Valmiki's own making. Both of them were well acquainted with military tactics. Vasishta was the general of King Sudasa against the Persians. Valmiki was the epic poet of Rama's wars with Ravana in the celebrated Ramayana. These descriptions are left out in the translations of this work as entirely useless in yoga philosophy without regard that they formed the preliminary step to Rama's military education, which he was soon after called to complete under the guidance of Vishwamitra in his hermitage. — V. L. Mitra]

¹ Vasishta said:—

Thus the ravaging war was making a rapid end of men, horse, elephants and all. The brave coming foremost in the combat fell in equal numbers on both sides.² These and many others were reduced to dust and ashes. The bravery of the brave served only to send them like poor moths to the fire and flame of destruction.

³ Know now the names of the central districts, not yet mentioned by me, that sent their warriors to the field, in favor of the consort prince of Leela.⁴ These were the inland forces of Sursena, the Gudas, and the Asganas; the Madhynikas and they that dwell in the tropics.⁵ The Salukas and Kodmals, and Pippalayanas; the Mandavyas, Pandyans, Sugrivas and Gurjars.⁶ The Pariyatras, Kurashtras, Yamunas and Uдумvaras; the Raj-waras, the Ujjainas, the Kalkotas and the Mathuras (of Muttra).⁷ The Panchalas, the Northern and Southern Dharmakshetras; the Kurukshetriyas, Panchalakas and Saraswatas.

⁸ The line of war chariots from Avanti, being opposed by the arms of the warriors of the Kunta and Panchanada districts, fell in fighting by the sides of the hills.⁹ Those arrayed in silk clothes, being defeated by the enemy, fell upon the ground and were trodden down by elephants.¹⁰ The brave of Daspura, being hacked in their breasts and shoulders by enemy weapons, were pursued by the Banabhuma warriors and driven to a distant pool.¹¹ The Santikas, being ripped in their bellies, lay dead and motionless in naked field, wrapped in their mangled entrails that were torn and devoured by the voracious pisachas at night.¹² Veteran and outspoken warriors of Bhadrasiri, well skilled in the battlefield, drove the Amargas into a ditch like tortoises to their pits.¹³ The Haihayas were driving the Dandakas, who fled like fleet stags flying with the swiftness of winds, gushing blood drawn by pointed, piercing enemy arrows.¹⁴ The Daradas, gored by the tusks of enemy elephants, were carried away like broken tree branches in the floods of their blood.¹⁵ The Chinas, bodies mangled by darts and arrows, cast themselves in the water, their bodies a burden they could no longer bear.¹⁶ The demons, pierced in their necks by Karnatic lancers, fled in all directions like faggots of fire, or like the flying meteors of heaven.¹⁷ The Sakas and Dasakas fought each other by pulling the other's hair, as if whales and elephants were struggling mutually with their respective elements.¹⁸ Fleeing cowards were trapped in snares cast by the Dasarna warriors, like dolphins hiding under reeds are dragged out by nets on a blood-red shore.¹⁹ The Tongas' swords and pikes destroyed the Gurjara force by the hundreds, and like razors shaved the heads of hundreds of Gurjara women.

²⁰ The luster of the warriors' weapons illuminated the land like flashes of lighting, and clouds of arrows rained like showers in the forest. ²¹ A flight of the crowbars obscured the sun and frightened the Abhira warriors with the dread of an eclipse. They were as surprised as if ambushed by a gang of plunderers after their cattle. ²² Handsome gold collared, tawny colored Tamras soldiers were dragged by the Gauda warriors, as captors snatch their fair captives by the hair. ²³ Like cranes by vultures, Tongons were beset by Kanisas with their blazing weapons, destroying elephants and breaking discuses. ²⁴ The rumbling noise raised by Gauda warriors whirling their cudgels frightened the Gandharas so much that they were driven from the field like a herd of beasts, or like the fearful Dravidas. ²⁵ A host of Saka warriors, dressed in black like the mist of night, poured like a blue torrent from the blue sky before their white-robed foes, the Persians.

²⁶ The crowded array of arms lifted in the clear and bright sky appeared like a thick forest under a milk white ocean of frost that shrouds the mountainous region of Mandara. ²⁷ From below, the flights of arrows appeared like cloud fragments in the air, and when viewed from above by the celestials, appeared like waves of the sea. ²⁸ The air was a forest thickly beset by trees of spears and lances, with arrows flying like birds and bees, and innumerable umbrellas, with their gold and silver mountings, appearing as so many moons and stars in the sky.

²⁹ Kekayas made loud shouts, like the war hoops of drunken soldiers. Kankas covered the field like a flight of cranes, and the sky was filled with dust over their heads. ³⁰ The Kirata army made a murmuring sound like the effeminate voices of women, causing the lusty Angas to rush upon them with a furious roar. ³¹ Khasias, bodies covered with kusa grass, appeared like birds with feathers, and raised clouds of dust by flapping their feathered arms. ³² The whirling warriors of Narmada's coasts came rushing unarmed into the field and began to mock, deride, flout and move about in their merry mood. ³³ Low statured Salwas came with bells jingling on their waist bands, flinging their arrows in the air, and throwing showers of their darts. ³⁴ The soldiers of Sibi were pierced by spears hurled by the Kuntas. They fell as dead bodies in the field, but their spirits fled to heaven in the form of vidyadharas. ³⁵ A mighty, light footed army took possession of the field and in its quick march, laid the Pandunagaras groveling on the ground. ³⁶ Big Punjabis and furious warriors from Benares crushed the bodies of stalwart warriors with their lances and cudgels, like elephants crush mighty trees under their feet and tusks. ³⁷ Burmese and Vatsenis were cut down by the discs of the Nepalese. Saws cut down Sahyas like withered trees. ³⁸ Heads of white Kaka, were lopped off with sharp axes. Their neighboring prince of the Bhadras was burnt down by the fiery arrows. ³⁹ Matangajas fell under the hands of Kashthayodhas like old, unchained elephants fall into a miry pit. Others who came to fight fell like dry fuel in a blazing fire. ⁴⁰ Mitragartas fell into the hands of Trigartas and were scattered about the field like straws, and having their heads struck off as they fled, they entered the infernal regions of death. ⁴¹ The weak Vanila force, falling into the hands of a Magadha army that resembled a sea gently shaken by the breeze, went down in the sands like thin, aged elephants. ⁴² Chedis lost their lines fighting the Tongans and lay withered on the battlefield, like scattered flowers fading under the shining sun. ⁴³ Kosalas were unable to withstand the war cry of the deadly Pauravas, routed by showers of clubs, arrows and darts. ⁴⁴ Those pierced by pikes and spears looked like coral plants, red with blood all over their bodies, and fled to the sheltering hills like red hot suns to the setting

mountains.⁴⁵ Flights of arrows and weapons, carried away by strong winds, moved in the air like cloud fragments with a swarm of black bees hovering under them.⁴⁶ Flying arrows wandering with the roar of elephants appeared to be showering clouds, their feathers appeared as the woolly breed, their reedy shafts seemed like trees.⁴⁷ Wild elephants and people of the plains were all torn to pieces like bits of torn linen.⁴⁸ War chariots with broken wheels fell into pits like the broken crags of mountains. The enemy stood upon their tops like a thick mist or cloud.⁴⁹ The hosts of stalwart warriors meeting on the battlefield gave it the appearance of a forest of palm and tamara trees, but when weapons chopped off their arms, they made it appear like a mountainous wood with clumps of stunted pine trees.

⁵⁰ The youthful maidens of paradise were filled with joy and glee to find the groves of their native hill (Meru) full of brave champions (fallen in the field).

⁵¹ The forest of the army howled in a tremendous roar until it was burnt down by the all devouring fire of the enemy.⁵² Hacked by the Assamese, their weapons snatched by the Bhutas, the Dasarnas threw away their staffs and fled like a herd of cows.⁵³ The Kasias by their valor were eager to despoil the tinsels from the dead bodies of the chiefs, like summer heat robs the beauty from lotuses in a drying pool.⁵⁴ Tushakas were beset by Mesalas with darts, spears and mallets. The sly Katakas were defeated and driven away by the Narakas.⁵⁵ Kauntas were surrounded by Prastha warriors and were defeated like good people by the treachery of the wily.⁵⁶ The elephant drivers who had struck off the heads of their hosts in a trice, were pursued by harpooners and fled with their severed heads like the lotus flowers plucked by their hands.⁵⁷ The Saraswatas fought on both sides with one another until it was evening, and yet no party was the looser or gainer, just like a learned discussion among pundits or lawyers.⁵⁸ The puny and short statured Deccans, driven back by the demons of Lanka, redoubled their attack against them, like smoldering fire is rekindled by fresh fuel.

⁵⁹ Rama, what more shall I say about this war which baffles even Sesha, with his hundred tongues and mouths, to attempt a full description?

Chapter 38 — The Battle: End of the Day, the Battlefield after Cessation of Fighting

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Now as the war waged fiercely, with mingled shouts on both sides, the sun shrouded his polished armor under the mist of darkness and was about to set.

² The waters of limpid streams glided over the showers of stones flung by the forces that fell on the fading clusters of lotuses growing in them. ³ The clashing of shafts and darts glittered like flashes of fire in the sky, and waves of arrows were seen, now approaching close and then receding at a distance. ⁴ Below, severed heads floated in whirlpools of blood like loose lotuses, while above, the sea of heaven was filled with flying weapons moving like marine animals. ⁵ The rustling of the breeze and the whistling of clouds of weapons frightened the aerial masters and woodland apes with fear of an approaching rain.

⁶ The day declined after it had run its course of eight watches and assumed the graceful countenance of a hero returning in glory after he has fought his battle. ⁷ The army, like the day, declined in splendor, being battered in its cavalry and shattered in its force of elephants. ⁸ Army commanders, in concert with the ministers of war, sent envoys to the hostile parties for a truce to the fighting. ⁹ Both parties, seeing how much they lost in the engagement, agreed to a truce and the soldiers gave their assent with one voice.

¹⁰ They hoisted their soaring banners of truce on the tops of the highest chariots, and a mounted crier on each side proclaimed the truce to the armies below. ¹¹ They unfurled white flags on all sides, which like so many moons in the gloom of night, proclaimed peace on earth by cessation from fighting. ¹² Then the drums delivered their loud peals, resounded by the roaring of clouds above and all about. ¹³ The flights of arrows and weapons that had been raging like fire in the sky now began to fall in torrents on the ground below, like the currents of Lake Manasarovar. ¹⁴ Hands and arms of warriors rested like their feet, like the shaking of trees and the surges of the sea end after an earthquake. ¹⁵ The two armies went their own ways from the field of battle, like inlets of the sea run into the land in different directions.

¹⁶ The armies being at rest, there was an end of all agitation in the field, like ocean waves are lulled to rest with the calm after being churned by Mandara Mountain. ¹⁷ In an instant the battlefield became as dreadful as the dismal womb of death, and as deep and dark as the hollow pit of the sea after Agastya sucked up its waters. ¹⁸ It was covered with the dead bodies of men and beasts and flowed with the floods of purpling blood. It resounded with the sounds of insects, like a heath with the humming of beetles. ¹⁹ Gory bodies gushed with blood and gurgled like sea waves.

The cries of the wounded wanting to live pierced the ears and throbbed the heart strings of the living. ²⁰ The dead and wounded rolling around side by side in streams of blood made the living think the dead were still alive like themselves. ²¹ Big elephants lying dead in piles on the field appeared like cloud fragments, and the heaps of broken chariots looked like a forest blown over by a storm. ²² Streams of blood flowed with the dead bodies of horses and elephants, and heaps of arrows, spears, mattocks and mallets flowed together with broken swords and missiles. ²³ Horses were lying in their halters and harnesses. Dead soldiers were wrapped in their mail and armor. Flags, fans,

turbans and helmets lay scattered in the field.

²⁴ The winds rustled by the openings of quivers like the hissing of snakes or the whistling of the breeze in the holes of bamboo trees. Flesh eating pisacha demons were rolling on beds of dead bodies as if they were beddings of straws. ²⁵ The gold chains from the helmets and head ornaments of fallen soldiers glittered with rainbow colors, and greedy dogs and jackals tore at the entrails of the dead like long ropes or strings.

²⁶ The wounded were gnashing their teeth in the field of blood, like the croaking of frogs in a miry pool of blood. ²⁷ Those dressed in party-colored coats with a hundred spots now had their arms and thighs gushing in a hundred streams of blood. ²⁸ Friends wailed bitterly over the bodies of their dead and wounded lying amidst heaps of arrows and weapons, broken cars and scattered trappings of horses and elephants that covered the land. ²⁹ Headless trunks of demons danced about with uplifted arms touching the sky. The stink of carrion, fat and blood filled nostrils with nausea. ³⁰ Elephants and horses of noble breed lay dead or gasping with their mouths gaping upwards, streams of blood dashing against their rock-like bodies beat as loudly as drums. ³¹ Blood gushing out of wounded horses and elephants ran like that of a wounded whale into a hundred streams. Blood spouting from the mouths of dying soldiers flowed into a hundred channels.

³² Those pierced with arrows in their eyes and mouths uttered an inaudible voice with their last gasp of death. Those pierced in their bellies had their bowels gushing out with a horrible stench. The ground was reddened with thickened blood issuing out of the wounds. ³³ Half-dead elephants grasped headless trunks with their trunks, while the loose horses and elephants that had lost their riders were trampling over dead bodies at random. ³⁴ The weeping, crying and tottering wives of fallen soldiers fell upon their dead bodies weltering in blood, embracing them closely by their necks, then made an end of themselves with the same weapons.

³⁵ Groups of soldiers were sent with guides to fetch dead bodies from the field. The hands of their living companions were busily employed dragging the dead. ³⁶ The field had become a wide river running with waves of blood breaking into a hundred whirling streams and carrying severed heads like lotuses, and the torn braids of hair floating like bushes. ³⁷ Men were busy taking weapons from the bodies of the wounded who lamented loudly on account of their dying in a foreign land and losing their arms, armor, horses and elephants.

³⁸ Dying souls remembered their sons and parents, their dear ones and their adored deities. They called out their names and sighed and sobbed with heart-rending sounds. ³⁹ The brave who died cursed their fates, and those who fell fighting elephants blamed the unkind gods they had adored in vain. ⁴⁰ Cowards fearing to be killed resorted to base flight, but the dauntless brave stepped forward into the whirlpools of blood. ⁴¹ Some, suffering under the agony of arrows stuck in their mortal parts, thought upon the sins of their past lives that had brought such pain upon them. Blood sucking vetalas advanced with their horrid mouths to drink blood from headless torsos.

⁴² Below, the floating flags, umbrellas and fans looked like white lotuses in a lake of blood, while from above, the evening stretched her train of stars like red lotuses in an ethereal sea. ⁴³ The battlefield looked like an eighth sea of blood. The war chariots were its rocks and their wheels its

whirlpools. The flags were its foam and froth, and the white fans its bubbles.⁴⁴ The field of blood with scattered chariots plunged in mud and mire and covered with broken pieces of woods looked like a tract of land devastated by a hurricane.⁴⁵ It was as desolate as a country burned by a fire, or like the dry bed of the sea sucked up by the sage Agastya. It was like a district devastated by a sweeping flood.

⁴⁶ The battlefield was filled with heaps of weapons as high as the bodies of big elephants lying dead about the ground.⁴⁷ The lances carried down by streams of blood were as big as the palm trees growing on the summits of mountains.⁴⁸ Weapons sticking in elephant bodies seemed like shining flowers growing on green trees. Their entrails, torn and carried away by vultures, spread a fretted network in the sky.⁴⁹ Lances stuck in the ground by streams of blood made a woody forest on the banks of a red river, and the flags floating on the surface were like a bush of lotuses in the liquid blood.⁵⁰ Friends pulled dead bodies from the bloody pool in which they drowned, and men marked the bodies of big elephants by the jutting weapons sticking in them.

⁵¹ Trunks of trees that had their branches lopped off by the weapons looked like the headless bodies of slain soldiers, and the floating carcasses of elephants seemed like so many boats swimming in a sea of blood.⁵² White garments swept down by the current looked like froth on the pool of blood. They were picked up by servants sent to search them out.

⁵³ The demonic bodies of headless soldiers were rising and falling in the field, hurling large wheels and discs upon the flying army on all sides.⁵⁴ Dying warriors were frothing forth floods of blood from their throats, and stones stained with blood were inviting greedy vultures to devour them.

⁵⁵ Then there were groups of sutala, vetala and uttala demons and ghosts dancing about the field with their war dances, whirling the broken bits of war-chariots upon the flying soldiers on all sides.⁵⁶ The stir and last gasp of the dying were fearful to behold, and the faces of the dying and the dead covered in dust and blood were pitiful to the beholder.⁵⁷ Devouring dogs and ravenous ravens had pity as they saw the last gasp of the dying. Carrion feeders were howling and fighting over carcasses until many of them became dead bodies from fighting each other.

⁵⁸ Now I have described the sea of blood that flowed fast with the gore of unnumbered hosts of horses, elephants and camels, and of warriors and their leaders, and the multitudes of cars and war chariots. But it became a pleasure garden to the god of death, delighting in his bed of bloodshed and grove of weapons strewn all around.

Chapter 39 — The Battlefield Infested by Nocturnal Fiends

Vasishta speaking:—

¹ Now the blood-red sun set down in the west like a hero red with blood. The sun hid his luster, which was dimmed by the brightness of the weapons of war in the western main. ² The sky which had reflected the blood-red flush of the field of blood was now dimmed by the setting of the glorious sun and darkened by the veil of evening. ³ Thick darkness spread over the face of heaven and earth like the waters of the great deluge, and there appeared a body of vetalas ghosts, dancing in a ring and clapping their hands.

⁴ The face of day, smeared with the blackness of nightfall, was painted by the light of evening with stars like pearly spots painted on the cheeks of an elephant. ⁵ The busy buzz of creation became silent in the dead darkness of night, like the humming of bees over the surface of the waters, the hearts of men were closed in sleep as in death, like the petals of the lotus at night. ⁶ Birds lay in their nests with folded wings and crests, like dead bodies were lying in the field covered with their wounds and weapons.

⁷ Then fair moonbeams shone above and white lotuses were blown below. The hearts of men were gladdened and the victors felt joyous in themselves. ⁸ The ruddy evening assumed the shape of the blood-red sea of battle, and the fluttering bees now hid themselves like the faces of fallen soldiers.

⁹ There was an ethereal lake above dotted on high with stars like white lotuses, and here was the earthly lake below, beset by lotuses resembling the stars of heaven.

¹⁰ Bodies thought to be lost in darkness were now recovered in moonlight like gems hidden under water are found scattered about. ¹¹ The battlefield was filled with vetalas ghosts howling with their hideous cries, while bodies of vultures, crows and owls tore at carcasses and sported with skeletons.

¹² Funeral pyres blazed as brightly as the starry frame on high, and the fires consumed dead bodies with their bones and clothing. ¹³ The fire burnt bodies and bones to ashes, after which it extinguished itself as if sated with plenty. The female fiends now began to sport in the water. ¹⁴ There arose a mingled cry of dogs, crows, and yaksha demons and vetalas clapping their hands. Bodies of ghosts, thick as woods and forests, were moving about. ¹⁵ Dakinis were eager to steal away the flesh and fat from the piles of bodies gathered for funeral, and pisachas delighted in sucking the blood, flesh and bones of the dead. ¹⁶ The demons were now looking and now lurking about the funeral piles, and the rakshasa demons that rushed in carried away carcasses on their shoulders.

¹⁷ There came also bodies of ferocious kumbhandas and big damaras uttering their barbarous cries and hovering in the shapes of clouds over the fumes of fat and flesh. ¹⁸ Bodies of vetalas stood in the streams of blood like earthly beings and snatched the skeletons with hideous cries. ¹⁹ Vetalas younglings slept in the bellies and chests of the elephants, and rakshasas were drinking their fill in the bloody field. ²⁰ Giddy vetalas fought one another with the lighted faggots from the pyres, and the winds blew the stench of the putrid carcasses on all sides.

²¹ Female fiends (*rupikas*) filled the baskets of their bellies with carrion with a rat-a-tat noise. Yaksha cannibals were snatching half-burnt carcasses from the funeral pyres as their roasted meat and dainty food. ²² Aerial imps (*khagas*) attacked the dead bodies of the big Bangas and black Kalingas,

and flouted about with their open mouths, emitting the blaze of falling meteors.²³ Vetala ghosts fell down in the dark and discolored blood-pits, lying hidden in the midst of heaps of dead bodies, while pisacha ogres and the leaders of yogini sprites laughed at them for their false step.

²⁴ Entrails being pulled vibrated like the strings of musical instruments. The ghosts of men that had become fiends from their fiendish desires fell to fighting one another.²⁵ Valiant soldiers were frightened at the sight of female fiends (*rupikas*), and funeral rites were disturbed by the vetala and rakshasa demons.²⁶ The demons of the night (*nisacharas*) were frightened at the fall of carcasses from the shoulders of elves (*rupikas*) who were carrying them aloft in the air where they were waylaid by a throng of ghostly demons (*bhuta-sankata*).²⁷ Many dying bodies were lifted with difficulty by demons who, when they found the bodies unfit for their food, let them fall down dead on the ground.²⁸ Pieces of blood-red flesh that fell from the fiery jaws of jackals looked like clusters of asoka flowers strewn all around the funeral ground.²⁹ Vetala urchins were busy putting scattered heads over the headless bodies of Kabandhas, and bodies of yaksha, raksha, and pisacha ogres flashed like firebrands in the sky.

³⁰ At last a thick cloud of darkness covered the face of the sky, and the hills, valleys, gardens and groves became hidden under an impenetrable gloom. Infernal spirits were loosened from their dismal abodes and ravaged at large over the battlefield like a hurricane under the vault of heaven.

Chapter 40 — Subtle Body & Astral Travel; Intellectual Body; Details on the Process of Death, Conception & Birth

¹ Vasishta related:—

The nocturnal fiends infested the gloomy field, and the attendants of Yama, the Lord of Death, roamed about it like marauders in the daytime.² Under the canopy of thick darkness, naked and fleeting ghosts in their nightly abode reveled on their provisions of carrion that was likely to be taken by the clutches of one's hand.

³ It was in the still hour of this gloomy night, when the host of heaven seemed to be fast asleep, that a sadness stole in upon the mind of Leela's magnanimous husband, the warring King Viduratha.⁴ He thought about what was to be done the next morning in council with his counselors, and then he went to his bed which was as white as moonlight and as cold as frost.⁵ For a while his lotus-eyes were closed in sleep in his royal camp, which was as white as moonbeams and covered by the cold dews of night.

⁶ Then the two ladies issued forth from their empty abode and entered the tent through a crevice, like air penetrates into the heart of an untouched flower bud.

⁷ Rama asked, "How is it possible sage, that the gross bodies of the goddesses, with their limited dimensions, could enter the tent through one of its holes, as small as the pore of a piece of cloth?"

⁸ Vasishta answered saying that:—

It is impossible for someone who mistakes himself to be a material body to enter a small hole with that gross body.⁹ But it is possible to go anywhere one pleases if he understands that he is only pent up in his physical body like in a cage and obstructed by it in his flight, and if he does not believe that he is confined by his material body but has the true notion of his inner subtle spirit.¹⁰ He who perceives his original spiritual state to be the better half of his body may pass as a spirit through a chink. But whoever relies on the lesser half of the material body cannot go beyond it in the form of his intellect.

¹¹ As air rises upward and the flame of fire never goes downward, so the nature of spirit is to rise upward, and that of the body to go down, but the intellect is made to turn in the way in which it is trained.¹² A man sitting in the shade has no notion of feeling heat or warmth, so one man has no idea of another man's knowledge or thoughts.¹³ As is one's knowledge, so is his thought. Such is the mode of his life. It is only by means of ardent practice (of meditation and learning) that the mind is turned to the right course.

¹⁴ One's belief of a snake in a rope is removed by knowledge of his error. The habits of the mind and conduct in life are changed from wrong to right by the knowledge of truth.¹⁵ It is one's knowledge that gives rise to his thoughts, and thoughts direct his pursuits in life. This is a truth known to every man of sense, even to the young.

¹⁶ Now then, the soul resembles something seen in a dream or formed in fancy. The soul is of the nature of air and emptiness and is never obstructed anywhere in its course.¹⁷ There is an intellectual and astral body which all living beings possess in every place. It is known as consciousness as well

as the feelings of our hearts.¹⁸ It is by Divine Will that consciousness rises and sets by turns. At first it was produced in its natural, simple and intellectual form and then, being invested with a material body, they together make the unity of the person out of the duality of material and immaterial essences.

¹⁹ Now you must know that the triple emptiness composed of the three airy substances — spirit, mind and space — are one and the same thing, but not so their receptacle the material body which has no ability to flow or extend.

²⁰ Know this intellectual, consciousness body of beings is like the air, present with everything everywhere, just like your desire to know extends over all things in all places and presents them all to your knowledge.²¹ It abides in the smallest particles, and reaches to the spheres of heavens. It reposes in the cells of flowers, and delights in the leaves of trees.²² It delights in hills and dales, and dances over the waves of the oceans. It rides over the clouds, and falls down in the showers of rain and hailstones of heaven.²³ It moves at pleasure in vast space and penetrates through the solid mountains. Its body bears no break in it, and it is as minute as an atom.

²⁴ Yet it becomes as big as a mountain lifting its head to heaven, and as large as the earth which is the fixed and firm support of all things. It views the inside and outside of everything, and bears the forests like hairs on its body.²⁵ It extends in the form of the sky and contains millions of worlds in itself. It identifies itself with the ocean, and transforms its whirlpools to spots upon its person.

²⁶ This intellectual, consciousness body of beings is of the nature of an uninterrupted understanding, ever calm and serene in its aspect. It is possessed of its intellectual form from before the creation of the visible world, and being all comprehensive as emptiness itself, it understands the natures of all beings.²⁷ It is as unreal as water in a mirage, but by its intelligence, it manifests itself as a reality to the understanding. Without this exercise of the intellect, the intellectual man is as nothing as the son of a barren woman, and as blank as the figure of a body seen in a dream.

²⁸ Rama asked, "What is that mind to which you attribute so many powers? What is that which you say to be nothing? Why is it no reality and something distinct from all that we see?"

²⁹ Vasishta replied:—

All individual minds are provided with these faculties, except those whose minds are engrossed with the error of the outer world.³⁰ All worlds are either of a longer or shorter duration, and they appear and disappear at times. Some of these vanish in a moment and others endure to the end of a kalpa age. But it is not so with the mind, whose progress I will now relate to you.

³¹ There is an unconsciousness which overtakes every man before his death. This is the darkness of his dissolution (*maha-pralaya-yamini*).³² After the shocks of delirium and death are over, the spiritual part of every man is regenerated anew in a different form, as if it was roused from a state of trance, reverie or swoon.³³ Just like the spirit of God, for its re-creation after the dissolution of the world, assumes his triune form with the persons of Brahma and Virat (the Universal Form), so every person after his death receives the triplicate form of his spiritual, intellectual and corporeal being.

³⁴ Rama said, "As we believe ourselves to be reproduced after death by reason of our memories, so must we understand the re-creation of all bodies in the world by the same cause. Hence there is nothing uncaused in it."

³⁵ Vasishta replied:—

The gods Hari (Vishnu), Hara (Shiva) and others, having obtained their disembodied liberation (*videha-mukti*) at the universal dissolution, could not retain their memory to cause their regeneration.

³⁶ But human beings, having both spiritual and intellectual bodies entire at their death, do not lose their memory of the past, nor can they have final liberation like Brahma unless they obtain their disembodied state, which is possible to all in this life or hereafter only by the edification of their souls through yoga meditation. ³⁷ Birth and death of all other beings like yourself are caused by their memory and because they lack disembodied liberation and eternal salvation. ³⁸ The individual soul, after its pangs of death are over, retains its consciousness within itself, but remains in its state of unconsciousness by virtue of its own nature.

³⁹ The universal emptiness is called nature (*prakriti*). It is the reflection of the invisible Divine Consciousness (*chit prativimbam*) and it is the parent of all that is dull or moving (*jada-jada*) which are produced by their reminiscence or its absence (*sansmṛiti* and *asmṛiti*); the former causing the regeneration of living beings, and the latter its cessation as in inert matter. ⁴⁰ As the living principle or animal life begins to have its understanding (*bodha*), it is called an intelligent being (*mahat*) which is possessed of its consciousness (*ahankara*). It has added to it the organs of perception and conception, all from their elements (*tanmatras*) residing in the empty ether.

⁴¹ Next this minutely intelligent substance is joined with the five internal senses that form its body and which is otherwise called its spiritual or ethereal body (*ativahika* or *lingadeha*; the astral or subtle body). ⁴² This spiritual being, by its long association with the external senses, comes to believe it has ordinary senses, so it finds itself invested with a material body (*adhibhautika deha*) as beautiful as that of a lotus. ⁴³ Then seated in the embryo, it rests in a certain position for sometime, and then inflates itself like the air until it is fully expanded.

⁴⁴ Then it thinks itself to be fully developed in the womb, like a man dreams of a fairy form in his sleep and believes this illusion as a reality. ⁴⁵ Then he views the outer world where he is born to die, just like one visits a land where he is destined to meet his death, and there he remains to relish its enjoyments, as prepared for him.

⁴⁶ But the spiritual man soon perceives everything as pure emptiness, and that his own body and this world are only illusions and vain nothings. ⁴⁷ He perceives the gods, human dwellings, the hills, and the heavens resplendent with sun and stars to be nothing more than homes of disease, debility, decay and ultimate death and destruction. ⁴⁸ He sees nothing but a sad change in the natures of things, and that all that is living or inert, great or small, together with the seas, hills, rivers and peoples of this earth, and the days and nights, are all subject to decay sooner or later.

⁴⁹ The knowledge that I am born here of this father and that this is my mother, these are my treasures and such are my hopes and expectations, is as false as empty air. ⁵⁰ That these are my merits and these my demerits, and these the desires that I had at heart, that I was a boy and am now young, are the airy thoughts of the hollow mind.

⁵¹ This world resembles a forest where every being is like a detached tree. The dark clouds are its leaves and the stars its full blown flowers. ⁵² Walking men are its restless deer and the aerial gods

and demons its birds of the air. Broad daylight is the flying dust of its flowers and the dark night the deep hiding place of its grove.⁵³ The seas are like its streams and fountains and the eight boundary mountains are its artificial hills. The mind is its great water reservoir containing the weeds and shrubs of human thoughts in abundance.

⁵⁴ Wherever a man dies, he is instantly changed to this state, and he views the same things everywhere. Thus everyone rises and falls constantly, like the leaves of trees in this forest of the world.⁵⁵ Millions of Brahmans, Rudras, Indras, Maruts, Vishnus and suns, together with unnumbered mountains, seas, continents and islands have appeared and disappeared in the eternal course of the world.⁵⁶ No one can count the numbers of beings that have passed away, are passing, and shall have to pass hereafter, or those who are in existence and have to become extinct in the unfathomable eternity of Brahman.

⁵⁷ Therefore it is impossible to comprehend the stupendous fabric of the universe in any way except in the mind, which is as spacious as infinite space itself, and is as variable as the course of events in the world.⁵⁸ The mind is the empty sphere of consciousness, and the infinite sphere of consciousness is the seat of the Supreme.

⁵⁹ Now, know the whirlpools and waves of the sea are of the same element as the sea in which they rise and fall even though, in their impermanence, they are not of the same durable nature as seawater. So the phenomenon is the same as its conception, though none is a reality.⁶⁰ The ethereal sphere of heaven is only a reflection of the intellectual sphere of the Divine Mind, and the bright orbs of the sky are like gems in the bosom of Brahman. Its vault is the cave of the mind of the Eternal One.

⁶¹ The world according to the sense in which I take it, as the seat of God, is highly interesting, but not so in your sense of it being a sober reality. So the meaning of the words "I" and "you" according to me refers to the intellectual spirit, and according to you to the individual soul and body.

⁶² Hence Leela and Saraswati, being in their empty astral bodies, were led by the pure desire of their souls to every place without any obstruction or interruption.⁶³ The spirit of consciousness has the power to present itself wherever it likes, on earth or in the sky, and before objects known or unknown and wished to be known by it. It was by this power that they could enter into the tent of the prince.

⁶⁴ Consciousness has its way to all places and things, and over which it exercises its powers of observation, reflection and reasoning to their full extent. This is known as the spiritual and unconfined body (*ativahika*, the subtle body, astral body, mind body) whose course cannot be obstructed by any restriction whatever.

Chapter 41 — Leela & Saraswati enter King Viduratha's Tent; He Remembers His Past Lives; Everything Is within the Temple of the Mountain Brahmin; Discrimination of Error

¹ Vasishta said:—

When the ladies entered the tent, it appeared like a bed of lotuses. Its white ceiling seemed as graceful as the vault of heaven with two moons rising at once under it.² A pure and cooling fragrance spread about it, as if blown by the breeze from mandara flowers, and lulled the prince to sleep. Everyone was lying in their camps.³ It made the place as pleasant as the celestial pleasure garden of Nandana and healed all the pains and cares of the people there. It seemed like a spring garden filled with the fragrance of the fresh blown lotuses in the morning.

⁴ The cooling and moon-bright radiance of the ladies roused the king from his sleep as if he had been sprinkled with the juice of ambrosia.⁵ He saw the forms of two apsaras sitting on two stools, appearing like two moons risen on two peaks of Mount Meru.⁶ The king saw them with wonder and after composing his mind, he rose up from his bed like God Vishnu rises from his bed of the serpent.⁷ Then advancing respectfully to them, with long strings of flowers in his hands, he made offerings of them to the ladies with handfuls of flowers flung at their feet.

⁸ Leaving his pillow'd sofa in the midst of the hall, he sat with folded legs on the ground. Lowly bending his head, he addressed them saying,⁹ “Be victorious, O moon-bright goddesses who by your radiance drive away all the miseries and evils and pains and pangs of life, and who by your sun-like beams dispel all my inward and outward darkness.”¹⁰ Saying so he poured handfuls of flowers on their feet, as trees on the banks of a lake drop down their flowers on the lotuses growing in it.

¹¹ Then the goddess, desiring to reveal the ancestry of the king, inspired his minister, who was lying nearby, to relate it to Leela.¹² Upon waking, the minister saw the nymphs manifested before him, and advancing humbly before them, threw handfuls of flowers upon their feet.¹³ The goddess said, “Let us know, O king, who you are and when and of whom you are born.”

Hearing these words of the goddess, the minister spoke saying,¹⁴ “It is by your favor, O gracious goddesses, that I am empowered to relate of my king’s ancestry to your kind graces.”

¹⁵ “There was a sovereign born of the imperial line of Ikshvaku named Mukundaratha, who had subjugated the earth under his arms.¹⁶ He had a moon-faced son by name of Bhadraratha, whose son Viswaratha was father to the renowned prince Brihadratha.¹⁷ His son Sindhuratha was the father of Sailaratha, and his son Kamaratha was father of Maharatha.¹⁸ His son Vishnuratha was father of Nabhoratha, who gave birth to this my lord of handsome appearance.”

¹⁹ “He is renowned as Viduratha and is born with the great virtues of his sire, as the moon was produced of the Milky Ocean to shed his ambrosial beams over his people.²⁰ He was begotten by his mother Sumitra like the god Guha of Gauri. He was installed king of the realm in the tenth year of his age, owing to his father taking himself to asceticism.²¹ He has been ruling the realm with justice since that time, and your appearance here tonight indicates the blossoming of his good fortune.”

²² “O goddesses, whose presence is hard to be had, even by the merit of long devotion and a hundred austeries, you see here present before you the lord of the earth, famed Viduratha.²³ He is highly

blessed today by your favor." After saying these words, the minister remained silent with the lord of the earth.

²⁴ They were sitting on the ground with folded legs, clasped hands and downcast looks when the goddess of wisdom, by her inspiration, told the king to remember his former births. ²⁵ So saying, she touched his head with her hand and immediately the dark veil of illusion and oblivion was dispersed from over the lotus of his mind. ²⁶ It opened like a blossom by the touch of the genius of consciousness and it became bright as the clear sky with the rays of his former memories. ²⁷ By his intelligence, he remembered his former kingdom, of which he had been the sole lord, and recollect all his past play with Leela. ²⁸ He was carried away by the thoughts of the events of his past lives, as one is carried away by the current of waves, and reflected in himself that this world is a magic sea of illusion.

²⁹ He said, "I have come to know this by the favor of the goddesses, but how is it that so many events have occurred to me in course of one day after my death? ³⁰ Here I have passed a lifetime full of seventy years and remember having done many works and having seen my grandson. ³¹ I recollect the bygone days of my boyhood and youth, and I remember well all the friends and relatives and all the clothes and attendants that I had before."

³² The goddess replied:—

Know O king that after the fit of unconsciousness attending your death was over, your soul continued to remain in the emptiness of the same place where you still reside. ³³ This royal pavilion, where you think yourself living, is situated in the empty space within the house of the brahmin in that hilly district. ³⁴ It is inside that house that you see the appearances of your other homes present before you, and it was in that brahmin's house that you devoted your life to my worship. ³⁵ It is the shrine within that same house and on the same spot that contains the whole world which you are now seeing all about you. ³⁶ This abode of yours is situated in that same place and within the clear firmament of your mind.

³⁷ It is a false notion of your mind, which you have gained by your habitual mode of thinking, that you are born in your present state of the race of Ikshvaku. ³⁸ Mere imagination has made you suppose yourself to be named so and so, and that such and such persons were your ancestors; that you had been a boy of ten years; ³⁹ that your father became an ascetic in the woods and left you governing the realm; that you have subjugated many countries under your dominion and are now reigning as the lord paramount over them; ⁴⁰ and that you are ruling on earth with these ministers and officers of yours, observing sacrificial rites and justly ruling your subjects.

⁴¹ You think that you have passed seventy years of your life and that you are now beset by very formidable enemies, ⁴² and that having waged a furious battle, you have returned to this tent of yours where you are now seated and intend to adore the goddesses who have become your guests here.

⁴³ You are thinking that these goddesses will bless you with your desired object, because one of them has given you the power of recollecting the events of your former births; ⁴⁴ that these goddesses have opened your understanding like the blossom of a lotus, and that you have the prospect of getting rid of all questions; ⁴⁵ that you are now at peace and rest, and enjoy the solace of your solitude; and that your long continued error (of this world) is now removed forever.

⁴⁶ You remember the many acts and pleasures of your past life in the body of King Padma before you were snatched away by the hand of death. ⁴⁷ You now perceive in your mind that your present life is only a shadow of the former, as it is the same wave that by its rise and fall carries one onward. ⁴⁸ The constant current of the mind flows like a river and leads a man, like a weed, from one whirlpool to another. ⁴⁹ The course of life now runs alone as in dreaming, and then accompanied by the body as in the waking state, both of which leave their traces in the mind at the hour of death.

⁵⁰ The sun of consciousness being hidden under the mist of ignorance, there arises a network of a false world which makes a moment appear like a hundred years. ⁵¹ Our lives and deaths are mere phantoms of imagination, just like we imagine houses and towers in aerial castles and icebergs. ⁵² The world is an illusion, like the delusion of moving banks and trees to a passenger in a vessel on water, or a rapid vehicle on land, or like the trembling of a mountain or quaking of the earth to one affected by a convulsive disease. ⁵³ As one sees extraordinary things in his dream, such as the decapitation of his own head, so he views the illusions of the world that can hardly be true.

⁵⁴ In reality you were neither born nor dead at anytime or any place, but ever remain as pure consciousness in the tranquility of your own soul. ⁵⁵ You seem to see all things about you, but you are seeing nothing real in them. Your all-seeing soul sees everything in itself. ⁵⁶ The soul shines by its own light like a brilliant gem. Nothing that appears beside it, whether this earth or yourself or anything else, is a reality.

⁵⁷ These hills and cities, these people and things, and ourselves also, are all unreal and mere phantoms, appearing in the hollow vault of the brahmin of the hilly district. ⁵⁸ The kingdom of Leela's husband was only a picture of this earth, and his palace with all its grandeur is contained within the sphere of the same hollow shrine. ⁵⁹ The known world is contained within the empty sphere of that shrine, and it is in one corner of this mundane house that all of us here are situated.

⁶⁰ The sphere of this vaulted shrine is as clear as emptiness itself, which has no earth or house in it.

⁶¹ It is without any forest, hill, sea or river, and yet all beings are found to rove about in this empty and homeless abode. ⁶² Here there are no kings, no royal retinue, and nothing else that kings have on earth.

Viduratha asked, "If it is so, then tell me goddess, how did I happen to have these dependants here?"

⁶³ A man is rich in his own mind and spirit. Is it not so ordained by Divine Mind and spirit? If not, then the world must appear as a mere dream, and all these men and things are only creatures of our dreams. ⁶⁴ Tell me goddess, what things are spiritually true and false? How are we to distinguish the one from the other?"

⁶⁵ Saraswati answered:—

Know prince that those who have known the only knowable One and are assimilated in the nature of pure understanding view nothing as real in the world except the empty consciousness within themselves. ⁶⁶ The misconception of the serpent in a rope being removed, the fallacy of the rope is removed also. The unreality of the world being known, the error of its existence also ceases to exist.

⁶⁷ Knowing the falsity of water in a mirage, no one thirsts after it anymore. Knowing the falsehood of dreams, no one thinks himself dead as he had dreamt. The fear of dreaming death may overtake the

dying, but it can never assail the living in his dream.

⁶⁸ He whose soul is enlightened with the clear light of his pure consciousness is never misled into believing his own existence, or that of others, by the false application of the terms “I”, “you”, “this” or the like.

Valmiki speaking:—

⁶⁹ As the sage was lecturing in this manner, the day departed to its evening service with the setting sun. The assembly broke with mutual greetings to perform their evening rituals, and it met again with the rising sun, after dispersion of the gloom of night.

Chapter 42 — Philosophy of Dreaming (*Swapnam*); Creation Is a Dream; Viduratha Asks a Boon to Be Reunited with His (Second) Queen Leela

Vasishta speaking:—

¹ The man who is devoid of understanding, ignorant and unacquainted with the all-pervading principle, thinks the unreal world as real, dense and concrete. ² Just like a child is not freed from his fear of ghosts until his death, so the ignorant man never gets rid of his fallacy of the reality of the unreal world as long as he lives. ³ Just like solar heat causes the error of water in the mirage to both deer and unwary people, so the unreal world appears as real to the ignorant part of mankind. ⁴ As the false dream of one's death appears to be true within the dreaming state, so the false world seems to be a field of action and gain to the deluded man. ⁵ Just like one, not knowing what is gold, sees a golden bracelet to be a mere bracelet and not gold, so the ignorant, without a knowledge of the causal substance, are ever misled by the appearances of form.

⁶ The ignorant see a city, a house, a hill and an elephant as they are presented before them, so appearances are all taken only as they are seen, and not what they really are. ⁷ As strings of pearls are seen in the sunny sky, and various paints and taints in the plumage of the peacock, so the phenomenal world presents its false appearances as sober realities. ⁸ Know life to be a long sleep, and the world with myself and yourself are the visions of its dream. We see many other persons in this sleepy dream. None is real, as you will now learn from me.

⁹ There is only one all-pervading, quiet, and spiritually substantial reality. It is of the form of unintelligible consciousness and an immense outspreading emptiness. ¹⁰ It is omnipotent, and all in all by itself. It is of the form manifesting itself everywhere. ¹¹ Hence the citizens that you see in this visionary city are only transient forms of men presented in your dream by that Omnipotent Being.

¹² The mind of the viewer remains the same in the sphere of his dreams and represents images thought of by itself in that visionary sphere of mankind. ¹³ The knowing mind has the same knowledge of things, both in its waking and dreaming states, and it is by an act of the perceiving mind that this knowledge is imprinted as true in the conscious souls of men.

¹⁴ Rama said, “If persons seen in the dream are unreal, then tell me sage, what is the fault in the embodied soul that makes them appear as realities?”

¹⁵ Vasishta replied:—

The cities and houses seen in dreams are nothing in reality. The illusion (*maya*) of the embodied soul makes them appear as true like those seen in the waking state in this ordinary world. ¹⁶ I will give you proof of this. In the beginning of creation and by the will of the creator, the self-born Brahma himself had notions of all created things in the form of visionary appearances, like in a dream, and their subsequent development. Therefore, their creator is as unreal as the notions and appearances in the dream.

¹⁷ Learn this truth from me, that this world is a dream and that you and all other men have your sleeping dreams contained in your waking dreams of this ordinary world. ¹⁸ If the scenes in your sleeping dream have no reality in them, how can you expect those in your daydreams to be real at all?

¹⁹ As you take me for a reality, so do I also take you and all other things for realities likewise, and such is the case with everybody in this world of dreams. ²⁰ As I appear an entity to you in this ordinary world of lengthened dreams, so you too appear an actual entity to me. So it is with all in their protracted dreaming.

²¹ Rama asked, "If both these states of dreaming are alike, then tell me. When the dreamer awakens, why doesn't he think the visions in his dream were as real as those of his daydreaming state?"

²² Vasishta replied:—

Yes, night dreaming is of the same nature as daydreams in that dream objects appear to be real in both. Upon a man's awakening from sleep, the night dreams vanish in empty air. Upon a man's death, his daydreams vanish in empty air. ²³ As the objects of your night dreams do not exist in time or place upon your waking, so also those of your daydream can have no existence upon death. ²⁴ Thus everything that appears real for the present is unreal, and though it might appear as charming as a fairy form in a dream, at last it all disappears into an airy nothing.

²⁵ There is one Consciousness that fills all space. It appears as everything both within and without everybody. It is only by our illusive conception of it that we take it in different lights. ²⁶ As one picks up a jewel he happens to see in a treasure house, so according to our own liking, we lay hold on anything with which the vast Consciousness is filled.

²⁷ The goddess of intelligence, having caused the germ of true knowledge to sprout forth in the mind of the king by sprinkling the ambrosial drops of her wisdom over it, spoke to the king in this way at the end, ²⁸ "I have told you all this for the sake of Leela, and now, good king, we shall take leave of you and these illusory scenes of the world."

²⁹ Vasishta said:—

The intelligent king, being gently addressed by the goddess of wisdom, asked her in a humble tone. ³⁰ Viduratha said, "Your visit, O most bounteous goddess, cannot go for nothing, if when we poor mortals cannot withhold our bounty from those who petition us for help. ³¹ I will quit this body to go to another world, as one passes from one chain of dreams into another. ³² Look upon me, your petitioner, with kindness and grant me the favor I ask of you, because the great never refuse to grant the prayers of their suppliants. ³³ Grant that this virgin daughter of my minister may accompany me to the region where I shall be led so that we may have spiritual joy in each other's company hereafter."

³⁴ Saraswati said, "Go now, king, to the former palace of your past life and there reign without fear in the enjoyment of true pleasure. Know king that our visits never fail to fulfill the best wishes of our supplicants."

Chapter 43 — The City Burning

¹ The goddess added, "Know further, O king, that you are destined to fall in this great battle and that will have your former realm presented to you in the same manner as before. ² Your minister and his maiden daughter will accompany you to your former city and you shall enter your lifeless corpse lying in state in the palace. ³ We shall fly there like the wind before you, and you will follow us accompanied by the minister and his virgin daughter like one returning to his native country. ⁴ Your way there will be as slow or swift as those of horses, elephants, asses, or camels, but our course is quite different from any of these."

Vasishta speaking:—

⁵ As the king and the goddess were going on with this sweet conversation, a man on horseback arrived before them in great hurry and confusion. ⁶ He said, "Lord! I come to tell that the enemy is showering darts and discs, swords and clubs upon us like rain, and they have been pressing upon us like a flood on all sides. ⁷ They have been raining their heavy weapons upon us at pleasure, like the impetuous gusts of a hurricane hurls down fragments of rocks from the heads of high hills. ⁸ There they have set fire to our fortress-like city and fires are burning on all sides like a wildfire. It is burning and engulfing houses with a hideous noise. ⁹ The smoke, rising like heaving hills, have covered the skies like a flood of clouds, and the flames of the fire leaping high resemble a garuda bird flying in the sky."

¹⁰ Vasishta said:—

As the royal marshal was delivering this unpleasant intelligence with trepidation, there arose a loud cry from outside that filled the sky with its uproar: ¹¹ the twanging of bow strings drawn to the ears, the rustling of flying arrows flung with full force; the loud roaring of furious elephants, and the shrieks of frightened ones; ¹² gorgeous elephants bursting into the city with a clattering sound; and the high loud shouts of citizens, whose houses have burnt to the ground; ¹³ the falling and flying of burnt embers with a crackling noise; and the burning of raging fire with a hoarse sound. ¹⁴ All these were heard and seen by the goddesses and the king and his minister from an opening of the tent. The city was ablaze in the darkness of the night.

¹⁵ It was as like the conflagration or fiery ocean of the last day. The city was covered by clouds of the enemy army, with their flashing weapons waving on all sides. ¹⁶ The flames rose as high as the sky, and the all dissolving fire of destruction melted buildings as big as hills. ¹⁷ Bodies of thick clouds roared on high and threatened the people, like the clamor of stout robber gangs gathered for plunder and booty. ¹⁸ The heavens were hidden under clouds of smoke rolling like the shades of Pushkara and Avarta coulds at the end of the world, and the flames of fire flashed like the golden peaks of Meru. ¹⁹ Burning cinders and sparks of fire glittered in the sky like meteors and stars, and the blazing houses and towers glared like burning mountains.

²⁰ Groups of soldiers were attacked by the spreading flames that trapped half-burnt citizens (with their bitter cries) between clouds of fire and their fear of the enemy outside. ²¹ Sheets of arrow-like sparks flew in the air on all sides, and showers of burning missiles fell everywhere, burning and piercing people in large numbers.

²² The greatest and most expert champions fought but were crushed under the feet of elephants. Streets were heaped with treasures wrested from looters in their retreat. ²³ Men and women wailed at the falling of fire-brands upon them, and the splitting of splinters and the slitting of timbers emitted a crack-crack noise all around. ²⁴ Big blocks of burning wood were blown up, blazing in the air like burning suns, and heaps of embers filled the face of the earth with living fire. ²⁵ The air echoed with the cracking of combustible wood and the bursting of burning bamboo, the cries of parched animals and the howling of soldiers.

²⁶ The flaming fire was quenched after consuming the royal city to ashes, and the devouring flames ceased after they had reduced everything to cinders. ²⁷ The sudden outbreak of fire was like burglars breaking in to a house and upon its sleeping inhabitants. It made prey of everything that fell in its way.

²⁸ At this moment King Viduratha heard a voice from his soldiers who saw wives fleeing from the scorching flames. ²⁹ “O, the high winds that have blown flames to the tops of our houses with their rustling sound and that have hindered our taking shelter under cooling protection. ³⁰ Sorrow for the burning of our wives, who (by pacifying the smart of every pain) were as cold as frost to our bodies before, and whose ashes now rest in our breasts like the lime from burnt shells. ³¹ O! the mighty power of fire that has burned the hair of our fair maidens like blades of grass or straw. ³² Curling smoke is ascending on high, like a whirling and long meandering river in the air, and black and white fumes of fire resemble the dark stream of Yamuna in one place, and the milky path of the ethereal Ganga in another. ³³ Streams of smoke bearing the sparks on high dazzle the sight of heavenly charioteers with their bubbling sparks. ³⁴ Our fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, relations and suckling babes are all burnt alive in the black and blue flames. Here are we burning with grief for them in these houses that have been spared by the devouring fire. ³⁵ See, there the howling fire is fast advancing to those houses, and here the cinders are falling as thick as the frost of Mount Meru. ³⁶ Behold the dire darts and missiles dropping down like driving rain, breaking windows like bodies of gnats in the shade of evening.”

³⁷ “Flashing spears and fire flaring above the watery ocean of the sky resemble an undersea fire ascending to heaven. ³⁸ Smoke is rising in clouds, and flames are tapering in the form of towers, and all that was humid and green is sucked and dried up like the hearts of the dispassionate. ³⁹ Trees are broken down by the raging fire, like posts by enraged elephants. They are falling with a cracking noise as if they were screaming at their own fall. ⁴⁰ Trees in the orchards, now flourishing in their luxury of fruits and flowers, are left bare by the burning fire, like householders bereft of their properties. ⁴¹ Children abandoned by their parents in the darkness of the night, fleeing through the streets, are either being pierced by flying arrows or crushed under falling houses. ⁴² Elephants posted at the front of the army were frightened by the flying embers driven by the winds, and fled with loud screaming at the fall of the burning houses upon them. ⁴³ O, the pain of being put to the sword is no more terrible than being burned by fire, or smashed under the stones of a thundering engine. ⁴⁴ Streets are filled with domestic animals and cattle of all kinds, let loose from their folds and stalls to raise their commingled cries in the blocked streets like the confused noise of battle.”

⁴⁵ “Weeping women passed like lotus flowers on land, with their lotus-like faces, feet and palms. Drops of tears fell upon the ground like fluttering bees from their lotus-shaped eyes and wet apparel.

⁴⁶ The red taints and spots of the hair-clusters upon their foreheads and cheeks burned like Asoka flowers. ⁴⁷ Alas, for pity that the furious flame of fire, like a ruthless victor who delights in acts of inhumanity, should singe the black lined, bee-like eyelids of our deer-eyed fairies. ⁴⁸ O, the bond of marriage love that the faithful wife never fails to follow her burning lord, and cremates herself in the same flame with him.”

⁴⁹ “The elephant, burned on his trunk from breaking the burning post to which he was tied by the leg, ran violently to a lake of lotuses, in which he fell dead. ⁵⁰ The flames of fire, flashing like flitting lightning amidst clouds of smoke, darted burning coals like bolts of thunder in showers. ⁵¹ Lord! The sparks of fire against the dusky clouds appeared like glittering gems in the bosom of the airy ocean, and seem by their twirling to gird the crown of heaven with the girdle of the Pleiades. ⁵² The sky was reddened by the light of flaming fires and appeared like the courtyard of Death dyed with purple colors in joy for reception of the souls of the dead.”

⁵³ “Alas the day and want of manners that royal dames are forcibly carried away by these armed ruffians. ⁵⁴ See them dragged from their stately building and in the streets, strewing their paths with wreaths of flowers torn from their necks while their half burnt locks are hanging loosely upon their bare breasts; ⁵⁵ their loose clothing uncovering their backs and loins, and jewelry dropped from their wrists are strewn on the ground. ⁵⁶ Their necklaces are torn and their pearls scattered about. Their bodies are bared of their bodices, and their golden colored breasts appear to view. ⁵⁷ Their shrill cries and groans, rising above the war cry, choke their breath and split their sides. They fall unconscious, eyes dimmed by ceaseless floods of tears. ⁵⁸ They fell in a body with their arms twisted about each other’s necks, the ends of their cloths tied to each other’s. In this way they are forcibly dragged ruffians, their bodies mangled in blood. ⁵⁹ ‘Ah! who will save them from this state?’ cried the royal soldiers with piteous looks on the sad plight of the women and shedding big drops of tears like lotuses.”

⁶⁰ The bright face of the sky turned black at the horrible sight, and it looked with its blue lotus-like eyes of clouds on the fair lotus-like maidens thus scattered on the ground. ⁶¹ Thus, like these ladies, the goddess of royal prosperity, decorated as she was with her waving and pendant locks, her flowing garments, flowery garlands and ornamental jewelry, was brought to her end after her enjoyment of the pleasures of royalty and gratification of all her desires.

Chapter 44 — Enlightened Leela Sees Viduratha's Queen Leela; Habits of the Mind Reproduce the Same Images

¹ Vasishta said:—

At this instant the great queen, who was in the bloom of youthful beauty, entered Viduratha's camp like the goddess of grace pops upon the lotus flower.² She was decorated with hanging wreaths of flowers and necklaces, and accompanied by a train of her youthful companions and handmaids, all terrified with fear.³ With her face as bright as the moon and her form as fair as the lily, she appeared like a star of heaven, her teeth shining like sets of stars and her bosom throbbing with fear.

⁴ Then one of her companions informed the king about the fate of the warfare, which resembled the onset of demons upon the apsara tribe.⁵ "Lord!" she said, "This lady has fled with us from her harem to take refuge under your arms, like a tender vine seeks the shelter of a tree from a rude gust of wind.

⁶ See the ravishers ravishing the wives of citizens with their uplifted arms, like the swelling waves of the sea in their rapid current carrying away the tree groves from the bank.⁷ The guards of the royal harem are all crushed to death by the haughty marauders, as the sturdy trees of the forest are broken down by the furious tornado.⁸ Our armies, frightened by the enemy from afar, dare not approach the falling city, as nobody ventures to rescue lotus beds from a flood under the threatening thunders of a rainy night.⁹ Hostile forces have poured into the city in terrible numbers and, having set it on fire, are shouting loudly under the clouds of smoke, their weapons brandished on all sides.¹⁰ Handsome ladies are dragged by the hair from their families like screaming cranes caught and carried away by cruel fowlers and fishermen.¹¹ Now we have brought this luxurious tender creeper to you so that your might may save her from similar fate."

¹² Hearing this, he looked at the goddesses and said, "Now, I will go from here to war and leave this my lady as a humble bee at your lotus feet."¹³ Saying so, the king rose in a rage from his seat and sprang like an enraged lion when pierced and pressed by the tusk of a furious elephant.

¹⁴ The widowed Leela saw the queen Leela to be exactly of her form and features, and took her for a true reflection of herself in a mirror.¹⁵ Then the enlightened Leela said to Saraswati, "Tell me, O goddess, how can this lady be exactly like myself? She is what I have been before. How did she come to be like me?"

¹⁶ "I see this prime minister with all these soldiers and citizens, these forces and vehicles, all to be the same as mine, and situated in the same place and manner as before.¹⁷ How is it then, O goddess, that they came to be placed in this place? I see them as images placed within and outside the mirror of my mind, and know not whether these are living beings (or my imagination)."

¹⁸ Saraswati replied:—

All our external perceptions of things are the immediate effects of our internal conceptions of them. The intellect has the knowledge of all that can be perceived in it, just like the mind has the impressions of mental objects in itself.¹⁹ The external world appears in an instant in the same form and manner to one who has its notion and impression in his intellect and mind, and no distance of time or place or any intermediate cause can create any difference in them.²⁰ The inner world is seen on the outside, like the internal impressions of our minds appear to be seen outside us in our dreams.

Whatever is within, the same appears without, as with our dreams and desires and in all our imaginations and fancies of objects.

²¹ It is the constant habit of your mind that presents these things as realities to your sight. You saw your husband in the same state in which you thought he was when he died in that city of yours. ²² It is the same place where he now exists. Even now he is presented with the same objects of his thought as he had at that moment. Anything that appears to be different in this state comes from the turn of his mind of thinking it so before. ²³ All that appears real to him is the creation of his fancy and is as unreal as his dream or desire; for everything appears to be the same as it is thought of in the mind.

²⁴ Say therefore, what truth can there be in these envisioned objects which are unsubstantial as dreams and in the end vanish into airy nothing? ²⁵ Then know that everything is no better than nothing and, like a dream, proves to be nothing upon waking. Waking is also a dream and equally nothing at death.

²⁶ Death in lifetime is a non-existence and life in death becomes null and extinct. These extinctions of life and death proceed from the fluctuating nature of our notions of them.

²⁷ So there is neither any entity nor a non-entity either. Both appear to us by turns as fallacies. For what after an kalpa aeon neither was nor will be cannot exist today or in any epoch (*yuga*), whether gone before or coming afterwards. ²⁸ That which is never non-existent is the ever existent Brahman, and That is the world. It is in Him that we see everything rise and fall by our fallacy, and what we falsely term as the creation or the created.

²⁹ As phantoms appear in the emptiness, are all vacant and void, and as the waves of the sea are nothing but its water so do these created things exist and appear in Brahman only. ³⁰ As the minutiae appearing in the air vanish in the air, and as the dust driven by the winds is lost in the winds, so the false notions of yourself and myself are lost in that Supreme Self in which all things rise and fall like waves of the ocean.

³¹ What reliance can there be in this dust of creation which is no more than the water of the mirage? When everything is united in that sole Unity, the knowledge of individualities is mere fallacy. ³² We see apparitions in the dark, though the darkness itself is no apparition. Our lives and deaths are the false notions of our error, and the entirety of existence is equally the production of gross error (*maya*). ³³ All this is Himself, for He is the great kalpa or will that produces everything. It is He who exists when all things are extinct in Him. Therefore these appearances are neither real nor unreal of themselves.

³⁴ But to say both real and unreal are Brahman is a contradiction. Therefore it is He who fills the infinity of space and abides equally in all things and their minutest particles. ³⁵ Wherever the spirit of Brahman abides, and even in the most minute living particle, It views the whole world in Itself, like one thinking on heat and cold of fire and frost has the same sensation within himself at that moment.

³⁶ So does the pure Consciousness perceive the Holy Spirit of God within itself, just like one sees particles of light flying in his closet at sunrise. ³⁷ So these multitudes of worlds move about like particles in the infinite space of the Divine Mind, as the particles of odorous substances oscillate in empty air. ³⁸ In this way this world abides in its incorporeal state in the mind of God, with all its modifications of existence and nonexistence, emanation and absorption, its condensation into dense and diffusion into subtle, and its movement and rest.

³⁹ But you must know all these modes and conditions of being belong only to material and not to the spirit, which is unconditioned and indivisible. ⁴⁰ There is no change or division of one's own soul, so there is no partition or variation of the Supreme Spirit. It is according to ideas in our minds that we see things in their different aspects before us.

⁴¹ Yet the word "world" (*vishva*) is not a meaningless term. It means the all as contained in Brahman. Therefore it is both real and unreal at the same time, like the fallacy of a snake in a rope. ⁴² It is the false notion (of the snake) that makes the true (rope) appear like the untrue snake to us, which we are apt to take for the true snake itself. So in the same way we make the mistake of taking Divine Consciousness, which is the prime cause of all, to be an individual soul. ⁴³ It is this notion (of the individual soul) that makes us think of ourselves as living beings which, whether it be false or true, is like the appearance of the world in empty air.

⁴⁴ Thus these little animals delight themselves with their own misconceived idea of being living beings, while there are others who think themselves so by their preconceived notions as such.

⁴⁵ There are some who have no preconceived notions, and others who retain the same as or a somewhat different notion of themselves than before. Somewhere inborn notions predominate, and sometimes they are entirely lost. ⁴⁶ Our preconceived notions of ourselves represent unrealities as realities to our minds, and present the thoughts of our former family and birth and the same occupations and professions before us.

⁴⁷ Such are the representations of your former ministers and citizens, imprinted as realities in your soul, together with the exact time and place and manner of their functions, as before. ⁴⁸ Because the consciousness of all things is present in the omniscient spirit of God, so the idea of royalty is inherent in the soul of the king. ⁴⁹ This notion of his goes before him like his shadow in the air, with the same stature and features and the same acts and movements as he had before.

⁵⁰ In this manner, Leela, know this world is only a shadowy reflection of the eternal ideas of God, and that this reflection is caught by or refracted in the consciousness of all animal souls like in a prismatic mirror. ⁵¹ Everything shows itself in every place in the form in which it is. So whatever is in the individual soul casts out a reflection of itself, and a shadow of it is caught by the intellect that is situated outside it.

⁵² Here is the sky containing the world in which you and I and this prince are situated like reflections of the One Ego only. Know all these are contained within the empty womb of Consciousness and remain as tranquil and transparent as emptiness itself.

Chapter 45 — The Second Leela Gets a Boon the First Didn't: How We Seek Is How We Obtain

¹ Saraswati continued:—

Know Leela, that this Viduratha, your husband, will lose his life in this battlefield and his soul will return to the tomb in the inner apartment where it will resume its former state.

Vasishta:—

² Upon hearing these words of the goddess, the second Leela, who was standing by, bent herself lowly before the goddess and addressed her with her folded palms. ³ The second Leela said, “Goddess! the genius of intelligence is ever adored by me and she gives me her visits in my nightly dreams. ⁴ I find you here exactly of her likeness. Therefore give me your blessing, O goddess with the beautiful face.”

⁵ Vasishta said:—

The goddess, being addressed by the lady in this way, remembered her faith and reliance in her, then politely spoke to the lady standing as a suppliant before her. ⁶ The goddess said, “I am pleased, my child, with your unfailing and undiminished adoration of me all your lifetime. Now say what you want of me.”

⁷ The second Leela said, “Ordain O goddess, that with this body of mine I may accompany my husband to whatever place he is destined to go after his death in the war.”

⁸ The goddess replied, “Be it so my child who has worshipped me with flowers, incense and offerings with all diligence and without fail.”

⁹ Vasishta said:—

The second Leela was cheered by this blessing of the goddess. The first Leela was much puzzled in her mind at the difference between their states. ¹⁰ The first Leela said, “Those who desire truth and they whose desires lean towards godliness have all their wishes fulfilled without delay and fail.

¹¹ Then tell me, goddess, why could I not keep company with my brahmin husband with my body of the brahmani, but had to be taken to him in the mountain home after my death.”

¹² The goddess answered saying:—

Know, O excellent lady, that I have no power to do anything. Everything happens according to the desire of the living being. ¹³ Know me only as the presiding divinity of wisdom, and I reveal everything according to my knowledge of it. It is by virtue of the intellectual powers exhibited in every being that it attains its particular end. ¹⁴ A living being has a certain development of mental powers and state when he desires an object. He attains that object according to the same development of mental powers and state.

¹⁵ You had attained the powers of your understanding by your devotion to my service. You have always desired from me that you be liberated from flesh. ¹⁶ Accordingly, I have awakened your understanding in that way, whereby you have been able to arrive at your present state of purity. ¹⁷ It was because of your constant desire for liberation that you have gained the same state by enlargement (of the powers) of your consciousness.

¹⁸ Whoever exerts his bodily powers according to the dictates of his understanding is sure to succeed in gaining his object sooner or later. ¹⁹ Without cultivation of the intellect, performance of austerities and adoration of gods are as vain as to expect fruit to fall from the sky. ²⁰ Without cultivation of the intellect and exertion of manly powers, there is no way to success. Therefore if you do, you may choose for yourself.

²¹ Truly the state of one's mind leads his internal soul to that state upon which it thinks, and to that prosperity which it attempts to obtain. ²² Now distinguish between what is desirable or disagreeable for you, and choose that which is holy and perfect, and you will certainly arrive at it.

Chapter 46 — Viduratha Counter-Attacks

¹ Rama said, “Tell me what Viduratha did after he got angry and left the ladies and the goddess having said what he did, and went out from the camp.”

² Vasishta said:—

Viduratha, accompanied by a large group of his companions, left his camp like the bright moon beset by a host of stars.³ He was in armor and girt by laces and girdles. Dressed in his military clothing, he went forth amidst the loud war cry of sorrow to the vanquished, like God Indra going to battle.⁴ He gave orders to the soldiers and was informed of the battle array.

Having given directions to his captains, he mounted his chariot.⁵ It was adorned with equipment resembling the pinnacles of mountains and beset by five flags fringed with strings of pearls and gems, resembling a celestial car.⁶ The iron hoops of its wheels flashed with their golden pegs, and the long and beautiful shaft of the car, rang with the tinkling of pearls which were suspended to it.⁷ It was drawn by long necked, swift and slender horses of the best breed and auspicious marks. Their swiftness and bearing made them seem like they were flying in the air pulling a heavenly car with some god in it.⁸ Impatient of the wind’s swiftness, they spurred them with their back heels and left them behind, and sped the forepart of their bodies as if to devour the air, impeding their course.⁹ The car was drawn by eight war horses with their manes hanging down their necks like fans, and white spots or circlets resembling the discs of moon on their foreheads, and filling the eight sides around with their hoarse neighing.

¹⁰ At this time there rose a loud noise of the elephants, resounding like drums from the hollows of the distant hills.¹¹ Angry soldiers raised a loud clamor, and the tinkling of their belted trinkets, and clashing of their weapons, rang afar in the open air.¹² The crackling of bows, and the wheezing of arrows, joined with the jangle of armor clashing against one another, raised a confused hubbub all around.¹³ Seen and heard on all sides were the sparks of blazing fires, champions challenging each other, painful shrieks of the wounded, and the piteous cry of captives.¹⁴ The mingled sounds thickened in the air and filled its cavity and sides like with solid stones, as if one could clutch the noise in the hands.

¹⁵ Clouds of dust flew so fast and thick into the air that they seemed to be the earth’s crust rising upward to block the path of the sun in the sky.¹⁶ The great city was hidden in the dark womb of the spreading dust, just like an ignorant state of man is covered in darkness by the rising passion of youth.

¹⁷ Burning lights became as dim as the fading stars of heaven by day light, and the darkness of night became as thick as the devils of darkness gather their strength at night.

¹⁸ The two Leelas saw the great battle from the tent with the minister’s virgin daughter. By favor of the goddess, they had their eyes enlightened with farsightedness.

¹⁹ Now there was an end to the flashing and clashing of the hostile arms in the city, just like the flash and crash of undersea fires are put to an end by the all-submerging floods of the universal deluge.

²⁰ Viduratha collected his forces and, without considering the enemy’s superiority, pressed himself forward into them, as the great Mount Meru rushed into the waters of the great deluge.²¹ Now the twanging of the bow strings emitted a clattering sound, and the enemy forces advanced in battle array

like bodies of clouds with rainbows amidst them.²² Many kinds of missiles flew like falcons in the air. Black steel waved with a dark glare owing to the massacres they made.²³ Clashing swords striking against each another flashed with living flames of fire, and showers of arrows whistled like hissing rainfalls in the air.²⁴ Two edged saws pierced the bodies of the warriors, and the flinging weapons hurtled in the air, clashing and crashing each other.²⁵ The darkness of the night was put to flight by the blaze of the weapons. The entire army was pierced by arrows sticking like hairs on their bodies.²⁶ Headless trunks moved about like players in a horrid, solemn ritual of the god of death (Yama). Furies fled about at the violence of war, like raving girls at drunken revelries.²⁷ Elephants fighting with their tusks sent a clattering noise into the air. Stones flung from the slings flew like a flowing stream in the sky.²⁸ Bodies of men were falling dead on the ground like the dried leaves of forests blown away by wind. Streams of blood were running in the field of battle, as if the heights of war were pouring down the floods of death below.²⁹ The dust of the earth was set down by the floods of blood, and the darkness was dispelled by the blaze of weapons.

All clamor ceased in intense fighting, and the fear for life was lost under the stern resolution of death.³⁰ The fighting was stern without a cry or noise, like the pouring of rain in a breezeless sky. The glitter of swords in the darkened air was like the flashes of forked lightning in murky clouds.³¹ Darts were flying about with a hissing noise. Crowbars hit one another with a harsh sound. Large weapons struck each another with a jarring noise. The dreadful war raged direfully in the dim darkness of the night.

Chapter 47 — Saraswati Explains Why Sindhu Will Win; the Encounter of Sindhu & Viduratha

¹ Vasishta said:—

As the war was waging furiously between the two armies, the two Leelas addressed the goddess of knowledge and said, ² “Tell us, O goddess, what unknown cause keeps our husband from gaining victory in this war, in spite of your good grace to him and his repelling enemy elephants in the fighting.”

³ Saraswati replied:—

Know daughters that I was asked by Viduratha’s enemy to give him victory in battle, which your husband never craved of me. ⁴ He lives and enjoys his life as it was desired by him, while his antagonist gains the conquest according to his aim and object. ⁵ Knowledge is contained in the consciousness of every living being, and rewards every one according to the desire to which it is directed.

⁶ My nature, like that of all things, is as unchangeable as the heat of fire. So the nature of Viduratha’s knowledge of truth and his desire for liberation lead him to the like result. ⁷ The intelligent Leela will also be liberated with him, but not the unintelligent one who by her nature is still unprepared for that highest state of bliss.

⁸ Viduratha’s enemy, the King of Sindhu, has long worshipped me for his victory in war. Therefore the bodies of Viduratha and his wife must fall into his hands. ⁹ O girl, you will also have liberation like hers in course of time. But before that, this enemy of yours, the King of Sindhu, will reign victorious in this earth.

¹⁰ Vasishta said:—

As the goddess was speaking in this manner, the sun appeared on his rising hill to behold the wonderful sight of the forces fighting. ¹¹ The thick mists of night disappeared like the enemy Sindhu hosts and left Viduratha’s forces to glitter like stars at the approach of night. ¹² The hills and dales and the land and water gradually appeared to sight, and the world seemed to reappear to view from amidst the dark ocean of the deluge. ¹³ The bright rays of the rising sun radiated on all sides like streams of liquid gold and made the hills appear as they did the bodies of warriors besmeared with blood.

¹⁴ The sky seemed like an immense field of battle, stretched over by the radiant rays of the sun that made the warriors’ shining arms shake in a snake-like manner. ¹⁵ The helmets on their heads raised their lotus-like tops, and the rings about their ears blazed with their jeweled glare. ¹⁶ The pointed weapons were as fixed as the snouts of unicorns, and the flying darts fled about like butterflies in the air. The bloody field presented a picture of a ruddy dawn and dusk, and the dead bodies on the ground represented the figures of motionless saints in their yoga. ¹⁷ Necklaces hung on their necks like snakes, and armor covered their bodies like the skins of serpents. Flags were flying like crests of vines on high, and the legs of warriors stood like pillars in the field. ¹⁸ Their long arms were like tree branches, and the arrows formed a bush of reeds. The flash of weapons spread like a green meadow all around, while their blades blazed with the luster of the long-leaved ketaka flowers. ¹⁹ The long

lines of weapons formed like rows of bamboo and bramble bushes. Their mutual clashing emitted sparks of fire like clusters of the red asoka flowers.

²⁰ Bands of spiritual masters (*siddhas*) were flying with their leaders away in the air to avoid the weapons that were blazing with the radiance of the rising sun, forming as it were, a city of gold on high. ²¹ The sky re-echoed to the clashing of darts and discuses, of swords and spears, and of mallets and clubs in the field, and the ground overflowed with streams of blood bearing away the bodies of the slain. ²² The land was strewn with crowbars, lances and spears, and with tridents and stones on all sides. Headless bodies were falling hideously, pierced by poles and pikes and other instruments of death.

²³ Above, the ghosts and demons of death were making horrible noise, and below, the shining chariots of Sindhu and Viduratha moved with a loud rumbling. ²⁴ They looked like the two luminaries of the sun and moon in heaven, and they were equipped with various weapons of discs and rods, of crowbars and spears, and other missiles besides. ²⁵ Each was surrounded by thousands of soldiers who shouted loudly as their king turned towards them.

²⁶ Crushed under heavy discs, many fell dead and wounded with loud cries. Big elephants were floating lightly on the currents of blood. ²⁷ Hairs on the heads of dead bodies floated like weeds in the stream of blood, and the floating discuses glided like the discs of the moon, reflected in the purple streamlet. ²⁸ The air of the battlefield was filled the confused noise of the jingling of jeweled ornaments, the tinkling bells of war carriages, and the flapping of flags in the wind. ²⁹ Numbers of valiant as well as dastardly soldiers followed their respective kings, some bleeding under the spears of Kuntas and others pierced by the arrows of archers.

³⁰ Then the two kings turned their chariots in circling rings amidst phalanxes armed with all sorts of destructive weapons. ³¹ Each confronted the other with his arms, and having met one another face to face, commenced showering forth his arrows with the pattering sound of hailstones. ³² They both threatened one another with the roaring of loud surges and clouds. In their rage, the two lions among men fired their arrows at each other. ³³ They flung their missiles in the air in the form of stones and malls, and some faced like swords, and others headed as mallets. ³⁴ Some were sharp edged discs, and some curved as battle axes. Some were pointed like pikes and spears, and others had forms like bars and rods. Some were shaped like tridents, and others as bulky as blocks of stones.

³⁵ These missiles were falling as fully and as fast as rocks hurled down from high by gusts of blustering hurricanes. The meeting of the two warring powers was as the confluence of the Indus and the sea, with tremendous roaring, collision and clashing.

Chapter 48 — Supernatural Weapons

¹ Vasishta said:—

King Viduratha, finding the high shouldered king of Sindhu before him, was enraged like the raging sun, in his midday fury. ² The twanging of his bow resounded in the air on all sides, and growled as loudly as the howling of winds in the caverns of mountains. ³ He drew his arrows from his dark quiver and shot them like the rays of the sun rising from the womb of night. ⁴ Each arrow flung from the bowstring flew like thousands in the air, and fell like millions on the ground. ⁵ The King of Sindhu was equally expert in his archery, as both of these archers owed their skill with bows to the favor of Vishnu.

⁶ Some of these darts were called bolts which blocked the aerial passages, like door bolts do their doors, the fell down on the ground with the loud roar of thunderbolts. ⁷ Others decorated with gold flew hissing as if blown by the winds, and after shining like stars in the sky, fell like blazing meteors on the ground. ⁸ Showers of shafts poured forth constantly from the hands of Viduratha, like the ceaseless torrents of rivers, or billows of the sea, or the endless radiation of solar rays. ⁹ Shells and bullets were flying about like sparks of fire struck out of the balls of red-hot iron, and falling like flowers of forests blown away by gusts of wind. ¹⁰ They fell like showers of rainwater, and like the rush of water-falls, and as plentifully as the sparks of fire that flew from Viduratha's burning city. ¹¹ The jarring sound of their bowstrings hushed the clamor of the two armies, like a calm quiets the roaring of the raging sea. ¹² The course of arrows, was as the stream of Ganges (the milky path) in heaven, running towards the King of Sindhu, as the river runs to meet the sea (Sindhu). ¹³ The shower of arrows flying from the golden bow of the king was like a flood of rain falling under the variegated rainbow in the sky.

¹⁴ Then from the window, the Leela who was the native of that city saw the darts of her husband rushing like the currents of the Ganges against the Sindhu forces resembling a sea. ¹⁵ She understood the flight of those darts to promise victory to her lord, and then spoke gladly to Saraswati, with her lotus-like mouth. ¹⁶ “Be victorious O goddess, and behold victory waiting on the side of my lord whose darts are piercing the rocks and breaking them to pieces.” ¹⁷ As she was uttering these words full of affection, the goddesses eyed her sideways and smiled at her womanish tenderness of heart.

¹⁸ The flaming fire of Sindhu swallowed the raging sea of Viduratha's arrows like an undersea fire consumes water, and like Jahnu drank the stream of Ganges. ¹⁹ The Sindhu missile weapons thwarted the thickening arrows of his adversary, and drove them back broken and flying as dust in the empty air. ²⁰ As an extinguished lamp loses its light in the air, so the flashes of the fire arms disappeared in the sky, and nobody knew where they fled.

²¹ Having thus dispelled the shower of arrows, the Sindhu king sent a thick cloud of his weapons, appearing as hundreds of dead bodies flying in the air. ²² Viduratha repelled them quickly by means of his better bolts, as a hurricane disperses the frightening clouds in the air. ²³ Both kings, baffled in their aims by opposing arms let indiscriminately loose against each another, laid hold on more powerful missiles.

²⁴ Sindhu let fly his magic missile that was gift from a gandharva. It kept the army of his enemy all

spell-bound except Viduratha himself.²⁵ Struck with this weapon, the soldiers became as mute as moonstruck, staring in their looks, and appearing as dead bodies or as pictures in a painting.²⁶ As the soldiers of Viduratha remained spellbound within their files, King Viduratha employed his instruments of a counter-charm to remove the spell.²⁷ This awakened the senses of his men like morning twilight reveals a bed of lotuses, and the rising sun opens their closed petals to light.

The Sindhu king fired his rage at them like the raging.²⁸ He flung his serpentine weapons upon them, which bound like a band around all their bodies, encircling the battle ground and air like snakes wrapped round crags and rocks.²⁹ The ground was filled with snakes like a lake with the spreading stalks of lotuses, and the bodies of gigantic warriors were bound by them like hills by huge and horrible hydras.³⁰ Everything was overpowered by the sharp power of the poison, and the inhabitants of the hills and forests were benumbed by the venomous infection.³¹ The smart poison spread a fiery heat all around, and the frozen snows like fire-brands sent forth their burning particles which were blown by the hot winds in the air.

³² The fully armed Viduratha, equally skilled in arms, then had recourse to his garuda (divine eagle) anti-serpent weapons. They fired like mountain eagles to all sides.³³ Their golden wings spread in the sky on all sides, and embroidered the air with purple gold. The flapping of their wings wheezed like a breeze that blew the poisonous vapor far away into the air.³⁴ It made the snakes breathe out of their nostrils with a hissing, resembling the gurgling of waters in a whirlpool in the sea.³⁵ The flying garuda weapons devoured the land-creeping serpents with a whistling noise, like that of the waters being sucked up by Agastya.³⁶ The face of the ground, delivered from its covering of these reptiles, again appeared to view like the surface of the earth reappears to light after its deliverance from the waters of the deluge.³⁷ Afterwards the army of garudas disappeared from sight like a line of lamps put out by the wind, and like an assembly of clouds vanishes in autumn.³⁸ They fled like flying mountains fearing the bolts of thundering Indra, and vanished like the impermanent world seen in a dream, or as like a castle in the sky built by fancy.

³⁹ Then King Sindhu shot his shots of dark smoke that darkened the scene like the dark cave under the ground.⁴⁰ It hid the face of the earth and sky like flood waters reaching to the sky's face. It made the army appear like a shoal of fishes, and the stars like gems shining in the deep.⁴¹ The spreading darkness appeared like a sea of ink or dark mud, or like the particles of Anjana Hill blown by the breeze over the face of nature.⁴² All beings seemed to be immersed in the sea or darkness, and to lose their energies as in the deep gloom of midnight.

⁴³ Viduratha the best of the most skilful in ballistics, fired his sun-bright shot which like the sun illumined the vault of the sky.⁴⁴ It rose high amidst the spreading darkness like the sun with his effulgent beams, and dispelled the shades of darkness, as autumn does the rainy clouds.⁴⁵ The sky being cleared of its veil of darkness, manifested itself with its reddish clouds that resembled the ruddy bodices of maidens before the king.

⁴⁶ Now the landscape appeared in full view, like the understanding of men coming in full play after the extinction of their greed.⁴⁷ The enraged Sindhu then laid hold on his dreadful demon rakshasa weapon, which he instantly flung on his enemy with its bedeviled darts.⁴⁸ These horrid and

destructive darts flew on all sides in the air, and roared like the sea and the gigantic dark clouds of heaven.⁴⁹ They were like the flames of bright fire, with their long licking tongues and ash-colored and smoky curls rising like white hairs on the head, and making a chat-chat sound like that of moist fuel burning.⁵⁰ They wheeled round in circles in the air with a horrible tang-tang noise, now flaming as fire and now fuming as smoke, and then flying about as sparks of fire.⁵¹ With mouths beset by rows of sprouting teeth like lotus stalks, and faces defaced by dirty and moldy eyes, their hairy bodies were like stagnate pools full of moss and weeds.⁵² They flew about and flashed and roared aloud like dark clouds, while the locks of hairs on their heads glared like lightning in the midway sky.

⁵³ At this instant Viduratha, Leela's husband, sent forth his Narayana weapon that had the power to suppress wicked spirits and demons.⁵⁴ The appearance of this magic weapon made the bodies of the rakshasa demons disappear like darkness at sunrise.⁵⁵ This entire army of fiends was lost in the air, like the dark clouds of the rainy season vanish into nothing at the approach of autumn.

⁵⁶ Then Sindhu discharged his fire arms which set fire to the sky, and began to burn down everything like the all destroying conflagration of the last day.⁵⁷ They filled all the sides of air with clouds of smoke that seemed to hide the face of heaven under the darkness of hell.⁵⁸ They set fire to the woods in the hills which burned like mountains of gold, while the trees appeared to bloom with yellow plumeria flowers all around.⁵⁹ All the sides of the sky above, and the hills, woods and groves below, were enveloped in the flames, as if they were covered under the red powder of Holi with which Yama, the God of the underworld, was playing over the plain.⁶⁰ The heaven-spreading flame burnt legions into a heap of ashes like an undersea fire consumes entire ships and fleets in the sea.

⁶¹ As Sindhu continued to dart his fire arms against his defeated adversary, Viduratha let off his watery arms with reverential regard.⁶² Filled with water, these flew forward like the shades of darkness from their hidden cells. They spread up and down and on all sides like a melted mountain gushing in a hundred cataracts.⁶³ They stretched like mountainous clouds or like a sea in the air, and fell in showers of watery arrows and stones on the ground.⁶⁴ They flew up like large tamara trees, and gathered in groups like the shades of night, appeared as the thick gloom beyond the polar mountains.⁶⁵ They gave the sky the appearance of subterraneous caves, emitting a gurgling sound like the loud roaring of elephants.⁶⁶ These waters soon drank the spreading furious fire, like the shades of the dark night swallow the surrounding red tints of the evening.⁶⁷ Having swallowed the fires above, the waters flooded the ground and filled it with a humidity which served to weaken all bodies, as the power of sleep numbs everybody in death-like torpidity.

⁶⁸ In this manner both the kings were throwing their enchanted weapons against each other, and found them equally quelling and repelling one another.⁶⁹ The heavy armed soldiers of Sindhu and the captains of his regiments were swept away by the flood, together with the war-cars that floated upon it.

⁷⁰ At this moment, Sindhu thought upon his thermal weapons which possessed the miraculous power of preserving his people from the water. He hurled them in the air.⁷¹ These absorbed the waters like the sun sucks up the moisture of the night, and dried up the land and revived the soldiers, except those that were already dead and gone.⁷² Their heat chased the coldness like the rage of the illiterate

against the learned, and made the moist ground as dry as when sultry winds strew the forest land with dried leaves.⁷³ It decorated the face of the ground with a golden color, like when the royal dames adorn themselves with yellow paint.⁷⁴ It put the soldiers on the opposite side in a state of feverish fainting, like when the tender leaves of trees are scorched by the warmth of a wild fire in summer heat.

⁷⁵ Viduratha, in his war-like rage, took up his bow, bent it to a curve, and let fly his cloudy arms on his enemy.⁷⁶ They sent forth columns of clouds as thick as the dark shades of night, which flying upward like a forest of dark tamara trees, spread a shelter heavy with water on high.⁷⁷ They lowered under the weight of their water, stood still by their massive thickness, and roared aloud in their circles all over the sky.⁷⁸ Then blew the winds dropping the dewdrops from the icy store they bore on their wings. Showers of rain fell quickly from the clouds collected on high.⁷⁹ Then fiery lightning flashed from the clouds like golden serpents, or rather like side glances from the eyes of heavenly apsara nymphs.⁸⁰ The roaring of the clouds rebounded in the mountainous caverns of the sky, and the quarters of heaven echoed with the sound like the hoarse noise of elephants, the roaring of lions, and the growling of tigers and bears.⁸¹ Showers of rain fell in floods with drops as big as mallets and with flashes of lightning that threatened like stern glances from the god of death.⁸² Huge mists rose up in the form of vapors of the earth and were carried aloft into the sky by the heated air. They seemed like demons rising from the infernal regions.

⁸³ The mirage of the warfare ceased after a while, like worldly desires subside to rest upon tasting the sweet joys attending on divine knowledge.⁸⁴ The ground became full of mud and mire and was impassable everywhere. The forces of Sindhu were flooded by the watery deluge, like the Sindhu River (Indus) or the sea.

⁸⁵ He then hurled his airy weapon that filled the vault of heaven with winds, and raged in all their fury like the bhairava spirits on the last day of resurrection.⁸⁶ The winds blew on all sides of the sky, with darts falling like thunder bolts, and hailstones now piercing and then crushing all bodies as if by the last blast of nature on the dooms-day.

Chapter 49 — More Supernatural Weapons

Vasishta speaking:—

¹ Then blew the icy winds of winter, blasting the beauty of the forest tree foliage, shaking and breaking the beautiful trees, and covering them with gusts of dust. ² Then rose a gale whirling the trees like birds flying in the air, dashing and smashing soldiers on the ground, and hurling and breaking buildings to dust. ³ This dreadful squall blew away Viduratha and his force, like a rapid current carries away broken and rotten fragments of wood.

⁴ Then Viduratha, skilled in ballistics, hurled his huge and heavy arrows that stretched themselves to the sky and withstood the force of wind and rain. ⁵ Opposed by these rock-like barriers, the airy weapons were at a stand still, just like animal spirits are checked by the firm detachment of the soul.

⁶ Trees that had been blown up by the winds and were floating in the breezy air, now came down and fell upon dead bodies, like flocks of crows upon putrid carcasses. ⁷ The shouting from the city, the distant hum of the village, the howling of forests, and the rustling of the trees ceased on all sides like the vain words of men.

⁸ Sindhu saw burning rocks falling from above like leaves of trees, and flying about like the winged menakas (mind-born from apsaras) or moving rocks of the sea or Sindhu. ⁹ He then hurled his thundering weapons, falling like flaming thunderbolts from heaven, which burnt the rocks away like flaming fire destroys darkness. ¹⁰ These falling bolts broke the stones with their pointed ends, and hewed down hilltops like a hurricane scattering fruit from trees on the ground. ¹¹ Viduratha then darted his Brahma weapon to quell the thunderbolts, which jostling against one another, disappeared in their mutual conflict.

¹² Sindhu then cast his demonic weapons as black as darkness, which fled as lines of horrid pisacha demons on all sides. ¹³ They filled the sky with the darkness of their bodies, and made the daylight turn to the shade of night, as if it were for fear of them. ¹⁴ They were as strong in their figures as huge columns of smoke, and as dark in their complexion as the blackest pitch, and tangible to the hand.

¹⁵ They were like lean skeletons with erect hair on their heads and bearded faces, with looks as pale as those of beggars, and bodies as black as those of the aerial and nocturnal fiends. ¹⁶ They were terrific and like idiots in their looks, and moved about with bones and skulls in their hands. They were as meager as churls, but more cruel than either the sword or thunderbolt. ¹⁷ The pisacha demon-ghosts lurk about woods, bogs and highways and pry into empty and open door houses. They hunt about like ghosts in their dark forms, and fly away as fast as fleeting lightning. ¹⁸ With fury they ran and attacked the remaining enemy forces that stood weaponless in the field with their broken and sorrowful hearts. ¹⁹ Frightened to death they stood motionless, and dropped down their arms and armor, and stood petrified as if they were demon-struck, with staring eyes, open mouths, and unmoving hands and feet. ²⁰ They let fall both their lower and upper garments, loosened their bowels and slackened their bodies through fear, and kept shaking like trees by the wind.

²¹ The line of the pisachas then advanced to frighten Viduratha out of his wits, but he had the good sense to understand them as the mere magic mumbo-jumbo. ²² He knew the counter charm to force the pisachas from the field, and employed his charmed weapons against the enemy pisacha army. ²³ He

fired his rupika weapon with anger, which gave comfort to his own army and deluded the enemy pisacha force.²⁴ These rupikas flew in the air with erect hairs on their heads, their terrific eyes sunk in their sockets. Their waists and breasts moved like trees with bunches of fruit.²⁵ They had past their youth and become old. Their bodies were bulky and worn out with age. They had deformed backs and hips, and protuberant navels and naves.²⁶ They had dark dusky bodies and held human skulls in their hands all besmeared with blood. They had bits of half devoured flesh in their mouths, and pouring out fresh blood from their sides.²⁷ They had a variety of gestures, motions and contortions of their bodies, which were as hard as stone, with wry faces, crooked backs and twisted legs and limbs.²⁸ Some had their faces like dogs, crows, and owls, with broad mouths and flat cheek-bones and bellies, and held human skulls and entrails in their hands.²⁹ They laid hold of the pisachas like men catch little children, and joined with them in one body as their consorts.³⁰ They joined together in dancing and singing with outstretched arms and mouths and eyes, now joining hand in hand and now pursuing one another in their merry sport.³¹ They stretched their long tongues from their horrid mouths, and licked away the blood exuding from the wounds of the dead bodies.³² They plunged in the pool of blood with as much delight as if they had dived into a pond of ghee. They scrabbled in the bloody puddle with outstretched arms and feet, and uplifted ears and nose.³³ They rolled and jostled with one another in the puddle of carrion and blood, and made it swell like the Milky Ocean when churned by Mandara Mountain.

³⁴ As Viduratha employed his magic weapon against the magic of Sindhu, so he had recourse to others from a sense of his inferiority.³⁵ He fired his vetala weapon, which made dead bodies, whether with or without their heads, rise up in a body in their ghastly shapes.³⁶ The joint forces of the vetalas, pisachas and rupikas presented a dreadful appearance like that of the Kavandhas, and they seemed as if ready to destroy the earth.

³⁷ The other monarch was not slow to show his magic skill by hurling his demon rakshasa weapon, which threatened to grasp and devour the three worlds.³⁸ Their gigantic bodies rose as high as mountains, and with their ghostly forms, they seemed like hellish fiends appearing from the infernal regions.³⁹ The ferocious body of the roaring rakshasas terrified both gods and demigods with their loud martial music and war dance of their headless trunks.⁴⁰ The giddy vetalas, yakshas and kushmandas devoured the fat and flesh of dead bodies as their toast, and drank the gory blood as their lurid wine in the course of their war dance.⁴¹ The hopping and jumping of the kushmandas in their war dance in streams of blood, scattered its crimson particles in the air, which assembled in the form of a bridge of red evening clouds over the sparkling sea.

Chapter 50 — The Death of Viduratha

¹ Vasishta said:—

As the tide of war was rolling violently with a general massacre on both sides, the belligerent monarchs thought on the means of saving their own forces from the impending ruin.² The magnanimous King of Sindhu, who was armed with patience, called to his mind the Vaishnava weapon, which was the greatest of arms and as powerful as Shiva himself.³ He hurled the Vaishnava weapon using his best judgment (mantra). Immediately it emitted a thousand sparks of fire from its flaming blade on all sides.⁴ These sparks became large balls as big and bright as to shine like hundreds of suns in the sky, and others flew like the lengthy shafts of cudgels in the air.⁵ Some of them filled the wide field of the sky with thunderbolts as thick as the blades of grass, and others spread over the lake of heaven with battle axes like a bed of lotuses.⁶ These poured forth showers of pointed arrows spreading like a net in the sky, and fired dark sword blades scattered like tree leaves in the air.

⁷ At this time, the rival king Viduratha sent forth another Vaishnava weapon for repelling the former, and removing the reliance of his foe in his weakness.⁸ It sent forth a stream of weapons counteracting those of the other, and overflowing in currents of arrows and pikes, clubs and axes and missiles of various kinds.⁹ These weapons struggled with and jostled against one another. They split the vault of heaven with their clattering, and cracked like loud thunder claps cleaving mountain cliffs.¹⁰ The arrows pierced rods and swords, and the swords hewed down axes and lances to pieces. The mallets and mallets drove the missiles, and the pikes broke the spears.¹¹ The mallets like Mandara rocks, broke and drove away the rushing arrows as waves of the sea, and the resistless swords broke to pieces by striking at the maces.¹² The lances revolved like the halo of the moon, repelling the black sword blades as darkness, and the swift missiles flashed as the destructive fires of Yama.¹³ The whirling discs were destroying all other weapons. They stunned the world by their noise, and broke mountains by their strokes.¹⁴ The clashing weapons were breaking one another in numbers, and Viduratha defeated the arms of Sindhu, like a steadfast mountain defies the thunders of Indra.¹⁵ The truncheons were blowing away the curved swords, and the pikes were warding off the stones fired by slings. The crowbars broke down the pointed heads of the pikes.¹⁶ The iron rods of the enemy were broken by tridents of Shiva, and the enemy arms were falling down and crushing one another to pieces.¹⁷ The clattering shots stopped the course of the heavenly stream, and the combustion of powder filled the air with smoke.¹⁸ The clashing of dashing weapons lit the sky like lightning, their clattering cracked the worlds like thunderclaps, and their shock split and broke the mountains like thunderbolts.¹⁹ Thus the warring weapons were breaking one another by their impacts, and protracting the engagement by their mutual overthrow.

²⁰ As Sindhu was standing still in defiance of the prowess of his adversary, Viduratha lifted his own fire-arm, and fired it with a thundering sound.²¹ It set Sindhu's war chariot on fire like a heap of hay on the plain, while the Vaishnava weapons filled the ethereal sphere with their meteoric blaze.²² The two kings were thus engaged in fierce fighting with each other, the one firing his weapons like drops of raging rain, and the other hurling his arms like currents of a deluging river.²³ The two kings were thus harassing each other like two brave champions in their contest, when the chariot of Sindhu was

reduced to ashes by its flame.²⁴ He then fled to the woods like a lion from its cavern in the mountain, and repelled the fire that pursued him by his aqueous weapons.²⁵ After losing his car and alighting on the ground, he brandished his sword and cut off the hoofs and heels of the horses of his enemy's chariot in the twinkling of an eye.²⁶ He hacked everything that came before him like the lean stalks of lotuses. Then Viduratha also left his chariot with his sword in hand.

²⁷ Both were equally brave and matched to one another in their skill in warfare. They turned about in their rounds, and scraped their swords into saws by striking against the other.²⁸ With their jagged weapons, they tore the bodies of their enemies like fish crushed under teeth, when Viduratha dropped down his broken sword, and threw his javelin against his enemy.²⁹ It fell with a rattling noise on the bosom of Sindhu like a flaming meteor falls rumbling in the breast of the sea.³⁰ But the weapon fell back having hit his breast plate, like a maiden flies back from the embrace of a lover deemed an unfit match for her.³¹ Its shock made Sindhu throw out a flood of blood from his lungs, resembling the water spout an elephant let out from its trunk.

³² Seeing this, the second Leela cried with joy to her sister Leela, "See here the demon Sindhu killed by our lion-like husband.³³ Sindhu is slain by the javelin of our lion-like lord, like the wicked demon by the nails of the lion-god Narasimha, and he is spouting forth his blood like the stream of water, thrown out by the trunk of an elephant from a pool.³⁴ But alas! This Sindhu is trying to mount on another car, although bleeding so profusely from his mouth and nostrils, as to raise a wheezing sound."

³⁵ "Look there! Our lord Viduratha is breaking down the golden mountings of his car with the blows of his mallet, like the thundering clouds Pushkara and Avarta break down the gold peaks of Sumeru.

³⁶ See this Sindhu now mounting on another carriage, which is now brought before him, and decorated like the splendid seat of a gandharva.³⁷ Alas! Our lord is now made the mark of Sindhu's mallet hurled like a thunder bolt against him. But lo! How he flies off and avoids the deadly blow of Sindhu.

³⁸ Hurrah! How nimbly he has got up upon his own car. But sorrow is to me that Sindhu has overtaken him in his flight.³⁹ He mounts on his car like a hunter climbs on a tree, and pierces my husband, like a bird-catcher with his pointed arrow does a parrot hidden in its hollow.⁴⁰ Behold his car is broken down and its flags flung aside. His horses are hurt and the driver is driven away. His bow is broken and his armor is shattered, and his whole body is full of wounds.⁴¹ His strong breast-plate is broken by slabs of stone and his big head is pierced by pointed arrows. Behold him thrown down on earth, all mangled in blood."

⁴² "Look with what difficulty he is restored to his senses, and seated in his seat with his arm cut off and bleeding under Sindhu's sword.⁴³ See him weltering in blood gushing out profusely from his body, like a red stream issuing from a hill of rubies. Sorrow is me, and cursed be the sword of Sindhu that has brought this misery on us.⁴⁴ It has severed his thighs like they cut a tree with a saw, and has lopped off his legs like the stalks of trees.⁴⁵ Ah! It is I who am so struck and wounded and killed by the enemy. I am dead and gone and burnt away with my husband's body."

⁴⁶ Saying so, the second Leela began to shudder with fear at the sorrowful sight of her husband, and fell unconscious on the ground like a vine cut off by an axe.

⁴⁷ Viduratha though thus mutilated and disabled, was rising to smite the enemy in his rage, when he fell down from his car like an uprooted tree, and was replaced there by his charioteer ready to make his retreat. ⁴⁸ At this instant, the tribal Sindhu struck a saber on his neck, and pursued the car in which the dying monarch was borne back to his tent.

⁴⁹ The body of Padma (alias Viduratha) was placed like a lotus in the presence of Saraswati, shining with the splendor of the sun. But the elated Sindhu was kept from entering that place, like a giddy fly from a flame. ⁵⁰ The enemy returned to his camp and the charioteer entered the apartment and placed the body on its death-bed in the presence of the goddess. The body was all mangled and besmeared with blood seeping from the pores of the severed neck.

Chapter 51 — Sindhu's Rule

¹ Vasishta said:—

The loud cry that the king was killed in battle by the rival monarch, struck the people with awe, and filled the realm with dismay. ² Carts loaded with utensils and household articles were driving through the streets. Women with their loud wailing were running away amidst the impassable paths of the city.

³ Weeping maidens fleeing for fear were ravished on the way by their captors. Inhabitants were in danger of being plundered of their properties by one another. ⁴ The joyful shouts of soldiers in the enemy camp resounded with the roaring of loose elephants and neighing of horses trampling men to death on their way. ⁵ The doors of the royal treasury were broken open by brave brigands, the hinges flew off and the ceilings re-echoed to the strokes. The warders were overpowered by numbers, and countless treasures were plundered and carried away. ⁶ Bandits ripped off the bellies of the royal dames in the palace, and the chandala freebooters hunted about the royal apartments. ⁷ The hungry rabble robbed provisions from the royal stores, and soldiers were snatching jewels from weeping children trodden down under their feet. ⁸ Young and beautiful maidens were dragged by their hair from the seraglio, and the rich gems that fell from the hands of the robbers glistened all along the way.

⁹ Chiefs assembled with ardor with their troops of horses, elephants and war-chariots, and announced the installation of Sindhu by his minister. ¹⁰ Chief engineers were employed in decorating the city and its halls, and the balconies were filled by the royal party attending the inauguration. ¹¹ It was then that the coronation of Sindhu's son took place amidst the loud acclamations of victory. Titles and dignities were conferred upon the noblemen on the victor's side.

¹² The royal party were fleeing for their lives into the villages, where they were pursued by the victorious soldiers. A general pillage spread in every town and village throughout the realm. ¹³ Gangs of robbers thronged about and blocked the passages for pillage and plunder. A thick mist darkened the light of the day for want of the magnanimous Viduratha. ¹⁴ The loud lamentations of the friends of the dead, and the bitter cries of the dying, mixed with the clamor raised by the driving cars, elephants and horses, thickened in the air like a solid body of sound.

¹⁵ Loud trumpets proclaimed the victory of Sindhu in every city and announced his sole sovereignty all over the earth. ¹⁶ The high-shouldered Sindhu entered the capital like a second Manu for repopulating it after the all-devastating flood of war was over. ¹⁷ Then the tribute of the country poured into the city of Sindhu from all sides. These loaded on horses and elephants resembled the rich cargoes borne by ships to the sea. ¹⁸ The new king issued forthwith his circulars and royal edicts to all sides, struck coins in his own name, and placed his ministers as commissioners in all provinces.

¹⁹ His iron-rod was felt in all districts and cities like the inflexible rod of Yama, and it awed the living with fear of instant death. ²⁰ All insurrections and tumults in the realm soon subsided to rest under his reign, like the flying dust of the earth and the falling leaves of trees fall to the ground upon subsidence of a tempest.

²¹ The whole country on all sides was pacified to rest, like the perturbed sea of milk after it had been churned by Mandara Mountain. ²² Then there blew the gentle breeze of Malaya, unfurling the locks of the lotus-faced maidens of Sindhu's realm, and blowing the liquid fragrance of their bodies around,

and driving away the unwholesome air of the carnage.

[*The entire vision of Leela shows the state of human life, with its various incidents and phases to its last termination by death. The discontented brahmin longs for royal dignity, imagines all its enjoyments in the person of Padma, and at last in the character of Viduratha sees all its evils. The lesson is for aspirants to avoid aiming at high worldly honors which end in their destruction. In her silent meditation, Leela by her wisdom sees the whole course and vicissitudes of the world, and the rise and fall of human glory in the aspirations of her husband. — V. L. Mitra*]

Chapter 52 — The Second Leela Reflects upon the First Leela's Own Self-Concept: Life after Death

¹ Vasishta said:—

In the meanwhile, O Rama, the first Leela saw her husband lying unconscious before her and about to breathe his last. She spoke to Saraswati,² “Behold, O mother, my husband is about to shuffle his mortal coil in this perilous war that has laid waste his whole kingdom.”

³ Saraswati replied:—

This combat that you saw, fought with such fury and lasting so long in the field, was neither fought in your kingdom nor in any part of this earth.⁴ It occurred nowhere except in the vacant space of the shrine containing the dead body of the brahmin where it appeared only as the phantom of a dream.

⁵ This land that appeared as the kingdom of your living lord Viduratha was situated with all its territories in the inner apartment of Padma.⁶ Again it was the tomb of the brahmin Vasishta, situated in the hilly village of Vindya, that showed these varying scenes of the mortal world within itself.⁷ As the departed soul views the vision of the past world within its narrow tomb, so is the appearance of all worldly accidents unreal in their nature.

⁸ These objects that we see here as realities, including these bodies of mine and yours and this of Leela, together with this earth and these waters, are just the same as phantoms rising in the tomb of the deceased brahmin of the hilly region.⁹ It is the soul that presents the images of things, and nothing external which is wholly unreal can cast its reflection on the soul. Therefore know your soul to be the true essence which is uncreated and immortal, and the source of all its creations within itself.

¹⁰ The soul reflects on its inborn images without changing itself in any way. Therefore it was the nature of the brahmin's soul that displayed these images in itself within the sphere of his tomb.¹¹ But the illusion of the world with all its commotion was viewed in the vacant space of the souls of the brahmin and Padma, and not displayed in the empty space of their tombs, where there was no such false reflection of the world.

¹² There is no error or illusion anywhere except in the misconception of the observer. Therefore the removal of the fallacy from the mind of the viewer leads him to the perception of the light of truth.

¹³ Error consists in taking the unreal for the real and in thinking the viewer and the view, or the subjective and objective, is different from each other. It is the removal of the distinction of the subjective and objective that leads us to the knowledge of unity (the one or Aum).¹⁴ Know that the Supreme Soul is free from the acts of production and destruction, and it is His light that displays all things of which He is the source. Learn that the entire outer nature has no existence nor change in itself.

¹⁵ The souls of other beings exhibit their own natures in themselves, just like those in the burial tomb of the brahmin displayed the various dispositions to which his mind was accustomed.¹⁶ The soul has no notion of the outer world or any created thing in it. Its consciousness of itself is like an uncreated emptiness. It comprehends its knowledge of the world in itself.

¹⁷ The knowledge of the mountain ranges of Meru and others is included within the knowledge in the emptiness of the soul. There is no substance or solidity in them, just like a great city seen in a dream.

¹⁸ The soul sees hundreds of mountain ranges and thousands of solid worlds all drawn in the small compass of the mind, like in its state of dreaming. ¹⁹ Multitudes of worlds are contained in a grain of the brain of the mind, just like the long leaves of the plantain tree are contained in one of its minute seeds. ²⁰ All three worlds are contained in an atom of consciousness in the same manner as great cities are seen in a dream. Each of all the particles of consciousness within the mind has the representation of a world in it.

²¹ Now this Leela, your stepmother (*i.e.*, Arundhati, the wife of the hill-brahmin Vasishta), has already gone to the world that contains the tomb of Padma before the spirit of Viduratha could get there. ²² The moment when Leela fell in a swoon in your presence, know her spirit was immediately conveyed to him and placed by his side.

²³ Leela asked, "Tell me, O goddess, how was this lady endowed with my form? How did she come to be placed as my stepmother beside my deceased husband (Prince Padma)? ²⁴ Tell me in short, in what form do the people in Padma's house see her, and how are they now talking to her?"

²⁵ The goddess replied:—

Leela, hear what I will tell you in brief answer to your question regarding the life and death of this Leela as an image of yourself.

²⁶ It is your husband Padma, in the person of Viduratha, who beholds these illusions of the world spread before him in the same tomb. ²⁷ He fought this battle which you saw in his imagination, and this Leela who resembles you (Viduratha's wife) was also a delusion. These his men and enemies were only illusions, and his ultimate death was as illusory as a phantom of the imagination, like all other things in this world. ²⁸ It was his self delusion that showed him this Leela as his wife, and it is the same deceit of a dream that deludes you to believe that you are his wife. ²⁹ It is merely a dream that makes both of you Leelas think yourselves as his wives. In the same way he dreams that he is your husband, and I also rely on my own existence.

³⁰ The world with all its beauty is said to be the image of a vision. When we know it to be merely a visionary scene, we must refrain from having any faith in the sights of this magic projection lantern.

³¹ Thus this Leela, you, and this King Viduratha are only phantoms of your fancy. So am I, unless I believe to exist in the self-existent spirit. ³² The belief of the existence of this king and his people, and of ourselves as united in this place, proceeds from the fullness of that Consciousness which fills everything.

³³ So this Queen Leela, also situated in this place with her youthful beauty and smiling so charmingly with her blooming face, is only an image of divine beauty. ³⁴ See how gentle and graceful are her manners and how very sweet is her speech. Her voice is as sweet as the notes of the kokila nightingale, and her motions as slow as those of a lovelorn maiden. ³⁵ Behold her eyelids are like the leaves of the blue lotus and her swollen breasts are rounded like a pair of snowballs. Her form is as bright as liquid gold and her lips are as red as a brace of ripe bimba fruit. ³⁶ This is only a form of you as you desired to be to please your husband. It is the very figure of your own self that you now behold with wonder.

³⁷ After the death of your husband (Padma), his soul caught the same reflection of your image as you

did desire to be hereafter, and which you now see in the person of the young Leela before you.

³⁸ Whenever the mind has a notion or sensation or fancy of some material object, the abstract idea of its image is surely imprinted in the intellect.³⁹ As the mind comes to perceive the unreality of material objects, it begins to entertain the ideas of their abstract entities within itself.

⁴⁰ It was Padma's thought of his sure death, his false conception of the transmigration of his soul in the body of Viduratha, and your desired form of a youthful Leela, the idol of his soul, that represented the youthful Leela to Padma.⁴¹ He saw you and you saw him according to your desires. Thus both of you, although possessed of the same unvaried soul that pervades all space, are made to see one another according to your desires.

⁴² The spirit of Brahma is all pervasive. It manifests itself in various ways in all places. It is seen in different light according to the varying fancies or tendencies of men like ever-changing scenes appearing in visions and dreams.⁴³ The omnipotent Spirit displays its various powers in all places. These powers exert themselves everywhere according to the strong force and capability it has infused in them.

⁴⁴ When this pair remained in their state of death-like lack of physical senses, they saw all these phantoms in their inner souls by virtue of their memories and desires.⁴⁵ That such and such persons were their fathers and such their mothers before, that they lived in such places, had such properties, and did such acts some time ago are all memories of the soul.⁴⁶ That they were joined together in marriage, and the multitudes they saw in their minds, appeared to them as realities for the time in their imagination.

⁴⁷ This is an example that shows our physical-sense perceptions to be no better than our dreams. It was in this deluded state of Leela's mind that she worshipped and prayed to me.⁴⁸ In order to confer the boon on her that she might not become a widow, and by virtue of my blessing, this girl died before her husband's death.⁴⁹ I am the progeny of Brahma, and the totality of that intelligence in which all beings participate. It is for this reason that she adored me as the guardian divinity of all living beings.

⁵⁰ In the end her soul left her body through the orifice of her mouth and fled with her mind in the form of her vital breath.⁵¹ Then, after the unconsciousness attendant upon her death was over, she understood in her consciousness that her individual soul was placed in the same empty space as the departed spirit of Padma.⁵² In her memory she pictured herself in her youthful form and she saw herself as in a dream, situated in the same tomb. She was like a blooming lotus with her beautiful countenance, and her face was as bright as the orb of the moon. Her eyes were as large as those of an antelope, and she was attended by her graceful speech for the pleasure of her husband.

Chapter 53 — The Second Leela Visits the Temple of Dead King Padma; Representations of Memory Are Not the Creations of Brahma

¹ Vasishta said:—

The second Leela having obtained the blessing of the goddess, proceeded with her imagined body to meet her royal spouse in heaven beyond the skies. ² Having assumed her spiritual form which was as light as air, she fled merrily like a bird and was blown aloft by the fond desire of joining her beloved lord. ³ She met a maiden sent by the goddess of wisdom issuing out of the best model of her heart's desire. ⁴ The maiden said, "I am the daughter of your friend Saraswati. I welcome you, O beautiful lady, to this place. I have been waiting and expecting you here on your way through the sky."

⁵ Leela said, "Lead me, O lotus-eyed maid, to the side of my husband, as the visit of the good and great never goes for nothing."

⁶ Vasishta said:—

The maiden replied, "Come let us go there." So saying, she stood before her looking forward on her way. ⁷ Then both proceeding together onward, they came to the doorway of heaven which was as broad as the open palm of the hand and marked with lines like those read in palmistry. ⁸ They passed the region of the clouds and stepped over the currents of winds, then passing beyond the orbit of the sun, they reached the stations of the constellations. ⁹ From there they passed through regions of air and water to the worlds where gods and saints live, then they crossed over the worlds of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva to the great circle of the universe. ¹⁰ Their spiritual bodies pierced through its opening like the humidity of ice water passes out of the pores of a tight water-jar. ¹¹ Leela's body was of the form of her mind, which was of the nature of its own bent and tenor, and conceived these wanderings within itself.

¹² Having traversed the worlds of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva and having crossed the limit of the manifest spheres and the environs of atmospheric water and air, ¹³ they found an empty space as spacious as the scope of the great Consciousness and impassable by the swift garuda even in millions of kalpa ages. ¹⁴ There they saw an infinity of shapeless and nameless worlds scattered about like countless fruit in a great forest. ¹⁵ They pierced through the circumference of one of these orbs before them and passed inside like a worm creeps inside a fruit that it has nibbled.

¹⁶ This brought them back by the same worlds of Brahma, Indra and others to the orb of the globe below the starry skies. ¹⁷ Here they saw the same country, the same city and the same tomb as before. After entering the tomb, they sat beside the corpse of Padma covered under a heap of flowers.

¹⁸ At this time Leela lost sight of the heavenly maiden (sent to accompany her) who had been her companion all this while, and who had now disappeared like a phantom of her illusion. ¹⁹ Then she looked at the face of her husband, lying as a dead body in his bed, and recognized him as such by her right discretion. ²⁰ "This must be my husband," she thought. "Ah my very husband who fell fighting with Sindhu. Now he has attained this seat of departed heroes where he rests in peace. ²¹ By the grace of the goddess I have arrived here in person and reckon myself truly blessed to find my husband also as such." ²² Then she took a beautiful fan in her hand and began to wave it over his body like the moon moves in the sky over the earth.

²³ The waking, first Leela asked, "Tell me, O goddess, in what manner did the king and his servants and handmaids speak to this lady, and what did they think her to be?"

²⁴ The goddess replied:—

It was by our gift of wisdom to them that this lady, that king and those servants found themselves to share in the one and same intellectual soul in which they all existed. ²⁵ Every soul is a reflection of Divine Consciousness and is destined by his own fixed decree to represent individual souls to one another like refractions of the same, or like shadows in a magic show. ²⁶ Thus the king received his wife as his companion and queen, and his servants as related with himself. ²⁷ He saw the unity of his soul with hers and theirs, and no distinction existing between anyone of them. He was astonished to find that there was nothing distinct in them from what he had in himself.

²⁸ The waking, first Leela said, "Why did not that Leela meet her husband in her own body according to her request and the boon that was granted to her?"

²⁹ The goddess replied:—

It is not possible for unenlightened souls (such as that of the young Leela) to approach holy spirits in person. They are visible and accessible only to the deserving. They are unapproachable by gross bodies as sunlight is inaccessible by a shadow. ³⁰ So the established law from the beginning of creation is that intelligent souls can never join with dull beings and gross matter, as truth can never be mixed with falsehood. ³¹ And so is that as long as a boy is prepossessed of his notion of a ghost, it is vain to try to convince him of the falsehood of demons as mere shadows of his imagination. ³² And as long as the feverish heat of ignorance rages within the soul, it is impossible for the coolness of the moon of intelligence to spread over it. ³³ So long also as one believes himself composed of a physical body incapable of travel in the higher atmosphere, it is impossible to make him believe otherwise.

³⁴ By virtue of one's knowledge and discrimination, and by his own merit and divine blessing, one acquires a saintly form with which he ascends to the higher regions, as you have done with this body of yours. ³⁵ As dry leaves of trees are burnt in no time by burning fire, so this physical body is quickly lost by one's assumption of his spiritual frame. ³⁶ The effect of a blessing or curse on anyone is nothing else than his obtaining the state he desired or feared to have.

³⁷ As the false appearance of a snake in a rope is attended with no motion or action of the serpent, so the unreal views of Leela's husband and others were only the motionless images of her own imagination. ³⁸ Whoever views the false apparitions of the dead as present before the vision of his mind, he must know them as reflections of his past and constant memories of them. ³⁹ So our notions of all these worlds are mere products of our memories. They are not any creation of Brahma or from any other cause but the simple productions of our desire.

⁴⁰ They who are ignorant of the knowable spirit of God have in them only the notions of the outer world as they view the distant orb of the moon within themselves.

Chapter 54 — Divine Laws underlie Creation; Death as Reward; Life Durations

¹ The goddess continued:—

Therefore, those who know the knowable God and rely upon virtue can go to spiritual worlds — not others.² All material bodies are false, the false conceptions of the mind. They can have no place in Truth, just like no shadow can have any room in sunshine. (So gross matter has no room in the subtle spirit.)³ Young Leela, being ignorant of the knowable (God) and unacquainted with the highest virtue (the practice of yoga meditation), could go no further than the city of her lord which she had in her heart.

⁴ The waking Leela said, “Let her be where she is, but I will ask you about other things. You see here that my husband is about to die. Tell me, what must I now do?⁵ Tell me the law of being and not being of beings, and about that destiny which destines living beings to death.⁶ What determines the natures of things and gives existence to the categories of objects? What causes the warmth of fire and sun and gives stability to the earth?⁷ Why is coldness confined to frost and the like, and what forms the essence of time and space? What are the causes of the different states of things and their various changes, and the causes of the solidity of some and minuteness of others?⁸ What causes trees and men to be taller than grass and brambles, and why do many things dwindle and decay in the course and capability of growth?”

⁹ The goddess said:—

At the universal dissolution of the world, when all things are dissolved in the formless void, only the essence of Brahman remains in the form of infinite sky stretching on all sides beyond the limits of creation.¹⁰ Then it reflects in its consciousness in the form of a spark of fire, as you are conscious of your aerial journey in a dream.¹¹ Then this atomic spark in the Divine Spirit increased in size, and having no substance of itself, appeared as what is commonly called the ideal world.

¹² The spirit of God thought itself as Brahma, the soul of the world, who reigned over it in his form of the mind, as if it was identical with the real world itself.¹³ Whatever primary laws he appointed to all things at their first creation, they invariably continue in force with them to the present time.¹⁴ The minds of all turn as willed by the Divine Mind. There is nothing which of itself can go beyond the law assigned to it by the Divine Will.

¹⁵ It is improper to say that all formal existences are nothing because they remain in their substance (of the Divine Spirit) after their forms disappear, just like the substance of gold remains the same after its shape and form are altered.¹⁶ The elementary bodies of fire and frost continue in the same state as when their elements were first formed in the Divine Mind in the beginning of creation.

¹⁷ Therefore, as long as Divine Consciousness continues to direct his eternal laws and decrees appointed to all, nothing has the power to forsake its own nature.¹⁸ It is impossible for anything to alter its nature from the eternal stamp that Divine Will has set upon all the substantial and ideal forms of creation.¹⁹ As Divine Consciousness knows no opposition, it never turns from the tenor of its own wonted intelligence that directs the destinies of all.

²⁰ But know that in the first place, the world is not a created thing. All that appears to exist is only a display of the notions in our consciousness, like appearances in our dreams.²¹ The unreal appears as

real, just like the shadow seems to be of substance. Our notions of things are the properties of our nature.²² The manner in which Consciousness exhibited itself in its different manifestations at the beginning, the same continues in its course to this time and is known as the manifestations of consciousness (*samvid-kachana*) or the course or system of the universe which constitute the *niyati*.

²³ The sky is the manifestation of the intellectual idea of emptiness in the Divine Mind. The idea of duration in Consciousness appeared in the form of the parts of time.²⁴ The idea of liquidity evolved itself in the form of water in the Divine Mind. In the same way one dreams of water and seas in his own mind.

²⁵ We are conscious of our dreams in some particular state of our consciousness, and it is the wonderfully cunning nature of consciousness that makes us think the unreal to be real.²⁶ The ideas of the reality of earth, air, fire and water are all false. Consciousness perceives them within itself as its false dreams and desires and daydreams.

²⁷ Now hear me tell you about death in order to remove your questions with regard to this future state. Death is destined for our good in that it leads us to the enjoyment of the fruits of acts in this life.

²⁸ Our lives are destined in the beginning to extend to one, two, three and four centuries in the different Kali, Dwapara, Treta and Satya ages (*yugas*) of the world.²⁹ However by virtue of place and time, of climate and food, and our good or bad actions and habits, human life extends above or descends below these limits.³⁰ Falling short of one's duties shortens life, as excelling in them lengthens its duration. Mediocre conduct keeps it within its proper bound.

³¹ Children die by acts causing infant diseases and untimely deaths. The young and old die of acts that bring on juvenile and senile weakness, sickness and ultimate death.³² He who goes on doing his duties as prescribed by scriptures becomes prosperous and enjoys the long life allotted by the rule of scriptures.³³ Likewise men meet their last state and future reward according to the nature of their acts in lifetime; or else their old age is subject to regret and remorse and all kinds of bodily and mental maladies and anxieties.

³⁴ Leela said, "Tell me in short, O moon-faced goddess, something more with regard to death. Is it a pleasure or pain to die? What becomes of us after we are dead and gone from here?"

³⁵ The goddess replied:—

Dying men are of three kinds, and they have different ends upon their death. There are the ignorant, those practiced in yoga, and those who are reasonable and religious.³⁶ Those practicing *dharana yoga* (fixed concentration in meditation) may go wherever they like after leaving their bodies, and so the yogi of reason is at liberty to range everywhere.³⁷ He who has not practiced *dharana yoga*, or has not applied himself to reasoning, or entertains certain hopes for the future is called an ignorant sot and meets with the pain and pangs of death.

³⁸ He whose mind is not subdued and is full of desires, temporal cares and anxieties becomes as distressed as a lotus torn from its stalk.³⁹ The mind that is not guided by the precepts of the scriptures or purified by holiness but is addicted to the society of the wicked is subjected to the burning sensation of fire within itself at the moment of death.⁴⁰ At the moment when the last gurgling of the throat chokes the breath, eyesight is dimmed and the countenance fades away, then the rational soul

also becomes hazy in its consciousness.⁴¹ A deep darkness spreads over the dimming sight and stars twinkle before it in daylight. The sky appears to be hidden by clouds and presents a gloomy aspect on every side.⁴² An acute pain seizes his entire body, and a mirage caused by witchcraft dances before his vision. The earth is turned into air and the dying person seems to be moving in midair.⁴³ The sphere of heaven revolves before him and the tide of the sea seems to bear him away. He is lifted up in the air, then hurled down as in his state of dizziness or dream.⁴⁴ Now he thinks he is falling into a dark pit, and then he is lying in the cave of a hill. He wants to talk out loud about his torments, but his speech fails to utter his thoughts.

⁴⁵ Now he finds himself as if falling down from the sky, and now as whirled in the air like a bundle of straw blown aloft by a gust of wind. He is now riding swiftly as in a car, and now finds himself melting like snow.⁴⁶ He desires to tell his friends about the evils of life and this world, but he is carried away from them as rapidly as if by an air-engine.⁴⁷ He whirls about like a turning wheel and he is dragged along like a beast by its halter. He wallows about like in an eddy, or turns around as the machine of some engine.⁴⁸ He is borne like straw in the air and is carried about like a cloud in the wind. He rises high like vapor, then falls down like a heavy watery cloud pouring out into the sea.

⁴⁹ He passes through endless space and revolves in all of its vortices of emptiness to find, as it were, a place free from the ups and downs to which earth and ocean are subject.⁵⁰ Thus the rising and falling spirit wanders ceaselessly, and the soul breathing hard and sighing without break sets the whole body in sore pain and agony.⁵¹ By degrees the objects of his senses become as faint to his failing organs as the landscape fades to view with the setting of the sun.

⁵² At this moment, his memory fails and he loses memories of the past and present, like one is at a loss to know the sides of the compass after the evening twilight has passed away.⁵³ In his fainting fit, his mind loses its power of thinking. He is lost in a state of ignorance, the loss of all his thoughts and consciousness.⁵⁴ In this fainting state, the vital breath ceases to circulate through the body. When its circulation stops completely, a swoon into unconsciousness (*murcha*) follows.⁵⁵ When this state of unconscious paralysis combined with delirium has reached its climax, then by the law of inertia, ordained for living beings from the beginning, the body becomes as stiff as stone.

⁵⁶ Leela said, "But tell me, O goddess, why do these pains and agonies, this fainting and delirium, and disease and unconsciousness overtake the body, when it is possessed of all of its eight organs intact?"

⁵⁷ The goddess replied:—

It is the law appointed by the Author of life from the first, that such and such pains are to fall as the lot of living beings at such and such times.⁵⁸ The primeval sin springs of itself like a plant in the conscious heart of man and subjects him to his doomed miseries which have no other intelligible cause.⁵⁹ When disease and its pain overpower the body and prevent lungs and arteries from expanding and contracting to inhale and exhale air, the body loses its equilibrium (*samana*) and becomes restless.⁶⁰ When inhaled air does not come out and exhaled breath does not re-enter the lungs, all pulsation is at a stop. Organic sensations are lost, remaining only in memory.⁶¹ When vital air doe not enter or exit, the pulse sinks and becomes motionless. The body is said to become senseless, and life to be extinct.

⁶² I also shall die in my destined time, but all my consciousness of former knowledge will be awake at the hour of death. ⁶³ Though I am dead and gone from here in this manner, yet I must mind that the seed of my innate consciousness (the soul) is never destroyed with my life and body.

⁶⁴ Consciousness is inner knowledge and is imperishable in its nature. Therefore the nature of consciousness is free from birth and death. ⁶⁵ In some persons this consciousness is as clear as a fresh fountain; in others as foul as tide water. In some it is bright in its form of the pure intellect (*chit*); but in many in its nature of the sentient or individual soul (*chetana*), it is polluted with the passions of animal life.

⁶⁶ As a blade of grass has joints in the middle, so the nature of the sentient or individual soul is combined with the two states of birth and death amidst it. ⁶⁷ The sentient soul is neither born nor dead at anytime, but witnesses these two states as the passing shadows and apparitions in a dream and vision. ⁶⁸ The soul is nothing other than consciousness which is never destroyed anywhere by anything.

Say, what other thing is this soul called *purusha* besides consciousness itself? ⁶⁹ Tell me then, who and what are you calling dead today? Is consciousness subject to disease or death at anytime and in any form? Truly millions of living bodies are dying every day, but consciousness always remains imperishable. ⁷⁰ Consciousness never dies at the death of any living being because the entire individual soul continues the same upon the death of everybody here.

⁷¹ Therefore, the individual soul is nothing more than the principle which is conscious of its various desires, affections and passions. It is not that principle to which men attribute the phases of life and death. ⁷² So there is none that dies and no one is born at anytime. It is this only living principle that continually revolves in the deep eddy of its desires. ⁷³ Considering the unreality of visible phenomena, there can be no desire for them in anyone. But the inner soul that is led by its egoism and believes them to be true is subject to death at the disappearance of phenomena.

⁷⁴ The recluse ascetic flying from the fears of the world as foreign to his soul, and having none of its false desires rising in his breast, becomes liberated in his life and assimilated with the true One.

Chapter 55 — Categories of Death Experiences; Origin of Illusion

¹ Leela said, "Tell me, goddess, for edification of my knowledge, how does a living come to die and is reborn in another form?"

² The goddess replied:—

As the action of the heart ceases and the lungs blow and breathe no more, the current of vital airs is utterly stopped and the living being loses its consciousness.³ But the intellectual soul, which has no rise or fall, remains ever the same as it abides in all moving and unmoving bodies, and in air, water, fire and vacuum.⁴ When the breathing, pulse and motion of the body stop, it is said to be dead and is then called an inert corpse.⁵ The body being a dead carcass and the vital breath having mixed with the air, the soul is freed from the bonds of its desires. It flies to and remains in the mode of the discrete and self-existent soul.

⁶ The individual soul, called the animal spirit (*jiva*), has its desires and is other than the *atman* (soul). It remains in its burial tomb under the same atmosphere as the soul of Padma, which you saw hovering about his tomb.⁷ Hence such departed spirits are called ghosts of the dead (*pretas*). They have their desires and earthly propensities attached to them, just like the fragrance of the flower is concentrated in its pollen and thence diffused through the air.

⁸ As animal souls are removed to other spheres, after their departure from this visible world, they view the very many scenes and sights that their desires present before them like visions in a dream.

⁹ The soul continues to remember all its past adventures, even in its next state, and finds itself in a new body soon after the unconsciousness of death is over.

¹⁰ What appears an empty vacuum to others seems as a dusky cloud to the departed soul, enveloping the earth, sky, moon and all other orbs within its bosom.

¹¹ Departed spirits are classed in six orders, as you shall now hear from me. These are the great, greater and greatest sinners, and likewise the three degrees of the virtuous.¹² These are again subdivided into three kinds, some belonging to one state and others composed of two or three states in the same individual soul.

¹³ Some of the most sinful souls lose the memory of their past states for a period of a whole year. They remain quite unconscious within themselves, like blocks of wood or stone.¹⁴ Rising after this time, they are doomed to suffer the endless torments of hell which the hardness of their earthly mindedness has brought upon them.¹⁵ Then they pass into hundreds of births leading from misery to misery, or have a moment's respite from the pains in their short lived prosperity, amidst their dreaming journey through life.

¹⁶ There are others who, after their numbness of death is over, come to suffer the unutterable torments of sluggishness in the state of unmoving trees.¹⁷ And others again who having undergone the torments of hell, according to their inordinate desires in life, are brought to be reborn on earth in a variety of births in different forms.

¹⁸ Those of lesser crimes, are made to feel the inertness of stones for sometime, after the unconsciousness attending upon their death.¹⁹ These awakened to consciousness after some time,

whether long or short, are made to return on earth to feel the evils of brutish and beastly lives.

²⁰ But the souls of the least sinful, soon after their death, come to assume some perfect human form in order to enjoy the fruits of their desire and reward on earth. ²¹ These desires appear before the soul as dreams and awaken its reminiscence of the past as present at that moment.

²² Again the best and most virtuous souls, soon after their death, come to find themselves in heavenly abodes by reason of their continued thoughts and speculations of them. ²³ Some among them are brought to enjoy the rewards of their actions in other spheres, from which they are sent back to the mortal world, at the homes of the auspicious and best part of mankind.

²⁴ Those of moderate virtues are blown away by the atmospheric air upon the tops of trees and medicinal plants where they rove about as protozoa after the unconsciousness of death is over.

²⁵ Being nourished here by the juice of fruits, they descend in the form of serum and enter into the hearts of men, from where they fall into the uterus in the form of virile semen, which is the cause of the body and life of other living beings.

²⁶ Thus the dead, after they recover from the collapse attending upon their death, make themselves into one of these states of living bodies according to their natural tendency. ²⁷ At first they think themselves extinct, then they come to feel resuscitated upon receiving offerings of the food made to their departed spirits. ²⁸ Then they fancy seeing the messengers of death, with nooses in their hands, come to fetch them to the realm of Yama, and they depart with them.

²⁹ There the righteous are carried in heavenly cars to the Nandana gardens of paradise which they gain by their meritorious acts in life. ³⁰ But the sinful soul meets with icebergs and pitfalls, is tangled with thorns and iron pikes and bushes and brambles in its passage as punishment for its sins. ³¹ Those of the middling class have a clear and paved passage, with soft grassy pathways shaded by cooling trees, and supplied with spring waters on both sides of them. ³² On its arrival there, the soul reflects within itself that, "Here am I, and yonder is Yama, the lord of the dead. The other is the judge of our actions, Chitragupta, and this is his judgment given on my behalf." ³³ In this manner also, the great world appears to every one as in a dream. And so the nature and manner of all things present themselves before every soul.

³⁴ But all these appearances are as empty as air. The soul alone is the sentient principle, and vast space and time and the modes and motions of things, though they appear as real, are in reality nothing.

³⁵ Here in Yama's court, the soul is pronounced to reap the reward of its acts, whereby it ascends either to the blissful heaven above or descends to the painful hell below. ³⁶ After having enjoyed the bliss of heaven or suffered the torment of hell, the soul is doomed to wander in this earth again to reap the reward of its acts in repeated reincarnations.

³⁷ The soul springs up like a paddy plant and brings forth the grains of intelligence. Then, being assembled by the senses, it becomes an animal, and lastly an intelligent being. ³⁸ The soul contains in itself the germs of all its senses which lie dormant in it for lack of its bodily organs. It is contained in man's virile semen which, passing into the uterus, produces the fetus in the womb of the female.

³⁹ The fetus then becomes either well-formed or deformed, according to the good or evil deeds of the person in its past state, and brings forth the infant of a good or ill shaped appearance. ⁴⁰ It then

perceives the moonlike beauty of youthful bloom, and its amorous disposition comes upon itself. Afterwards it feels the effects of hoary old age, defacing its lotus-like face like the sheets of snow shatter and shrivel the lotus leaflets.⁴¹ At last it undergoes the pains of disease and death and feels the same lack of physical senses at of death as before, and finds itself again as in a dream taking on a new form.⁴² It again believes itself to be carried to the region of Yama, and subjected to the former kinds of revolution. Thus it continues to conceive its reincarnation in endless births and various forms.

⁴³ Thus forever in its own ethereal sphere, the aerial spirit goes on thinking about all its ceaseless reincarnations until its final liberation from this ever changing state.

⁴⁴ Leela said, "Tell me kindly, O good goddess, for the enlightenment of my understanding, how did this misconception of its changeableness first come upon the soul in the beginning?"

⁴⁵ The goddess replied:—

The dense appearance of the abstract causes us to assume the discrete spirit in the concrete forms of the earth and sky and rocks and trees.⁴⁶ As Divine Consciousness manifests itself as the soul and model of all forms, so we see these manifestations in the transcendental sphere of its pure consciousness.

⁴⁷ In the beginning, God conceived himself as the lord of creation (Brahma). Then, as it were in a dream, he saw in himself all the forms as they continue to this time.⁴⁸ These forms were manifested in the Divine Spirit, at first as his will, and then reflected and exhibited in the phenomenal world in all their present forms.⁴⁹ Among these some are called living beings which are able to move their bodies and limbs and live by means of the air they breathe and circulate in their bodies through lungs and arteries.

⁵⁰ Such also is the creation of plant life. They have their inner sensitivity, although devoid of outward motion, and they receive their sustenance from their roots.⁵¹ The hollow sphere of the Divine Intellect, beaming with intelligence, sends forth its particles of perception which form the consciousness of some beings and sensitivity in others.

⁵² But man uses his eyes to view the outer and the reflected world, although the eyes do not form his individual soul, nor did they exist at his creation or before his birth.

⁵³ It is according to one's estimation of himself that he has his proper and peculiar desires, and also the particular form of his body. Such also is the case of the elemental bodies, from their inner conception of their peculiar natures.⁵⁴ Thus all moving and unmoving things have their movable and immovable bodies according to their intrinsic disposition or idiosyncrasy as such and such.⁵⁵ Hence all self-moving beings have their movable bodies conforming to the conception of their natures as so and so. And in this state of their belief, they continue to this time with their same inborn or congenital bodies.

⁵⁶ The vegetable world still continues in the same state of fixedness from its sense of immobility. And so rocks and minerals continue in their inert state from the inborn sense of their inertness.⁵⁷ There is no distinction whatever between inertness and intelligence, nor any difference between production, continuance and extinction of things. All occurs in one common essence of the Supreme.⁵⁸ The varying characteristics existing in plants and minerals make them feel themselves as such and cause

their various natures and forms as they have to this time.⁵⁹ The inner constitution of all immovable objects makes them remain in their stationary states; likewise for all other substances, according to their different names and natures.⁶⁰ Thus the inner constitution or quality of worms and insects makes them conceive themselves according to their different kinds and gives them their particular natures forever.

⁶¹ So the people under the north pole know nothing about those in the south other than what they know of themselves.⁶² So also all kinds of moving and unmoving beings are prepossessed with their own notions of things and regard all others according to their own peculiar self-concepts.⁶³ Again, as the inhabitants of caves know nothing of their outsiders, and as frogs in dirty pools are unacquainted with the pure water of streams, so is one sort of being ignorant of the nature of another.

⁶⁴ But empty consciousness, residing in the form of the all pervasive mind and all sustaining air, knows the natures of all things in all places.⁶⁵ The moving principle is the vital air that enters all bodies through their pores and which gives life and motion to all living beings.⁶⁶ Truly the mind is situated in all things, whether they are moving or immovable. And so is the air, which causes motion in some and stillness in others.⁶⁷ Thus all things in this world of illusion are only the rays of the conscious soul, continuing in the same state as they have from the beginning.

⁶⁸ I have told you everything about the nature of things in the world and how unrealities come to appear as real unto us.

⁶⁹ Look, here this King Viduratha is about to breathe his last, and the garlands of flowers heaped on the corpse of your husband Padma are now being hung upon the breast of Viduratha.

⁷⁰ Leela said, "Tell me goddess, how did Viduratha enter Padma's tomb? How can we also enter to see what he is doing there?"

⁷¹ The goddess said:—

Man goes to all places by the way of his desires, even thinking that he goes to a distant future, in the spiritual form of pure consciousness.⁷² We shall go the same way, as you like, because the bond of our friendship makes no difference in our choice and desires.

⁷³ Vasishta said:—

Princess Leela was relieved of her pain by what Goddess Saraswati had explained. Her intellectual sight was brightened by the blazing sun of spiritual light. She saw the unconscious and unmoving Viduratha breathe out his final breath.

Chapter 56 — State of the Soul after Death; Ancestor Worship & Benefits to the Dead

¹ Vasishta continued:—

In the meantime the king's eyeballs became convoluted, and his lips and cheeks and entire face grew pale and dry. There remained only the slender breath of life in him.² His body became as lean as a dry leaf, and his face turned as ghastly as the figure of death. His throat gurgled like the hoarsest beetles and his lungs breathed with a bated breath.³ His sight was darkened upon the unconsciousness of death and his hopes were buried in the pit of despair. The sensations of his external organs were hidden within the cavity of his heart.⁴ His figure was as senseless as a picture in painting and all his limbs were as motionless as those of a statue carved from a block of marble.⁵ What need is there of a lengthier description when it may be said in short that his life quitted his body, like a bird flies far away from a falling tree?

⁶ The two ladies, with their divine eyesight, saw his animal spirit in its aerial form flying upwards in the sky and his consciousness disappearing like the odor of a flower blown by the wind.⁷ His individual soul being joined with its spiritual body began to fly higher and higher in the air as it was led by its inner desire or expectation of ascending to heaven.

⁸ The two ladies kept following that conscious soul, like a couple of female bees pursuing a particle of perfume borne afar in the air on the wings of the wind.⁹ Then, in a moment after the fainting fit of death was over, the conscious soul was roused from its unconsciousness like some fragrance expanding itself with the breeze.¹⁰ It saw the porters of death carrying away the souls of the dead that had resumed their grosser forms from the food offered by their kinsmen during ancestor-worship rituals.¹¹ After a long year's journey on the way, it reached the distant abode of Yama with the hope of reaping the reward of its acts, but found the gate guarded by beasts of prey.

¹² Yama, on seeing the departed spirit of everybody brought before him, demanded to know all its foul acts committed during its lifetime.¹³ On finding the prince's spirit spotless, ever inclined to virtuous acts and nourished by the grace of the goddess of wisdom,¹⁴ he ordered it to be released. The spirit re-entered its former dead body that lay buried under the flowers in the tomb.¹⁵ It was then allowed to fly in the ethereal path with the swiftness of a stone shot from a sling. The living Leela and the goddess followed in the air.

¹⁶ The individual soul of the king sailing through the sky did not see the forms of the two ladies who followed it, though they saw it all along its course.¹⁷ They passed through many worlds and soon passed beyond the bounds of the extra-mundane systems until they arrived at the solar world from where they descended to this earth.

¹⁸ The two self-willed forms of Leela and the goddess followed the individual soul of King Padma and arrived at his royal city where they entered Leela's apartment.¹⁹ In a trice and of their own free will, they entered the palace of King Padma like air passes in flowers and the sunbeams penetrate water and odors mix with air.

²⁰ Rama asked, "How was it sage, that they entered into the abode adjoining to the tomb, and how could they find the way to it? One had been dead a long time, and all three were bodiless emptiness."

²¹ Vasishta replied:—

The tomb of the king's dead body, being impressed on his soul and the object of its desire, led his spirit insensibly to it, as if by its inborn instinct.

²² Who does not know that the endless desires in the human breast, like countless fig seeds, grow up in time to become big trees? ²³ Just as the living body bears its seed, the subtle body (*linga deha*) in the heart that germinates and in the end grows into a tree, so every particle of the intellect bears the material seed in itself. ²⁴ As a man placed in a far distant land sees his own house within himself, so the soul sees the objects of his distant desires ever present before it. ²⁵ The individual soul always longs after the best objects of its desire, even though it may undergo a hundred births and become subject to the errors and delusions of his senses and of this illusory world.

²⁶ Rama replied, “There are many persons who are free from desire to receive funeral cakes. Now tell me, sage, what becomes of those souls who get no cake offering at their ancestor worship (*shradh*)?”

²⁷ Vasishta replied:—

A man having the desire settled in his heart to receive food offerings, and thinking it to be offered to him, is surely benefitted by its offering. ²⁸ Whatever is in the heart and mind, the same notions form the nature of living beings. Whether these are in their corporeal or incorporeal states, they think themselves as such beings and no other. ²⁹ The thought of having received the *pinda* cake (cake offered at a *shradh* ancestor worship ritual) makes a man *sapinda* (ancestors to the sixth degree), though it is not actually offered to him. On the other hand, the thought of not being served with the cake makes a *sapinda* become a *nispinda*.

³⁰ It is truly the desire of all living beings to be whatever they have in their hearts, and that is the cause of their becoming so in reality. ³¹ It is a man's thought that makes poison taste like nectar, and it is his very thought that makes an untruth seem as truth to him. ³² Know this for certain, that no thought ever rises in anyone without some cause or other. Therefore, the desire or thought that is inherent in the spirit is the sole cause of its regeneration on earth. ³³ Nobody has ever seen or heard of any event occurring without its proper cause; except the being of the Supreme Being which is the causeless cause of all beings from their state of not-being into being.

³⁴ Desire is inherent in consciousness, like a dream in the soul. Desire appears in the form of acts, as the Will of God is manifested in his works of creation.

³⁵ Rama said, “How can a spirit that is conscious of its faults foster any desire for its future good? How can it benefit from others' pious works for its salvation? ³⁶ Tell me also whether the pious acts of others, offered to ancestors, go for nothing. Do the good wishes of others have any effect on the future prospects of an undeserving ghost?”

³⁷ Vasishta said:—

A desire naturally arises in its proper time and place and by application of appropriate acts and means. The rising of the desire necessarily overcomes its absence. ³⁸ Pious gifts made for the sake of departed souls accrue to them as their own acts. It gives them a sense of worthiness and fills them

with better hopes and desires for their future state.

³⁹ Just like the stronger man gains the better of his adversary, so the later acts of piety drive away the former impiety from the spirit. Therefore the constant practice of pious acts is strictly encouraged in the scriptures.

⁴⁰ Rama said, "If the desire arises in its proper time and place, then how could it arise in the beginning when there was no time or place? ⁴¹ You say that there are accessory causes that give rise to desires, but how could the will arise in the first place without any accessory cause whatever?"

⁴² Vasishta replied:—

It is true, O long-armed Rama, that there was neither time nor place in the beginning when the Spirit of God was without its will. ⁴³ And there being no accessory cause, there was not even the idea of the visible world, nor was it created or brought into existence. It is so even now.

⁴⁴ The phenomenal world has no existence. All that is visible is the manifestation of Divine Consciousness which is everlasting and imperishable. ⁴⁵ Later I will explain this to you in a hundred different ways, and it is my main purpose to do so, but now hear now tell you what relates to the matter under consideration.

⁴⁶ Having arrived in that house, they saw its inside beautifully decorated with garlands of flowers as fresh as those of the spring season. ⁴⁷ The palace residents were quietly employed in their duties, and the king's corpse was placed upon a bed of mandara and kunda flowers. ⁴⁸ Wreaths of the same flowers were strewn over the sheet that covered the body and there were the auspicious pots of water placed bedside. ⁴⁹ The doors of the room were closed and the windows were shut fast with their latches. Lamps cast a dim light on the white washed walls and the corpse was lying as a man in sleep with the suppressed breathing of his mouth and nostrils.

⁵⁰ There was the bright full moon shining with her delightful luster, and the beauty of the palace would make Indra's paradise blush. It was as charming as the center of the lotus of Brahma's birthplace, and it was as silent as dumbness or a dummy itself, and as beautiful as the fair moon in her fullness.

Chapter 57 — Yogis' Astral Bodies; Phenomena of Dreaming

¹ Vasishta continued:—

There they saw the younger Leela of Viduratha who had arrived there after her death and before the death of that king.² She was in her former habit and mode with the same body, and the same tone and tenor of her mind. She was also as beautiful in all her features as in her former graceful form and figure when living.³ She was the same in every part of her body and wore the same clothes as before. She had the same ornaments on her body, with the difference that it was sitting quietly in the same place, and not moving about as before.

⁴ She kept waving her pretty fan over the king's corpse, gracing the ground below like the rising moon brightening the skies above.⁵ She sat quietly, reclining her moonlike face on the palm of her left hand. Decorated with shining gems, she appeared like a bed of flowers blooming with new blossoms.

⁶ With glances from her beautiful eyes, she shed showers of flowers on all sides. The brightness of her body shone with the beams of the ethereal moon.⁷ She approached her lord of men like Goddess Lakshmi appears before God Vishnu, and with the heaps of flowers around her, she looked like Vasanta Lakshmi (Lakshmi in the aspect of the blissful Goddess of Spring).⁸ Her eyes were fixed on her husband's face as if she was pondering his future well-being. Thoughts of his present sorrowful state spread a melancholy over her face like that of the waning moon.

⁹ They saw the maiden who was unable to see them. Their trust was in truth, so they saw everything clearly, while her views being otherwise, she could not discern their spiritual forms.

¹⁰ Rama said, "You have said, O sage, that the first Leela had returned there in her fancy and spiritual form, by the favor of the goddess of wisdom.¹¹ Why do you now describe her as having a body? I want to know how it came to her."

¹² Vasishta replied:—

Rama, what is this body of Leela? It is no more true than a false imagination of her gross spirit, like that of water in the mirage.¹³ It is spirit alone that fills the world, and all bodies are creations of fancy. This spirit is the Intellect of God, and full of joy in itself.

¹⁴ The same understanding which Leela had of herself at her end accompanied her to her future state. The same notion of her body followed her there, even though the body itself was reduced to dust, like ice melted in water.¹⁵ Spiritual bodies are also sometimes liable to fall into error and think themselves to be material bodies, just like we mistake a rope for the serpent.

¹⁶ The belief in anyone's materiality, composed of earth and other elements, is as false as believing rabbits have horns on their heads.¹⁷ Whoever thinks he has become a stag in his dream has no need to seek another stag so that he can compare himself with it.¹⁸ An untruth appears as truth at one time and disappears at another, just like the error of a snake in a rope vanishes upon the knowledge of its falsehood.¹⁹ So the knowledge of the reality of all things in the minds of the unenlightened is dispersed in the minds of the enlightened upon conviction of their unreality.²⁰ But the ignorant who have a belief in the reality of this world of dreams also believe in the reincarnation of the animal soul, like the revolution of the world on its own axis.

²¹ Rama asked, “If the bodies of yogis are of a spiritual nature, how is it that they are seen walking about in the sight of men?”

²² Vasishta replied:—

A yogi may take various forms upon himself without the destruction of his former body, like the human soul in a dream may deem itself transformed into a stag or any other being without undergoing any change in its spiritual essence.²³ A yogi’s spiritual body is invisible to all, although he may make it appear as visible to their sight. It is like particles of frost seen in sunbeams, and like the appearance of a white spot in autumn sky.

²⁴ Nobody can easily discern the features of a yogi’s body, nor are they discernible by other yogis. They are as imperceptible as the features of a bird flying in the air.²⁵ It is from the error of judgment that men think some yogis are dead and others living, but their spiritual bodies are never subject to death or common sight.²⁶ The embodied soul is subject to errors from which the souls of yogis are free because their knowledge of truth has cleansed the mistake of a snake in the rope from their souls.

²⁷ What is this body and from where does it come? What is its existence or destruction? What is lasting remains forever and is freed from the ignorance it had before.

²⁸ Rama said, “Does the embodied soul takes a spiritual form or is it something else? Tell me this and remove my doubt.”

²⁹ Vasishta said:—

I have told you this repeatedly, my good Rama! How is it that you do not understand it yet? There exists only the spiritual body and the material form is nothing.

³⁰ It requires a habit of constant meditation in order to know your spiritual state and subdue your sense of materiality. As you abstain from your sense of materiality, so you attain the spiritual state.³¹ Then there will be an end of your sense of gravity and solidity of objects, like the visions of a dreaming man disappear when he awakens.

³² The body of a yogi becomes as light and subtle as the impermanent appearances in a dream.³³ In his dreaming rambles, a man feels the lightness of his body. Similarly, a yogi finds his solid body is able to fly in all places like air.³⁴ The expectation of the long life of a master in his material body is realized in the spiritual one, after the corpse has been burnt away.³⁵ Everyone must assume his spiritual frame afterwards, but the yogi finds it in his lifetime by the enlightenment of his consciousness.³⁶ As a man upon waking from sleep remembers having an intellectual form in his dream state, so the yogi is conscious of his spiritual body in his own intellect.

³⁷ The notion of the physical body is a mere fallacy, like that of the snake in a rope. Therefore nothing is lost by the loss of this body, nor is anything gained by its production and regeneration.

³⁸ Rama said, “Now tell me sage, what did the palace residents think the second Leela to be? Did they see her as an embodied being or a bodiless apparition appearing before them?”

³⁹ Vasishta answered:—

They took the sorrowful queen to be some friend of the king, having come from some place they knew

not what or where.⁴⁰ They did not like to examine the matter because it is the nature of the ignorant, like that of brutes, to believe what they see without investigation or consideration of its nature.

⁴¹ As a stone flung at random flies off from its mark, so brutish and ignorant folks go astray from hitting the true mark of a thing placed before them.⁴² We know not what becomes of the objects of our dream, or where they go when we awaken. Such is the case with our material bodies that are as false and fleeting as our delusive dreams.

⁴³ Rama said, "Tell me sage, where does a hill that we dream of hide upon our waking? Kindly remove my doubt like the wind disperses the clouds of autumn."

⁴⁴ Vasishta said:—

All things that appear in dream or reside in our desires, such as a hill or the like, are absorbed in the consciousness from where they sprang, just like the motion of bodies subsides in the air that gives them vibration.⁴⁵ As the motion of the air mixes with the fixed ether, so dreams and desires set in the unchanging soul from where they arose.

⁴⁶ Our dreams, like our knowledge of all other things, are made known to us by our consciousness, the nature of which is as unknown to us as that of the inner soul.⁴⁷ We do not find our dreams or desires to be distinct from our awareness of them. They appertain to it in the same way as fluidity to water and motion to air.⁴⁸ Whatever difference may appear to exist between dreams and our awareness of them is the effect of sheer ignorance. This gross ignorance is the characteristic of this world known as the phantom of fancy.⁴⁹ It is impossible to conceive of two co-eternal and co-existent causes together, so it is wrong to suppose the dream as a distinct existence or anything other than an act of our consciousness.

⁵⁰ There is no difference whatever between the dreaming and waking states. In dream we see a false city appearing to view. In waking you behold the unreal world standing as a reality before you.

⁵¹ Nothing can be truly existent that appears as true in a dream. This being always true of what is seen in a dream, it is likewise so of external phenomena that we see in our daydreams.⁵² As a hill in a dream immediately disappears into airy nothing, so the material world sooner or later disappears into nothing by thinking on its nothingness.

⁵³ Some see a yogi arising in the air; others as a dead body lying on the ground. This is according to one's belief in his spiritual or material body. Every one sees him in his own way.

⁵⁴ The view of the phenomenal world as distinct from the Unity is as false as a seeing a delusion or a magic show, or a dream or delirium of the great illusion.⁵⁵ Others who are blinded by similar errors, after being awakened from cessation of physical senses at death, entertain the notion of their reproduction as in a dream. But the spiritual body of the yogi shines and soars upward, after passing over the mirage of the false appearances of the world.

Chapter 58 — The Two Leelas See Padma Revived

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Meantime, the goddess of wisdom stopped the course of Viduratha's life, like we stop the flight of our minds at will.

² Leela said, "Tell me, goddess, how much time has lapsed since the corpse of the king was laid in this tomb, and I was absorbed in my deep meditation?"

³ The goddess replied:—

A month has passed since these your maid servants have been waiting here watching your body, which they thought lay asleep in the room. ⁴ Hear, excellent lady, what has become of your body after a fortnight when it became rotten and evaporated in the air. ⁵ Seeing your lifeless corpse, as cold as frost lying on the ground and turning as dry as a log of wood, or rather as a withered leaf on the floor, ⁶ the royal ministers thought you had committed suicide and removed your putrid carcass out of the room. ⁷ What more shall I say than they laid your corpse on a heap of sandalwood and, having set fire to the pile with a sprinkling of ghee, they quickly reduced it to ashes.

⁸ Then the family raised a loud cry that their queen was dead. They wept bitterly for sometime, after which they performed your funeral ceremonies. ⁹ Now when they will see you coming here in your same body, they must be astonished and think that you have returned from the next world of the dead.

¹⁰ Now my daughter, when you appear before them in this your purer and spiritual form, they must look upon you with astonishment. ¹¹ For you have not your former form at present, but it is changed to a purer one, agreeably to the desire and temperament of your mind. ¹² For everyone sees everything outside himself according to his inner feelings as, for example, the sight of shadowy ghosts is frequent to children who have a fear of devils at heart.

¹³ Now, O beautiful lady! You are an adept in spiritualism and you have a spiritual body on you. You have forgotten and forsaken your former body and all the desires coexisting with it. ¹⁴ Those who see spirit do not see material bodies. Their intelligent view is to see material bodies in the light of autumn clouds which are void of substance. ¹⁵ Upon attainment of the spiritual state, the material body becomes like an empty cloud, or like a flower without its fragrance. ¹⁶ When a man of pure desire is conscious of his attainment of the spiritual state, he loses the memory of his material body, like a youth forgets his embryonic state.

¹⁷ It is now the thirty-first day that we have arrived at this place, and I have caused these maid servants to fall into a deep sleep this morning. ¹⁸ Now Leela, let us go before the willful Leela and use our will to let her discover the form of the truthful Leela and see how she behaves towards you.

¹⁹ Vasishta said:—

So saying, they wished themselves to be perceived by the willful Leela, and stood before her in their ethereal forms of goddess and her inspired dame. ²⁰ At this instant, the Leela of Viduratha looked at them with staring eyes and found the room lighted up by the full luster of their bodies. ²¹ The apartment seemed to be lighted by the bright orb of the moon, and its wall seemed washed with liquid gold. The ground floor shone as if paved with ice, and all was full of splendor.

²² After seeing the brightness of the bed chamber, Leela looked up at the goddess and the other Leela and rising respectfully before them, she fell at their feet. ²³ “Be victorious, O ye goddesses!” she said. “You have blessed me with your visit. You who know all, know that I have come here first to prepare your way.” ²⁴ As she was speaking this way, they received her with good grace, and then all three in their youthful bloom sat together on bedding, like luxuriant vines on the snow capped peak of Mount Meru.

²⁵ The goddess said, “Daughter, tell us how you came here before us. How you have been, and what you have seen on your way here?”

²⁶ The younger Leela answered, “As I lay unconscious on that spot, upon the shock of my death, I was enveloped in darkness like the new moon and I felt myself burned away by the flame of the funeral fire. ²⁷ I had no sense or thought of anything good or bad, but remained with my eyes closed under my eyelids. ²⁸ Then immediately after I had recovered from my trance of death, O great goddess, I found myself assuming (by mistake a new body agreeably to my former impression) and moving into the midst of the sky.”

²⁹ “I mounted on the vehicle of winds and was borne like fragrance to this mansion through the ethereal space. ³⁰ I found this house guarded by its warders and lighted with lamps, having a costly bedstead placed in midst of it. ³¹ I am looking upon this corpse, my husband Viduratha, who has been sleeping here with his body covered under flowers like the spring god in a flower garden. ³² I thought he was taking his rest after the fatigue of the warfare and I did not want to disturb his repose in this place. ³³ I have now related to you, my gracious goddesses, all that I have seen and thought of since I have been restored to my new life.”

³⁴ The goddess spoke, “Now I tell you Leela, who has such beautiful eyes and moves like a swan, that I will raise the corpse of the king to life from his bed.” ³⁵ Saying so, she breathed the breath of life like the lotus lets off its fragrance. It fled into the nostrils of the carcass like a creeping plant crawls into a hole. ³⁶ It entered into the heart through the vital sheath, as wind penetrates into the hole of bamboo. The breath of life was filled with desires, like the waves of the sea sparkle with pearls.

³⁷ The infusion of life added color of the face and body of King Padma like rainwater refreshes the fading lotus in a drought. ³⁸ By degrees the members of the body became renovated, like a garden with its returning flowering season, and like the sides of a hill become green with fresh grown bushes and vines. ³⁹ The body of the king shone like the queen of the stars with all her digits of the full moon when she enlightens the whole world with the beams of her radiant face. ⁴⁰ All his limbs became as tender and dewy as the branches of trees in spring. They regained their bright and golden color like the flowers of the spring season. ⁴¹ He opened his eyes which were as clear as the sky, their two pupils rolling like two orbs of light enlightening the world with their charming and auspicious beams. ⁴² He raised his body, as if Vindhya Mountain was uplifting its head, and cried with a grave and hoarse voice, “Who waits there?”

⁴³ The two Leelas responded saying, “Your commands.” He saw the two Leelas in attendance upon him, humbly bending themselves at his feet. ⁴⁴ Both were of the same form and features and of like demeanor and deportment towards him. They were alike to one another in their voice and action, as in

their joy and gladness at his rising.

⁴⁵ Then looking at them he asked, “What are you and who is she?”

At this the elder Leela responded, “Please hear what I have to say. ⁴⁶ I am Leela, your former consort. I was joined with you as two in one, as sounds and their senses are combined together. ⁴⁷ The other Leela is only a reflection of me, cast by my free will for your service.”

⁴⁸ “The lady sitting here beside the bed is the goddess of wisdom, the blessed Saraswati and mother of the three worlds. Set her on the golden seat before you. ⁴⁹ It is by virtue of our great merit that she has presented herself to our sight and brought us back from other worlds to your presence in this place.”

⁵⁰ Hearing this, the lotus-eyed king rose from his seat and with wreaths of flowers and a strap of cloth hung about his neck, he prostrated himself at her feet. ⁵¹ He exclaimed, “I hail you, O divine Saraswati who does confer all blessings on mankind. Please confer on me the blessings of understanding and riches with a long life.”

⁵² As he was saying so, the goddess touched him with her hand and said, “My son, be possessed of your desired blessings and gain your blessed abode in future. ⁵³ Let all evils and evil thoughts be far from you, and all your discomforts be dispersed from this place. Let an everlasting joy descend in your hearts and a great population fill your happy realm. May all prosperity attend on you forever.”

Chapter 59 — Padma & Two Leelas Live Out Their Liberated Lives

¹ Vasishta said:—

“Be it so,” said Saraswati and disappeared into the air, and people awoke that morning with their king restored to life. ² Padma embraced the reborn Leela, who embraced him in her turn. They were exceedingly glad in their coming to life again.

³ The palace was filled with loud shouts of joy like those of giddy revelry. Citizens were full of mirth and merry, song and music. ⁴ Shouts of victory and sounds of cheers and joys resounded in the air. People elated with joy thronged at the royal courtyard to see their king. ⁵ The spirits of the masters and demigod vidyadharas dropped flowers from above, and the sound of drums, kettles, trumpets and conches resounded on all sides. ⁶ Outside, elephants roared aloud with uplifted trunks. Crowds of women filled the inner courtyard with loud rejoicing. ⁷ Men bearing presents for the king fell upon one another at their mutual clashing. Others wearing flowery garlands on their heads and hairs moved gracefully all about. ⁸ Red turbans of joy on the heads of chiefs and a host of citizens, and the waving of the reddish palms of dancing girls, filled the sky with a bed of red lotuses. ⁹ The ground also was strewn with rosy flowers, by foot-falls of dancers with their reddish soles. The hanging earrings of ballet girls that flourished with the movement of their heads and shoulders waved in the air like flowers of gold. ¹⁰ Silken veils, like autumn clouds, covered the faces of fairy maidens in their dancing. They glittered like so many moons shining in the courtyard. ¹¹ Then people retired to their respective homes with loud applause for the queen’s return with her husband from the other world.

¹² King Padma heard of his adventures from the reports of his subjects, and made his purificatory ablution with the waters of the four seas of the earth. ¹³ Then royal ministers and ministerial brahmins joined together in the act of his installation, like a synod of immortals meeting at the inauguration of Indra.

¹⁴ The two Leelas continued in company with the king, describing with delight their respective adventures and the wisdom they had gathered thereby. ¹⁵ It was in this way that by grace of the genius of wisdom and their own experience, this King Padma and his two queens obtained prosperity equal to that of the three worlds. ¹⁶ The king, filled with the wisdom given to him by the goddess, in company with his consorts, continued to rule over his kingdom for thousands of years. ¹⁷ In their state of living liberation they reigned on earth for myriads of years. Then, receiving the perfect knowledge of the holy masters, they became wholly liberated after their deaths.

¹⁸ The happy pair having jointly reigned over their delightful realm of ever increasing population, and which was graced by learned men and righteous people, knowing their own rights and duties of doing good to all mankind, became freed from the burden of their state affairs forever.

Chapter 60 — Time & Reality Are Relative

¹ Vasishta said:—

Prince, I have told you this story in order to remove your error of the phenomenal world. Remember this tale of Leela and renounce your misconception of the gross material world.

² The substantiality of phenomena is a nothing by itself. No pains are required to invalidate it. It is hard to disprove a reality, but there is no difficulty to efface a falsehood from the mind.³ True knowledge consists in seeing phenomena as void and knowing the one emptiness to the sole unity and real entity. In the end, one loses himself in this infinite emptiness.

⁴ When the self-born Brahma created the world from nothing, without the aid of any material or elemental body, it is obvious that there was an eternal void and that all these are only manifestations of the empty soul.⁵ The same creative soul spread the seeds of its consciousness into the stream of creation, and these produce the images as they constantly appear to us, unless we take the pains to repress them.⁶ The appearance of the world is only a perspective of the environment that is Divine Consciousness. It is contained in the small space of human consciousness within the soul, like in a transparent particle of sand.

⁷ This being the case, then what is the essence of this false conception, and what are our desires to rely on it, and what can be the meaning of either destiny or necessity?⁸ This entire whole that is visible to the eye is only false appearance, like magic. There is no truth or substance in a magic show.

⁹ Rama said, “What a wonderful explanation of the world that you have given me! It refreshes my soul, like moonbeams revive the blades of grass that have been burnt down by a fire.¹⁰ After so long, I have come to know the truly knowable: such as what and how it is, and the manner how, from where, and when it is to be known.¹¹ I have my peace and rest in pondering on this wonderful theory, and your elucidation of the doctrines of the Sruti scriptures.”

¹² “But tell me this one thing to remove my doubt, as my ears are never satisfied drinking the nectar-like juice of your sweet speech.¹³ How much time elapsed during the three births of Leela’s husband? Was it the duration of a day and night in one case, and of a month in another, and the period of a whole year in the case of Viduratha?¹⁴ Or did any one of them live for many years, and whether they were of short or longer durations according to the measure of men, gods or Brahma.”

¹⁵ “Please sage, kindly tell me this, because little hearing is not sufficient for me, like a drop of water is not enough to moisten the parched ground of summer heat.”

¹⁶ Vasishta said:—

Know sinless Rama, that whoever thinks of anything in any manner at any place or time, he comes to feel the same in the same manner, and in the same place and time.

¹⁷ Take for instance a destructive poison that becomes like ambrosia to venomous insects that take it for their dainty nourishment. Similarly, an enemy turns to a friend by your friendly behavior to him.

¹⁸ The manner in which any being considers itself and all others for a length of time becomes the same they appear by its mode and habit of thinking, as if it were by an act of destiny.¹⁹ The manner in which the active intellect represents a thing in the soul is imprinted in its consciousness of its own nature.

²⁰ When our consciousness represents a twinkling of the eye to extend over a kalpa age, we are led to believe a single moment is an age of long duration. ²¹ When we are conscious of or think a kalpa age to be only a twinkling, the kalpa age is thought to pass as quickly as a moment. A long night in our unconscious sleep appears as a moment upon waking. ²² The night appears to be a long age to the long suffering sick, while it seems like a moment in the nightly revels of the merry. So a moment appears as an age in the dream, and an age passes off as a moment in the state of unconsciousness.

²³ The notions of the resurrection of the dead and of one's reincarnation and being reborn in a new body, of his being a boy, youth or old man, and of his migrations to different places at the distance of hundreds of leagues are all only the phenomena of sleep and retrospective views in a dream.

²⁴ King Harish Chandra is said to have thought a single night to be a dozen years. The prince Lavana passed his long life of a hundred years over the space of a single night. ²⁵ What was a moment to Brahma was the entire age of the life-time of Manu. What is a day to Vishnu constitutes the long period of the lifetime of Brahma. ²⁶ The entire lifetime of Vishnu is only one day of sedate Shiva. One whose mind is motionless in fixed meditation is unconscious of the change of days and nights and of seasons and years.

²⁷ There is no substance and no substantive world in the mind of the meditative yogi to whom the sweet pleasures of the world appear bitter, as they are thought to be the bane of his true joy. ²⁸ The bitter seems to be sweet by being thought to be so. What is unfavorable becomes favorable as that which is friendly comes to be unfriendly by being taken in their opposite senses.

²⁹ Thus Rama, it is by habitual meditation that we gain the abstract knowledge of things. We forget what we learned if we do not repeat and practice. ³⁰ By their habit of thinking, some find everything in a state of positive rest, while the unthinking fall into the errors of the ever-moving world, like a boat passenger thinks the land and objects on the shore are moving around him. ³¹ The unthinking part of mankind, and those wandering in their error, think the world to be moving about them. But the thinking mind sees the whole as an empty void and full of phantoms, like one sees in his dream.

³² It is false thought that shows white as black and blue. It is mistaken judgment that makes one rejoice or sorrow at the events of life. ³³ The unthinking are led to imagine a house where there is none. The ignorant are infatuated with a belief in ghosts, as they are the killers of their lives. ³⁴ It is reminiscence or memory that raises the dream as its consort and that represents things as they are presented to it by the thoughts of the waking state. ³⁵ The dream is as unreal as the empty void abiding in the hollow receptacle of the intellectual soul. It spreads over the mind like the shadow of a cloud and fills it with images like those of a puppet-show under a magic lantern.

³⁶ Know the phenomena of the revolving worlds to be no more in reality than mere effects of the vibrations of the mind in the empty space of the soul, like the motions and gestures of imagined hobgoblins to the sight of children. ³⁷ All this is only a magical illusion without any substance or basis of itself. All these imposing scenes of vision are only the empty and aerial sights of dreams.

³⁸ Just as a waking man beholds the wonderful world before him, so does a sleeping man see the same. Both of them resemble the unconscious pillar that finds images of statues engraved upon it.

³⁹ The Divine Spirit's great monument is the figure of the created world carved in itself, as if I see a

troop of soldiers passing before me in my dream.⁴⁰ This waking world sleeps in the soul of Brahma and rises in his mind like the plant world springs from sap lying hidden in the earth that gives it its growth and spring bloom.⁴¹ Likewise, creation lies hidden in and springs from the Supreme Spirit, like the brightness of gold ornaments is contained in and comes out of the material metal.

⁴² Every atom of creation is settled in the fullness of Divine Spirit, just like all the members of the body are set in the person of their possessor.⁴³ The visible world has the same relation to the bodiless and undivided spirit of God as one fighting in a dream bears to his enemy (both believe in their reality, while both are unreal in their bodies).⁴⁴ Thus the real and unreal, the spirit and the world, all dwindle into emptiness at the great fantasy annihilation of creation, except the consciousness of God which comprises the world in itself.

⁴⁵ The causality of the One and the unreality of the world cannot both be true (since nothing unreal can come out of the real). Except Brahman, there is no other cause, whether Brahma the Creator or any other. The Divine Consciousness is the only cause and substance of its productions.

⁴⁶ Rama asked, "But what caused the citizens, counselors and ministers of Viduratha's royal house to appear in Leela's vision in the same manner as that of her lord the king?"

⁴⁷ Vasishta said:—

All other thoughts are associated with the principal one in the intellect, in the same manner as high winds accompany a storm.

⁴⁸ The association of thoughts follows one another in a long and perpetual train and, one after the other, caused the succession of the sights of the ministers, citizens and subjects of the king in Leela's vision.⁴⁹ In this way the thought that the king was born of such and such a family naturally introduced the thoughts of his palace and city and of those that dwelt in them.⁵⁰ It is vain to inquire into the cause and manner of consciousness and each combination of its thoughts. This is why it is called the gem of thoughts (*chintamani*, the wish-fulfilling jewel). It is always accompanied with its radiating thoughts like a brilliant gem with its rays.

⁵¹ Padma thought to become a king like Viduratha, properly discharging the duties of his royal family. This constant thought of himself as such cast the mold of the mind and manner of Viduratha upon him.

⁵² All animate beings of every kind are only models of their own thoughts, like looking-glasses showing their inner reflections to sight.⁵³ The mind fixed in meditation on God remains unshaken amidst the turmoil of the world and is filled with perfect rest and preserves the composure of the soul until its final liberation from the bondage of the body.

⁵⁴ But thoughts of fluctuating enjoyments of this world alternately represented in the mirror of the mind are like the shadows of passing scenes upon a looking glass.⁵⁵ Therefore it requires a great force of mind to overcome its worldly thoughts and turn them to the channel of truth, just like the greater force of a river's main current leads its tributaries to the ocean.⁵⁶ But when worldly and spiritual thoughts press upon the mind with equal force, the mind is greatly disturbed. Then the greater force leads it onward in one way or the other.⁵⁷ Such is the case with all the myriads of beings, whether they are living, dead or to come to life. The same accidents take place in the particles of all human minds.

⁵⁸ All this is the empty sphere of Consciousness, all quiet and without any basis or substratum. It is neither peopled nor filled by anything except its own native thoughts. ⁵⁹ All these appear as dreams, even in our unsleeping states, and have no form or figure in the sight of the wise. The perception of their positive existence is only a misconception of their negative nonexistence. ⁶⁰ There really exists only one omnipotent and all pervasive Spirit which shows itself in diverse forms like flowers, fruits and tree leaves all appearing from the same woody trunk. ⁶¹ He who knows the uncreated Brahman to be the measurer, measure and the thing measured to be all one and himself can never forget this certain truth of unity, nor ever fall into the dualism error of cause and effect.

⁶² There is only one Being (*sat*) who is holy and without beginning and who, though he appears to have forms of light and darkness, and of space and time, never rises or sets anywhere. He is without beginning, middle or end. He remains like a vast expanse of water exhibiting itself in its waves and currents. ⁶³ The notion of myself, yourself and the objective world are only expressions of our perverted understandings. It is only ignorance within the sheath of the mind, according as it imagines it to be, that shows the One as many.

Chapter 61 — On the Origin of the World

¹ Rama said, “Please sage, explain to me how this error of believing in an objective world arises without a cause for such error?”

² Vasishta said:—

Because the knowledge of all things is contained in our consciousness, it is plain that this eternal and uncreated self is the cause and container of them all at all times.

³ That which has an insight or intuitive knowledge of all things, which are expressed by words and their meanings, is Brahma the soul and no other. Nothing that is meant by any significant term has a different form of its own. ⁴ As the quality of a bracelet is not different from its substance of gold, nor that of a wave from the water, so the expansion of the world is not distinct from the spirit of God.

⁵ It is Brahma who is manifest in the form of the world, and not the world that appears as God. Similarly, gold displays itself in the form of a bracelet. It is not that the bracelet takes on the nature of gold. ⁶ As the whole is displayed in all its various parts, so the entire consciousness shows itself in all the various operations of the mind composing the world. ⁷ It is ignorance of the infinite and eternal spirit of God that exhibits itself as myself, yourself and the world itself in the mind.

⁸ As the shades of different colors in gems are not different from the gems, so the notions of one's self and the world are the shades inherent in the same intellect. ⁹ Like waves appearing on the surface of the still waters of the deep, this so-called and meaningless creation is but a phase in Divine Consciousness.

¹⁰ The Spirit of God does not reside in creation. Creation does not exist in the Divine Spirit. There is no such relation of part and whole between God and creation.

¹¹ One should meditate on his own consciousness as the form of Divine Consciousness. In his own consciousness of it, he will feel Divinity stirring within himself, as if stirred by the breath of a breeze.

¹² The minute particle of the empty intellect will then appear in its wonderful form of an emptiness within the empty space of his conscious mind. ¹³ He then finds this empty form stirring in himself like an airy spirit with its property of feeling, like feeling the breath of air.

¹⁴ Then God assumes a luminous form as the state of His own substantiality, and this is placed as a spark of fire in the sheath of the intellect. ¹⁵ The light then melts into water which is the same substance as itself. This fluid substance contains the property of taste. ¹⁶ The same is condensed in the form of a solid substance, which is the same with the Divine Mind. This becomes the earth bearing in its bosom the property of smell. ¹⁷ Again God represents Himself to our intellect as one infinite and uniform duration. Measures in seconds and other divisions are only manifestations of the succession of our thoughts.

¹⁸ The other ways in which God presents Himself to our intellects are that, He is holy, infinitely glorious, seen within us, and without beginning, middle or end. He has no rising or setting and exists of Himself without a substratum and as the substratum of all. ¹⁹ This knowledge of God is bliss itself, and His creation is identical with himself. Ignorance of God leads to knowledge of the objective world, and its extinction is the way to know the eternity of His existence.

²⁰ Brahma is conceived in our souls as He is represented to us by our consciousness, just like in our all comprehensive minds we know all other things according to our ideas of them.²¹ Of these, only those things are true which we derive from our well-directed understanding. All those are untrue which the mind paints to us from the impressions of senses and the meanings of words that are incapable of expressing the nature of the indefinable and indescribable God.

²² Know the unreal world which appears as real, and the reality of God which appears as unreality, to be of the manner of air in motion and at rest. The visible world is like moving air that appears true to those who have no knowledge of the invisible God, who is as calm as the still air underlying the ethereal air and its motions.

²³ A thing may appear different from another, and yet be the same with it. The light in the fire is the same fire. So the visible world arising from invisible Brahma appears as another reality even though it is same as the reality of God.²⁴ All things whether being or not being exist in God as their invisible and unknown source and cause. Just like clay in the earth is the cause of the would-be doll, the growing tree of a future carving, and the black powder of an ink not yet made.²⁵ One thing is exhibited as another in the great desert of the Divine Mind that shows the phenomena of the world like figures in a mirage.²⁶ The wise soul thinks this world as one with its source, Divine Consciousness. In the same way he considers a tree no way different from its parent seed.

²⁷ As the sweetness of milk, the pungency of pepper, the fluidity of water, and the motion of winds are the inseparable properties of their substances,²⁸ so this creation is inseparable from the spirit of Brahma. It is a mere form of the one Supreme Soul, beside which there is nothing in reality.²⁹ This world is the manifestation of the luster of the gem of the Divine Mind. It has no other cause except the essence of Brahma, which is nothing other than its material cause, the Supreme Soul itself.³⁰ The will, the mind, the individual soul, and its consciousness are all the offspring of Divine exercise of Consciousness. There is nothing that can be produced by exertion of any power without direction of Consciousness.

³¹ There is nothing that rises or sets anywhere, or appears or disappears at anytime. Everything is unborn at all times and lies quiet in Divine Consciousness which is as solid as a massive rock.³² It is imagination to explain things as formations of multitudes of combinations of atoms and to suppose every particle to be composed of minute infinitesimals because none of them could combine of themselves except by direction of the eternal mind.³³ All force resides in some living principle, just as the waking, sleeping and dreaming states appertain to the individual soul, and as the undulation of waves exists in the water or the current of the stream that lies hidden in it.

³⁴ When the individual soul feels renunciation towards worldly enjoyments, scriptures say it has reached its highest perfection.³⁵ As the mind is freed from its choice and dislike of things, so the soul is liberated by avoiding its egoism and personality. Then it no longer is conscious of the pain that attends future birth and reincarnation.³⁶ Whoever in his understanding comes to know this state of supreme and inexpressible joy, he is sure to overcome all his worldly appetites that bind him fast to this earth.³⁷ But whoever labors in his mind with affections to this world, he has to wander in it continually like in the whirlpool of a stream, and he destroys the supreme joy of his soul in his continuous turmoil.

³⁸ It was the lotus-born Brahma who was first conscious of his egoism and who, by the will of his mind, spread out this universe.

Chapter 62 — Fate Is What Determines the Result of Action

¹ Vasishta continued:—

These myriads of worlds and millennia of kalpa ages are no more real in themselves than our false computation of the millionth part of an atom or the twinkling of an eye.² It is our error that represents them as true to us, though they are as false as our calculation of those infinitesimals.

³ These creations, whether past or future, follow one another in endless succession like overflowing currents of water with all the waves, eddies and whirlpools in them.⁴ The idea of these created worlds is as false as a delusive mirage that presents a stream of water flowing with strings of flowers fallen from the plants on the shore.⁵ Perceived creation is as baseless as a city in a dream or a magic show, or like a mountain in fiction or an imaginary castle in the air.

⁶ Rama said, “Sage, the drift of your reasoning leads to the establishment of the identity of the perceived creation with the creator, and that this unity of both is the belief of the learned and wise.

⁷ Now tell me, what do you have to say with regard to material bodies as they exist on earth? What causes the body to be subject to the causes unknown to inner spirits?”

⁸ Vasishta replied:—

Divine Consciousness has an active, supernatural energy called the predominant Decree, Fate or Destiny which must come to pass and bear its command over all our actions and desires.

⁹ She is invested from the beginning with irresistible and multifarious powers. She destines the manner in which everything is to take place and continue forever.¹⁰ She is the essential cause of all essence, and the chief mover of the intellect. She is called the great power of powers and remains as the great viewer of all things.¹¹ She is called the great agency and the great producer of all events. She is known as the chief mover of occurrences, and she is the soul and source of all accidents. (*chit shakti*, power of consciousness; *Mahasatta*, Great Existence; *Mahachiti*, Great Intelligence; *Mahashakti*, Great Power; *Mahadrishti*, Great Vision; *Mahakriya*, Great Doing; *Mahodbhava*, Great Becoming, and *Mahaspanda*, Great Vibration).

¹² She whirls worlds like straw and bears her sway over gods and demons. She commands the naaga snakes and the mountain monsters to the end of time.¹³ Sometimes she is thought of as an attribute of divine essence, remaining pictured in her ever varying colors in the hollow emptiness of Divine Consciousness.

¹⁴ For the understanding of those ignorant in spiritual knowledge, the learned have explained that Brahma the Creator is identical with the Spirit of Brahma, and by destiny they mean his creation.

¹⁵ The immovable spirit of Brahma appears to be full of moving creatures. The infinity of divine existence seems to teem with finite creation in the midst of it, like a grove of trees growing under the vault of the hollow sky.¹⁶ The unawake spirit of God reflects various images in itself (as in a dream), like the reflection of a dense forest in the lens of a crystal stone. The creator Brahma, in the hollow sphere of the Divine Mind, understood these reflections as the prototype of the destined creation.

¹⁷ Consciousness naturally exhibits a variety of forms in itself, just as the body of an embodied person exhibits its various members. The lotus-born Brahma took these various forms in itself to be the

several parts in the great body of the cosmos.¹⁸ This foreknowledge of events imprinted in the Consciousness of God is called Destiny which extends over all things at all times.

¹⁹ Destiny comprises the knowledge of the causes that move, support and sustain all things in their proper order, and that such and such a cause must produce such and such effect forever.²⁰ This destiny is the force or mobile power that moves all men, animals, plants and inanimate creations. It is the beginning or primary source of time and the motion of all beings.²¹ It is combined with Divine Power, and this combination of them into one is the cause of the production and existence of the world.

²² It is the union or conformity of human effort with the course of destiny or decree of God that is productive of certain ends which are respectively called their destiny and destined effects.

²³ What more do you have to ask me, Rama, with regard to destiny and self-exertion when I tell you that it is destined that all beings take themselves to their proper actions, in the destined or prescribed manner, in order to bring about the desired result?

²⁴ A person who relies on predestination, sitting idly and quietly under the belief that he is being fed by his fixed lot, is said to depend on his destiny alone (a fatalist).²⁵ By sitting idly and waiting on Providence for the whole of his life, he gains nothing and soon comes to lose his good sense and energy, and finally dies from the famine of his sole reliance upon destiny.²⁶ It is quite certain that whatever is destined must surely come to pass of its own accord, and that it is impossible to prevent it by the foresight of gods and men.²⁷ Yet the intelligent ought not cease to exert their activity and only rely on their fates. They must know that it is our effort that brings destiny into action.

²⁸ Destiny is inactive and abortive, without an active power to enforce it to action. It is human activity that produces effect or production in nature by the help of destiny.²⁹ Depend on destiny and remain both deaf and dumb as a doll. Be inactive and become dull and torpid as a block. Say, what is the good of this vital breath, unless it has its vitality and activity?

³⁰ It is good to sit quietly by restraining even the vital breath in yoga meditation. With such practice one can obtain his liberation. Otherwise, an inactive man is not to be called a yogi but an idler and a beggar.³¹ Both activity and inactivity are good for our liberation from pain, but the high minded esteem that to be better which saves them from the greater pain of regeneration.³² This inactive destiny, meditation, is a type of the latent Brahma, and who so leans towards it by laying aside his busy course is truly installed in the supremely holy state of highest joy.³³ Inert destiny resides everywhere in the manner of Brahma, the latent soul in all bodies, and evolves itself in various shapes by means of activity in all its productions.

Chapter 63 — No Duality; Only the Appearance of Forms of the One Divine Mind

¹ Vasishta continued:—

The essence of Brahma is all in all and ever remains in every manner in everything in all places. It is omnipotence, omniform and the lord God of all.² This essence is the Spirit or Soul whose omnipotence develops itself sometimes in the form of intellectual activity and sometimes in the tranquility of soul. Sometimes it shows itself in the movement of bodies, and at others in the force of the passions and emotions of the soul. Sometimes as something in the form of creation, and at another as nothing in the annihilation of the world.

³ Whenever it realizes itself anywhere in any form or state, it is then viewed in the same manner at the same place and time.⁴ The absolute omnipotence manifests itself as it likes and appears to us. All its powers are exhibited in one form or another to our view and understandings.

⁵ These powers are of many kinds, and are primarily concentrated in the Divine Soul or Spirit. The potentialities are the Active and Passive powers, also the Rational and Irrational and all others.

⁶ These varieties of powers are the inventions of the learned for their own purpose and understanding. But there is no such distinction in Divine Consciousness.⁷ There is no duality in reality. The difference consists in shape and not substance. Thus the waves in the waters of the sea and the bracelets formed of gold are no more than modifications of the same substances.⁸ The form of a thing is said to be so and so not because of its reality but because of its appearance. We affirm that a rope is a snake, but we have neither the outward perception nor inner thought of a snake in it. Hence all appearances are delusions of sense.

⁹ It is the Universal Soul that shows itself in some form or other to our deluded senses and understandings, and also according to our different apprehensions of the same thing.¹⁰ Only the ignorant understand the omniform God to be all forms of things. The learned know the forms to be modifications of the various powers of the Almighty, and not the figures themselves.

¹¹ Whether forms appear real or unreal is to be known to men according to their different apprehensions, which Brahma is pleased to exhibit in any particular form to their minds and senses.

Chapter 64 — Uncausèd Brahma Creates Rules of Causation for Forms

¹ Vasishta resumed:—

The Supreme Deity is the all-pervading spirit and the great God and Lord of all. He is without beginning or end and is identical with the infinite bliss of his translucent self-reflection.² It is from this supreme joy and purely intellectual substance that the individual soul and mind have their rise before their production of the Universe.

³ Rama asked, “How could the self-reflection of Brahma, as the infinite spirit and one without a second, conceive in it a finite individual soul other than itself and which was not in being?”

⁴ Vasishta replied:—

The immense and transparent spirit of Brahma remained in a state of non-existence (*asat*), a state of ineffable bliss as seen by the adept yogi, but of formidable vastness as conceived by the uninitiated novice.⁵ This state of supreme bliss, ever tranquil and full with the pure essence of God, is altogether indefinable and incomprehensible, even by the most proficient in divine knowledge.

⁶ Thence springs a power (an aspect), like the germ of a seed, possessed of consciousness and energy which is called the living and conscious soul and which must last until its final liberation.⁷ The vast empty sphere of this being’s clear mirror of the mind reflects images of innumerable worlds set above one another, like statues engraved upon it.

⁸ Rama, know that the individual soul is an extension of Divine Spirit, like the swelling of the sea and the burning of a candle when its flame is unshaken by the wind.⁹ The individual soul is possessed of a finite awareness as distinguished from the clear and calm consciousness of the Divine Spirit. Its vitality is the nature of the living God, but it is only a flash of the empty consciousness of Brahma.

¹⁰ Vitality is the essential property of the soul, resembling the inseparable properties of motion in wind, warmth in fire and coldness in ice.¹¹ When we forget the nature of Divine Consciousness and Spirit, our self-consciousness leaves us with a knowledge of ourselves and this is called the individual soul.¹² It is by means of this positive consciousness that we know our egoism or self-existence. It strikes us more glaringly than a spark of fire, and enlightens us to the knowledge of ourselves more than any other light.

¹³ When we look up to heaven we see a blue vault beyond which our eyes have no the power to pierce. In the same way, when we inquire into the nature of soul, we cannot see beyond consciousness of ourselves.¹⁴ Our knowledge of the soul is presented to us in the form of an ego that is known by its thoughts, like the empty sky appearing as a blue sphere because of the clouds.¹⁵ Ego differentiates the soul from our ideas of space and time and stirs within it like the breath of winds by reason of its subjectivity of thoughts.¹⁶ The subject of thoughts is known as ego. It is also called various other names like the intellect, the soul, the mind, illusion (*maya*) and nature (*prakriti*).

¹⁷ The mind (*chetas*) which is the subject of thoughts contemplates on the nature of elementary matter, and thus becomes of itself the quintessence of the five elements.¹⁸ The quintessential mind next becomes like a spark of fire and remains like a dim star, a nebula in the emptiness of the yet unborn universe.¹⁹ The mind takes the form of a spark of fire by thinking on its essence, which gradually

develops itself like a seed in the form of the cosmic egg by its internal force.²⁰ The same fiery spark figuratively called the cosmic egg (*brahmanda*) became like a snowball in water and conceived the great Brahma within its hollow womb.

²¹ Then as sensuous spirits assume some bodily forms at pleasure, although they dissolve like a magic city in empty air, so this Brahma appeared to view in an embodied form.²² Some of them appear in the form of immovable, and others in those of moving beings. Some assume the shapes of aerials or whatever their fondness leads them to choose for themselves.

²³ Thus in the beginning of creation, the first born living being had a form for himself as he liked. Afterwards he created the world in his form of Brahma or Virinchi ("Creator").²⁴ Whatever the self-born and self-willed soul wishes to produce, the same appears immediately to view as produced of its own accord.²⁵ Brahma, originating in Divine Consciousness, was by his nature the primary cause of all without any cause of his own. He appointed the acts of men to be the cause of their transition from one state to another in the course of the world.

²⁶ Thoughts naturally rise in the mind to subside in itself, like water foaming, but acts done thereby bind us like passing froth or flying birds are caught by ropes and traps.²⁷ Thoughts are the seeds of action and action is the soul of life. Past acts produce future consequence, but inaction is attended with no result.

²⁸ The individual soul bears its vitality like a seed bears the germ in its bosom. This sprouts forth in future acts, like the seed in various forms of leaves, fruits and flowers of trees.²⁹ All other individual souls that appeared in the various forms of their bodies had such forms given to them by Brahma according to their acts and desires in pre-material creations in former kalpa ages.

³⁰ So people's own personal acts are the causes of their repeated births and deaths in this or other worlds. They ascend higher or sink lower by virtue of good or bad deeds that proceed from their hearts and the nature of their souls.³¹ Our actions are the efforts of our minds and they shape our good or bad destinies according to their merit or demerit.

All fate and luck in the existing world are the fruits and flowers of past acts, even of those done in prior kalpa ages. This is called their destiny.

Chapter 65 — Nature of the Individual Soul as the Same as Universal Consciousness

¹ Vasishta continued:—

At first Mind sprang from the supreme Cause of all. This mind is the active soul which resides in the Supreme Soul.² The mind hangs in doubt between what is and what is not, and what is right and what is wrong. It forgets the past by its willful negligence like the scent of a fleeting odor.³ Yet there is no difference between these seeming contraries. The dualities of Brahma and the soul, the mind and illusion (*maya*), the agent and act, and the world of phenomena and that of ideals, all blend together in the unity of God.

⁴ There is only one Universal Soul displaying its Consciousness like a vast ocean and extending its consciousness like an endless sea.⁵ What is true and real shines forth amidst all that is untrue and unreal. So the subjective essence of the mind exists amidst all its airy and fleeting dreams in sleep. Thus the world is both true and untrue as regards its existence in God and its external phenomena.

⁶ The false conception, either of the reality or unreality of the outer world, does not spring in the mind which is conscious only of its operations and not of outward phenomena. This conception is like the deception of a magic show and is attendant to all sensuous minds.⁷ It is the long habit of thinking the unreal world to be real that makes it appear as such to the unthinking, like a protracted sleep makes its visionary scenes appear as true to the dreaming soul. It is the lack of reflection that causes us to mistake a man in a block of wood.⁸ Lack of spiritual light misleads the mind from its rationality and makes it take its false imaginations for true, like children, through their fear and lack of true knowledge, are impressed with a belief of ghosts in shadows.

⁹ The mind is inclined of its own tendency to assign an individual soul to the Divine Spirit which is devoid of name, form or figure and is beyond comprehension.¹⁰ Knowledge of the living state (personality) leads to that of egoism which is the cause of reasoning. This again introduces sensations and finally the conscious body.¹¹ This bondage of the soul in body necessitates a heaven and hell for lack of its liberation. Then the acts of the body become the seeds of our endless reincarnations in this world.

¹² As there is no difference between the soul, consciousness and life, so there is no duality in the individual soul and consciousness, or in the body and its acts which are inseparable from each other.

¹³ Acts are the causes of bodies and the body is not the mind. The mind is one with egoism, and the ego is the individual soul. The individual soul is one with Divine Consciousness and this soul is all and the lord God of all.

Chapter 66 — Individual Souls Mistake Subjective for Objective

¹ Thus Rama, there is one true essence which appears as many by our mistake. This variety is caused by the production of one from the other, as one lamp is lighted from another. ² By knowing one's self as nothing, as it was before it came into being, and by considering the falsity of his notions, no one can have any cause for grief. ³ Man is only a being of his own conception. By getting rid of this concept, he is freed from his idea of the duality of the world, just as one wearing shoes perceives the whole earth he treads upon to be covered with skin. ⁴ As the plantain tree has no pith except its manifold coats, so there is no materiality to the world other than our false conceptions of it.

⁵ Our births are followed by childhood, youth, old age and death, one after the other, and then opens the prospect of a heaven or hell to our view, like passing phantoms before the flighty mind. ⁶ As the clear eye sees bubbles of light in the empty sky, so the thoughtless mind sees the sky full of luminous bodies (which are only phantoms of the brain). ⁷ As the one moon appears as two to the dim sighted eye, so the intellect, corrupted by influence of the senses, sees a duality in the unity of the Supreme Spirit. ⁸ As the giddiness of wine presents the pictures of trees before the drunken eye, so does the inebriation of sensation present the phantoms of the world before the excited intellect. ⁹ Know the revolution of the visible world to resemble the revolving wheel of a potter's mill which they turn about in play like the rotating ball of a terrestrial globe.

¹⁰ When the consciousness thinks of another thing as something other than itself, it falls into the error of dualism. But when it concentrates its thoughts within, it loses the sense of objective duality.

¹¹ There is nothing beside Consciousness except the thoughts on which it dwells. Its sensations are all at rest as it comes to know the non-existence of objects.

¹² When the weak intellect is quiet by its union with the Supreme and by suppression of its functions, it is then called quiescent or indifferent (*sansanta*). ¹³ It is the weak intellect that thinks of external things, but sound understanding ceases all thoughts. It is a slight intoxication that makes one rave and revel about, while deep drinking is dead to all excitements. ¹⁴ When sound and consummate understanding runs in one course towards its main reservoir of the Supreme, it becomes divested of its knowledge of the external things and, in the presence of the one and no other, it also loses its self-consciousness. ¹⁵ Perfected understanding finds the errors to which it is exposed by its sensation of the external things and comes to know that birth and life and all acts and sights of the living state are as false as dreams.

¹⁶ The mind, being repressed from its natural flight, can have no thought of anything. It is lost in itself. When the natural heat of fire or motion of the wind become extinct, they are annihilated of themselves.

¹⁷ Without the suppression of mental operations, the mind must continue in its misconceptions, like that of mistaking a rope for a snake through ignorance.

¹⁸ It is not difficult to repress the action of the mind and rouse our consciousness in order to heal our souls of the malady of their mistaken notion of the world. ¹⁹ If you can succeed suppressing the desires of your restless mind at anytime, you are sure to obtain your liberation even instantly and without fail. ²⁰ If you will only turn to the side of your subjective consciousness, you will get rid of the objective world in the same manner as one is freed from his fear of snake in a rope by his

examination of the thing.²¹ If it is possible to get rid of the restless mind, which is the source of all our desires, then it is possible for anyone to attain the chief end of liberation.

²² When high minded men are seen to give up their lives like straws (in an honorable cause), there is no reason why they should be reluctant to abandon their desires for the sake of their chief good of liberation.²³ Remain unfettered by forsaking the desires of your greedy mind. What is the good of getting sensible objects that we are sure to lose?²⁴ The liberated are already in sight of the immortality of their souls and of God, like one who has fruit in his hand or sees a mountain visible before him.

²⁵ It is only the Spirit of God that abides in everything in these world appearances which rise to be seen like the waves of the waters of the great deluge. It is His knowledge that is attended with the supreme good of liberation. Ignorance of that Supreme Being binds the mind to the interminable bondage of the world.

Chapter 67 — Lecture on Creation: Still Consciousness & Moving Thoughts

¹ Rama said, “Leaving the mind, please tell me more about the nature of the individual soul. What relation does it have to the Supreme Soul? How did the individual soul spring from the Supreme Soul and what is its essence?”

² Vasishta replied:—

Know that Brahma is omnipresent and is the Lord of all at all times. He manifests himself in whatever attribute he assumes to himself of his free will.³ The attribute which the Universal Soul assumes to itself in the form of perception (*chetana*) is known by the term “individual soul”, which possesses the power of volition in itself.

⁴ There are two causal principles combined with the individual soul, namely its predestination resulting from its prior acts and volitions and its later free will. These branch forth severally into the various causes of birth, death and existence of beings.

⁵ Rama said, “Such being the case, tell me, O greatest of sages, what does this predestination mean? What are these acts and how do they become the causal agents of subsequent events?”

⁶ Vasishta replied:—

Consciousness (*chit*) has its own nature or properties of vibration and rest, like the movement and stillness of wind in the air. Its agitation is the cause of its action. Otherwise it is calm and quiet as a dead block of stone.⁷ Its vibration appears in the fluctuations of the mind and its calmness in the lack of mental activity and exertions, as in the detachment of the stillness of yoga meditation.

⁸ The vibrations of consciousness, which are the movements of thoughts, lead to its continual rebirths; its quietness settles it in the state of the immovable Brahma. The movement of thought is known to be the cause of the living state and all its actions.⁹ This vibrating intellect is the thinking Soul, and it is known as the living agent of actions, the primary seed of the universe.¹⁰ This secondary soul then assumes a luminous form according to the light of its thoughts, and afterwards becomes many and diverse at its will and through the pulsations of the primary consciousness all over the creation.¹¹ The pulsating intellect or soul, having passed through many transformations, is at last freed from its motion and migration. Some souls pass through a thousand births and forms while others obtain their liberation in a single birth.¹² The human soul, being a pulsating intellect, is of its own nature prone to assume dualism. So it becomes its own cause of its reincarnations and sufferings, as also of its transient bliss or misery in heaven or hell.

¹³ As the same gold is changed into the forms of bracelets and other things, and as the same gross matter appears in the different forms of wood and stone, so the uniform soul of God appears as multiform according to his various modes and attributes.¹⁴ An error of the human mind makes it view the forms as realities. It is a fallacy that causes one to think his soul, which is free from birth and form, is born, lives and dies, just like a man sees a city rise and fall in his delirium.

¹⁵ The moving, varying intellect, ignorant of its unity with the unchangeable reality of God, and also desiring its enjoyment peculiar to its varied state, falsely conceives its unreal ego-identity as reality.

¹⁶ As Lavana, the King of Mathura, falsely thought he was an outcaste tribal, so consciousness thinks

on its own different states of existence and that of the world.¹⁷ All this world is the phantom of an false imagination, O Rama! It is no more than the swelling of the waters of the deep.¹⁸ Consciousness is always busy exercising the intellect of its own intelligences and the innate principles of its action. It is like the sea seen swelling with its waters moving of themselves in waves.¹⁹ The intellect is like the water in the wide expanse of Brahma. Its movement raises the waving thoughts in the mind, resembling the bubbles of water, and produces the revolutions of individual souls like eddies in the sea of this world.²⁰ Know your soul, O gentle Rama, to be a phenomenon of the all pervading Brahma who is both the subject and object of his consciousness, and who has placed a particle of himself in you, like the breath of a mighty lion.

²¹ The intellect with its consciousness constitutes the individual soul, and the soul with the will forms the mind. Its knowing power is understanding and its retentiveness is called its memory. Its subjectivity of selfishness is called egoism, and its error is called illusion (*maya*).

²² The mind by its imagination stretches out this world which is as false as the phantom of paradise or a city drawn in air.²³ The objective knowledge of the world in the mind is as false as the appearance of chains of pearls in the sky, or like visionary scenes in a dream.²⁴ The soul, ever pure and self sufficient in its nature, remaining in its own state of tranquility, is not perceived by the misdirected mind dwelling on its delusive dreams.

²⁵ The objective world is called waking (*jagata*) because it is perceived in the waking state of the soul. The subjective mind is allied to sleep (*swapna*) because the mind is active during sleeping and dreaming states. Ego is related to deep sleep (*susupta*) when we are unconscious of ourselves. The fourth state or pure Consciousness (*turiya* or *turya*) is the trance or hibernation of the soul.

²⁶ That which is above these four conditions is the state of ultimate bliss: ecstasy. It is by reliance on that supremely pure essence of God that one is exempt from all his causes of grief and sorrow.

²⁷ Everything is displayed in Him and all things are absorbed in Him. This world is neither a reality here nor there. It presents only the false appearance of strings of pearls in the sky.

²⁸ And yet God is said to be the cause and substratum of all these unobstructed phantoms rising to view, just as empty air is said to be the receptacle for rising trees. Thus the non-causing God is said to be the cause of this uncaused world which only exists in our illusive conceptions and presents itself to our delusive sensations of it.²⁹ As a polished piece of iron reflects a grosser piece, so do our finer or inner sensations take the representations of the gross forms of their particular objects.

³⁰ These sensations are conveyed to the mind, then to the individual soul and intellect in the same manner as the roots supply sap to the stem, then to the branches, and lastly to the fruits of trees.³¹ As a seed produces fruit and the fruit contains the seed in itself, so the intellect producing the mind and its thoughts can not get rid of them, but is contained in and is reproduced by them in successive reincarnations.

³² There is some difference between the comparison of the unconscious seed and tree with the conscious intellect and mind, but the thoughts of the creator and creation, like the seed and tree, reproduce one another without end.³³ There is this difference between the unconscious seed and conscious intellect: the former continually reproduces itself, while the latter ceases its process upon attainment of liberation. Yet the ideas of creator and creation reproduce each other without end.

³⁴ Yet our understanding shows it as clearly as sunlight reveals forms and colors of objects: that there is one eternal God of truth who is of the form of intellectual light and who shows the forms of all things that proceed from him.

³⁵ As a hole dug in the ground presents a hollow, so the reasoning of every system of sound philosophy establishes the existence of the transcendental void as the cause of all.³⁶ As a prismatic crystal represents various colors in its prisms, without being tinged by them, so the transparent essence of Brahma shows the groups of worlds in its hollow bosom without its connection with them.

³⁷ The Universal Soul is the source, and not the substance of all these vast masses of worlds, just as the seed is the embryo and not the matter of the trees and plants and their fruits and flowers that grow from them.

³⁸ Rama said, "O how wonderful is this world which presents its unreality as a reality to us in all its endless forms! Though situated in the Divine Self, it appears to be quite apart from it. O how it makes its minuteness seem so very immense to us!³⁹ I see how this shadowy scene of the world appearing in the Divine Soul and becoming like an orb by virtue of the ideal particles (*tanmatras*) of the divine essence in it. I find it like a snow ball or icicle made of frozen frost."

⁴⁰ "Now tell me sage, how do the spiritual particles increase in bulk? How was the body of the self-born Brahma produced from Brahman? Tell me also how these objects in nature come into existence in their material forms?"

⁴¹ Vasishta replied:—

This form which sprang of itself from its own essence is too incredible and is without parallel. It is altogether inconceivable how something is produced of its own conception.

⁴² Just imagine, O Rama, how the unexpanded phantom of a vetala ghost swells huge in the sight of fearful children. Then in the same manner imagine the appearance of the living spirit from the entity of Brahma.⁴³ This living spirit is a development of Brahma, the Universal Soul. It is holy and a commensurable and finite being. Having a personality of its own, it remains as an impersonal unreality in the essence of the self-existent God. Afterwards, being separated from its source, it has a different name given to it.

⁴⁴ As Brahma, the all extended and infinite soul, wills and becomes the definite individual soul, so the living spirit, by its volition, afterwards becomes the mind.⁴⁵ The mind, which is the principle of exercise of intellect, takes a form of its own. Likewise, life assumes an airy form in the midst of emptiness.⁴⁶ The wakeful living god, without anything whereby we measure time, is yet conscious of its course by means of his thoughts. He has the notion of a brilliant icicle of the form of the future cosmic egg in his mind.⁴⁷ Then the individual soul feels in itself the sense of its consciousness and by thinking "What am I?" is conscious of its egoism.

⁴⁸ Next this god finds in his understanding knowledge of the word "taste" and gets the notion of it becoming the object of a particular organ of sense, to be hereafter called "the tongue."⁴⁹ The individual soul then finds out in his mind the meaning of the word "light," which was afterwards to sparkle in the eye, the particular organ of sight.⁵⁰ Next the god comes to know in his mind the property of smell and the organ of smelling, and also the substance of earth to which it appertains as

its inseparable property.⁵¹ In this manner the individual soul becomes acquainted with the other sensations and the organs to which they appertain as their inseparable properties and objects.

⁵² The unsubstantial living spirit which derives its being from the essence of the substantial Brahma, comes next to acquire the knowledge of sound, the object of the organ of hearing, and the property of air.^{53a} It then comes to understand the meaning of the word touch as the medium of feeling, and also to know the tongue as the only organ of taste.^{53b} It finds the property of color to be the peculiar object of the eye, the organ of sight, and that smell is an object peculiar to the nose, the organ of the sense of smelling.⁵⁴ The individual soul is thus the common receptacle of the sensations, and source of the senses, which it develops afterwards in the organs of sense in the body. It perceives the sensation of sensible objects through the perceptive holes that convey their perceptions into the sensorium of the mind.

⁵⁵ Such, O Rama, is how it was with the first animated being. It remains like this with all living animals. All sensations are represented in the Soul of the world in its spiritual form (*ativahika*) called the subtle body or astral body (*sukshma* or *lingadeha*).⁵⁶ The nature of this abstruse essence is as indefinable as that of the spirit. It appears to be in motion when it really is at rest, as in our idea of the soul.⁵⁷ As measure and dimensions are foreign to our notion of Brahma, the all conscious Soul, so they are quite foreign to spirit also, which is no more than the motive power of the soul.⁵⁸ As the notion of the spiritual is distinct from material and corporeal, so the notion of Brahma is quite apart from everything, except that of his self-consciousness.

⁵⁹ Rama said, “If consciousness is identical with Brahma, and our consciousness of ourselves as Brahma, make us identical with Brahma Himself, then what is the use of devising a duality of the soul, or of talking of the liberation and final absorption of the one in the other?”

⁶⁰ Vasishta replied:—

Rama, your question is irrelevant at this time when I was going to prove another thing. Nothing can be appropriate out of its proper time and place, as the untimely offering of flowers is not acceptable to the gods.⁶¹ A word full of meaning becomes meaningless out of its proper place, just like the offering of flowers to gods and guests out of their proper time.⁶² There is a time to introduce a subject and another to hold silence over it. Everything becomes fruitful in its proper season.⁶³ But to resume our subject.

The individual soul afterwards appears from Him like the human soul appears in dreaming, and the individual soul thought in himself that he was the great father of created beings in time to come.⁶⁴ He uttered the syllable Om and was conscious of its meaning in his mind, which soon displayed all forms of beings to his mental vision.⁶⁵ All these were unrealities displayed in the empty sphere of the Divine Mind. The shadowy world seemed like a huge mountain floating in the air before him.

⁶⁶ It was neither born of itself nor was it made by Brahma. It is not destroyed at anytime by any other power. It was Brahma himself, appearing like the phantom of city in the sky.⁶⁷ As the living Brahma and other spiritual beings are unreal in their nature, so also the essences of other beings, from the big giant to the little ant, are only mere unrealities in their substance.⁶⁸ It is our false understanding that represents these unrealities as real ones to us. Clear understanding will find all things, from the great

Brahma down to the minutest insect, to vanish entirely from its sight.

⁶⁹ The same cause that produces Brahma also produces insects. It is the greater depravity of the mind that causes its rebirth in the contemptible forms of worms. ⁷⁰ The living being possessed of a rational soul and devoted to the cultivation of the mind attains to the state of man. He then acts righteously for attaining a better state in after life.

⁷¹ It is wrong to suppose that one's elevation is the result of the merit of his acts, and his degradation to the condition of worms to result from his former acts of demerit, because there is the same particle of consciousness in both. This being known will destroy the mistaken difference between the great and small. ⁷² The notions of the measurer, measure and measurable are not separate from consciousness (or mind). Therefore the controversy between unity and duality is as futile as the horns of a rabbit or a lake of lotuses in the air.

⁷³ It is our misconception of blissful Brahma that produces the wrong notion of solid substances in us. This imagination of our own making binds us like silk-worms are bound in cocoons formed by their own saliva fluid.

⁷⁴ The knower perceives everything in his mind as revealed by Brahma. The knower meets with everything as allotted by God for his share. ⁷⁵ It is the immutable law of nature that nothing can be otherwise than what it is ordained to be. There is nothing in nature that can change its nature for a minute in a whole kalpa age. ⁷⁶ And yet this creation is a false phantom, and so is the growth and dissolution of all created beings, as is also our enjoyment of them.

⁷⁷ Brahma is pure, all pervading, infinite and absolute. It is only for our misery that we take him for impure matter and unreal substance, and as definite and limited pluralities. ⁷⁸ It is the spoiled imagination of children that fancies water and its waves to be different things and makes a false distinction between those which really are the same thing. ⁷⁹ It is His undivided self that expands itself in visible nature, and which appears like a duality, like waves and the sea, and bracelets and gold. Thus He of himself appears as other than himself.

⁸⁰ We are led to imagine the visible and changing world as having sprung from the invisible and immutable spirit which manifests itself in the form of the mind that produced the ego. Thus we have the visible from the invisible, and the mind and the ego from the same source. ⁸¹ Mind joined with ego produces notions of elementary principles or elemental particles that the individual soul, combined with its intellect, derives from the main source of Brahma, and of which it formed the phenomenal world.

⁸² Thus the mind being realized from Brahma sees before it whatever it imagines. Whatever consciousness thinks upon, whether it is a reality or unreality, the same comes to take place. The reflection truly passes into reality.

Chapter 68 — Story of the Demoness Karkati, Vishuchika (Cholera) & Suchi (Needle); Her Tapas

¹ Vasishta said:—

Hear me relate to you, Rama, an old story bearing upon this subject and relating to a difficult question that was resolved by a rakshasi (female demon).

² There lived on the north of Himalaya a heinous rakshasi named Karkati, a crooked crab, who was as dark as ink and as stalwart as a rock, with limbs strong enough to split the sturdy oak. ³ She was also known as Vishuchika or Choleric Pain, by which she was ever afflicted, and which had reduced her frame like that of Vindhya Hill which was pushed down (by the curse of Agastya). ⁴ Her eyeballs were blazing like fires. Her stature reaching half way to the sky. She was covered by a blue garment, like the shade of night wrapping the atmosphere. ⁵ A white cloak covered her head like a cloud fragment. The long erect hairs of her head stood like a dark cloud on her crest. ⁶ Her eyes flashed like lightning, and her sharp hooked nails glistened like sapphires. Her legs were as long as tamara trees, and her loud laughter was like a burst of frost. ⁷ A string of dried bones decorated her body like a wreath of flowers. Traces of dead bodies adorned every part of her body. ⁸ She frolicked in the company of vetala ghosts, with human skulls hanging down her ears like earrings. When she stretched out her arms she looked like she was going to pluck the sun from his sphere.

⁹ Her huge body lacked its necessary food, causing her stomach fire to blaze like an undersea flame that the waters of the deep are unable to quench. ¹⁰ Nothing could ever satisfy the insatiable hunger of this big bellied monster, or satisfy her licking tongue that was always stretched out like a flame of fire. ¹¹ She thought to herself, “O, if just once I could to the land of Asia (*Jambudwipa*), I would devour all its men in one swoop and feast on them continually like an undersea fire upon the waters.

¹² As clouds cool burning sands by their rain, so will I allay the burning fire of my hunger there. It is settled as the best plan to support my life at this critical moment.”

¹³ “All men are well guarded by their mantras, medicines, austerities, devotions and charities from all evils of the world. Therefore it is impossible for anybody to destroy the indestructible devotee. ¹⁴ I will perform the most rigorous austerities with an unflinching heart and mind, because it is by intensity of effort that we may gain what is otherwise hard to be had.”

¹⁵ Having thought so, she went to an inaccessible mountain for the purpose of destroying all animal beings. ¹⁶ She climbed to the top of the mountain, scrambling over it with her hands and feet, and stood on it with her body looking a cloud and her eyeballs flashing like lightning. ¹⁷ Having reached the summit, she made her ablution and then sat in her tapas. Her steadfast eyeballs resembled the two orbs of the sun and moon fixed on one object. ¹⁸ She passed many a day and month there, and saw the course of many a season and year. She exposed her huge body to the rigor of heat and cold, like the hill itself (on which she sat). ¹⁹ She with her huge black body remained unmoved as a thick dark cloud on the mountain top. Her jet black hairs stood up as if to touch the sky.

²⁰ Seeing her body beaten by the blasts and covered with nothing but her ragged skin, and her hairs standing up to their end, tossed to and fro by the raging winds, while the twinkling of her eyelids shed a whitish glare on her dark frame, God Brahma appeared before her.

Chapter 69 — Brahma Declares Karkati's Tapas Complete, Grants Her Boon to Be a Pin to Cause Pain

¹ Vasishta resumed:—

After the passing of a thousand years, Brahma appeared to Karkati in order to put an end to the intensity of her austerities and crown her with success and the reward of her tapas.² She saluted him internally in her mind and remained fixed in her position thinking about the boon she should beg of him for allaying her keen appetite.³ She soon recollected a certain request, which she should present to her complying god. It was to transform her soft and flexible form to the shape of an inflexible iron needle with which she could torment all living beings.

⁴ At Brahma's bidding, she thought in herself, "I will become as thin as a minute pin in order to enter imperceptibly into the hearts of animals, like the fragrance of flowers enters the nostrils.⁵ By this means will I suck blood from the heart of beings to my heart's satisfaction. In this way my hunger will be satisfied and my appetite gratified to the greatest delight of my soul."

⁶ As she was thinking in this manner, the god discovered her sinister motives, contrary to the character of a yogi, and approached her with a voice resembling the roaring of clouds.

⁷ Brahma said, "Daughter Karkati of the rakshasa race, who sits here like a cloud on the inaccessible top of this mountain, know that I am pleased with your tapas and bid you now to raise yourself and receive the boon that you desire of me."

⁸ Karkati answered, "O Lord of the past and future! If you are inclined to grant my request, then please confer on me the boon of transforming my un-iron-like body to the form of an iron needle."

⁹ Vasishta said:—

The god pronounced "Be it so," and added, "You will be like a pin (Suchi) and you shall be called choleric pain (Vishuchika) because you give pain to all bodies.¹⁰ You shall be the cruel cause of acute pain to all living beings, particularly to the intemperate and hard-working fools and loose libertines who are destined to be your devoted victims.¹¹ Moreover shall you molest the dwellers of unhealthy districts, and the practitioners of malpractices by entering their hearts with your infectious breath, and by disturbing their sleep and deranging the liver and other intestinal parts of the body.¹² You shall be of the form of wind (in the bowels) and cause bile and flatulence under the different names of colic diseases, and attack the intemperate both among the wise and unwise.¹³ The wise, when attacked by you, will be healed by repeating this magical mantra, which I will here propound for their benefit."

¹⁴ "The mantra runs thus: 'There lives Karkati, the rakshasi, in the north of the snowy mountain. Her name is Vishuchika, and it is for repelling her power that I repeat this mantra. Om, I bow to hring, hrang and ring, rang (the powers of Vishnu) and invoke the Vaishnavi powers to remove, destroy, root out, drive away this choleric pain far beyond the Himalayas, and afar to the orb of the moon. Om and swaha, be it so.' "

"Let these lines be tied as an amulet on the left arm.¹⁵ Then rub the painful part with the palm of that hand, and think the colic Karkati to be crushed under the mallet of this amulet and driven back beyond

the hills with loud wailing.¹⁶ Let the patient think the medicinal moon is seated in his heart and believe himself to be freed from death and disease, and his faith will save his life and heal his pain.¹⁷ When the attentive adept, who having purified himself with sprinkling water in his mouth, repeats this formula, he succeeds in a short time to remove the colic pain altogether."

¹⁸ Then, after delivering this effective amulet to the spiritual masters (*siddhas*) attending upon him, the lord of the three worlds disappeared in the air. He went to his splendid seat in heaven where he was received by God Indra who advanced to hail him with his praises.

Chapter 70 — Karkati as Suchi, the Needle of Colic and Cholera

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Now this Karkati who had been as tall as a mountain-peak, and a rakshasi of the blackest kind, resembling a thick and dark cloud of the rainy season, gradually began to fade away and grow leaner and leaner day by day.² Her gigantic cloud-like form was soon reduced to the shape of a tree branch which afterwards became like the figure of a man, and then the measure of only a cubit.³ It next became the length of a span in its height, and then of a finger's length in all. Growing by degrees thinner and thinner like grain, it became at last as lean as a needle or a pin.⁴ Thus she was reduced to the thinness of a needle, fit only to sew a silken robe. By her own desire that could change a hill to a grain of sand, she had become as lean as the filament of the lotus flower.

⁵ Thus the non-metallic Karkati was transformed into the form of Suchi, a black and slender iron needle that contained all her limbs and organs of her body and conducted her in the air anywhere she liked.⁶ She saw herself as an iron pin, having neither substance nor length nor breadth of her body.

⁷ Her mind with its power of thought appeared as bright as a golden needle, like a streak of sapphire impregnated by sunshine.⁸ Her rolling eyeballs were as dark as the spots of black clouds moved to and fro by the winds. Her sparkling pupils, piercing through their tenuous pores, gazed at the bright glory (of God).⁹ She had observed the vow of silence in order to reduce the plumpness of her person, and her face radiated with joy at becoming as lean as the filament of a feather.¹⁰ She saw a light descending on her from the air at a distance, and she was happy to find her inner spirit to be as subtle as air.¹¹ With her contracted eye brows, she saw the rays of light extending to her from afar, which caused the hairs on her body to stand up like those of babies at bathing.

¹² Her grand energy channel called *Brahma nadi* or *sushumna* rose up to its cavity in the head called the *Brahma randhra* in order to greet the holy light, like the filaments of the lotus rise to receive sunlight and heat.¹³ Having subdued the organs of her senses and their powers, she remained as one without an organic frame and identified with her individual soul. She resembled the intelligent principle of the Buddhists and logicians (*tarkikas*) which is unseen by others.¹⁴ Her minuteness seemed to have produced the minutiae of minute philosophers called the Siddhantas. Her silence was like that of the wind confined in a cave. Her slender form of a puny pin resembled the breath of animal life which is imperceptible to the eye.¹⁵ The little that remained of her body was as thin as the last hope of man. It was like the pencil of an extinguished flame of a lamp that has heat without light.

¹⁶ But alas! How pitiable was her folly, which a first she could not understand. She was wrong to choose the form of a slender pin for herself in order to gratify her insatiable appetite.¹⁷ Her object was to have her food and not the contemptible form of a pin. Her heart desired one thing, and she found herself in another form that was of no use to her purpose.¹⁸ Her silliness led her to make the unwise choice of a needle shape for herself. So it is with the short witted. They lack the sense of judging beforehand about their future good.¹⁹ An arduous attempt to accomplish a desired object is often attended by a different result. Even success on one hand becomes a failure on another. In the same way a mirror is soiled by the breath while it shows the face to the looker.

²⁰ How be it, having renounced her gigantic form, the rakshasi soon learnt to be content with her

needle form, although she viewed her transformation as worse than her dissolution itself.²¹ But see the contradictory desires of the infatuated who distaste in a trice what at one time they fondly wished. This fiend was disgusted at her needle form instead of her monstrous figure.²² As one dish of food is easily replaced by another, suiting the taste of the gourmand, so this fiend did not hesitate to shun her gigantic body, which she took to taste the heart blood of animals in her pin form.²³ Even death is delightful to the giddy headed when they are over fond of something else. The minimum of a meager needle was desirable to the monstrous fiend to gratify her fiendish desire.

²⁴ Now this needle took the rarefied form of air and moved about after all living beings as the colic wind in quest of sucking animal gore.²⁵ Its body was like fiery heat and its life the vital breath of animals. Its seat was in the sensitive heart, and it was as swift as the particles of solar and lunar beams.²⁶ It was as destructive as the blade of a deadly sword, and as fleet as vapors flying in air. It penetrated bodies in the minute form of odor.²⁷ It was ever bent to do evil, like an evil spirit, as she was now known by that name. Her sole object was to kill the lives of others at her pleasure.

²⁸ Her body divided into two halves; one was as fine as a silken thread and the other as soft as a thread of cotton.²⁹ Suchi ranged all about the ten sides of the world in her two forms and pierced and penetrated into the hearts of living beings with all her excruciating pains.³⁰ Karkati gave up her former big body, and took the form of the acute and small needle in order to accomplish all these purposes of hers, whether they be great or little.³¹ To men of little understanding, a slight business becomes an arduous task. The foolish fiend had recourse to her austerities in order to do the mean work of a needle.³² Again, however good and great, men can hardly get rid of their natural disposition. The great rakshasi performed her austere tapas in order to become a vile pin for molesting mankind.

³³ Now as Suchi was wandering about in the sky, her aerial form which was big with her heinous ambition disappeared in air like vapor, or like a thick cloud in autumn.³⁴ Then entering in the body of some sensualist or weak or too fat a person, this inward colic flatulence of Suchi assumes the shape of cholera.³⁵ Sometimes she enters the body of a lean person, but also in those of healthier and wise people, first appearing as a choleric pain, then becoming real cholera at last.³⁶ She is often delighted to take her seat in the hearts of the ignorant. But afterwards she is driven back by good acts and prayers, and mantras and medicines of the wise.

³⁷ In this manner she continued many years in her rambles. Sometimes her two-part body (pin and cholera) flies in the air, but most often she creeps low on the ground.³⁸ She lies concealed in the dust of the ground, and under the fisted fingers of hands. She hides herself in sunbeams, in air and in the threads of cloths.³⁹ She is hidden in the intestines, entrails and genitals. She resides in the bodies of pale and ash colored persons. She lives in the pores, lines and lineaments of the body, and also in dry grass and in the dried beds of rivers.⁴⁰ She has her seat among the indigent, and in the naked and uncovered bodies of men, and in those who are subject to hard breathing. She dwells in places infested by flies and of obstructed ventilation, and also in green verdures excepting only mango and wood-apple trees.⁴¹ She lurks in places scattered with bones and joints of animal bodies, and such as are disturbed by violent winds and gusts of air. She lies in dirty places, and in cold and icy grounds, and likewise in polluted cloths and places polluted by them.⁴² She sits in holes and hollow places,

withered trees, and spots infested by crows, flies and peacocks; also in places of dry, humid and high winds and in benumbed fingers and toes.⁴³ She is in cloudy regions, in cavernous districts of the form of rotten bodies, in regions of melting and driving snows, and in marshy grounds abounding in anthills and hills of malura trees.⁴⁴ She exhibits herself in the mirage of desert sand and in wildernesses abounding with ravenous beasts and snakes. Sometimes she is seen in lands infested by venomous reptiles, disgusting leeches and worms.⁴⁵ She frequents stagnant pools soiled by dry leaves and those chewed by pisacha ghosts. She haunts hovels beside road crossings where passengers halt and take shelter from cold.⁴⁶ She rambles in all places, everywhere leeches suck the blood of men, and vile people tear them with their nails and hold them in their fists to feed upon them.⁴⁷ In this manner she is everywhere in the landscape of cities, until she is tired with her long journey through them.

⁴⁸ Then she stops in her course like a tired bullock whose body is hot from travelling through towns with loads of cotton and utensils on its back.⁴⁹ She lays down to rest in some hidden place, like a needle tired with continued sewing. There she drops down like thread from the hand of the sewer.⁵⁰ A hard needle held in the hand of the sewer never hurts his finger, because a servant, however sharp he may be, is never faithless or injurious to his master.⁵¹ An iron needle, grown old in its business of stitching, was at last lost by itself, like the rotten plank of a boat bearing the burdensome ballast of stones in it.⁵² It wandered about on all sides of its own accord and was driven to and fro like chaff by the driving winds, according to the course of nature.

⁵³ Someone takes it up and feeds the last end of a thread in its mouth. The malady of cholera is caught by those human parasites who glut themselves with food supplied by the sap of another.⁵⁴ The malady of colic, like the needle, is ever fond of feeding with its open mouth on the pith of others. It continually finds the thread-like heartstring of some body put into its hole.⁵⁵ Thus the strong bodies of greedy and heinous beings are nourished by the sap of the weak and innocent, just like colic disease preys on the lean bodies of the poor, and the sharp needle is supported by the thin thread of the needy (who cannot afford to buy new suits).⁵⁶ Though the heart of Suchi, like the hole of the needle, was to receive the thread-like sap of the patient's heart, yet her power to pierce it was like that of the sewing needle, which is as potent as the piercing sunbeams to penetrate into the toughest substances.

⁵⁷ Suddenly and at last, Suchi came to find the fault of her wrong choice for a puny body which was filled with her scanty fare of a bit of thread. She began to repent of her folly.⁵⁸ However, she continued with all her might to trudge on in her accustomed course of pricking and piercing the bodies of others. In spite of her great regret, she could not avoid the cruelty of her nature.⁵⁹ The sewing man cuts and sews the cloth agreeably to his own liking. But the weaver of destiny weaves the long loom of lengthened desires in all bodies and hides their reason under the garb of her own making.

⁶⁰ The colic Suchi went on like the sewing needle in her business of piercing the hearts of people by hiding her head, just like it is the practice of robbers to carry on their rogueries by covering their faces.⁶¹ She, like the needle with the sewing thread behind it, raises her head to make and look at the loop-hole that she should penetrate like burglars making and marking holes in the wall for their entry.⁶² She entered the bodies of the weak and strong alike, like the needle stitching cloths of all textures, just as it is the custom of the wicked to spare neither the just nor unjust.⁶³ Colic pain, like the piercing needle, being pressed under the fingers, lets off its griping like the thread of the needle in its act of

sewing.⁶⁴ The acute and unfeeling colic, being as ignorant of the softness or dryness of the object as the stiff and heartless needle, pierces the hardest breast without deriving any sweetness from it.

⁶⁵ The needle is comparable to a rich widow. Both are equally stern and full of remorse. Both are equally veiled and speechless and, with their eye of the needle, are as empty in their joyless hearts.

⁶⁶ The needle hurts nobody, yet she is dragged by the thread which is no other than the thread of her fate.⁶⁷ After her trudging, slipped from the finger of her master, the needle peacefully sleeps in company with her fellows of dirt and dregs. For who is there who, when he is out of work, does not deem himself blessed to be in the company of his equals?⁶⁸ The herd of common people is ever fond of mixing with the ignorant rabble because there is nobody who can avoid the company of his equals.

⁶⁹ The lost needle, when found by a blacksmith and heated in the hearth, flies to heaven by the breath of the bellows, after which it disappears in the air.⁷⁰ In this manner the current of vital airs, by force of the acts of its prior states of existence, conducts the breath of life in to the heart, which becomes the living spirit.⁷¹ The vital airs, being diminished in the body, cause the colic pains known by different names such as flatulence, bile and the like.

⁷² The colic caused by spoiling the *vyana* vital energy produces many diseases and affects all the members of the body with a watery fluid. When it affects the lung's breathing, it causes the *vaya sula* or pulmonary colic and is attended by disfigurement of the body and an insanity or hysteria known as the hysterical colic.⁷³ Sometimes it comes from the hands of sheep-keepers, or by the smell of sheep's wool in blankets. At other times it seizes the fingers of children and causes them to tear their bed cloths.⁷⁴ When it enters the body through the foot, it continues sucking blood and, with all its voracity, becomes satisfied with very little food.⁷⁵ It lies in the glandular vessel of the feces with its mouth placed downward and takes as its prerogative any form it likes to assume.

⁷⁶ It is the nature of malicious people to show the perversion of their hearts by doing injury to others. It is characteristic of base people to raise a row for their pleasure, and not for any gain or good to themselves.⁷⁷ The miserly think much of their gain of even a single penny, so deeply rooted is the avaricious selfishness of human nature.⁷⁸ It was only for a particle of blood, or as much as could be picked out by the point of a pin, that the colic Suchi was bent on the destruction of men. So the wise are fools in their own interests.

⁷⁹ "How great is my master-stroke," says the needle, "that I have come from stitching the shreds of cloth to piercing the hearts of men. So be it and I am happy at my success."⁸⁰ As the rust of the lazy needle passes off in sewing, without being rubbed with dust, so must it rust unless it is put into the action of piercing patient and passive shreds.⁸¹ The unseen and airy darts of fate are as fatal as the acts of cruel advanced cholera, though both have their respite of their massacres at short intervals.

⁸² The needle is at rest after its act of sewing is done; but the wicked are not satisfied even after their acts of slaughter are over.

⁸³ It dives in the dirt and rises in the air. It flies with the wind and lies down wherever it falls. It sleeps in the dust and hides itself at home and in the inside, and under the cloths and leaves. It dwells in the hand and ear-holes, in lotuses and heaps of woolen stuffs. It is lost in the holes of houses, in clefts of wood and underneath the ground.

⁸⁴ Valmiki added:—

As the sage was speaking in this manner, the sun went down in the west, and the day departed to its evening service. The assembly broke after mutual salutations, to perform their sacred ablution, and joined again on the next morning, with the rising beams of the sun to the royal palace.

Chapter 71 — Suchi's Remorse

¹ Vasishta continued:—

After the carnivorous fiend Karkati had feasted for a long period on the flesh and blood of human kind, she found her insatiable appetite to know no bounds. She was never satisfied with anything.

² She used to be satisfied with a drop of blood in her form of the needle. Now she became sorry at the loss of the insatiable thirst and appetite of her former state.

³ She thought in herself, “O pity it is that I came to be a vile needle. With so weak and slender a body, I can take nothing for my food. ⁴ How foolish I have been to forego my former gigantic form and change my dark cloudy figure for something like the dry leaf of a forest tree. ⁵ O wretch that I am to have foregone my dainty food of flesh flavored with fat. ⁶ I am doomed to dive in dirt and drop down on the ground to be trodden and trampled under the feet of people, soiled and sullied in filth. ⁷ O me miserable, helpless and hopeless thing, and without any support or status. From one sorrow I fall to another, and one danger is succeeded by another! ⁸ I have no mistress or maid servant, no father or mother. I have no son or brother, nor anyone to serve or befriend me. ⁹ I have nobody, no home, and no refuge or asylum anywhere. I have no fixed dwelling anywhere. Instead I am driven about like falling leaves by driving winds. ¹⁰ I am subject to all accidents and exposed to every kind of calamity. I wish for my extinction, but it wishes not to approach me.”

¹¹ “What have I done? In the foolishness of my heart, I have given away my own big body, like a madman gives away a precious jewel for a paltry piece of glass. ¹² One calamity is enough to turn the brain out of order, but what will be my case when it is followed by other disasters in endless succession? ¹³ I am hung up to be suffocated by smoke and dropped down in the streets to be trodden underfoot. I am cast away with dirt and hidden under grass to my great distress. ¹⁴ I serve at another’s will, and am guided by my guide. I am stark naked while I sew for others, and I am ever a dependent on another’s guidance. ¹⁵ Long do I work and walk for a small worthless gain, and stitching alone is all the work that I have to perform for life. O unlucky that I am, that even my bad luck is so very unlucky.”

¹⁶ “With my remorse today, I see the demon of despair rising before me and threatening to make an end of this body of which I have made an offering to him. ¹⁷ After my foolishness losing so big and bulky a body, what better fate can await me than to be annihilated into nothing, rather than be a thing which is good for nothing? ¹⁸ What man will pick me up, who is as lean as a thread worm, from the heap of ashes under which I lie buried by the wayside? ¹⁹ No keen sighted man will take such a wretched and forlorn being into his consideration, just like nobody living on a high hill ever stoops to take notice of the grass growing on the ground below. ²⁰ I cannot expect to raise myself higher while I am lying in a sea of ignorance. What blind man guided by the flash of fireflies can perceive the glorious sunlight? ²¹ I find myself drowned in a sea of misery and I know not how long I shall have to labor under my difficulties.”

²² “When shall I be restored to the form of the daughter of Anjanagiri Mountain and stand like a pillar over the ruins of the nether and upper worlds? ²³ When shall I have my arms reach the clouds and my eyes flashing like lightning, my clothes as white as snow and my hair touching the sky? ²⁴ When will

my big belly resemble a huge cloud and my long breasts hang below like pillows shaking with the motion of my body, dancing like the wings of a peacock? ²⁵ When will the ash-white light emitted by my laughter cast shade onto the sun, and my former high stature threaten to devour the terrible god of death? ²⁶ Some time ago my hollow sockets, deep as the holes of mortars, flashed with living fire like the rays of the sun, and my large legs moved in my rambling like two monumental pillars. ²⁷ When shall I have my big belly with its huge pot-belly? When shall I again have my soft black nails that resemble the dark and humid clouds of autumn. ²⁸ When will those tender smiles return to me with which I moved the great rakshasa demons to my favor? When shall I dance in my giddy circles at the music of the tabor in the forests? ²⁹ When will that big belly of mine be filled with pots full of fattened liquor and be fed with heaps of flesh and bones from dead bodies? ³⁰ When shall I get drunk drinking the blood of human gore and become merry and giddy until I fall fast asleep?"

³¹ "It was I, by my bad choice of austerities, who destroyed my former brilliant body and accepted this petty needle-like form, like one who takes the sulphate of gold instead of the precious metal.

³² Ah! Where is that huge body that filled all sides and shone like the dark hill of Anjanagiri? What is this puny and pin form in the shape of a spider's leg, thin and lean like a tender blade of grass? ³³ The ignorant, thinking it useless, throw a golden jewel on the ground like a piece of glass. So I have cast aside my shining body for a bit of this black needle."

³⁴ "O great Vindhya Mountains with your hollow and snow covered caves! Why do you not destroy your dull elephants with your native lions? It is I who is as silly as an elephant. ³⁵ O my arms that used to break down mountain peaks, why do you fail to pluck the butter-like moon with your moony nails? ³⁶ O my breast that was as fair as snowy mountain sides, even without my glassy ornaments. Why do you not show your hairs, which were as large as leeches that feed on lion's flesh? ³⁷ O my eyes that used to dispel the darkness of the darkest night and kindle dry fuel with your glaring fire. Why do you cease to lighten the air with your brightness? ³⁸ O my shoulder blades! Are you broken down and leveled with the earth, or are you crushed and smashed or moldered and worn out by age?

³⁹ O my moon-bright face! Why do you not shine over me with your bright beams that resemble the everlasting light of the orb of the moon? Are you now at an end forever? ⁴⁰ O my hands! Where is your strength fled today? Do you not see how I am transformed into an ignoble needle that is moved by the touch of the foot of a fly? ⁴¹ Alas! The cavity of my navel was as deep as a well and beset by hair resembling rows of beautiful plants about it. My protuberant posteriors were like the bottom of the Vindya hills. ⁴² Where is that towering stature reaching to the sky, and what is this new earned contemptible form of the needle? Where is that mouth, hollow as the vault of the sky, and what is this hole of the needle? Where is my heap of flesh meat and what is this drop of watery food?"

"Ah, how lean have I grown. But who is to be blamed for an act of my own doing?"

Chapter 72 — Suchi Again Performs Tapas

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Afterwards Suchi became silent and motionless and thought of resuming her austerities for the sake of regaining her long lost body.² With this intention she returned to the Himalayas where, abstaining from her desire of human gore, she sat repeating her criticisms and rebukes.³ In her mind she saw her needle form entering into her heart with her breathing.⁴ Meditating on her mental form of the needle, she was blown upwards by her vital breath to the top of the hill and alighted on it like a vulture from high.⁵ There she remained alone and apart from all living beings, sitting amidst burning fire with her form of an ash-colored stone.⁶ She sat there like a sprout of grass springing in that dry and grassless spot. But soon she faded away into a blade of withered hay in the sandy desert.⁷ She remained standing on the toe of one foot, and she continued criticizing and rebuking her own self.⁸ In her tiptoe position, she lightly touched the ground and avoiding all sidelong looks. She gazed on the upper sky with her face upraised and her eyes uplifted.⁹ The fine point of the black iron needle penetrated the ground and firmly preserved its standing posture. It fed itself upon the air which it inhaled by its uplifted mouth.¹⁰ The scarcity of food in the forest made her look like she was in search of some prey coming from a distance. Her shadow shaking with the wind enticed the unwary to approach towards it.

¹¹ The ray of light issuing like a pencil from the needle hole served as her attendant guard on the hinder part.¹² As men are kindly disposed towards the mean who are favorites to them, so the needle was attached to the thin pencil of light that became its constant attendant.¹³ The needle had another constant companion: the devotion in its own shadow; but the blackness of its body made it always remain behind the back.¹⁴ Thus these three — the iron needle, the thin pencil of light passing through its eye, and the needle's shadow — having firmly adhered themselves to the iron needle, become intimate friends, like all good people mutually assisting one another.

¹⁵ On seeing Suchi in this plight, the trees and plants of the mountain forest felt compassion for her. Who is there who bears no sympathy for a pious devotee or her penances and austerities?¹⁶ The needle that was stuck to the ground by its foot and had sprung up like some faculty of the mind was fed with the fragrance of fruits blown and borne by the breeze to its uplifted mouth.¹⁷ Woodland gods and demigods continued to fill its mouth with the dust of buds and full blown flowers of the woods.¹⁸ But Suchi did not swallow the powdered meat dust that God Indra had caused to be thrown into her mouth for the purpose of frustrating the effect of her tapas.¹⁹ Her fixity of purpose did not permit her to swallow the delicious powder because a person, however mean he may be, is sure of success by the firmness of his mind.

²⁰ Vayu, the god of winds with his power of uprooting mountains, was astonished to find the needle adverse to swallowing the food. He ministered to it in the form of the pollen of flowers.²¹ The resolute devotee is never shaken from his purpose, though he be plunged into mud or drowned in water or scattered by winds and thrown into burning fire;²² or when he is shattered by showers of hailstones, or struck by lightning or battered by raindrops and intimidated by thunder claps.²³ The resolute mind is not changed in a thousand years and the feet of the firm, like those of the drowsy and

dead drunk, never move from their place.²⁴ A holy hermit who is devoted to his purpose in time loses the motion of his external organs, but by the exercise of his reason, he obtains the light of true knowledge in his soul.

²⁵ Thus did Suchi gain the light of knowledge and become a seer of the past and future. She became cleansed of the impurity of her sins, and her impurity (*visuchi*) turned to purity (*suchi*).²⁶ She came to know the truly knowable in her own understanding. After the removal of her sins by tapas, she felt true bliss in her soul.²⁷ She continued in her austere tapas for many thousands of years, to the great astonishment of seven times seven worlds that became frightened at her austerities.²⁸ The fervor of her tapas set great mountains on fire, and that flame spread to all the worlds like the blaze of an auspicious meteor.

²⁹ This made Indra, the god of heaven, ask Narada about the cause of this intense tapas, saying, "Who is so immersed in tapas that she obtains the fruit of worlds by her austere tapas?"

Narada replied,³⁰ "It is Suchi, who by her continued tapas of thousands of years, has attained her highest state of enlightenment. She is that light which now enflames all the worlds.³¹ It is Suchi's tapas, O lord of gods, that makes naaga serpents sigh and hills tremble. It causes the celestials to fall down and the sea to overflow on earth. It dries up all things and casts a shade over bright orb of the sun itself."

Chapter 73 — Narada Explains Suchi's Tapas to Indra Who Sends Maruta to Disturb Her Tapas

¹ Vasishta related:—

Indra, having learned about Karkati's austere tapas, was curious to know more about her from Narada. ² Indra asked, "I know Suchi acquired her fiendish practice of blood sucking by means of her tapas, but who is this apish Karkati that is so greedy to gain flesh and bones?"

³ Narada replied:—

It is Karkati, the malevolent fiend, who became the individual soul Suchi, the colic pain of the living, and assumed the shape of an iron needle as its support. ⁴ Afterwards, having forsaken that prop, it entered the human body, then it flew up to the heart on the vehicle of vital breath, and is seated in the car of the current air in atmosphere. ⁵ This colic of life Suchi, having entered into the bodies of vicious lives, passes through the canals of their entrails and the pores of their flesh, fat and blood, then nestles in the interior part like a bird. ⁶ It enters the intestines with the breath of air and settles there in the form of flatulent colic. Afterwards, seated at the end of the *nyagrodha* artery, it becomes the various forms of colic with fullness of blood and inflammation. ⁷ It also enters the body through other parts and organs and receives different names according to its situation. Then it feeds upon their flesh and marrow. ⁸ Fastened to the knots of flower wreaths and stuck to leafy garlands decorating the breasts and cheeks of fond maidens, she sleeps enraptured with them on the bosoms of their loving spouses.

⁹ She flies to the bodies of birds in woodland retreats free from worldly sorrow and strife. She flutters on the tops of flowers of kalpa trees of Nandana paradise, or rolls on beds of lotuses in the lakes. ¹⁰ She flies in the forms of fluttering bees over the high hills of the gods, and she sips honey drops perfumed with the fragrance of mandara flower pollen. ¹¹ In the form of vultures, she devours the entrails of the dead bodies of warriors through the wounds made by sword blades. ¹² She flies up and down in the translucent and glassy paths of the sky and pierces into the human body through all pores, arteries, and orifices, just like expansive winds pass on all sides through every creek and corner.

¹³ Just like the universal vital air runs in the heart of every living being in the form of the pulsation of air, so Suchi oscillates in everybody as if they were her own home. ¹⁴ Just like intellectual powers are lodged in every person like blazing lamps, so she resides in her dwelling and blaze as the mistress of everybody. ¹⁵ She sparkles like the vital spark in blood particles, and she flows in bodies like liquid. She rolls and trolls in the bowels of living beings like whirlpools whirl about in the bosom of the sea. ¹⁶ She rests in the milk-white mass of flesh, just like Vishnu reclines on his bed of the serpent Sesha. She tastes the flavor of blood from all hearts, just like Goddess Kali drinks the liquor of her goblet of wine. ¹⁷ She sucks the circulating, red hot blood of hearts, just like the wind absorbs the internal and vivifying juice from the hearts of plants and trees.

¹⁸ Now this living Suchi, intending to become a devotee, remains as motionless as an immovable substance and as fixed and steady in her mind. ¹⁹ The iron-hearted needle, being now rarefied like invisible air, is traversing to all sides on the swift wings of winds resembling its riding horses. ²⁰ It goes on feeding on the flesh and drinking the blood of all living beings, and carrying on its various

acts of giving and receiving, and dancing and singing all along.²¹ Though the incorporeal Suchi has become aeriform and invisible as vacuum, yet there is nothing which she is unable to accomplish by the powers of her mind, outstripping the swiftness of the winds.²² But though she runs mad with her meat and turns giddy with her drink, yet she is curbed by fate from running at random, like an elephant in chains.

²³ The living body, like a running stream, moves apace with billows in its course. The painful and destructive diseases under which it labors are like greedy sharks lying hidden underneath.²⁴ This frail body, like the formless Suchi, being disabled by its inability to gorge on its fleshy food, begins to lament its fate, like old and sickly rich folks for their lack of hunger and appetite.

²⁵ The body with its members moves about like the beasts of the forest (for their prey). It plays its parts like an actress on stage dressed with good clothes and ornaments.²⁶ The body's internal and external winds move the it back and forth. Its natural weakness (immobility) is always in need of being moved by the vital airs, just like the immovable fragrance requires to be blown by a breeze.

²⁷ Men in vain rely on mantras and medicines, on austerities and charities, and on the adoration of idols for relief, while their bodies are subject to diseases like the sea to its surges.²⁸ The unseen force of mobility is soon lost in the solid body, just like the light of the lamp is lost in darkness. So the living Suchi came to be lost in the iron needle in which she had her rest.

²⁹ Everyone aspires to a state according to his natural propensity. The rakshasi's own inclination led her to choose being a needle.³⁰ A man tired from travelling far and wide returns at last to take his rest at home. So the big and living Karkati turned into the form of the thin iron Suchi in order to rest. But like ignorant people who prefer the grosser pleasures of the body to the nicer delights of the soul, she still wanted her grosser enjoyments that now are lost to her.³¹ With the intention of satisfying her thirst, she travelled to all parts and quarters in her form of the poor needle. But she derived more mental pleasure from the experiences than the satisfaction of her physical appetites.

³² When the container is in existence, it is possible to fill it with its contents and not otherwise. So one having his body can seek and get every pleasurable object to give it delight.³³ Remembering now the past enjoyments of her former body, she became sad in her mind that before she had been so highly pleased and satisfied filling its belly.³⁴ Then she resolved to undertake austere tapas for the purpose of recovering her former body. With this object in view, she chose for herself the proper situation for her castigations.

³⁵ The individual soul of Suchi thought of entering into the heart of a young vulture flying in the air. Thus by the help of her vital breath, she soared to it and rested herself in the air like that bird.³⁶ The vulture, filled with the malevolent spirit of the choleric Suchi in itself, began to think of executing the purposes that Suchi had in her mind.³⁷ Thus the vulture, bearing the unsatisfied Suchi within its body, flew to its intended spot on the mountain. It was driven there like a cloud by the wind and it was in this place that Suchi was to be released from her needle shape.

³⁸ It sat there in its state of asceticism on a spot of the solitary forest, seeming to be freed from all desires of the world.³⁹ It stood there on one of its legs, supported on the tip of its toe. It looked like the statue of some god that had been consecrated on the top of the mountain by someone in the form of

garuda.⁴⁰ There standing on one leg, supported on an atom of dust, she remained like the mountain peacock that stands on one leg with its head raised to the sky.

⁴¹ The vulture, seeing the living Suchi coming out of his body and standing on the mountain like a statue, fled and disappeared from that place.⁴² Suchi came out from the body of the bird like a spirit coming out of it, and the intellect aspiring to higher regions. She came out like particles of fragrance fly upon the wings of winds to be borne into a nose and meet the breath of the nostrils.⁴³ The vulture fled to his own place after leaving Suchi at that place, like a porter unburdening himself of his load, and on his return found himself relieved of his lecherous diseases.

⁴⁴ Now the iron Suchi, being seated in her tapas in the form of the living Suchi, appeared as graceful as a good man engaged in the performance of his proper duty.⁴⁵ Because a formless spirit is unable to do anything without the support or instrument of form, so the living Suchi supported herself on the tip of her toe in order to perform her tapas.⁴⁶ The living Suchi sheathed the iron needle like an evil female pisacha spirit wraps itself around a sinsapa tree, and like the winds enfold particles of odor which they bear away in their bosom.

⁴⁷ From then, O Indra, she has undertaken her protracted tapas and she has passed many years in the solitary wilderness in her steady position and posture of body.⁴⁸ It now behooves you, O Indra who is skilled in stratagems, to devise some plan to delude her from her object, or else her tapas will destroy the people you have so long preserved.

⁴⁹ Vasishta said:—

Indra, having heard these words of Narada, sent Maruta, the god of winds, to search for Suchi in all quarters of the globe.

⁵⁰ Then God Maruta, in his spiritual form of intelligence, proceeded in quest of her. Having traversed the ethereal regions, he alighted upon the nether world. The winds and all other elemental and physical powers are also believed to be endued with intelligence. They are not mere brute forces. They could never regularly discharge their proper functions without intelligence.

⁵¹ He saw everything instantly at a glance of his intelligence which perceived all things at one view, just like the sight of the Supreme Spirit sees through all bodies without exception or hindrance.⁵² His sight stretched to Lokaloka Mountain in the polar circle, far beyond the seven seas of the earth, where there is a large tract of land abounding with gems.⁵³ He viewed the circle of Pushkara continent, surrounded by a sea of sweet water and containing mountains with their dales and valleys.⁵⁴ He next saw Gomeda Islands surrounded by the liquid sea of liquor with its marine animals, and its land abounding with cities and towns.⁵⁵ He saw also the fertile and peaceful continent of Kraunchadwipa bounded by the sweet Saccharine Sea and beset by a range of mountains.⁵⁶ Further on was the Swetadvipa (white island) with its subsidiary isles surrounded by the Milky Ocean and having the temple of Vishnu in the midst of it.⁵⁷ After that appeared the sea of butter surrounding Kushadwipa Island and having chains of mountains and cities with buildings in them.⁵⁸ Then came the Sakadwipa in view amidst the ocean of curds, containing many countries and many large and populous cities in them.⁵⁹ Last appeared the Jambudwipa (Asia) girded by the sea of salt, having Meru and other boundary mountains and many countries in it.

⁶⁰ Thus the intelligence of air (Marut), having alighted on earth upon the wings of winds, rapidly spread himself to its utmost ends. ⁶¹ The god of air then directed his course to Jambudwipa (Asia). Having arrived there, he made his way to the summit of the snowy mountain, the Himalayas where Suchi was performing her tapas. ⁶² On the highest top of the summit, he saw a great desert as extensive as the expanse of the sky and devoid both of living creatures and the vestiges of animal bodies. ⁶³ It was unproductive of greens or grass owing to its nearness to the sun, and it was covered with dust like that which makes this earth. ⁶⁴ There, like the lucid waters of a river, spread a wide ocean of mirage to excite the thirst and allure the longings of men by its various colors that resemble the variegated colors of a rainbow. ⁶⁵ Its wide expanse, reaching almost to infinity, was not measurable even by the regents of the quarters of heaven, and the gusts of wind blowing upon it served to cover it with a canopy of dust. ⁶⁶ It resembled a wanton woman smeared with red powder like sunbeams and sandalwood paste like the moonbeams, and attentive to the whistling of the breeze.

⁶⁷ The god of the winds having travelled all over the seven continents and their seas, and being tired with his long journey on the surface of the earth, rested his gigantic body, which fills the infinite space in all directions, on the top of that mountain; like a butterfly resting on the twig of a tree after its wearied flight in the air.

Chapter 74 — Consummation of Suchi's Tapas

Vasishta speaking:—

¹ The god of the winds saw Suchi standing erect, like a crest on the summit of the mountain, amidst that vast tract of desert all around. ² She stood upon one leg fixed in her meditation and roasted by the burning sun over her head. She was dried up to a skeleton by her continued fasting, and her belly was contracted to shrunken skin. ³ Now and then she inhaled the hot air with her open mouth, then breathed it out as her heart could not contain the repeated influx of air. ⁴ She was withered under the scorching sunbeams, and battered in her frame by the hotter winds of the desert, yet she moved not from her stand-point as she was relieved every night by the cold bath of moonbeams. ⁵ She was content covering her head under particles of dust and did not like to change her state for a better fortune. ⁶ She gave up the possession of her forest to other living beings, and lived apart from all in the form of a crest of hair. Her breathings being withdrawn to the cranium, appeared out of it like a tuft of hairs or bushes clapped on her head.

⁷ The god of air was astonished to see Suchi in this state. He bowed down to her and was struck with terror as he saw her more carefully. ⁸ He was so overawed by the blaze of her body that he dared not ask her anything, such as, “O saintly Suchi, why do you undertake these austerities”? ⁹ He only exclaimed, “O holy Suchi, how wonderful is the sight of your tapas!” Impressed with veneration for her holiness, the god made his departure to heaven from where he had come.

¹⁰ He passed the region of the clouds and reached the sphere of the still air (*sthira vayu*). Then leaving the realm of the spiritual masters behind him, he arrived at the ecliptic path of the sun. ¹¹ Then rising higher in his airy car, he arrived at the city of Indra where he was cordially embraced by the lord of gods for the merit of his sight of Suchi. ¹² Being asked what he saw, he related all that he had seen to the assembled gods in the court of Indra.

¹³ Pavana, the wind god, said, “There is a king of mountains in the high Himalayas situated in the midst of Jambudwipa (Asia). It has Lord Shiva, who bears the crescent of the moon on his forehead, for his son-in-law. ¹⁴ North of it is a great peak with a plain land above it. That is where the holy Suchi holds her hermitage and performs her rigorous tapas.”

¹⁵ “What more shall I relate other than that she has abstained even from air, and has made a mess of her entrails coiled up together? ¹⁶ She has contracted the opening of her mouth into a needle hole, and stopped even that with a particle of dust in order to restrain it from receiving even a cold dewdrop for food. ¹⁷ The fervor of her tapas has made the snowy mountain forsake its coldness and assume an igneous form which is difficult to approach. ¹⁸ Therefore let all of us rise and go to the great father of creatures for redress, or know that the result of her fervent tapas must prove to our disadvantage.”

¹⁹ Hearing Pavana's words, Lord Indra in company with the other gods proceeded to the abode of Brahma and prayed to him for their safety. ²⁰ Brahma answered, “I am going even now to the summit of the snowy Himalaya to give Suchi her desired boon.” Upon this assurance of Brahma, the gods all returned to their celestial abodes.

²¹ During this time Suchi became perfect in her holiness. She began to glow with the fervor of her tapas on the mountain of the immortals. ²² Suchi very clearly perceived the passage of time by fixing

her open eyes on the sun and by counting days by the rays of solar light penetrating the opening of her mouth, the needle hole.²³ Suchi, though flexible as a bit of thread, had attained the firmness of Mount Meru by her erect posture.²⁴ She saw, by the ray of sunlight that penetrated the eye of the needle, that her shadow was the only witness to her upright tapas.²⁵ Suchi's shadow, the only attendant on her tapas, hid herself under her feet for fear of the midday heat. So do people find their best friends forsake their company in times of adversity.

²⁶ The union of the three persons of the iron, the ascetic, and shadowy Suchi, like the meeting of the three rivers (Asi, Varana and Ganga), described a triangle in the form of the sacred city of Benares.

²⁷ This union of the three, like the confluence of three rivers of Triveni (Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati), purifies the sins of men by the three different colors of their waters, namely the blue, black and white.²⁸ A person becomes acquainted with the unknown cause of all only by reasoning in his own mind and by means of his self-consciousness. Awareness of one's own mind is the best guide in all things. O Rama, there is no better teacher for men.

Chapter 75 — Suchi Regains Her Former Frame

¹ Vasishta continued:—

After a thousand years of long and painful tapas by Suchi, Brahma, the great father of creation, appeared to her under his pavilion of the sky and bade her accept the boon she preferred. ² Suchi was absorbed in her tapas. Her vital principle of life, remaining dormant in her, wanted the external organs of sense to give utterance to her prayer. She remained only to think upon the choice she should make.

³ She thought to herself, “I am now a perfect being and I am delivered from my questions. Therefore, what blessing do I need to ask beyond this state of beatitude, bliss of contentment, and self-resignation which I already possess in my peace and tranquility? ⁴ I have the knowledge of all that is to be known. I am free from the web of errors. My rationality is developed. What more is necessary for a perfect and rational being? ⁵ Let me remain seated as I am in my present state. I am in the light of truth and quite removed from the darkness of untruth. What else is there for me to ask or accept?”

⁶ “I have passed a long period in my ignorance. I was carried away like a child by the demon of the evil genius of earthly desires. ⁷ This desire is now brought under subjection by the power of my reasoning. So of what value are all the objects of my desire to my soul?”

⁸ The lord of creatures kept looking on Suchi sitting with her mind fixed in her silent meditation and resigned to her destiny. She was quite withdrawn from all external sensations and from the use of her bodily organs. ⁹ Brahma, with the kindness of his heart, again approached the indifferent woman and said, “Receive your desired blessing and live to enjoy for sometime longer on earth. ¹⁰ Then having enjoyed the joys of life, you shall attain the blissful state from which you shall have no more to return here. This is the fixed decree destined for all living beings on earth. ¹¹ By merit of your tapas, O best of womankind, let your desire be crowned with success! Resume your former physical form and remain as a rakshasi in this mountain forest.”

¹² “Regain your cloud-like shape of which you are deprived at present, and revive like a sprout from your pin-like root to become like a big tree growing out of its small root and little seed. ¹³ You shall get an inward supply of serum from your muscle tendon, like a plant gets its sap from the seeded grain. The circulation of that juice will cause growth like that of a germ from the ingrained seed.

¹⁴ Your knowledge of truth has no fear of falling into the difficulties of the world. On the contrary, the righteousness of your soul will lead you like a huge, heavy cloud with its pure water high in the heaven, in spite of the blasting gusts of wind.”

¹⁵ “By your constant practice of yoga meditation, you have accustomed yourself to a state of death-like samadhi. For your intellectual delight, you have thereby become assimilated into the trance of your meditation. ¹⁶ But your meditation must be compatible with your worldly affairs, and the body like the breeze, is nourished best by its constant agitation. ¹⁷ Therefore, my daughter, you are acting contrary to nature by avoiding the action that your nature requires.”

“There can be no objection to your slaughter of animal life under proper bounds. ¹⁸ Therefore act within the bounds of justice and refrain from all acts of injustice in the world. Stick steadfastly to reason if you should like to live liberated in this life.”

¹⁹ Saying so far, the god disappeared from below to his heavenly sphere, when Suchi said to him, "Be it so. I have no objection to this." Then, as she thought in her mind that she had no cause to be dissatisfied with the decree of the lotus-born Brahma, she found herself immediately in possession of her former body.

²⁰ She came to be of the measure of a span at first, then of a cubit, and next a full fathom in length. She was quickly increasing in height. She grew up like a tree until she was in the form of a cloud. She had all the members of the body added to her instantly, in the manner of the growth of the tree of human desire. ²¹ From the fibrous form of Suchi, the needle which was without form or feature, body, blood, bones, flesh or strength, there grew up all the parts and limbs at once. Just so the fancied garden of our desire suddenly springs up with all its green foliage and fruits and flowers from their hidden state.

Chapter 76 — Refraining from Unlawful Food

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Suchi the needle now became the demoness Karkati again. Her leanness turned to bulkiness in the manner of a flimsy cloud assuming a gigantic form in the rainy season.² Now returning to her native air and element, she felt some joy in herself. But she renounced her fiendish nature by the knowledge she had gained, like a snake throws off its old skin.³ There seated in her lotus posture, she continued to reflect on her future course. Relying on the purity of her new life and faith, she remained fixed as a mountain peak.

⁴ After six months of continued meditation, she obtained the knowledge of what she sought, like the roaring of clouds rouses the peacock to the sense of an approaching rain.⁵ Being roused to her sense, she felt the pains of her thirst and hunger, because the nature of the body never forsakes its appetites as long as it lasts in the same state.

⁶ She became sad not knowing what food she should take, because she thought the killing of animal life for food was unlawful and repugnant to her nature.⁷ Food forbidden by the respectable and obtained by unjust means must be rejected even at the expense of one's valuable life.⁸ "If my body," she thought, "should perish for lack of lawful food, I will not transgress the law for that. The guilt lies in sustaining my own life by taking unlawful food."⁹ Whatever is not obtained according to the customary rules of society is not worth taking. If I should die without proper food, or live upon improper fare, it amounts to the same thing whether I live or die.¹⁰ I was only the mind before, to which the body is added as a base appendage. It vanishes upon the knowledge of self. Hence its care and neglect are both alike."

¹¹ Vasishta resumed:—

As she was uttering these words in silence to herself, she heard a voice in the air coming from the god of winds who was pleased at the renunciation of her fiendish disposition.¹² "Arise Karkati", the voice said, "and go to the ignorant and enlighten them with the knowledge you have gained. For it is the nature of the good and great to deliver the ignorant from their error.¹³ Whoever does not receive this knowledge of lawful food from you, make him truly the object of your derision, and take him as being a right meat and proper food for you."

¹⁴ On hearing these words she responded, "I am much favored by you, kind god!" So saying, she got up and descended slowly from the height of the craggy mountain.¹⁵ Having passed the heights, she came to the valley at the foot of the mountain. From there she proceeded to the homes of the Kirata people who inhabit the lands at the bottom of the hills.¹⁶ She saw those places abounding in provisions of all sorts, such as humans and their cattle with their fodder and grass. There were vegetable as well as animal foods, with various kinds of roots and plants. There were eatables and drinkables also, with the flesh of deer and fowls, and even of reptiles and insects.

¹⁷ The nocturnal fiend then walked her way under the shade of the deep darkness of night. In her form of the dark mountain of Anjanagiri (unperceived by the inhabitants), she went towards the homes at the foot of Himalayas.

Chapter 77 — Karkati Travels to the Land of the Kiratas, Sees a King & His Minister, Debates Food

¹ Vasishta resumed:—

A deep dark night, black as ink and as thick as tangible pitch, covered the homes of the Kiratas.² The sky was moonless and overcast by a veil of dark clouds. The woodlands were hidden by tamara trees and thick masses of black clouds flew about in the air.³ Thick shrubs and bushes covered the hilly villages, obstructing passage by their impervious darkness. The flitting light of fireflies gave the homesteads an appearance of a bridal night.⁴ The thick darkness spread over the compounds of houses shut out the passage of the light of lamps, which made their way through chinks in the houses where they were burning.

⁵ Karkati saw a band of female pisacha ghosts dancing about her as her companions. She became motionless as a block of wood on seeing giddy vetala ghosts moving about with human skeletons in their hands.⁶ She saw antelope sleeping by her and the ground matted over by thick snow fall. The breeze gently shook drizzling drops of dew and frost from the leaves of trees.⁷ She heard frogs croaking in the bogs and night ravens cawing from the hollows of trees. The mingled noise of happy men and women came from the inside of the houses.⁸ She saw phosphorescent light burning in swamps with the luster of portentous meteors. She found banks and streams thick with thorns and thistles growing by their sides and washed by the waters gliding below them.⁹ She looked above and saw groups of stars shining in the firmament. She saw the forest about her, the breeze shaking their fruit and flowers.¹⁰ She heard the alternate and constant cries of owls and crows in the hollows of trees. She listened also to the shouts of robbers in the outskirts and the wailings of villagers at a distance.¹¹ Foresters were silent in their native woods and citizens were fast asleep in the cities. Winds were howling in the forests and birds were at rest in their woodland nests.¹² Furious lions lay in their dens and deer were lying in their caves. The sky was full of frozen dew and the woodlands were all still and quiet.¹³ Lightning flashing from dark inky clouds resembled the reflections of rays from the bosom of a crystal mountain. The clouds were as thick as solid clay and the darkness was as stiff as if it needed a sword to cut it.¹⁴ Blown by the storm, dark clouds fled in the air like the dark Anjana Mountain, then deluged a flood of pitchy rain like a waterfall from the bosom of a mountain.¹⁵ The night was as dark as the pit of a coal-mine, and as jet black as the wing of the black bee. The whole landscape, lulled to sleep, appeared like the world lying submerged under ignorance.

¹⁶ In this dreadful dead of night in the area inhabited by Kiratas, she saw a king and his minister wandering together in the forest.¹⁷ The king was named Vikrama and he was as brave and valorous as his name and conduct implied him to be. He came out undaunted from within the city, after the citizens had fallen fast-asleep.¹⁸ Karkati saw them wandering in the forest with the weapons of their valor and fortitude, looking for the vetala ghosts that infested the neighborhood.

¹⁹ Seeing them, she was glad to think that at last she had found a proper food. But she wanted to know beforehand whether they were ignorant folks or had any knowledge of their souls, or whether their weariness under the burden of their bodies had exposed them to the dangers of the dark night.

²⁰ “The lives of the unlearned,” she thought to herself, “truly are damned in this world and the next.”

Therefore it is better to put an end to these rather than leave them to live to their peril in both worlds.
²¹ Without spiritual knowledge, the life of the ignorant is death. Physical death is preferable because it saves the dying soul from further accumulation of sin.²² It is the primeval law ordained by our prime father, the lotus-born Brahma, that ignorant souls and those without knowledge of their selves should become the food of the heinous.²³ Therefore there is no harm in my feeding upon these two persons, who have offered themselves for my food. It is silliness to allow an easy prize or a proffered gift slip from the hand.”

²⁴ “But if they prove to be men of good and great souls, then in that case I cannot feel disposed of my own nature to put an end to their valuable lives.²⁵ Therefore I must test them to see if they possess such intelligence. If so, I will decline to make them my food because I feel averse to molesting the intelligent.²⁶ For those who expect to have true glory and real happiness throughout their lives on earth must always honor the learned with gifts adequate to their parts and desires.²⁷ I should rather suffer my body to perish with hunger than destroy the intelligent for its support. The soul derives more satisfaction from the counsels of the wise than bare life without knowledge can possibly afford.²⁸ The learned are to be supported even at the expense of one’s own life because the society of the wise is a tonic for the soul, though death should deprive us of our bodies.”

²⁹ “If I, a man-eating rakshasi, am so favorably disposed to the preservation of the wise, then what reasonable man is there who must not make a breast-plate of the wise for himself?³⁰ Of all embodied beings that move about on the surface of the earth, it is only the man of profound understanding who sheds his benign influence like cooling moonbeams all around him.³¹ To be despised by the wise is death, and to be honored by the learned is true life. Only the company of the wise makes life bring forth its fruits of heavenly bliss and final beatitude.”

³² “I will now ask a few questions to test them, like copper by a chemical process, and know whether they are men of character or gilded on the surface with wise looks.³³ Upon examination and ascertainment of the qualifications, if they prove to be wiser than the examiner, then one should avail of their instruction. Otherwise there is no harm to make an end of them as they best deserve.”

Chapter 78 — Karkati Confronts the King & His Minister

¹ Vasishta continued:—

The rakshasi, who was an offshoot of the great garden of the rakshasa demon race, made a loud and tremendous yell like the deep roaring of a cloud.² After her deep roar she muttered in a clattering voice like the rattling of a thunder clap following the rumbling of clouds.³ She said, “Ho, ho? What are you who venture abroad in this dread and dreary desert, dark as the great illusion of *maya*, which without the light of the sun or moon is as gloomy as the gloom of ignorance? Why are you crawling here like insects bred in stones?⁴ What men of great minds are you to have come here like weak minded deviants who have lost their way? You have become an easy prey for me and must meet your fate in my hands in a moment.”

⁵ The king replied, “O you demon, what are you and where do you stand? If you are an embodied being, show yourself unto us. Who is terrified by your bodiless form buzzing like a bee?⁶ It is the business of the brave to immediately pounce like a lion upon his prey. Therefore leave off your bragging and show us your prowess at once.⁷ Tell me what you want of us and whether you terrify us by your vain boasting or utter these words from your own fear of us.⁸ Now measure your body according to your speech and confront us without delay. Slow gain serves no good save the loss of time.”

⁹ On hearing the king’s speech, she thought it was well said and immediately showed herself to them, uttering her loud shout with a grinning laughter.¹⁰ The king heard her voice filling the air and resounding in the woods. He saw her huge and hideous person by the light of her open mouth and ivory teeth in the act of her loud laughter.¹¹ Her body was like a huge cliff hurled down by the thunder bolt of the last doomsday. The flashes of her eyeballs blazed in the sky like a pair of bangles or conch shells.¹² The darkness of her appearance would have cast shade on the deep dark waters at the universal deluge that hid the flame of the undersea fire. Her voice was as hoarse as the growling of clouds on the high heads of hills.¹³ Her form was like that of a monumental pillar standing between the heaven and earth. The gnashing of her teeth struck the night-rovers with the fear at being ground to death under them.

¹⁴ Her figure, like those of the nocturnal demons, yakshas, rakshasas and pisachas, by its erect hairs, muscular limbs, dingy eyes and coal black color, inspired dread of dire disaster.¹⁵ The air she breathed in the lungs snored like the horrible snorting of horses’ nostrils. The tip of her nose was as big as a mallet, and its sides as flat as a pair of bellows or winnowing fans.¹⁶ She stood with her jet black body like a rock of dark agate. Her body joined with her loud laugh gave her the appearance of the all subduing night of dissolution.¹⁷ Her bulky body, resembling a thick cloudy night, approached them like an autumn cloud moving in the forest of the sky.

¹⁸ The huge body appeared like a demon rising from underneath the ground and approaching to devour them like an eclipse engulfs the sun and moon.¹⁹ Her ebony breasts were hanging down like two pendant clouds of somber sapphires, or more like two mortars or water pots, with her necklaces hanging on them.²⁰ Her two arms were suspended from her bulky body like a couple of stout branches from a sturdy oak, or like two logs of burnt wood from her coal-like body.

²¹ Seeing her thus, the two valiant men remained as steadfast as those standing on the firm ground of certainty who are never led away by doubts.

²² The minister said, "O great friend! What causes this rage and fury in your great soul? It is only the mean and base who are always violent even in trifling matters. ²³ Lay aside this great ado for nothing, which does not become you. The wise pursue their business with coolness to crown it with success.

²⁴ Know the soft and slow breath of our moderation has driven swarms of such flies like yourself, just like a slight breath of wind scatters dry leaves and straws. ²⁵ Setting aside all haughtiness and passion of spirit, the wise man conducts his business with a calm coolness of the mind, assisted by reason and practical wisdom. ²⁶ One must manage his affairs with slowness, whether it prove effectual or not, because overruling destiny disposes of everything, which human effort has no power to prevent.

²⁷ Now let us know your desire and what is your object with us, because no suitor who has come to us has been refused of his prayer, or allowed to return in disappointment."

²⁸ Hearing these words, the rakshasi pondered in her mind, "O, the serene composure of these lion-like men and the affability of their conduct with others. ²⁹ I do not think them to be men of the ordinary kind, and even more wonderful, their inner soul is expressed in the outward gestures of their faces and eyes and in the tone and tenor of their speech. ³⁰ The words, face and eyes express the inner thoughts of the wise, and these go together like the salt and water of the sea. ³¹ My intention is already known to them, as is theirs also to me. I cannot destroy them when they are indestructible because of their moral excellence."

³² "I understand them to be acquainted with spiritual knowledge, without which there cannot be a good understanding. Because knowledge of the indestructibility of the spirit takes away the fear of death, and these men lack that fear. ³³ Therefore I shall ask them something about which I have doubts. They who fail to ask the wise what they know not must remain dunces throughout their lives."

³⁴ Having thought so, she opened her mouth, suppressing her roaring voice and loud laughter for a while, and asked her questions. ³⁵ "Tell me, O you sinless men who are so brave and valiant, who are you and from where have you come? The very sight of you has raised my regard for you, like the good hearted become friends with one another, even at their first sight."

³⁶ The minister said, "This is the king of the Kiratas and I am his councilor. We have come out tonight in our nightly round to apprehend malicious beings like you. ³⁷ It is the duty of princes to punish the wicked, both by day and night. Those who trespass the bounds of their duty must be made like fuel to the fire of destruction."

³⁸ The rakshashi said, "King, you have a good minister. A bad one is unbecoming of a king. All good kings have wise counselors, and they make the good king. ³⁹ The wise minister is the king's guide to justice, and it is he who elevates both king and his people. Justice is the first of the four cardinal virtues (justice, temperance, prudence and frugality), and it is the only virtue of a ruler who is called the incarnation of justice (*dharma avatara*)."

⁴⁰ "But kings also must have spiritual knowledge because that is the greatest human knowledge. The king who has this knowledge becomes the best of kings. The minister who knows the soul can give the best counsel to guide other souls. ⁴¹ A man who feels for others makes a good ruler. Whoever is

unacquainted with this rule is not fit to be either a ruler or his minister.⁴² If you know this fundamental principle, it is good and you shall prosper. Otherwise you wrong yourselves and your subjects. In which case, you shall be my prey.”

⁴³ “There is only one way for you two young men to escape from my clutches. You must answer my intricate questions according to your best wits and judgment.⁴⁴ Now you king and you his counselor give me the solution to the questions that I ask of you. If you fail to give the proper answers as you have agreed to do, then you must then fall under my hands, like anyone who fails to keep his words.”

Chapter 79 — The Rakshasi Karkati's Questions

¹ Vasishta continued:—

After saying so, the fiend began to ask her questions. You should be attentive to them Rama, like the king who told her to go on.

² The rakshasi resumed:—

What is that minuscule atomic particle that is one yet many, and is as vast as the ocean, and which contains innumerable worlds like the bubbles of the sea? ³ What is a void yet no void, which is something yet nothing? What makes me and you, and where do I or you abide and subside? ⁴ What moves unmoved and unmoving, and stands without stopping? What is intelligent yet is as dull as a stone? What presents its variety in the emptiness of understanding?

⁵ What has the nature of fire without its burning quality? What is that non-flammable substance that produces fire and its flame? ⁶ Who is not of the nature of the ever-changing solar, lunar and stellar lights, but is the never changing enlightener of the sun, moon and stars? Who, having no eyes, gives the eye its sight? ⁷ Who gives eyesight to the eyeless vegetables and the blind mineral creation?

⁸ Who is the maker of heavens and who is the author of the natures of things? Who is the source of this world of jewels and whose treasure are all the gems contained in it? ⁹ What is that monad which shines in darkness and is the point that is and is not? What is that iota which is imperceptible to all, and what is that jot that becomes an enormous mountain? ¹⁰ To whom is the twinkling of the eye as long as a kalpa millennium and a whole age only a moment? Whose omnipresence is equal to his absence, and whose omniscience is the same as his total ignorance? ¹¹ Who is called spirit but is no air in itself? Who is said to be sound or word but is none of them himself?

He is called the All, but is nothing at all of all that exists. He is known as Ego, but no ego is he himself.

¹² What is gained by the greatest effort over a great many births which, when gained at last, is hard to retain (owing to the spiritual carelessness of mankind)? ¹³ Who being in easy circumstances in life has not lost his soul in it?

Who, being only an atom in creation, does not reckon the great Mount Meru as a particle? ¹⁴ What is no more than an atom and fills a space of many leagues? What atomic particle is measured in many miles? ¹⁵ Whose glance and nod makes all beings act their parts as players? What minute particle contains many mountain chains in its bosom? ¹⁶ Who is bigger than Mount Meru in his minuteness and who, being smaller than the point of a hair, is higher than the highest rock?

¹⁷ Whose light brought out the lamp of light from the bosom of darkness? What minute particle contains the minutiae of ideas without end? ¹⁸ What has no flavor and gives savor to all things? Whose presence when withdrawn from all substances reduces them to infinitesimal atoms? ¹⁹ Who is it that by his self-permeation connects the particles composing the world and, after their separation and dissolution, what imperceptible power rejoins the detached particles to recreate the new world?

²⁰ Who, being formless, has a thousand hands and eyes, and in whose twinkling of an eye comprehends the period of many cycles together? ²¹ In what microscopic particle does the world exist

as a tree in its seed, and by what power do the unproductive seeds of atoms become productive of worlds? ²² Whose glance causes the production of the world, like from its seed? Who creates the world without any motive or material? ²³ Who has no visual organs and enjoys the pleasure of seeing (*drishti*) and is the viewer (*drashta*) of himself, which he makes the object of his view? ²⁴ Who has no object of vision before him, sees nothing without him, but looks upon himself as an infinity void of everything visible within it? ²⁵ Who shows the subjective sight of the soul by itself as an objective view and represents the world like the shape of a bracelet in his own metal? ²⁶ Who has nothing existent beside himself, and in whom all things exist, like the waves existing in the waters, and whose will makes them appear as different things?

²⁷ Both time and space are equally infinite and indivisible, like the essence of God in which they exist. Then why do we try to differentiate and separate them like water from its fluidity? ²⁸ What inner cause in us makes the soul believe the unreal world to be real, and why does this fallacy continue at all times? ²⁹ The knowledge of the worlds, whether present, past or future, is all a great error. Yet what is that immutable being that contains the seed of this phenomenal wilderness? ³⁰ What being, without changing itself and before it develops itself into creation, shows these phenomena such as the shape of the seed of the world that becomes the form of a developed forest of created beings?

³¹ Tell me, O king, on what solid foundation does the great Mount Meru stand like a tender filament of the lotus? What gigantic form contains thousands of Meru and Mandara mountains within its spacious womb? ³² Tell me, what immeasurable consciousness has spread myriads of intelligences in all these worlds? What supplies your strength for ruling and protecting your people, and in conducting yourself through life? In whose sight do you either lose yourself or think to exist

Tell me all these, O clear sighted and fair faced king, for the satisfaction of my heart. ³³ Let your answer melt down the doubt that has covered the face of my heart as with snow. If it fails to completely efface this dirt of doubt from the surface of my heart, I will never account it as the saying of the wise. ³⁴ But if you fail to lighten my heart of its doubts and set it at ease, then know for certain that you shall immediately be made fuel to the fire of my bowels. ³⁵ I shall fill this big belly of mine with all the people of your realm. But should you answer rightly, you shall reign in peace. Otherwise, you shall meet your end like the ignorant who are satisfied with the enjoyments of life.

Vasishta speaking:—

³⁶ Saying so, the nocturnal fiend made a loud shout like a roaring cloud to express her joy. Then she sat silently with her fearful features, like a light hearted cloud in autumn.

Chapter 80 — The Minister's Answers

¹ Vasishta continued:—

After the giant-like descendent of rakshasas had asked her occult questions in the deep gloom of night in that thick forest, the good and great minister began to give his replies.

² The minister said:—

Hear me, you dark and cloud-like form, unravel your riddling questions with as much ease as a lion foils the fury of gigantic elephants.³ All your questions relate to the Supreme Spirit and are framed in enigmatic language to test the force of our penetration into their hidden meanings.

⁴ The soul is identical to consciousness which is more minute than a particle of air. That is the atomic principle that you asked about because it is a nameless atom imperceptible by the six organs of sense and unintelligible to the mind.⁵ Underlying the atomic consciousness is the minute seed that contains this universe. Whether it is a substantial or unsubstantial reality, nobody can say.

⁶ It is called a reality from our notion of it being the soul of all by itself. It is from that soul that all other existences have come in to being.⁷ It is a void from its outward emptiness, but it is no void as regards its consciousness (which is a reality). Because it cannot be perceived, it is said to be nothing, but because it is imperishable, it is a subtle something.⁸ It is not a nothing because it permeates all things. All things are only reflections of the minute Consciousness, and its unity shines forth in the plurality, all which is as unreal as the form of a bracelet made of gold substance.

⁹ This atom is the transcendental vacuum. It is imperceptible owing to its minuteness. Though it is situated in all things, it is unperceived by the mind and external senses.¹⁰ Its universal permeation cannot make it nothing, because all that exists is not That, which alone is known as the thinking principle that makes us speak, see and act.¹¹ No kind of reasoning can establish the non-entity of real existence because it is not capable of being seen by anybody. Yet the Universal Soul is known in its hidden form, like the unseen camphor by its smell.

¹² The unlimited soul resides in all limited bodies, and the atomic consciousness pervades the vast universe in the same manner as the mind fills all bodies in its purely subtle state unknown to the senses.¹³ It is one and all, unity as well as plurality, because it is the soul of each and all, both singly as well as collectively, and because it supports and contains each and all by and within itself.¹⁴ All these worlds are like little billows in the vast ocean of Divine Consciousness whose intelligence, like a liquid body, shows itself in the form of eddies in the water.¹⁵ This minute intellect, being imperceptible to the senses and the mind, is said to be of the form of emptiness. But being perceived by our consciousness, it is not a nothing, although of the nature of a void in itself.

¹⁶ I am That and so are you by our conviction of the unity. But if we only believe ourselves to be composed of our bodies, then I am not That, nor you are He.¹⁷ If we rid our sense of "I" and "you" through our knowledge of truth, we cease to be the ego, and you and all other persons lose all their properties in the sole unity.

¹⁸ This particle of consciousness is immovable, though it moves over thousands of miles. We find that in our consciousness, this particle has many a mile composed in it.¹⁹ The mind is firmly seated in the

empty intellect from which it never stirs, though it goes to all places where it is never located.²⁰ That which has its seat in the body can never go out of it, just like a baby hanging on the breast of its mother cannot look to another place for its rest.²¹ One who is free to range over large tracts will never leave his own home where he has the liberty and power to do all he likes.²² Wherever the mind may wander, it is never affected by the climate of that place, just like a jar taken to a distant country with its lid shut does not yield any passage to the light and air of that region into it.

²³ The thinking and non-thinking of consciousness, both being perceived in our minds, is said to be the exercise of intellect and the dullness of the intellect.²⁴ When our exercise of intellect is assimilated into the solid substance of Divine Consciousness, then our intellect is said to become solidified as a stone.

²⁵ The consciousness of the Supreme Being has spread worlds in the infinite space that are most wonderful as they are his uncreated creations.²⁶ The Divine Soul is of the essence of fire, and never forsakes its form of fire. It inheres in all bodies without burning them, and it is the enlightener and purifier of all substances.²⁷ The blazing intelligence of the Divine Soul, purer than the ethereal sphere, produces the elemental fire by its presence.²⁸ The intellect, which is the light of the soul and enlightener of the lights of the luminous sun, moon and stars, is indestructible and never fades, although the light of the luminaries is lost on the last day of universal doom.

²⁹ There is an inextinguishable light (glory), known as ineffably transcendental which the eye cannot behold, but it is perceptible to the mind as its inner illumination and presents all things to its view.

³⁰ From there proceeds the intellectual light which transcends the conscious and mental lights and presents before it wonderful pictures of things invisible to visual light.³¹ Although plant life has no eyes, it is conscious of an inner light within that causes their growth and gives the capability of bearing fruit and flowers.

³² With regard to time, space and action and existence of the world, all are only the perceptions of sense and have no master or maker, father or supporter except the Supreme Soul in whom they exist. They are mere modifications of Himself and are nothing of themselves.³³ The atomic spirit is the casket of the bright gem of the world, without changing its minuteness. The Divine Spirit is its measure and measurer, beside which there is no separate world of itself.³⁴ Spirit manifests itself in everything in all these worlds. It shines as the brightest gem when all the worlds are compressed in it (at the universal dissolution).

³⁵ Because His nature is beyond understanding, He is said to be a speck of obscurity. Because of the brightness of His intellect, He is said to be a ray of light. Because we are conscious of Him, He is known to exist. Because our sight cannot see Him, He is said to be non-existent.³⁶ He is said to be far away because He is invisible to our eyes, and to be near because His being is the nature of our consciousness. He is described as a mountain because He is the totality of our consciousness, although He is more minute than any perceptible particle.³⁷ His consciousness manifests itself in the form of the universe. Mountains are not real existences. They exist like Meru in his atomic substratum.

³⁸ A twinkling is what appears as a short instant, and a kalpa epoch is the long duration of an age.

³⁹ Sometimes an instant, when it is filled with acts and thoughts of an age, represents a kalpa, just like

an extensive country of many miles can be pictured in miniature or in a grain of the brain.⁴⁰ The course of a long kalpa is sometimes represented in the womb of an instant, just like the time to build a great city is present in the small space of a mind's memory, as it is in the reflection of a mirror.⁴¹ As little moments and kalpa ages, high mountains and extensive miles may abide in a single grain of the intellect, so do all dualities and pluralities unite and meet in the unity of God.

⁴² That "I have done this and that before" is an impression derived from the thought of our actual actions and activity. But the truth thereof becomes as untrue as our doings in a dream.⁴³ It is calamity that prolongs the course of time, and our prosperity diminishes its duration, just like the short space of a single night appeared like twelve long years to King Harishchandra in his misery.

⁴⁴ Anything that appears as a certain truth to the mind stamps the same impression in the soul. It is the same as the impression of a golden jewelry is deeper in the soul than the idea of its gold.⁴⁵ There is nothing like a moment or an age, or anything like near or far to the soul. It is the idea in the minute intellect that creates their length or brevity, and nearness or remoteness.⁴⁶ The opposites of light and darkness, nearness and distance, and a moment and an age, are only varied impressions on the unvaried percipient mind. There is no real difference.

⁴⁷ All things or objects that are perceptible to the senses are called evident or apparent. That which lies beyond them is said to be imperceptible or unapparent. But visual sensation is not self-evident, only the vision of consciousness which is the real essence.⁴⁸ As long as there is the knowledge of the jewel, there is the knowledge of the gem also, that of the real gem being lost under the apparent form.

⁴⁹ By restoring attention away from the visible form of the jewel to its real essence that one is led to the sight of the pure light of the only one Brahman.

⁵⁰ Brahma is viewed as reality (*sat*) when He is thought of as pervading all things. He is said to be unreal (*asat*) because He is not the object of vision. Consciousness is said to be a reality from its faculty of exercise of intellect. Otherwise it is a stolid or dull matter.⁵¹ Consciousness is the wonderful property of the Divine Spirit in which it is present as its object (*chetya*). But how can a man see Consciousness if his mind is fixed to the sight of a world that is a shadow of Consciousness and moves like a tree shaken by the wind?

⁵² As a mirage is the reflection of the dense light of the sun, so the world is a shadow of the solid light of Divine Consciousness.⁵³ That which is more refined than the rays of the sun and never decays is always as uniform as it was before creation and remains apart from it. Hence its existence is equivalent to its nonexistence.

⁵⁴ Just like the accumulation of sunbeams exhibits the form of a gold mine in the sky, so the golden appearance of the world prevents the deluded from seeing the knowable object of the intellect.⁵⁵ Like the appearance of a visionary city in dream, the sight of this world is neither a reality nor altogether unreal. It is a reflection of consciousness, like the dream is a reflection of images in the memory. It is only a continued medley of errors.⁵⁶ Knowing it as such, men should consider everything by the light of reason and proceed to the knowledge of truth by their intellectual culture.

⁵⁷ There is no difference between a house and a void other than that the one is the object of vision and the other of consciousness. Again, all nature teeming with life is said to live in God who is light and

life of all for evermore.⁵⁸ But all these living beings have no room in the empty sphere of Divine Consciousness. They live and shine like solar rays proceeding imperceptibly from that luminous orb.

⁵⁹ A difference appears in these rays, both from the original light and from one another, by a curious design of Providence. But it the same in all, like the forms of the trees growing out of the same kind of seed.

⁶⁰ As the tree contained in the seed is of the same kind as the parent seed, so the innumerable worlds contained in the empty seed of Brahma are also as empty as Brahma himself.⁶¹ As the tree which is yet undeveloped in the seed does not exist without development of its parts, so the world in the womb of Brahma was discernible only to Divine Consciousness.

⁶² There is only one God who is one and uncreated, calm and quiet, without beginning, middle or end, and without a body and its parts. He has no duality and is one in many. He is of the form of pure light, and shines for ever with everlasting and undiminished luster.

Chapter 81 — The King's Answers

¹ The Rakshasi said, "Well said, O councilor! Your explanations are sanctifying and filled with spiritual doctrines. Now let the king with lotus eyes answer the other questions."

² The king answered:—

He whose belief consists in the renunciation of all reliance on this world, and whose attainment depends upon forsaking all the desires of the heart,³ whose expansion and contraction causes the creation and extinction of the world, who is the object of the doctrines of Vedanta, and who is inexpressible by words or speech of humankind,⁴ who is between the two extremes of doubt (whether he is or is not), and who is between both extremes (that he is and is not), and whose pleasure (will) displays the world with all its animate and inanimate beings,⁵ whose universal permeation does not destroy His unity, who being the soul of all is still but one, He alone, O lady, is truly said to be the eternal Brahma.

⁶ This minute particle is falsely conceived as spirit (air) because it is invisible to the naked eye, but in truth, it is neither air nor any other thing except pure Consciousness.⁷ This smallest of particles is said to be sound or words, but it is error to say so because it is far beyond the reach of sound or the sense of words.⁸ That particle is all yet nothing. It is neither I, you or he. It is the Almighty Soul and its power is the cause of all.⁹ It is the soul that is attainable with great pains, and which being gained adds nothing to our possession. But its attainment is attended with the gain of the Supreme Soul. There is no better gain.

¹⁰ Ignorance of the soul stretches the bonds of our worldliness and repeated reincarnations with their evils growing like the rankest weeds in spring, until they are rooted out by spiritual knowledge.

¹¹ Those who are in easy circumstances in life lose their souls by viewing themselves only as solid bodies that rise quickly to view like a dense mirage by light of the sun.

¹² This particle of self-consciousness contains Mount Meru and the three worlds in itself like bits of straw. They are distinguished from it in order to present their delusive appearances to us.¹³ Whatever is imprinted in consciousness appears expressed without it. The fond embrace of passionate lovers in dream and imagination serves to exemplify this truth.¹⁴ As Consciousness rose of itself with its omnipotent Will at the first creation of the world, so it exercises the same volition in its subsequent formations also, like sprigs growing from the joints of reeds and grass.¹⁵ The hobby that enters the heart also shows itself on the outside, as in the example of children's whims.

¹⁶ The minute intellect, small as an atom and as subtle as the air, fills the whole universe on all sides.

¹⁸ As a cunning and conceited man deludes young girls by gestures, calls, winks and glances,¹⁹ so the holy look of Divine Consciousness serves as a prelude to the endless rotating dance of worlds with all their hills and contents.²⁰ It is that atom of consciousness that envelops all things within its consciousness, and represents also their forms outside it, just like a picture on canvas shows the figures of the hills and trees drawn in it, standing out as in bas-relief.

²¹ The Divine Spirit is as minute as the hundredth part of the point of a hair, yet it is larger than the hills it hides in itself, and as vast as infinity, being unlimited by any measure of space or time.²² The comparison of the vast emptiness of divine understanding with a particle of air is not an exact simile.

It is like comparing a mountain with a mustard seed, which is absurd.²³ The minuteness attributed to the Divine Spirit (in the Vedas) is as false as attributing different colors to a peacock's feathers, and of jewelry to gold, which can not be applicable to the spirit.

²⁴ It is that bright lamp that has brought forth light from its thought without any loss of its own essential brightness.²⁵ If the sun and other luminous bodies in the world were dull and dark in the beginning, then what was the nature of the primeval light and where was it?²⁶ The pure essence of the mind situated in the soul saw the light displayed on the outside by its internal particle of the intellect.

²⁷ There is no difference between the lights of the sun, moon and fire and the darkness, out of which these lights were produced. The only difference is that of the two colors, black and white.²⁸ As the difference between clouds and snows consists in the blackness of the one and whiteness of the other, such is the difference between light and darkness, only in their colors not in their substance.²⁹ Both of these being inanimate in their nature, there is no difference between them. They both disappear or join with one another before the light of consciousness. They disappear before the intellectual light of the yogi who, under the blaze of his consciousness, perceives no physical light or darkness in his abstract meditation. They join together as light and shade, the shadow inseparably following the light.

³⁰ The sun of consciousness shines by day and night without setting or sleeping. It shines in the bosom of even hard stones without being clouded or having its rise or fall.³¹ The light of this blazing soul has lighted the sun, which diffuses its light all over the three worlds. It has filled the capacious womb of earth with a variety of provisions, just they store large baskets of food in a warehouse.³² It enlightens darkness without destroying itself, and the darkness that receives the light becomes as enlightened as light itself.

³³ As the shinning sun brings the lotus buds to light, so the light of the Divine Spirit enlightens our intellects amidst the gloom of ignorance that envelopes them.³⁴ As the sun displays himself by making day and night by his rise and fall, so does the intellect show itself by its development and restraint by turns.³⁵ All our notions and ideas are contained in the particle of the intellect, just like a healthy seed contains in its breast the leaves, flowers and fruits of the future tree.³⁶ These and all the powers of the mind develop themselves in their proper times, like flowers and fruits make their appearance in spring and proper seasons.

³⁷ The particle of Divine Spirit is altogether tasteless, being so very flavorless and devoid of qualities, yet it is always delicious as the giver of flavor to all things.³⁸ All tastes abide in the waters (water being the receptacle of taste), like a mirror is the recipient of a shadow, but savor, like the shadow, is not the substance. It is the essence of the spirit that gives it the flavor.

³⁹ All bodies that exist in the world and are unconsciousness of Him are forsaken by the atomic spirit of the Supreme, but they remain dependant upon Him, by the consciousness of the divine particle shining in their souls.

In answer to "who are forsaken by and supported by the Divine Spirit,"⁴⁰ it is He who, being unable to wrap himself, wraps the world in Him by spreading out the clothing of his atomic consciousness over all existence.⁴¹ The Supreme Spirit is of the form of infinite space. It cannot hide itself in anything within its sphere, which would be like hiding an elephant in grass.⁴² Yet this all-knowing

spirit encompasses the world, knowing it to be a trifle, just like a child holding a grain of rice in his hand. This is an act of illusion (*maya*).

⁴³ The spirit of God exists even after the dissolution of the world by relying in his consciousness (*chit*), just like plants survive the spring by the sap they have derived from it. ⁴⁴ It is the essence of Consciousness that gives rise to the world, just as the garden continues to flourish by the nourishment of the spring season. ⁴⁵ Know the world is truly a transformation of consciousness, and all its productions are like plants in the great garden of the world, nourished by the spring juice of consciousness. ⁴⁶ It is the sap supplied by the intellectual particle that makes all things grow up with myriads of arms and eyes. In the same manner the atom of a seed produces plants with a thousand branches and fruit.

⁴⁷ Myriads of kalpas amount to an infinitesimal part of a twinkling of the atomic consciousness, as a momentary dream presents a man with all the periods of his life, from youth to age. In answer to, “What twinkling of the eye appears as many thousand kalpas,” ⁴⁸ even this infinitesimal of a twinkling is too long for thousands of kalpas. The whole duration of existence is as short as a wink of His eye.

⁴⁹ Only an idea makes a twinkling appear a kalpa or many kalpas, just as the idea of satiety in starvation is a mere delusion to the deluded soul.

⁵⁰ Only lust makes the famished feed upon his thoughts of food. Despair of one’s life presents his death before him in his dream. ⁵¹ All worlds reside in the intellectual soul within the atom of its consciousness. Outer worlds are only reflections of the inner prototype. ⁵² Whatever object appears to be situated anywhere, it is only a representation of its model in some place or other, and resembles the appearance of figures in bas-relief on any part of a pillar. But the changes occurring in external phenomena are no results of the internal, which being the serene vacuum is subject to no change.

⁵³ All existences present in Consciousness at this moment are the same as they have existed, and will ever exist inwardly, like trees in their seeds. ⁵⁴ The atom of Consciousness contains the moments and ages of time, like grain within the husk. It contains these in the seed within the infinite soul of God.

⁵⁵ The Soul remains quite aloof as if retired from the world, in spite of the existence and dependence of the world upon the Soul. The Divine Soul at all times remains unconcerned with its creation and its preservation. ⁵⁶ The essence of the world springs from the atom of pure Consciousness. However, Consciousness itself remains apart from both the states of action and passion.

⁵⁷ There is nothing created or dissolved in the world by anybody at anytime. All apparent changes are caused by the delusion of our vision. ⁵⁸ This world with all its contents is as empty as the vault of the empty atmosphere. We apply the word ‘world’ to phenomena, but it is an insignificant term signifying nothing. ⁵⁹ It is the particle of consciousness that is led by the delusion of *maya* to view scenes situated in the Divine Soul in the outward appearance of the world of phenomena.

⁶⁰ The words ‘external’ and ‘internal’ as applied to the world are meaningless and not positive terms. There is no inside or outside of the Divine Soul. These are contrived for the instruction of pupils to explain its different views by consciousness. ⁶¹ The viewer looking into the invisible being within himself comes to see the soul. He who looks on the outside with his open eyes comes to view the unreal as real. ⁶² Therefore whoever looks into the soul can never see false phenomena as realities as

others do.⁶³ It is the internal sight of consciousness that looks into the inner soul which is without all desires. The external eyes are mere organs to look upon the false appearance of outer objects.

⁶⁴ There can be no object of sight unless there is a looker, just like there can be no child without its parent. This duality arises from the lack of knowing their unity.⁶⁵ The viewer himself becomes the view as there can be no view without its viewer. Nobody prepares any food, unless there is somebody to feed upon it.⁶⁶ It is in the power of consciousness (imagination) to create the views of its vision, just like it lies in the capacity of gold to produce all the various forms of jewelry.⁶⁷ The inanimate view never has or can have the ability of producing its viewer, just like the golden bracelet has no power of bringing gold into being.

⁶⁸ Consciousness, having the faculty of reasoning (*chetana*), forms thoughts of what can be perceived (*chetiyas*) within itself, which however unreal are falsely viewed as real by its intellectual vision to its own deception, just like the deception caused by the appearance of jewelry in gold.⁶⁹ The viewer (Divine Consciousness), being transformed to the view (of the visible world), is no more perceptible in it than the jewelry of gold and not gold itself.⁷⁰ Thus the viewer becoming the view still views himself as the viewer, as gold transformed into jewelry is always looked upon as gold.

⁷¹ There being only one unity apparent in all nature, it is useless to talk of the duality of the viewer and view. A word with a masculine suffix cannot give the sense of a neuter noun.⁷² The viewer who feasts his eyes seeing the outer visible world cannot have sight of the inner soul with the internal eyes of his consciousness. But when the viewer shuts out the outer view, all its realities appear as unreal.

⁷³ When the viewer perceives the unreality of what can be seen by the light of his understanding, then he comes to see the true reality. So by withdrawing the mind from seeing the bracelet form, one comes to see only its nature of gold.⁷⁴ If what can be seen is present, there must also be their viewers to whose view they are apparent. It is the absence of both viewer and the seen, and the knowledge of their unreality, that produce the belief of unity.

⁷⁵ The man who considers all things in the humility of his conscious soul comes at last to perceive something in him that is serenely clear and which no words can express.⁷⁶ The minute particle of consciousness shows us the sight of the soul as clearly as a lamp enlightens everything in the dark. (Answer to, "Who shows the soul as clearly as a visible thing?")⁷⁷ The intelligent soul is without perception of the measure, measurer and measured, like liquid gold dissolved from its form of an ornament.

⁷⁸ There is nothing that is not composed of the elements of earth, water and the like. Therefore, there is nothing in nature that is apart from the nature of the atomic consciousness.⁷⁹ The thinking soul penetrates into all things in the form of their notions. Because all thoughts concentrate in the intellect, there is nothing apart from it.⁸⁰ Our desires being the parents of our wished for objects, our desires are the same as our desired. Therefore there is no difference between our desires and the object of our desire, just like there is none between the sea and its waves.

⁸¹ The Supreme Soul exists alone unbounded by time or space. Being the Universal Soul, it is the soul of all. Being omniscient, it is no dull matter at all.⁸² The self-existent, being only consciousness, is not perceptible to sight. There is unity and no duality in it, but all forms unite into one in the great self

of the Supreme.⁸³ If there is a duality, it is the one and its unity. The unity and duality of the Universal Soul are both as true as the light and its shade joined together.⁸⁴ Where there is no duality or any number above it, unity can have no application to anything, and where there is no unity, there cannot be any two or more over it because they are only repetitions of the unity.

⁸⁵ Anything is in itself such as it is. It cannot be more or less than itself, but is identical with itself like water and its fluidity.⁸⁶ The multiplicity of forms which it exhibits blends into a harmonic whole without conflict with one another. The varieties within creation are contained in Brahma, like a tree with all its several parts in the embryonic seed.⁸⁷ Its dualism is as inseparable from it as the bracelet from its gold. Although the many forms in nature are evident to comprehensive understanding, yet it is not true of the true Entity.⁸⁸ Like fluidity of water, the movement of air, and the emptiness of the sky, this variety of forms is an inseparable property of God.⁸⁹ A systematic inquiry into unity and duality is the cause of misery to the restless spirit. It is the lack of any such distinction that is the highest knowledge.

⁹⁰ The measure, measurement and measurer of all things, and the viewer, view and vision of the visible world are all dependent on the atom of consciousness that contains them all.⁹¹ The atom of Divine Consciousness spreads out and contracts in itself by an inflation of its spirit as it were by a breath of air. These mountainous orbs of the world are like its limbs.⁹² O the wonder and great wonder of wonders that this atom of consciousness should contain in its embryo all the three regions of the worlds, above and below one another.⁹³ It is an incredible delusion that must always remain an inexplicable riddle, how the enormous universe is contained in the minute atom of Consciousness.

⁹⁴ As a pot contains the seed with a huge tree within its cell, so the Divine Soul contains the atom of consciousness containing the chains of worlds outstretched within itself.⁹⁵ The all-seeing eye simultaneously sees all the worlds situated within the bosom of the intellect, as microscopic sight discovers the parts of the future tree concealed in the seed.⁹⁶ The expansion of the world in the atom of Consciousness is analogous to the enlargement of the hidden parts of the seed into leaves, branches, flowers and fruit.⁹⁷ As the many forms of the future tree is contained in the uniform substance within the seed, it is in like manner that the multiplicity of worlds is situated in the unity of the atomic Consciousness. Such can be seen by anyone who will but look into it.

⁹⁸ It is neither a unity nor a duality, neither seed or its sprout. It is not thin or thick, born or unborn.

⁹⁹ He is neither an entity nor a nonentity, nor graceful nor ungraceful. And though it contains the three worlds with the ether and air, yet it is nothing and has no substance at all.

¹⁰⁰ There is no world and no non-world other than consciousness which is all of itself and is said to be such and such in any place or time, as it appears so and so to us there and then.¹⁰¹ It rises as if unrisen, and expands in its own knowledge. It is selfsame with the Supreme Soul, and as the totality of all selves, it spreads through the entire emptiness like air.

¹⁰² Like a tree springs from the ground according to its seed, so the world appears to sight in the form as contained in the seed of consciousness.¹⁰³ The plant does not quickly quit its seed, lest it would dry up and die for want of its sap. So the man who sticks to the soul and seed of his being is free from disease and death.

¹⁰⁴ Mount Meru is like the filament of a flower compared to the vastness of that atom. Everything that can be sensed has its place in that invisible atom. ¹⁰⁵ Meru is truly a filament of the atomic flower of the Divine Soul, and myriads of Merus resemble the cloudy spots rising in the sphere of Consciousness. ¹⁰⁶ It is that one great atom that fills the world, after having made it out of itself and given it a visible, extended and material form in its own hollow sphere.

¹⁰⁷ As long as the knowledge of duality is not driven out of the mind, it finds the charming form of the world, as in its dream upon waking. But the knowledge of unity liberates the soul from its stay in and return to the world, which it beholds as a mass of the divine essence.

Chapter 82 — Friendship with the Rakshasi; Criminals as Food

¹ Vasishta continued:—

The silly Karkati of the forest, having heard the king's speech, pondered well the sense of the words and forsook her levity and malice.² She found the coolness and tranquility of her heart after its fervor was over, just like a peacock when the rains set in, or a lotus bed at the rising of moonbeams.³ The king's words delighted her heart like the cries of cranes flying in the sky gladden the passing clouds in the air.

⁴ The rakshasi said, “O how brightly shines the pure light of your understanding. It glows as serenely by its inner brilliance as it is illuminated by the sun of intelligence.⁵ Hearing the elements of your reasoning, my heart is as gladdened as when the earth is cooled by the serene beams of humid moonlight.⁶ Reasonable men like you are honored and venerated in the world, and I am as delighted in your company as a lake of lotuses with full blown buds under moonbeams.⁷ The company of the virtuous scatters its blessings just like a flower garden spreads its fragrance all around and, like the brightness of sunbeams, brings the lotus buds to bloom.⁸ Company of the good and great dispels all our sorrows, just like a lamp in the hand disperses surrounding darkness.⁹ I have been fortunate to have found you as two great lights in this forest. Both of you are entitled to my reverence. Please let me know what good intent has brought you here.”

¹⁰ The king answered, “O offspring of the savage race of rakshasas, the people of this province are always afflicted in their hearts by a certain evil.¹¹ It is the stubborn disease of choleric pain that troubles the people of this part. Therefore I have come out with my guards to find her out in my nightly rounds.¹² No medicine removes this choleric pain from the hearts of men, so I have come in search of the mantra revealed to her for its cure.¹³ It is my business and professed duty to persecute such wicked beings as yourself who infest our ignorant subjects in this way. This is all I have to tell you and do in this place.¹⁴ Therefore, good lady, promise in your own words that in future you will never injure any living being.”

¹⁵ The rakshasi replied, “Well! I tell you truly, my lord, that I shall hence forward never kill anybody.”

¹⁶ The king replied, “If that be so, you who lives on animal flesh, tell me how can you support your body if you abstain from animal food?”

¹⁷ The rakshasi replied, “It has been six months, O king, since I have risen from my samadhi meditation and fostered my desire for food, which I wholly renounce today.¹⁸ I will return to the mountain top, resume my steadfast meditation, and sit there contented as long as I like in the posture of an unmoving statue.¹⁹ I will restrain myself by unshaken meditation until my death, and then I shall quit this body in its time with gladness. This is my resolution.”

²⁰ “I tell you now, O king, that until the end of this life and body of mine, I shall no more take the life of any living being, and you may rely assured upon my word.²¹ There is Mount Himalaya by name, standing in the heart of the northern region and stretching in one sweep from the vast east to west.²² At first I lived there in a cave by its golden peak. I was in the shape of an iron statue, and also like

a cloud fragment, and I bore the name of Karkati the Rakshasi.²³ There by the austerity of my meditation I obtained the sight of Brahma and I expressed my desire to kill mankind in the shape of a destructive needle.²⁴ I obtained the boon accordingly and passed a great many years in the act of afflicting living beings and feeding on their entrails in the form of choleric pain.”

²⁵ “Then Brahma prohibited me from killing the learned and he instructed me in the great mantra.²⁶ He gave me the power of piercing the hearts of men with some other diseases that infest all mankind.²⁷ I spread myself far and wide in my malice and sucked the heart blood of men, which dried up their veins and arteries and emaciated their bodies.²⁸ Those I left alive after devouring their flesh and blood begat a race as lean and without veins as they had become themselves.”

²⁹ “You will be successful, O happy king, in getting the mantra for driving away cholera pain, because there is nothing impossible that the wise and strong cannot attain.³⁰ Receive immediately, O king, the mantra that Brahma uttered to remove choleric pain from the cells of arteries weakened by cholera.³¹ Come and let us go to the nearby river. After you are both prepared by washing and purification, then I will initiate you with the mantra.”

³² Vasishta said:—

Then the rakshasi proceeded to the river side that very night accompanied by the king and his minister, all joined together as friends.³³ These two men, being sure of the rakshasi’s friendship by both affirmative and negative proofs, made their ablutions and stood on the river bank.³⁴ Then the rakshasi tenderly told them the mantra that Brahma had revealed to her to remove cholera pain, and which was always successful.

³⁵ Afterwards as the nocturnal fiend was about to depart and leave her friendly companions behind, the king stopped her with his speech.³⁶ The king said, “O you of gigantic stature! By teaching us the mantra, you have become our teacher. We affectionately invite you to take your meal with us tonight.³⁷ It does not become you to break off our friendship which has grown at our very first meeting like the acquaintance of good people.³⁸ Give your ill-favored form a little more graceful figure and walk with us to our home and stay there at your own pleasure.”

³⁹ The rakshasi replied, “You can well provide a female of your own kind with her proper food, but what entertainment can you give to my satisfaction? I am a cannibal by nature!⁴⁰ It is only a rakshasa’s food that can satisfy me, not the little morsels of petty mortals. This is the innate nature of our being and it can not be done away with as long as we carry our present bodies.”

⁴¹ The king answered, “Ornamented with necklaces of gold, you shall be at liberty to remain with the ladies in my house for as many days as you may like to stay.⁴² Then, for your food, I will produce the robbers and felons that I seize in my territories. You will have them supplied to you constantly by the hundreds and thousands.⁴³ Then you can then forsake your attractive form, resume your hideous rakshasi figure, and kill hundreds of those lawless men for your food.⁴⁴ Take them to the top of the snowy mountain and devour them at your pleasure. Great men always like to take their meals in privacy.”

⁴⁵ “After your recreation with that food and a short nap, you can resume your meditation. When you

are tired with your meditation, you can come back to this place.⁴⁶ You can then take other offenders for your slaughter. Killing culprits is not only justifiable by law, it amounts to an act of mercy to rid them of their punishment in the next world.⁴⁷ You must return to me when you are tired of your meditation because friendship, even that formed with the wicked, is not easily done away.”

⁴⁸ The rakshasi replied, “You have spoken well, king, and I will do as you say. For who is there that will slight the words of the wise spoken to him in the way of friendship?”

⁴⁹ Vasishta said:—

Saying so, the rakshasi assumed a graceful form and wore necklaces and bracelets, and silken robes and laces.⁵⁰ She said, “Well king, let us go together,” then followed the footsteps of the king and his counselor who walked before her and led the way.

⁵¹ Having arrived at the royal residence, they passed that night with their agreeable meal and discourse together.⁵² As it became morning, the rakshasi went inside the house and remained there with the women. Meanwhile the king and the minister attended to their business.⁵³ Over the course of six days, the king collected together all the offenders he had seized in his territory and from other parts.⁵⁴ These amounted to three thousand heads which he gave to her.

She resumed her fierce dark form of the black fiend of the night.⁵⁵ She laid hold of thousands of men in her extended grasp, like a cloud fragment holds drops of rainwater in its wide bosom.⁵⁶ She took leave of the king and went with her prey to the mountain top, just like a poor man takes gold that he happened to find in some hidden place.⁵⁷ For three days and nights she refreshed herself with her food and rested. Then regaining the firmness of her understanding, she employed herself in meditation.

⁵⁸ After four or five or sometimes seven years passed, she used to get up from her tapas and return to where men live and to the court of the king.⁵⁹ There they passed some time in confidential conversation, then she returned with her prey of the offenders to her mountain seat.⁶⁰ Thus freed from cares even in her lifetime, she continued to remain as a liberated being in that mountain.

Chapter 83 — Worship of Karkati as Kandara Devi or Mangala Devi

¹ Vasishta continued:—

The rakshasi continued her meditation and remained on friendly terms with the successive rulers of the Kirata country who kept supplying her with her rations.² By the power of her perfection in the practice of yoga meditation, she continued to prevent all possibility of evils, to ward off all dread and danger from demons, and to remove diseases from the people.³ Over the course of her many years in meditation, she used to come out of her cell at certain intervals and call at headquarters to take the living creatures collected and kept to be her victims.⁴ The practice is still observed by the kings of that place who sacrifice animals to her departed ghost on the hill, because none can be negligent to repay the good services of his benefactor.

⁵ At last she ceased her meditation, and for a long time she stopped appearing where men lived to lend her aid in removing their diseases, dangers and difficulties.⁶ Then the people dedicated a high temple to her memory, and installed a statue of her in it under the names of Kandara (Cave) and Mangala Devi (Auspicious Goddess).⁷ Since then it is the custom of the chiefs of the tribe to consecrate a newly made statue in honor of the Kandara Devi, the goddess of the valley, after the previous one is disfigured and broken.⁸ Any king of the place who out of his vileness fails to consecrate the new statue of Goddess Kandara brings great disasters on his people out of his own perverseness.

⁹ By worshipping her, man obtains the fruits of all his desires. By neglecting it, he exposes himself to all sorts of evils and disasters. These are the results of the Goddess's pleasure or displeasure with her devotees.

¹⁰ Dying and ailing people still worship the goddess with offerings for remedy of their illness and to secure her blessings. In turn, she distributes her rewards among those who worship her in her statue or picture.¹¹ She bestows all blessings on young babies and weak calves and cows. She kills the hardy and proud who deserve death. She is the goddess of intelligence and favors the intelligent, and presides forever in the land of the Kirata people.

Chapter 84 — Imperfect Words Used to Guide to Understanding; the Power of the Mind

¹ Vasishta said:—

Rama, I have told you the worthy legend of Karkati, the rakshasi of Imaus, from beginning to end.

² Rama replied, “But how could one born in a cave of the Himalayas become a black rakshasi, and why was she called Karkati? These I want clearly explained.”

³ Vasishta replied:—

Rakshasa cannibals originally are of many races. Some are of dark and others of fair complexions, while many have a yellowish appearance and some of a greenish shade.⁴ As for Karkati, you must know that there was a rakshasa named Karkata because of his exact resemblance to a crab.⁵ I only told you the story of Karkati because of her questions which I remembered and thought would serve well to explain the omniform God in our discourse into spiritual knowledge.

⁶ It is evident that the pure and perfect unity is the source of the impure and imperfect duality of phenomena, and this finite world has sprung from its supreme cause who is without beginning or end.

⁷ These float like the waves upon waters, which apparently are of different forms, and yet essentially the same with the element on which they seem to move. So creations whether present, past or future, are all situated in the Supreme Spirit.

⁸ As wet wood when ignited serves to provide heat and invites the apes of the forest to warm themselves in cold weather, so the externally shining appearance of the world invites the ignorant to rely upon it.⁹ Such is the temporary glow of the ever cool spirit of God in the works of creation which shows itself in many forms without changing its essence.¹⁰ The absent world appeared and its unreality appears to consciousness as a reality, like figures carved in wood.

¹¹ As the products of the seed, from its sprout to the fruit, are all of the same species, so the thoughts (*chetiyas*) of the mind (*chitta*) are of the same nature as those originally implanted in it.¹² According to the law of the continuity of the same essence, there is no difference in the nature of the seed and its fruit. So consciousness (*chit*) and the thoughts (*chetiyas*) differ in nothing except in their forms, like the waves and water differ in external appearance and not in their intrinsic substance (*vastu*).¹³ No demonstration can show any difference between thoughts, mind and consciousness. Whatever distinction our judgment may make, it is easily refuted by right reasoning.

¹⁴ Let this error therefore vanish. It has come from nothing to nothing and like all causeless falsities, it fails of itself. You will know more of this, Rama, when you are awakened to divine knowledge. In the meantime, do away with the error of seeing duality that is different from the only existent unity.

¹⁵ After your attention to my lectures cuts the knot of your error, you yourself will come to know the significance and substance of what is called the true knowledge that is taken in different senses by various schools of philosophy. That which comes of itself in the mind is the intuitive knowledge of divine truth.

¹⁶ You have a mind like that of the common people, full of mistakes and blunders. All this will undoubtedly subside in your mind through your attention to my lectures.¹⁷ You will be awakened by my sermons to know this certain truth, that all things proceed from Brahma into whom they ultimately

return.

¹⁸ Rama replied, "Sage, you state the first cause in the ablative case indicating causation: 'That all things proceed from Brahma.' This contradicts the opposite passage in the Sruti scriptures in the same case, that 'Nothing is distinct from Him.' It is inconsistent in itself."

¹⁹ Vasishta answered:—

Words are used in the scriptures to instruct others. Where any inconsistency appears, they are explained. ²⁰ Hence, although not strictly true, we use a difference between visible phenomena and the invisible Brahma, just like we speak of ghosts appearing to children, though there are no such things in reality. ²¹ In reality there is no duality connected with the unity of Brahma, just as there is no dualism between a city and the sleep dream in which it appears. Again, God being immutable in his nature and eternal in decree, it is wrong to apply the mutations of nature and the mutability of will to Him. ²² The Lord is free from the states of causality and the caused, of instrumentality and instruments, of a whole and its part, and those of proprietorship and property. ²³ He is beyond all affirmative and negative propositions, and their legitimate conclusions or false deductions and refutations. ²⁴ So it is equally false to attribute the original will to God. Yet it is usual to say so for the instruction of the ignorant. There is no change in His nature from its nothing to slight wish.

²⁵ These conscious terms and figurative expressions are used to guide the ignorant. The knowing few are far from falling into the fallacy of dualism. All intellectual conceptions cease upon the spiritual perception of God. There ensues an utter and dumb silence. ²⁶ When in time you come to know these things better, you shall arrive at the conclusion that all this is only one thing, an undivided whole without parts and having no beginning or end.

²⁷ The unlearned dispute among themselves from their uncertainty of truth. Their differences and dualisms all end when they understand true unity by instructions of the wise. ²⁸ Without knowledge of the agreement of significant words with their meanings, it is impossible to know the unity, for so long as a word is taken in different senses, there will be no end of disputes and difference of opinions. Dualisms being done away, all disputes are hushed up in the belief of unity.

²⁹ O support of Raghu's race, place your reliance upon the sense of the great sayings of the Vedas. Do not pay any regard to conflicting passages. Attend to what I will now tell you. ³⁰ From whatever cause it may have sprung, the world resembles a city rising to view in a vision, just like thoughts and ideas appear before the mirror of the mind from some source of which we know nothing. ³¹ Listen Rama, and I will relate an example of visible evidence for you how the mind (*chitta*) spins out the magical world from itself. ³² Having known this, O Rama, you will be able to cast away all your false conceptions. Being certain of certainty, you will resign your attachments and desires in this enchanted and bewitching world.

³³ All these prospective worlds are machinations and the workings of the mind. Having forsaken these false fabrications of fancy, you will have tranquility of your soul and abide in peace with yourself forever. ³⁴ By paying your attention to the drift of my preaching, you from your own reasoning will be able to find a mite of the medicine that cures all the illnesses of your deluded mind.

³⁵ If you sit in silent meditation, you will see the whole world in your mind. All outward bodies will

disappear like drops of oil in sand.³⁶ The mind is the seat of the universe as long as it is not weakened by passions and affections and afflictions of life. When the mind is rid of the turmoil of its present state, it is set beyond the world (in heavenly bliss).³⁷ The mind is the means to accomplish anything. It is the store-keeper to preserve all things in the warehouse of its memory. It is the faculty of reasoning, and the power to act like a respectable person. Therefore the mind is to be treated with respect as it recalls, restrains and guides us in our pursuits and duties.

³⁸ The mind contains within it the three worlds with all their contents and the surrounding air. It exhibits itself as the fullness of ego and the cornucopia of all in its microcosm.³⁹ The intellectual part of the mind contains the subjective self-consciousness of ego, which is the seed of all its powers. The other part, its objective part, bears in itself the false forms of the dull material world.

⁴⁰ The self-born Brahma saw the yet uncreated and formless world as already present before his mind in its ideal state, like a dream at its first creation. He saw it (mentally) without seeing it (actually).

⁴¹ He saw the whole creation in the self-consciousness of his vast mind, and he saw all material objects, the hills and all, in the knowledge (*samvid*) of his gross personal consciousness. At last by his subtle sightedness (*sukshma vid*, subtle knowledge or clairvoyance) he perceived that all gross bodies were as empty as air and not solid substances.⁴² The mind with its embodying thoughts is pervaded by the omnipresent soul that is spread out as transparently as sunbeams upon clear water.

⁴³ Otherwise, the mind is like an infant who views the appearance of the world in its unconscious sleep of ignorance. But being awakened by consciousness (*chit*), it sees the transcendent form of the self or soul without the mist of delusion. The delusion is caused by the part of the mind that is aware of physical senses, and it is removed by the reasoning faculties of consciousness.

⁴⁴ Hear now Rama, what I am going to say about how the soul is to be seen in this world of phenomena that is the cause of misleading the mind from its knowledge of the unity to the false notion of the duality.⁴⁵ What I will say, by opposite similes, right reasoning, graceful style, and good sense of the words in which they shall be conveyed to you, cannot fail to come to your heart. By listening, your heart will be filled with a delight that will pervade your senses like the oil upon the water.

⁴⁶ Speech which is without suitable comparisons and graceful phraseology, which is inaudible or clamorous, or has inappropriate words and harsh sounding letters, cannot take possession of the heart. It is thrown away for nothing, like butter poured upon the burnt ashes of an offering that has no power to rekindle the flame.⁴⁷ Whatever stories there are in any language on earth, and whatever compositions are adorned with measured sentences and graceful diction, all these are rendered acutely insightful through conspicuous comparisons, as the world is enlightened by cooling moonbeams. Therefore almost every verse in this work is embellished with a suitable comparison.

Chapter 85 — Brahma Describes His Own Experience; Asks the Sun

¹ Vasishta continued:—

I will relate to you Rama, agreeably to your request, the story that Brahma himself told me of old. The mind (*manas*) produced Manu, the progeny of the mind, who begat the Manujas otherwise called men (*manavas* or *manushyas*), the offspring of the mind.² Once before I had asked the lotus-born god to tell me how these hosts of creation had come to being.³ Then Brahma, the great progenitor of men, granted my request and related the story of the ten Aindava (Moon-like) brothers in his loud voice.

⁴ Brahma said:—

All this visible world is the manifestation of the Divine Mind, like circling whirlpools and rippling swirls of water on the surface of the sea.⁵ Hear me tell you how I (the personified mind) first awoke on the day of creation in a former kalpa with my volition to create (expand) myself.

⁶ Previously I remained alone, quietly intent upon the creation at the end of the prior day (kalpa). I had compressed the whole creation in the focus of my mind and hid it under the gloom of the primeval night.⁷ At the end of the chaotic night I awoke like from a deep sleep and performed my morning prayers as it is the general law (of all living beings).

I opened my eyes with a view to create and fixed my look on the emptiness all about me.⁸ As far as I could see, it was empty space covered by darkness with no light of heaven. It was unlimitedly extensive, all void and without any boundary.⁹ Being then determined to bring forth creation, and with the acuteness of my understanding, I began to discern the world in its simple (ideal) form within me.¹⁰ Then I saw in my mind the great cosmos of creation, set unobstructed and apart from me in the wide extended field of emptiness.¹¹ Then the rays of my reflection stretched out over them from amidst the lotus-cell of my abode, and sat in the form of ten lotus-born Brahmans over the ten worlds of this creation, like so many swans brooding upon their eggs.¹² Then these separate orbs (cosmic eggs) brought forth multitudes of beings to light within their transparent aqueous atmospheres.

¹³ Thence sprang the great rivers and the roaring seas and oceans, and thence again rose the burning lights and blowing winds of the sky.¹⁴ The gods began to play in the ethereal air, men moved about on the earth, and demons and serpents were confined in their homes under the ground.¹⁵ The wheel of time turned with the revolution of seasons and their produce, and adorned the earth with her various productions by change of the seasons.¹⁶ Laws were fixed for all things on all sides, and human actions were regulated in the Smriti scriptures as right or wrong and producing the reward of heaven or the torments of hell as their fruits.

¹⁷ All beings pursue their enjoyments and liberty, and the more they strive for their desired objects, the better they thrive in them.¹⁸ In this way the seven worlds and continents, the seven oceans and the seven boundary mountains were brought to existence, and they continue to exist until their final dissolution at the end of a kalpa period.¹⁹ The primeval darkness from the face of open lands fled before the light and took its refuge in mountain caverns and hollow caves. It abides in some places allied with light, as in the shady and sunny forest lands and lawns.

²⁰ The blue sky, like a lake of blue lotuses, is haunted by fragments of dark clouds resembling swarms

of black bees on high. The stars that twinkle in it are like the yellow filaments of flowers shaken by the winds.²¹ The huge heaps of snow setting in the valleys of high hills resemble the lofty cottonwood trees beset by their pods of cotton.²² The earth is surrounded by the polar mountains serving as her girdles, and the circles of polar seas serve as her sounding anklets and trinkets. She is covered by the polar darkness as if by a blue garment, and studded all about with gems growing and glowing in the bosoms of her rich and ample mines and seas.²³ The earth, covered by the ornaments of her greenness of vegetation, resembles a lady sitting dressed in her robes, having the produce of rice for her food and the busy buzz of the world for her music.

²⁴ The sky appears like a bride veiled under the black covering of night, with glittering chains of stars for her jewels. Seasonal fruits and flowers hanging in the air resemble wreaths of lotuses about her body.²⁵ The orbs of worlds appear like beautiful pomegranate fruits containing all their peoples in them, like the shining seeds in the cells of those fruit.²⁶ Bright moonbeams, stretching both above and below and all around the three sides, appear like the white sacred thread girding the world above and below and all about, or like the Ganges River running in three directions in the upper, lower and nether worlds.²⁷ The clouds dispersing on all sides with their glittering lightning appear like the leaves and flowers of air-borne forests, blown away by the breezes on all sides.

²⁸ But all these worlds with their lands and seas, their skies and all their contents, are in reality as unreal as visionary dreams and as delusive as the enchanted city of a fairyland.²⁹ The gods, demons, men and serpents seen in multitudes in all worlds are like bodies of buzzing gnats fluttering about fig trees.

³⁰ Here time is moving on with his train of moments and minutes, his ages, yugas and kalpas, in expectation of the unforeseen destruction of all things.

³¹ Having seen all these things in my pure and enlightened understanding, I was quite confounded to think from where all these could have come into being.³² Why is it that I do not see all that I perceive with my visual organs, like a magic scene spread out in the sphere of my mind?³³ Having looked into these for a long time with my steadfast attention, I called to me the brightest sun of these luminous spheres and addressed him saying,³⁴ “Approach me, O god of gods, luminous Sun! I welcome you to me!” Having approached, I said,³⁵ “Tell me what you are and how this world with all its bright orbs came to being. If you know anything of this, then please reveal it to me.”

³⁶ Being thus addressed, he looked upon me, and then having recognized me, he made his salutation, and uttered in graceful words and speech.

³⁷ The Sun replied, “O lord, you are the eternal cause of these false phenomena. How is it that you do not know it and ask me about its cause?³⁸ But should you, all knowing as you are, take a delight in hearing my speech, I will tell you of my unasked and un-thought of production, which I beg you to listen to.”

³⁹ “O great Spirit, this world is composed of reality and unreality in its twofold view. It beguiles understanding to take it sometimes for a real and at others for an unreal thing. It is the great mind of the Divine Soul that is employed in these constant and unceasingly endless creations for its diversion.

Chapter 86 — The Sun's Story of Indu's and His Wife's Tapas & Their Ten Sons, the Aindavas

¹ The Sun continued:—

It was, my lord, only the other day of one of your previous kalpas, and at the foot of a mountain, beside the tableland of Mount Kailash that stands in a corner of the continent of Asia,² that there lived a man named Suvarnajata together with all his sons and their progeny, who had made that place a beautiful and pleasant home.

³ Among them lived a brahmin named Indu, a descendant of the patriarch Kasyapa, who was a saintly soul, virtuous and acquainted with divine knowledge.⁴ He resided in his house with all his relatives and passed his time agreeably in company with his wife, who was as dear to his heart as if his second self.⁵ But this virtuous couple had no children, as no grass grows in sterile soil, and the wife remained discontent at the unfruitfulness of her blossoming or seed.⁶ With all the purity and simplicity of their hearts, and the beauty and gracefulness of their persons and manners, they were as useless to the earth as the fair and straight stem of the pure rice plant without its stalk of grains. The unhappy couple left for the mountain in order to make their tapas for the blessing of children.

⁷ They ascended Mount Kailash, which lacked any shade from shade trees and was uninhabited by living beings. There they stood fixed on one side, like a couple of trees in a barren desert.⁸ They remained in their austere tapas, subsisting upon liquid food which also supported the trees. At the close of the day, and from the hollow of their palms they drank only a sip of water from a neighboring cascade.⁹ They remained standing and unmoved as immovable trees, and continued long in that posture, in the manner of an erect wood in heat and cold.

¹⁰ In this manner they passed two ages before their meditation met with the approval of the god who bears the crescent of the moon on his forehead (Shiva).¹¹ The god with the cooling moonbeams on his forehead advanced towards the parched pair, like when the moon casts her dewy light on trees and lotuses dried and scorched under the burning sunbeams of a summer day.¹² The god appeared to them mounted on his milk-white bull, and clasping the fair Uma (Goddess Parvati) on his left, and holding the beaming moon on his head, like spring season approaches green shrubs strewing flowers upon them.

¹³ The couple's faces and eyes brightened as they saw the god, just like lotuses hail the appearance of the beautiful moon. They bowed down to the god of the silvery crescent and snow-white face.¹⁴ Then the god rising to their view like the full moon, and appearing in the midst of the heaven and earth, spoke smilingly to them in a gentle and audible voice. The breath of that voice refreshed them like the breath of spring revives the faded plants of a forest.

¹⁵ Shiva said, "I am pleased with your meditation, O brahmin! Offer your prayer to me and have your desired reward granted to you immediately."

¹⁶ The brahmin replied, "O Lord of gods, please favor me with ten intelligent male children. Let these be born of me to dispel all my sorrows."

¹⁷ The Sun continued:—

The god said, "Be it so," and then disappeared into the air. His great body passed through the ethereal

path with a tremendous roar of thunder like the surge of the seas.

¹⁸ Then the brahmin couple returned to their home with gladness in their hearts. They appeared like the reflections of the two gods Shiva and Uma. ¹⁹ After returning, the brahmani became big with child from the blessing she received from her god Shiva. ²⁰ In her pregnant state, she looked like a thick cloud heavy with rainwater. In proper time she and brought forth a boy as beautiful as the digit of the new moon. ²¹ In this way she bore ten sons in succession, each as handsome as the tender sprouts of plants. They grew up in strength and stature, and were invested with the sacramental thread.

²² In course of a short time, they attained their boyhood and became conversant in the language of the gods (Sanskrit), like the mute clouds become loud in the rainy season. ²³ They shone in their circle with the luster of their bodies, as the resplendent orbs of the sky burn and turn about in their spheres.

²⁴ In time these youths lost both parents who passed off their mortal coils to go to their last abode.

²⁵ Losing both parents, the ten brahmin lads left their home in grief and went to the top of Mount Kailash to pass their helpless lives in mourning.

²⁶ Here they discussed what would be best for them, and what would be the right course to take to avoid the troubles and miseries of life. ²⁷ They talked with one another on such topics as what was the best good of humanity in this world of mortality, and many other subjects, such as: ²⁸ What is true greatness, best riches and affluence, and the highest good of humankind? What is the good of great power, possessions, being chief, or even the gain of a kingdom? What forms the true dignity of kings and the high majesty of emperors? ²⁹ What avails the rule of the great Indra, which is lost in one moment (of Brahma). What endures a whole kalpa and must be the best good as the most lasting?

³⁰ As they were talking in this manner, they were interrupted by the eldest brother, with a voice as grave as that of the leader of a herd of deer to the attentive herd. ³¹ “Of all kinds of riches and dignities, there is one thing that endures for a whole kalpa and is never destroyed. This is the state of Brahma, which I prize above all others.”

³² Hearing this, all the good sons of Indu exclaimed in one voice, “Ah! Well said” Then they honored the eldest with kind speeches. ³³ They said, “How, O brother, is it possible for us to attain to the state of Brahma, who is seated on his seat of lotuses, and is adored by all in this world?”

³⁴ The eldest then replied to his younger brothers saying, “O you my worthy brothers, do as I say and you will be successful. ³⁵ Sit in lotus posture and think yourselves to be the bright Brahma, full of his brilliance and possessing the powers of creation and annihilation in yourselves.”

³⁶ Being instructed in this manner by the eldest brother, the younger brothers responded saying, “Amen.” With gladness in their hearts, they sat in meditation together with the eldest brother. ³⁷ They remained in their meditative mood like the still images in a painting. Their minds were concentrated in the inmost Brahma, whom they adored and thought upon, thinking, ³⁸ “Here I sit on the middle of a full blown lotus, and find myself as Brahma, the great god, the creator and sustainer of the universe.

³⁹ I find in me the whole ritual of sacrificial rites, the Vedas with their branches and supplements and the rishis. I view in me the Saraswati and Gayatri mantras of the Vedas, and all the gods and men situated in me. ⁴⁰ I see in me the spheres of the regents, of the world, and the circles of the spiritual masters revolving about me, with the spacious heaven bespangled with the stars. ⁴¹ I see this globe of

land and water decorated with all its oceans and continents, its mountains and islands, hanging like an earring in the material system.”

⁴² Within myself I have the hollow of the infernal world, with its demons, and serpents. I have the cavity of the sky in myself, containing the homes and maidens of the immortals. ⁴³ There is the strong armed Indra, the tormentor of the lords of peoples, the sole lord of the three worlds, who receives the sacrifices of men. ⁴⁴ I see the bright net of the firmament spread over all sides of heaven, and the twelve suns of the twelve months dispensing their ceaseless beams amidst it. ⁴⁵ I see the righteous rulers of the sky and the rulers of men protecting their respective regions and peoples with the same care as cowherds take to protect their cattle. ⁴⁶ I find every day among all sorts of beings, some rising and falling, and others diving and floating, like the constant waves of the sea.

⁴⁷ “It is I who create, preserve and destroy the worlds. I remain in myself and pervade over all existence as the lord of all. ⁴⁸ I observe in myself the revolution of years and ages, and of all seasons and times, and I find the same time to be both the creator and destroyer of things. ⁴⁹ I see a kalpa passing away before me, and the night of Brahma (dissolution) stretched out in my presence, while I reside forever in the Supreme Soul, as full and perfect as the Divine Spirit itself.”

⁵⁰ Thus these brahmins, the ten sons of Indu, remained in this sort of samadhi meditation in their motionless postures like fixed rocks, and like images hewn out of stones in a hill. ⁵¹ In this manner these brahmins, being fully acquainted with the nature of Brahma, and possessed of the spirit of that deity in themselves, continued in their meditation for a long period. They sat in their lotus posture on seats of kusa grass, freed from the snare of the fickle and frivolous desires of this false and frail world.

Chapter 87 — Ten Brother Aindavas Become the Ten Worlds of the Next Day of Brahma

¹ The Sun said:—

O great father of creation, in this way these venerable brahmins remained at that spot for a long time, occupied in their minds with these various thoughts and their several actions. ² They remained in this state until their bodies dried up by exposure to the sun and air, and dropped down in time like the withered leaves of trees. ³ Their dead bodies were devoured by the voracious beasts of the forest, or tossed about like some ripe fruit by monkeys on the hills.

⁴ These brahmins, their thoughts turned away from outward objects and concentrated on Brahma, continued enjoying divine joy in their spirits until the close of the kalpa cycle at the end of the four ages (*yugas*). ⁵ At the end of the kalpa, there is an utter extinction of sunlight by the constant rains poured down by the heavy pushkara and avartaka clouds at the great flood, ⁶ when the hurricane of desolation blew on all sides and buried all beings under the universal ocean. ⁷ It was then your (Brahma's) dark night, and the previous creation slept as if in yogic sleep (*yoga nidra*) in your sleeping self. Thus, continuing in your spirit, you contained all things in their spiritual forms in yourself. ⁸ Upon your waking this day with your desire of creation, all these things are exhibited to your view, like a copy of everything that was already in your inmost mind or Spirit.

⁹ I have thus related to you O Brahma, how these ten brahmins were personified as so many Brahmans. These ten have become the ten bright orbs situated in the empty sphere of your mind. ¹⁰ I am the eldest among them, consecrated in this temple of the sky, and appointed by you, O lord of all, to regulate the portions of time on earthly beings.

¹¹ Now I have given you a full account of the ten orbs of heaven, which are no other than the ten persons united in the mind of Brahma, and now appearing as detached from him. ¹² This beautiful world that you behold, appearing to your view with all its wonderful structures, spread out in the skies, serves at best as a snare to entrap your senses and delude your understanding by taking the unrealities as realities in your mind.

Chapter 88 — Detachment of Brahma; Need to Act; Only One's Own Mind Can Change One's Own Mind

¹ Brahma said to *Vasishta*:—

O brahmin who is the best of brahmins, the Sun God remained silent after telling me about the ten brahmins. ² I thought upon this for sometime in my mind, then said, “O Sun, tell me what I am to create next? ³ Tell me O Sun, what need is there for me to make any more worlds after these ten globes have come into existence?”

⁴ Now, O great sage, the Sun having long considered in his mind about what I wanted him to say, replied to me in the following manner in appropriate words.

⁵ The Sun said:—

My lord who is devoid of effort or desire, what need do you have to create? This work of creation is only for your pleasure. ⁶ O lord who is free from desires and gives rise to worlds like sunbeams raise waters, and the sunshine is accompanied by the shadow, ⁷ you are indifferent to fostering or forsaking your body and need nothing to desire or renounce for your pleasure or pain. ⁸ You, O lord of creatures, create all these only for the sake of your pleasure, and so you retract them all in yourself, as the sun by turns gives and withdraws his light. ⁹ You who is unattached to the world make your creation as a work of love to you, and not of any effort or endeavor on your part.

¹⁰ If you desist from stretching creation out of the Supreme Spirit, what good can you derive from your inactivity? ¹¹ Do your duty as it may present itself to you, rather than remain inactive doing nothing. A dull person, like a dirty mirror that does not reflect images, is of no use at all. ¹² The wise have no desire of doing anything that is beyond their reach, but they never like to leave out anything that presents itself before them and is useful. ¹³ Therefore do your work as it comes to you with a cheerful heart, a calm mind, and a tranquil soul, as if it were in your sleep, and devoid of desires that you can never reap.

¹⁴ You derive pleasure, O Lord of worlds, from forming the orbs of the sons of Indu, so the Lord of Gods will give you your reward for your works of creation. ¹⁵ Nobody with their external organs of vision can see the worlds as clearly as you, O lord, see with the eyes of your mind. For who, by seeing them with his eyes, can say whether you are created or uncreated? ¹⁶ Only He who has created these worlds from his mind, and no other person with his open eyes, can behold me face to face.

¹⁷ The ten worlds are not the work of so many Brahmans as it appeared to you before. Nobody has the power to destroy them when they are seated so firmly in the mind. ¹⁸ It is easy to destroy what is made by the hand, and to shut out the sensible objects from our perception, but who can annul or disregard what is ascertained by the mind? ¹⁹ It is impossible for anyone except the owner to remove whatever belief is deep-rooted in the minds of living beings. ²⁰ No curse can remove from the mind whatever has become a habit of confirmed belief in the mind, even though it can kill the body.

²¹ Principle deeply rooted in the mind forms the man according to its stamp. It is impossible by any means to make him otherwise, as it is impossible to make a rock bear fruit by watering its root like a tree.

Chapter 89 — The Story of the Lovers Indra & Ahalya, the Fixation of Their Minds on Each Other

¹ The Sun said:—

The mind is the maker and master of the world. The mind is the first supreme being (*purusha*). Whatever is done by the mind is said to be done. The actions of the body are held as no acts. ² Look at the capacity of the mind in the example of the sons of Indu. They were only ordinary brahmins, but by their meditation of Brahma in their minds, they became assimilated in Brahma.

³ One thinking himself as composed of the body becomes subject to all the incidents of physicality. But he who knows himself as bodiless is freed from all evils that attend the body. ⁴ Looking on the outside, we are subject to the feelings of pain and pleasure, but the inward-sighted yogi is unconscious of the pain or pleasure of his body. ⁵ Thus it is the mind that causes all our errors in this world. Evidence of this is the example of Indra and his consort Ahalya.

[*The Yoga Vasishta's story of two adulterous lovers, Indra and Ahalya, has many connections with another story that would have been well known to an India reader, that of Indra, king of the gods, seducing Ahalya, the wife of sage Gautama, one of the Seven Rishis. The sage cursed both Indra and his wife. The curse on Ahalya was removed by Rama. As the story became popular over time, the curse was that Ahalya was turned into a stone and came back to life when touched by Rama's foot.*]

⁶ Brahma said, “Tell me, my Lord Sun, who was this Indra and who that Ahalya, so that by hearing my understanding may have its clear-sightedness.”

⁷ The Sun said:—

It is related my lord! In former times there reigned a king at Magadha, Indra-dyurna (Glorious Indra) by name and similar to his namesake (in prowess and fame). ⁸ He had a wife fair as the moon with eyes as beautiful as lotuses. Her name was Ahalya and she resembled Rohini, the moon's favorite.

⁹ In that city lived a rascal at the head of all the libertines. He was the cheating son of a brahmin, and was known by the same name of Indra.

¹⁰ Now this Queen Ahalya came to hear the story of the former Ahalya, wife of Gautama, and her lust related to her at a certain time. [*The story of God Indra seducing Ahalya, the wife of sage Gautama.*] ¹¹ Hearing the story, Queen Ahalya felt a passion for the other Indra, the libertine, and became impatient in the absence of his company. She was thinking only how he should come to her.

¹² She was fading like a tender vine thrown adrift in the burning desert. She was burning with an inner flame on beds of cooling leaves of watery lotus and plantain trees. ¹³ She was pining amidst all the enjoyments of her royal state, like a poor fish lying exposed on the dry bed of a pool in summer heat.

¹⁴ She lost her modesty with her self possession. She repeated in her frenzy, “Here is Indra, and there he comes to me.”

¹⁵ Finding her in this pitiable plight, a lady of her palace took compassion on her, and said, “I will safely conduct Indra before your ladyship in a short time.” ¹⁶ No sooner did she hear her companion say, “I will bring your desired object to you,” than she opened her eyes with joy and fell prostrate at her feet, like one lotus flower falls before another. ¹⁷ Then as the day passed on, and the shade of

night covered the face of nature, the lady made her haste to the house of Indra, the brahmin's boy.

¹⁸ The clever lady used her persuasions as far as she could, and then succeeded to bring this Indra with her and present him before her royal mistress. ¹⁹ She then adorned herself with pastes and paints, and wreaths of fragrant flowers, and conducted her lover to a private apartment where they enjoyed their fill. ²⁰ The youth, also decorated in his jewels and necklaces, delighted her with his sweet caresses, as spring season renovates the tree groves with his luscious juice. ²¹ Henceforward this ravished queen saw the world full with the figure of her beloved Indra, and she did not think much at all of the excellences of her royal lord, her husband.

²² After sometime, certain facial indications by the queen caused the great king to know of her love for the brahmin Indra. ²³ For as long as she thought of her lover Indra, her face glowed like a full blown lotus, blooming with the beams of her moonlike lover. ²⁴ The brahmin boy Indra also was inflamed with all his enraptured senses for love of her, and he could not remain for a moment in any place without her company. ²⁵ The king heard the painful news of their affections for each other and of their unconcealed meetings. ²⁶ He also observed many examples of their attachment, and at different times gave them his reprimands and punishments as they deserved.

²⁷ They were both cast in the cold water of a tank in cold weather where, instead of betraying any sign of pain, they kept smiling together as in their merriment. ²⁸ Then the king had them to be taken out of the tank and ordered them to repent for their crimes, but the infatuated pair was far from doing so, and replied to the king in the following manner.

²⁹ "Great king! As long we continue to reflect on the unblemished beauty of each other's face, so long are we lost in the meditation of one another and forget our own selves. ³⁰ We are delighted in our persecutions, as no torment can separate us from each other. We are not afraid of separation, even though you can separate our souls from our bodies."

³¹ They were thrown in a frying pan upon fire, where they remained unhurt and exclaimed, "We rejoice, O king, at the delight of our souls in thinking of one another." ³² They were tied to the feet of elephants to be trampled, but they remained uninjured and said, "King, we feel our hearty joy at our memories of each other." ³³ They were lashed with rods and straps and many other sorts of scourges which the king devised from time to time. ³⁴ But being brought back from the scourging ground and asked about their suffering, they returned the same answer as before.

Moreover, said the brahmin Indra to the king, "This world is full with the form of my beloved one.

³⁵ All your punishments inflict no pain on her because she views the whole world as full of myself.

³⁶ Therefore all your punishments to torment the body can give no pain to the mind (soul) which is my true self and constitutes my personality (*purusha*) that resides in my person. ³⁷ This body is only an ideal form and presents a shadowy appearance to view. You can pour out your punishments upon it for a while, but it amounts to no more than striking a shadow with a stick. ³⁸ Nobody can break down a brave (firm) mind. Then tell me great king, what do the powers of the mighty amount to?"

³⁹ "The causes that conspire to disturb the nature of the resolute mind are the false conceptions of external appearances. Therefore it is better to chastise such bodies which mislead the mind to error.

⁴⁰ The mind is forever firm that is steadfast to its fixed purpose. The mind identifies with the object

which it has constantly in its thoughts.⁴¹ Being and not being are words applicable to bodies. They do not apply to the mind because what is positive in thought cannot be negated of it in any way.⁴² The mind is immovable and cannot be moved by any effort like one can move bodies. It is impregnable to all external actions, and neither your anger or favor can have any effect on it.”

⁴³ “It is possible for men of strong resolutions to change the course of their actions. But where is such a strong minded man to be found who is able to withstand or change the currents of his thoughts?⁴⁴ It is impossible to move the mind from its fixed fulcrum, just as it is impracticable for tender stags to remove a mountain from its base.”

“This black-eyed beauty is the fixed prop of my mind.⁴⁵ She is seated in the lofty temple of my mind like Goddess Bhavani on Mount Kailash. I fear nothing as long as I see this beloved preserver of my life and soul before me.⁴⁶ I sit amidst the conflagration of a burning mountain in summer’s heat, but wherever I stand or fall, I am cooled under the shadow of her showering cloud.⁴⁷ I think of nothing except the only object of my thought and wish. I cannot persuade myself to believe me as any other than Indra, the lover of Ahalya.”

⁴⁸ “It is by constant association that I have come to this belief of myself. I cannot think of me otherwise than what is in my nature. Know, O king, that the wise have only one object in their thought and view.⁴⁹ The mind, like Mount Meru, is not moved by threat or pity. It is the body that you can tame by the one or the other means. The wise, O king, are masters of their minds. There is none and nothing to deter them from their purpose.”

⁵⁰ “Know it for certain, O King, that neither these bodies about us nor these bodies and sensations of ours are realities. They are only shows of truth and not the movers of the mind. On the contrary, it is the mind that supplies the bodies and senses with their powers of action, just like water supplies trees and branches with their sap.⁵¹ The mind is generally believed to be a sensuous and passive principle, wholly moved by the outward impressions of senses. But in truth the mind is the active and moving principle of the organs of action. Because all the senses become dormant in absence of the action of the mind, so the functions of the whole creation are at a stop without the activity of the Universal Mind.”

Chapter 90 — Indra's & Ahalya's Attachment through Reincarnations

¹ The Sun said:—

The lotus-eyed king, thus defied by this perverse Indra, addressed sage Bharata who was sitting by him. ² The king spoke, “Lord, you are acquainted with all morality. See this ravisher of my wife and hear the arrogant speech that he utters before our face. ³ Please, O great sage, pronounce your curse upon him without delay, because it is a breach of justice to spare the wicked, just as it is to hurt the innocent.”

⁴ Being thus asked by the great king, Bharata, the best of the wise munis, considered the crime of this wicked soul Indra. ⁵ Then he pronounced his curse by saying, “Do you, O reprobate sinner, soon meet with your perdition, together with this sinful woman who is so faithless to her husband.”

⁶ Then they both replied to the king and his venerable sage, saying, “What fools must you be to have wasted your curse, the great gain of your tapas, on our devoted heads. ⁷ The curse you have pronounced can do us very little harm. Though our bodies should fall, yet it cannot affect our inner minds and spirits. ⁸ The inner principle of the soul, owing to its inscrutable, subtle and intellectual nature, can never be destroyed by anybody anywhere.

⁹ The Sun added:—

Then this fascinated pair, head over heels in love, fell down by effect of the curse, just like when branches cut from a tree fall upon the ground. ¹⁰ Being subjected to the torment of reincarnation, they were both born as a pair of deer in mutual attachment, and then as a couple of turtle doves in their inseparable alliance. ¹¹ Afterwards, O lord of our creation, this loving pair came to be born as man and woman, who by their practice of austerities, came to be reborn at last as a brahmin and brahmani.

¹² Thus the curse of Bharata was capable only of transforming their bodies. It never touched their minds or souls which continued in their unshaken attachment in every state of their reincarnation.

¹³ Therefore wherever and in whatever shape they come to be reborn, they always assumed the form of a male and female pair by virtue of their delusion and memories. ¹⁴ Seeing the true love that existed between this loving pair in the forest, the trees also became enamored of the other sex of their own kinds.

Chapter 91 — Brahma Wonders Whether to Create; Two Aspects to the Mind

¹ The Sun continued:—

My lord, therefore I say that the mind, like time, is indestructible by its nature, and the unavoidable curse of the sage could not alter its tenor.² Therefore it is not right for you, O great Brahma, to destroy the ideal fabric of the air-drawn world of the sons of Indu. It is improper for great souls to put a check on others' fancies.

³ O lord of lords, what are you lacking in this universe of so many worlds that should make your great soul pine for the air built worlds of Indu's sons?⁴ The mind is truly the maker of worlds. It is known as the Prime Male (*Purusha*). Hence the mind fixed to its purpose is not to be shaken from it by the power of any curse or by virtue of any drug or medicine, or even by any kind of chastisement.⁵ The mind that is the image of everybody is not destructible like the body, but remains forever fixed to its purpose. Therefore let the ten Aindava brothers continue in their ideal act of creation.

⁶ O lord who has made these creatures, remain firm in your place. See the infinite space spread before you, commensurate with the ample scope of your understanding, in the triple spheres of your consciousness and mind and the vast emptiness of space.⁷ These threefold infinities of ethereal, mental and intellectual spaces, are only reflections of the infinite emptiness of Divine Consciousness. They supply you, O Brahma, with ample space to create as many worlds as you wish.⁸ You are at liberty at your pleasure to create whatever you like. When you have the power to create everything, do not think that the sons of Indu have robbed you of anything.

⁹ Brahma said:—

After the Sun had spoken to me in this manner concerning men and other worlds, I reflected awhile and then answered him saying,¹⁰ "Well have you said, O Sun, for I see the ample space of air lying open before me. I also see my spacious mind and the vast comprehension of my consciousness. Therefore I will go on with my work of creation forever.¹¹ I will immediately think about multitudes of material productions. O Sun, I ordain you as my first offspring (Manu) to produce all these for me.¹² Now produce all things as you will, and according to my command," at which the brilliant sun readily complied to my request.

¹³ Then this great light stood with his two-part body of light and heat. With the first, he shone like the sun in the middle of heaven.¹⁴ With the second, his body's property of heat, he became my agent (Manu) in the nether worlds.¹⁵ He produced all things in the course of the revolutions of his seasons as I had asked him do.

¹⁶ Thus have I related to you, O sagely Vasishta, all about the nature and acts of the mind, and omnipotence of the great soul that infuses its might in the mind through its acts of creation and production.¹⁷ Whatever reflection is represented in the mind manifests in a visible form and becomes compact and stands confessed before it.¹⁸ Look at the extraordinary power of the mind that raised ordinary brahmin men to the rank of Brahma through their conception of it in themselves.¹⁹ As the individual souls of the Aindavas were incorporated with Brahma through their intense thought of him within, so also have we attained to the level of Brahma.

²⁰ The mind is full of innate ideas, and the figure that lays a firm hold of the mind appears expressed outside in a visible shape. There is no material substance beside one's own mind. ²¹ The mind is the wonderful attribute of the soul, and bears in itself many other properties like the inborn pungency of pepper. ²² These properties appear also as the mind and are called its hyperphysical or mental faculties. It is a downright mistake on the part of some (Samkhya materialists) to understand them as belonging to the body. ²³ The same mind when combined with its purer desires is also called the living principle (*jiva*). After all is said, it is bodiless and unknown in its nature.

²⁴ There is nobody like me or any other person in this world except this wonderful and self-existent mind which, like the sons of Indu, assumes the false conception of being real Brahmas themselves.

²⁵ As the Aindavas were Brahmas in their minds, so my mind makes me a Brahma also. It is the mind that makes one such and such, according to the conception that he entertains of himself. ²⁶ It is only by a conceit of my mind that I think myself situated as a Brahma in this place. Otherwise all these material bodies are known to be as unreal, like the emptiness of the soul in which they abide.

²⁷ The unsullied mind approximates the Divine by its constant meditation of the Divine. But being spoiled by the variety of its desires, it becomes a living being which at last turns to animal life and the living body. ²⁸ The intelligent body shines like any of the luminous orbs in the Aindava worlds. It is brilliant with the intelligent soul, like the appearance of a visionary creation of the mind. ²⁹ All things are the productions of the mind and reflections of itself, like the two moons in the sky, one being only a reflection of the other, and as the concepts of man's worlds.

³⁰ There is nothing such as real or unreal, nor is there any personality such as I or you or any other. Real and unreal are both alike, unless it is the conception that makes something appear as a reality which has otherwise no reality of itself. ³¹ Know the mind is both active and inert. It is vast owing to the vastness of its desires. It is lively on account of its spiritual nature of the great God. The mind becomes inert by its incorporation with material objects.

³² The conception of phenomena as real cannot make them real, any more than the appearance of a golden bracelet can make it gold, or the phenomena appearing in Brahma can identify themselves with Brahma himself. ³³ Brahma being all in all, the inert also are said to be intelligent, or else all beings from ourselves down to blocks are neither inert nor intelligent. ³⁴ It is said that lifeless blocks are without intelligence and perception, but everything that bears a like relation to another has its perception also like the other. ³⁵ Know that everything is sentient and has its perception or sensitivity. All things possess perception because of the relation between themselves and the Supreme Soul.

³⁶ Therefore the terms inert and sensitive, in their application to things existing in the one Divine Spirit, are meaningless. It is like attributing fruit and flowers to the trees of a barren land. The barren waste refers to the vacuum of the Divine Mind, and its trees to its unsubstantial ideas which are neither inert nor sentient like the fruit or flowers of those trees.

³⁷ Notion or thought formed by and an act of consciousness is called the mind. Of these, the intellect or intellectual part is the active principle, but the thought or mental part is quite inert. ³⁸ The intellectual part consists of the operation of exercise of consciousness, but the thoughts or that which is thought (*chetiyas*), which are the acts of consciousness (*chit*) are known to be inert. These are viewed by the individual soul in the false light of the world.

³⁹ The nature of consciousness (*chit*) is pure unity, but the mind (*chitta*) situated within consciousness and therefore called established-in-the-intellect (*chit-stha*) is a dualism of itself, and this appears in the form of duality in the world. ⁴⁰ Thus, by exercise of consciousness of itself as the other form, the ideal assumes the shape of the phenomenal world. Being indivisible in itself, it wanders through the labyrinth of errors with its other part of the mind.

⁴¹ There is no error in the unity of consciousness, nor is the soul liable to error unless it is deluded by its belief in pluralities. Consciousness is as full as the ocean, with all its thoughts rising and sitting in it like endless waves. ⁴² That which you call the mental part of consciousness is full of error and ignorance; and the ignorance of the intellectual part produces the errors of egoism and personality.

⁴³ There is no error of egoism or personality in the transcendental category of the Divine Soul because it is the integrity of all consciousness, just as the sea is the collection of all its waves and waters.

⁴⁴ The belief of egoism rises like any other thought of the mind, and is as inborn in it as water in the mirage, which does not exist really in it. ⁴⁵ The term ego is inapplicable to the pure and simple internal soul which, being weakened by the gross idea of its ardent desire, takes the name of ego, just as thickened coldness is called by the name of frost. ⁴⁶ The pure substance of consciousness forms the ideas of gross bodies, just as one dreams of his death in his sleep. All-pervading consciousness, which is the all inherent and omnipotent soul, produces all forms in itself, of which there is no end until they are reduced to unity. ⁴⁷ The mind manifests various appearances in the forms of things, and being of a pure ethereal form, it assumes various shapes by its intellectual or spiritual body.

⁴⁸ Let the learned abstain from thoughts of the three-fold forms of the pure intellectual, spiritual and physical bodies and reflect on them in his own mind as the reflections of Divine Consciousness.

⁴⁹ The mind being cleansed of its darkness, like the mirror of its dirt, shows the golden color of spiritual light replete with real joy, and by far more blissful than what this earthly clod of body can ever yield. ⁵⁰ We should cleanse the mind that exists forever, rather than the body which is transient and non-existent, and which is as unreal as the trees living in the air, of which no one takes any notice.

⁵¹ Those employed purifying their bodies under the impression that the body also is called the soul (*atma*) are the atheistic Carvakas who are like silly goats among men. ⁵² Whatever one thinks inwardly in himself, he is truly transformed to its likeness, as in the example of the ten Aindava brahmin sons, and like Indra and Ahalya cited before. ⁵³ Whatever is represented in the mirror of the mind, the same also appears in the figure of the body. But because neither this body nor anyone's ego lasts forever, it is right to forsake our desires.

⁵⁴ It is natural for everybody to think himself as an embodied being subject to death. It is like a boy who thinks he is possessed by a demon of his own imagination, until he gets rid of his false belief by the aid of reasoning.

Chapter 92 — A Strong Mind Is Unaffected by Curses

¹ Vasishta added:—

Now hear, O support of Raghu's race, what I next asked of the lotus-born lord Brahma, after we had finished the preceding conversation.

² I asked him saying, "Lord, you have spoken before of the irrevocable power of curses. Then how is it that their power is frustrated by men?"

³ "We have witnessed the efficacy of curses, pronounced with potent mantra anathemas, to overpower the understanding and senses of living animals and paralyze every member of the body.⁴ The mind and body are as intimately connected with each other as motion with air and fluidity with a sesame seed.⁵ There is nobody except a creation of the mind, like the fantasies of visions and dreams, and like the false sight of water in the mirage, or the appearance of two moons in the sky.⁶ Or else why is it that the dissolution of the one brings on the extinction of the other, such as the quiet of the mind is followed by the loss of bodily sensations?"

⁷ "Tell me, my lord, how is the mind unaffected by the power of curses and menace that subdue the senses? Are mind and senses both overpowered by curses, being the one and same thing?"

⁸ Brahma replied:—

Know there is nothing in the treasure-house of this world that man cannot attain by means of his efforts in the right way.

⁹ All species of animal beings, from the state of the highest Brahma down to minute insects, are bicorporal. They are endowed with two bodies: mental and physical.¹⁰ The mental body is ever active and always fickle. The other is the worthless body of flesh, which is dull and inactive.¹¹ The fleshy part of the body that accompanies all animal beings is overpowered by the influence of curses and charms practiced by the art of incantation (*abhichara vidya*).¹² The influence of certain supernatural powers stupefies a man, making him dull and dumb. Sometimes one is about to droop down unconscious, as spell-bound persons are deprived of their external senses, and fall down like a drop of water from a lotus-leaf.¹³ The mind, which is the other part of the body of embodied beings, is ever free and not subdued, though it is always under the subjection of all living beings in the three worlds.

¹⁴ He who can control his mind by continued patience on one hand and by constant vigilance on the other, is the man of an unimpeachable character and unapproachable by calamity.¹⁵ The more a man employs the mental part of his body to its proper employment, the more successful he is in obtaining the object that he has in mind.¹⁶ Mere physical energy is never successful in any undertaking. It is only intellectual activity that is sure of success in all attempts.

¹⁷ Focusing the mind in an effort to hurt objects unconnected with matter is as vain as trying to pierce a stone with an arrow.¹⁸ Drown the body underwater or dip it in mud, burn it in fire or fling it aloft in the air, yet the mind turns not from its orientation. He who is true to his purpose is sure of success.

¹⁹ Intensity of physical efforts overcomes all impediments, but only mental effort leads to ultimate success in every undertaking.

²⁰ Mark the example of the fictitious brahmin boy Indra, who employed all his thoughts to assimilate himself into the very image of his beloved, and drowned all his bodily pains in the pleasure of his thoughts of her. ²¹ Think of the manly fortitude of Mandavya who, when he was about to be beheaded, made his mind as detached as marble and was unconscious of his suffering. ²² Think of the sage who fell into a dark pit while his mind was employed in some sacrificial rite. He was taken up to heaven in reward of the merit of his mental sacrifice. ²³ Remember also how the ten sons of Indu, by virtue of their persevering tapas, obtained their status as Brahma, which even I have not the power to withhold.

²⁴ There have been many other such sages and master-minds among men and gods who never laid aside their mental energies, whereby they were crowned with success in their proper pursuits. ²⁵ No pain or sickness, no fulmination or threat, no malicious beast or evil spirit can break down the resolute mind, anymore than a lean lotus leaf striking can split the breast of a hard stone.

²⁶ Those who you say have been disturbed by tribulations and persecutions, I understand them as too infirm in their faiths and very weak both in their minds and courage. ²⁷ Men with heedful minds have never been entrapped in the snare of errors in this perilous world. They have never been visited by the demon of despair in their sleeping or waking states. ²⁸ Therefore let a man employ himself exercising his own manly powers and engage his mind and mental energy to noble pursuits in the paths of truth and holiness.

²⁹ The enlightened mind forgets its former darkness and sees its objects in their true light. The thought that grows big in the mind swallows it up at last, just as the imagination of a ghost lays hold of a child's mind. ³⁰ The new reflection effaces the prior impression from the tablet of the mind, just as an earthen pot turning on the potter's wheel thinks no more of its nature of dirty clay. ³¹ The mind, O muni, is transformed in a moment to its new model, just like inflated water rises high into waves, spray and foam, glaring with reflections of sunlight.

³² The mind adverse to right investigation sees like the blind, everything in darkness even in broad daylight, and observes by deception two moons for one in the moonshine. ³³ Whatever the mind has in view, it soon succeeds in accomplishing. Whether it does anything of good or evil, it reaps the reward accordingly in the gladness or bitterness of his soul. ³⁴ A wrong reflector reflects a thing in a wrong light, just as a distracted lover sees a flame in moonbeams which makes him burn and consume in his state of distraction. ³⁵ It is the conception of the mind that makes salt seem sweet to taste by its giving a flavor to the salted food for our zest and delight. ³⁶ It is our conception that makes us see a forest in the fog, or a tower in the clouds appearing to the sight of the observer to be rising and falling by turns.

³⁷ In this manner, whatever shape the imagination gives to a thing, it appears in the same form before the mind's sight. Therefore knowing this world of your imagination to be neither a reality nor unreality, stop seeing it and its various shapes and colors as they appear to view.

Chapter 93 — Brahma as the Mind: A View of the Genesis of the Mind & Body

¹ Vasishta said:—

Rama, I will now tell you what lord Brahma himself taught me long ago.

² From the unspeakable Brahma, there sprang all things in their indefinable ideal state. Then the Spirit of God, being condensed by His Will, came to be produced of itself in the form of the Mind.³ The Mind formed the notions of the subtle elementary principles in itself and became a personal agent. It became a luminous body and was known as Brahma the first Male (*puruṣha*).⁴ Therefore Rama, know this same Brahma is situated in the Supreme (*parameshti*) and, being a personification of the Will of God, is called the Mind.

⁵ Therefore, the Mind known as Lord Brahma is a form of Divine essence and, being full of desires in itself, sees all that it wills (in their indefinable, ideal forms) present before it.⁶ The mind then framed or fell of itself into the delusion of seeing its ideal images as substantial. Therefore, it is said that the world of phenomena is the work of Brahma.

⁷ The world proceeds in this order from the Supreme Essence. This is why some suppose that its dull material particles came into being from another source.⁸ It is from that Brahma, O Rama, that all things situated in this concave world are in being, like waves rising on the surface of the deep.⁹ The self existent Brahma that exists in the form of consciousness (*chit*) before creation assumes the attribute of egoism (*ahamkara*) and becomes manifest in the person of Brahma.¹⁰ All the other powers of Consciousness that are concentrated in the personality of Ego are equivalent to those of Omnipotence.

¹¹ The world, being evolved from the eternal ideas in Divine Consciousness, manifests itself in the mind of the great father of all, Brahma.¹² The Mind thus moving and modeling all things is called the individual soul (*jiva*).¹³ These individual souls rise and move about in the empty sphere of infinite Consciousness (*chidakasa*). These unfold by the elementary particles of matter and pass into the open space surrounded by air. Then they reside in the fourteen kinds of animated nature according to the merit and demerit of their prior acts. They enter bodies through the passage of their vital breath, and become the seeds of moving and immovable beings.¹⁴ They are then born of the generative organ, and are suddenly met with the desires of their previous births. Thus led on by the currents of their wishes, they live to reap the reward or retribution of their good or bad acts in the world.¹⁵ Thus bound fast to action and fettered in the meshes of desire, individual souls enchain in their bodies continue to rove about or rise and fall by turns in this changeful world.¹⁶ Scriptures say their wish is the cause of their happiness or sorrow, which is inseparable from the soul as will is from the mind.

¹⁷ Thousands of individual souls are falling off as quickly as the leaves of forest trees. Carried away by the force of their pursuits, they are rolling about like fallen leaves blown upward by the breeze in the valleys.¹⁸ Many are brought down by their ignorance of Divine Consciousness (*chit*) and are bound to innumerable births on this earth, subject to unending reincarnations in various births.

¹⁹ There are some who, having passed many mean births in this earth, have risen high in the scale of beings by their tapas to better acts.²⁰ Same persons acquainted with spirituality have reached their state of perfection and have gone to heaven, like particles of seawater carried into the air by blowing

winds.

²¹ The production of all beings is from the Supreme Brahma, but their appearance and disappearance in this frail world are caused by their own actions. Hence the yogi without actions is free from both these states.

²² Our desires are poisonous plants bearing the fruits of pain and disappointment. They lead us to actions filled with dangers and difficulties. ²³ These desires drive us to different countries and to distant hills and valleys in search of gain. ²⁴ This world, O Rama, is a jungle of withered trees and brambles. It requires the axe of reason to clear away these trees and bushes. So our minds and bodies are only plants and trees of our sorrow which, when rooted out by the axe of reason, will grow no more as reincarnations on this earth.

Chapter 94 — Fourteen Grades of Beings; Brahma the Origin of All

¹ Vasishta said:—

Now hear me relate to you, Rama, the several classes of higher, lower and middling species of beings, and the various grades of their existence here and elsewhere in the scale of creation.

² The first class in birth (*idam-prathama*) were the first to be produced. They are those whose long practice in a course of virtuous actions in prior states has secured to them the property of only goodness.

³ The second grade is called state of sound qualities (*guna pivari*). This is attained by the prosperous and leads them to meritorious deeds, to the acquisition of their desired objects, and their right dealing in the affairs of the world.

⁴ The third grade is termed substantiality (*sasatwa*) or the state of men of substance. It is attended with like results, proportioned to the righteous and unrighteous acts of men, who may obtain their liberation after a hundred reincarnations of their souls on earth.

⁵ The fourth grade (*atyanta tamasi*) comprises infatuated people who are addicted to their varying desires in this changeful world ⁶ and come to the knowledge of truth after passing a thousand lives in ignorance and sin, and suffering the effects proportionate to their good or evil deeds.

⁷ The fifth grade is composed of men of a baser nature, called *adharma-satwa* by the wise, and who may possibly have their liberation after a course of numberless births in different shapes and forms.

⁸ The sixth grade is composed of those men involved in extreme darkness (*atyanta tamasi*) who are doubtful of their liberation (*sandigdha-moksha*) and continue in the vicious course of their past lives.

⁹ Those who pass two or three previous births in other states and are then born with the quality of gentleness are in the seventh grade, called the gentry (*rajashi*). ¹⁰ The wise say that those who remain mindful of their duties and are employed in discharge of them in this state of life are entitled to their liberation soon after their death.

¹¹ Those among the gentry (*rajashi*), whose acts are commensurate with those of gentlemen and the nobility, are included in the eighth class and are called nobility (*raja satwika*) and are entitled to their liberation after a few births on earth.

¹² The ninth class comprises the noble nobility (*raja-rajashi*) whose actions conform with their title, and who obtain their long longed-for liberation after a course of hundred births in the same state.

¹³ The next or tenth class is composed of the blinded gentry (*rajatamasi*) who act foolishly under their infatuation and who are uncertain of their liberation even after a thousand births. ¹⁴ The most giddy of this class are called the excessively infatuated gentry (*atyanta-raja-tamashi*). Their conduct in life corresponds with their name and their reincarnations do not cease at anytime. ¹⁵ Then the lower classes comprise the children of ignorant darkness (*tamas*) of whom the *tamasas* form the eleventh grade, and are said to be deprived of their liberation forever more. ¹⁶ However, there have been a few among them who have obtained their salvation by means of their divine knowledge, and their good acts during their lifetime.

¹⁷ Next follows the twelfth order who combine the qualities of darkness and enlightenment (*tamasa-rajas*) and who are liberated after a thousand births in their former demonic state, and one hundred births in their progressive improvements.

¹⁸ Then comes the thirteenth order of those in darkest darkness (*tamas-tamasi*) who have to reincarnate for millions of years, both in their prior and later births, before they can have their liberation from the bondage of body.

¹⁹ Last comes the fourteenth order of beings, who continue in their state of gross ignorance (*atyanta-tamasi*) forever, and it is doubtful whether they can have their liberation at all.

²⁰ All other masses of living beings also have proceeded from the body of the great Brahma, just as the moving waves rise from the great body of waters.²¹ As the lamp flickering by its own heat scatters its light on all sides, so does Brahma glowing in himself radiate his beams in the shape of a glittering particle spread all over the universe.²² As sparks are flung by the force of a burning fire, so these multitudes of produced beings rise from the substance of Brahma himself.²³ As the dust and filaments of mandara flowers fly and fill the air on all sides, and as moonbeams shoot out of its orb to fill the four quarters of heaven and earth, so the minutiae of divine essence emanate from the Deity and spread throughout the universe.

²⁴ As the variegated tree produces its leaves and flowers of various colors from itself, so the varieties of created beings spring from one Brahma, the source of all.²⁵ As gold ornaments relate to the metal gold of which they are made and wherein they exist, so all things and persons are in relation to Brahma, out of whom they have sprung and in whom they abide.²⁶ As drops of water are related to the pure water of the waterfall, so Rama are all things related to the uncreated Brahma from which they issue as like drops.²⁷ As the air in a pot or about a basin is the same as the air that surrounds heaven, so all individual objects are the same with the undivided spirit of the all-pervading Brahma.

²⁸ As raindrops and drops of water from water spouts, whirlpools and waves are identical with their parent waters, so are all these sights of phenomena the same as the great Brahma from where they spring and where they exist and subside.²⁹ As a mirage, by the fluctuation of sunbeams on sand, presents the appearance of a swelling sea wave, so all visible objects show themselves to the sight of the spectator, beside which they have no figure or form of themselves.³⁰ Like cooling moonbeams and burning sunlight, so all things shine with their different luster derived from Brahma.³¹ It is He from whom all things have risen, and it is to Him that they return in their time; some after reincarnations of a thousand births, and others after longer periods of transmigrations in various bodies.

³² All these various forms of beings in the multiform world are moving in their respective spheres by the will of the Lord. They come and go, rise and fall, and shine in their transitory forms, like the sparks of fire, fluttering and sparkling for a moment, then falling and becoming extinct forever.

Chapter 95 — Identity of Mind & Action

¹ Vasishta said:—

There is no difference between acts and agent. They have sprung together from the same source of their creator. They are the simultaneous growth of nature like flowers and their fragrance.

² When human souls are freed from their desires, they are united with the Supreme Soul of Brahma, just like the blueness of the sky, which appears distinct to the eyes of the ignorant, is found to be joined with the clear firmament.

³ Know, O Rama, that it is for the understanding of the ignorant that we say that individual souls have sprung from Brahma. In reality, they are only shadows of the same. ⁴ Therefore it is not right for the enlightened to say that such and such things are produced from Brahma when there is nothing that exists apart or separate from him. ⁵ It is a mere fiction of speech to speak of the world as creation or production, but it is difficult to explain the subject and object of the lecture without the use of such fictitious language. ⁶ Hence the language of dualists and pluralists is adopted in monotheistic doctrines as figures of speech, just as they are in use in the popular language: this one is Brahma or Divine Soul, and those others are the individual souls.

⁷ It has been explained that the concrete world springs from the discrete Brahma because the production of something is the same as its material cause, though it seems different from it to common understanding. ⁸ Multitudes of living beings, rising like the rocks of Meru and Mandara Mountains, are joined with the main range from which they jut out. ⁹ Thousands and thousands of living beings are constantly produced from their common source, like the innumerable offshoots of forest trees filling the woodland sky with their variegated foliage. ¹⁰ An infinity of living beings will continue to spring from Brahma, like blades of grass sprouting from the earth below. They will likewise be reduced to Brahma, like the seasonal plants of spring that die in the hot weather of summer. ¹¹ There is no counting the living creatures that exist at anytime, and what numbers are being born and are dying at any moment.

¹² Men with their duties proceed from the same divine source, like flowers growing with their fragrance from the same stem. All these subside in the same receptacle from where they arise. ¹³ We see different tribes of demons, brutes, men and gods in this world coming into existence from non-existence, and this is repeated without end. ¹⁴ We see no other cause for their continuous revolution in this manner, except the forgetfulness of their reminiscence, which makes them oblivious of their original state and makes them conform with every mode of their reincarnation into new forms.

¹⁵ Rama said, “For lack of such memory, I think that obeying the dictates of the infallible scriptures promulgated by the sages, and based on the authority of the Vedas, is the surest way for the salvation of mankind. ¹⁶ And I reckon those men as holy and perfect who are possessed of the virtues of the great, have magnanimity and equanimity of their souls, and have received the light of the unknowable Brahma in them. ¹⁷ I reckon two things to be the two eyes of the ignorant that allow them to discern the path of salvation. One is their good conduct and the other their knowledge of the scriptures, which follows the former. ¹⁸ Because one who is righteous only in his conduct but is without knowledge is never taken into account and is slighted by all to be plunged into insignificance and misery.”

¹⁹ “Again sage, both men and the Vedas agree that acts and their actors come one after the other, and not as you said both arising simultaneously from their divine origin. ²⁰ Act makes the actor, and the actor does the work. Thus they follow one another like the seed and tree which produce one another. This mutuality of both is seen in the practice of men and ordinances of the Vedas. ²¹ Acts are the causes of animal births, as the seed gives birth to the sprouts of plants. In turn, works proceed from living beings like the sprouts produce the seeds. ²² The desire that prompts a person to his particular pursuit in his prison house of this world, the same yields him like fruits and no other.”

²³ “Such being the case, sage, why did you say that animals are produced from the seed of Brahma without causation from their prior acts? You also said that prior acts cause the birth of animal beings.

²⁴ On one hand, by your position of their simultaneity, you ignored the law of antecedence and sequence of birth and action to one another. ²⁵ Then to say that Brahma is not the origin of actions, and that Brahma and other living beings are subject to their several actions, are self contradictory propositions and opposed to common sense. This question upsets the doctrine of Free Will. ²⁶ Also to say that living beings are born together with their actions (by predestination) and are bound to them to no purpose, is like saying that fish are caught by bait they cannot eat but cause their death.”

²⁷ “Therefore sage, please tell me about the nature of acts, for you are best acquainted with the secrets of things and can well answer my questions on the subject.”

²⁸ Vasishta replied:—

My good Rama, you have asked well about this intricate subject. I will now explain to you in a manner that will enlighten your understanding.

²⁹ It is the activity of the mind that forms its thoughts and intentions and which are the roots or seed of actions. It is its passivity that is the recipient of their results. ³⁰ Therefore no sooner did the principle of the mind spring from the essence of Brahma than it was accompanied by its thoughts and actions in the bodies which the living beings assumed according to their prior deserts and inborn desires. ³¹ As there is no difference between the flower and its fragrance, there is no distinction between the mind and its actions, which are one and the same thing.

³² The exertion of bodily activity is called an action, but the wise well know that action is preceded by a mental action which is called its thought in the mind. ³³ It is possible to deny the existence of material objects like air, water, hill and others, but it is impossible to deny the operations of our mental faculties, of which we have subjective evidence in ourselves. ³⁴ No deliberate action of the present or past life goes for nothing. All human actions and efforts are attended with their just results, to which they are properly directed.

³⁵ As ink ceases to be ink without its inky blackness, so the mind ceases to exist without the action of its mental operations. ³⁶ Cessation of mental activity is attended with cessation of thought, and stillness of the mind is accompanied with a cessation of actions. The liberated are free from both of these, but those who are not liberated from neither. ³⁷ The mind is ever united with its activity as fire with its heat, and the lack of either mind or action means the extinction of both. ³⁸ The mind, ever restless in itself, becomes identified with the actions proceeding from its activity. In turn, the actions, whether good or bad, become identified with the mind which feels their just rewards and

punishments.

Hence Rama, you see the inseparable connection between mind and acts. They reciprocate their actions and reactions upon each other.

Chapter 96 — Different Names for Mind

¹ Vasishta said:—

The mind is mere thought, and thought is the mind in motion. Its actions are directed by the nature of the thoughts, and the result of the acts is felt by everybody in his mind.

² Rama said, “Sage, please explain in more detail the immaterial mind as opposed to the material body, and its inseparable property of will or volition.”

³ Vasishta replied:—

The nature of the mind is known to be composed of the property of will, which is an attribute of the infinite and almighty power of the Supreme Soul.⁴ The mind is known to be of the form of that self-moving principle which determines men’s doubt between the affirmative and negative sides (as whether it is so or not).⁵ The mind is known to be of the form of ego, which is ignorant of the self-manifesting soul of God and believes itself to be the subject of its thoughts and actions.⁶ The mind is of the nature of imagination (*kalpana*) which is always busy in its operations. Therefore the inactivity of the mind is as impossible in this world as it is for an intelligent man not to think.

⁷ As there is no difference in the essence of fire and heat, so there is no difference whatever between mind and its activity, and so between the mind and soul.

⁸ The mind is known by many names according to its various faculties and functions, its various thoughts and desires, and their manifold operations and consequences.⁹ The Divine Mind is said to be distributed into all souls by mistake and without any reason, because the All is without any substance or substratum and is indivisible in its nature. It is a mere fabrication of our desires and fancies to diversify it in different persons.¹⁰ Whoever has set his desire in anything as if it were a reality, finds the same to be attended with the like fruit as he had expected of it.¹¹ It is the movement of the mind that is said and perceived by us to be the source of our actions, and the actions of the mind are as various as the branches, leaves and fruits of trees.

¹² Whatever is determined by the mind is readily brought into performance by the external organs of action. Therefore, because the mind is the cause of action, it is identified with the effect.

¹³ Mind, understanding, egoism, intellect, consciousness, action and imagination, together with memory, desire, ignorance, and effort are all synonyms of the mind.¹⁴ Sensation, nature, delusion and actions are also words applied to the mind to bewilder one’s understanding.¹⁵ The simultaneous collision of many sensations diverts the mind from its clear sight of the object of its thought, and causes it to turn about in many ways.

¹⁶ Rama asked, “How is it sage, that so many words with different meanings were invented to express the transcendent cause of our consciousness (the mind), and heap them on the same thing solely for our confusion?”

¹⁷ Vasishta replied:—

As man began to lose sight of his consciousness and labored under suppositions about his self, he found the mind to be the waking principle within him.¹⁸ When man, after considering himself and other things, comes to understand them in their true light, he is then said to have his understanding

(*buddhi*).¹⁹ When man by false conception of himself assumes a personality by his pride, he is called an egoist, with the principle of ego or egoism causing his bondage on earth. Absolute egoism is doubting everything other than individual self-existence.

²⁰ Thought passes from one object to another in quick succession and, like the whims of children, shifts from one thing to another without forming a right judgment of any.²¹ The mind is identified with acts done by the exercise of a power immanent in itself as the agent. The result of the actions, whether physical or moral, good or bad, returns to the mind in their effects.

²² The mind is said to be fanciful because it holds onto fleeting fantasies and ignores its solid and certain truths. It is also called imagination because it presents various images of the objects of its desire (*ihita kalpana*). It is called *kakataliya sanyoga* or accidental assemblage of fancied objects. It is defined as the agglutinative and associative power that accumulates materials for imagination.

²³ Memory or retention is the power of the mind to retain an image, whether known or unknown before, as if it were a certainty already known. When attended with the effort of recalling it to the mind, it is called recollection.²⁴ Cravings to possess objects of past enjoyment, and the mind's efforts to attain other things, are called its desires.

²⁵ When the mind's clear sight of the light of the soul or self is hidden by the shadow of other gross things which appear to be real instead of the true spiritual, it is called ignorance. It is another name for deluded understanding.²⁶ The next is doubt, which entraps the dubious mind in the snare of skepticism and tends to destroy the soul by causing it to disbelieve and forget the Supreme Spirit.

²⁷ The mind is called sensation because all its actions of hearing, feeling, seeing, smelling, thinking and enjoying serve to delight the senses which convey the impressions back to the mind.²⁸ The mind that views all phenomena of nature in the Supreme Spirit and takes outward nature as a copy of the eternal mind of God, is called nature itself.

²⁹ The mind is called *maya* or magic because it converts the real into unreal, and the unreal into real. Showing realities as unrealities and the vice-versa by turns, the mind is called error or mistake of our judgment, giving assent to what is untrue and its contrary. The causes of error are said to be ignorance (*avidya*) and passions (*tamas*).³⁰ The actions of the physical organs of senses are seeing, hearing, feeling, tasting and smelling, but the mind is the cause of both actions and their acts.

³¹ The intellect (*chit*), bewildered in its view of the intellectual world (*chetiyas*), manifests itself in the form of the mind and becomes the subject of the various functions that are attributed to it.³² Being changed into the category of the mind, consciousness loses its original state of purity and becomes subject to a hundred desires of its own making.³³ Its abstract knowledge of general truths becomes shadowed by its preconceptions of concrete and discrete gross bodies, so it comes to the knowledge of numbers and parts and is overwhelmed by the multiplicity of its thoughts and its objects of desire.

³⁴ Consciousness is variously named the living principle and the mind by most people on earth, but it is known as exercise of intellect and understanding (*chitta* and *buddhi*) by the wise.

³⁵ The learned give the intellect, spoiled by falling away from the sole Supreme Soul, various names according to its successive phases and functions. The wise give intellect such different names because it spoiled by its various desires and the variety of their objects.

³⁶ Rama said, "O sir, you are acquainted with all truths. Please tell me whether the mind is a material or immaterial thing. So far I have been unable to determine this."

³⁷ Vasishtha replied:—

The mind, O Rama, is not completely a gross substance or completely an intelligent principle. Originally it is as intelligent as consciousness, but being sullied by the evils of the world and the passions and desires of the body, it takes the name of the mind. ³⁸ Consciousness (*chit*), which is the cause of the world, is called heart (*chitta*) when it is situated in the bosom of sentient bodies with all its affections and feelings (*avilam*). Then it has a nature between goodness and badness.

³⁹ When the heart lacks a uniform certainty to its purpose and a steadiness in itself, it feels inside and reflects all the changes and vicissitudes of the outer world. ⁴⁰ Consciousness hanging between its own intelligence and a belief in gross objects takes the name of the mind. It is spoiled by contact with outward objects. ⁴¹ When the action of consciousness or the faculty of the intellect's reasoning is weakened by sensations and becomes dull by its inward impurity, then it is called the mind which is neither a gross material thing nor an intelligent spiritual principle.

⁴² The intellectual principle is called by many names, such as mind, understanding, ego, and the individual soul or principle of animation. ⁴³ The mind bears its different names according to the variety of its functions, just like an actor in a theatre appears under different names and costumes depending on his dramatic parts on the stage. ⁴⁴ As a man passes under many titles according to his various occupations and professions, so the mind takes different names according to the various operations of its nature.

⁴⁵ Besides the names that I have already mentioned for the mind, the disputants in mental philosophy have invented many others agreeably to their diverse theories. ⁴⁶ They have attributed many names to the mind according to the views in which they want to exhibit its nature, such as calling it intellect, understanding or sensation and so forth. ⁴⁷ One takes it as dull matter and another as the living principle. Someone calls it ego, while others apply the term understanding.

⁴⁸ Rama, I have told you that individual ego, mind, the light of understanding, and the will to create are only different properties of the one and same internal principle. ⁴⁹ Nyaya philosophy has taken the mind in different lights according to its own view of them. The Sankhya system explains perception and senses in a way peculiar to itself. ⁵⁰ In this manner, all these terms are taken in very different meanings by the different systems of Mimamsa, Vaisesika, Arhatta and Buddhist philosophy. The Pancharatra and some other systems have given them particular meanings inconsistent with one another. ⁵¹ All these various doctrines, arising at different times and in distant countries, lead at last to the same Supreme Being, like the very many different ways leading their passengers to the same imperial city. ⁵² Ignorance of this supreme truth and misunderstanding among conflicting doctrines cause the adherents of different systems and sects to carry on endless and bitterly acrimonious disputes among themselves. ⁵³ The disputants maintain their particular positions by their respective dogmatism, just like passengers persist in their accustomed paths as the best suited to them.

⁵⁴ It is wrong to say that everything is the fruit of our acts, and therefore mankind should only be concerned about the performance of their actions. According to men's various perspectives, they have

come up with their explanations in their own ways.

⁵⁵ The mind receives its various names from its different functions, just like a man is called an early bather (*snataka*) from his acts of sacred ablutions and a donor from his religious gifts.⁵⁶ As the actor gets many titles according to the different characters he performs, so the mind takes the name of a living being (*jiva*) from its animation of the body and its desires.⁵⁷ The mind is also said to be the heart that is perceived by everybody as residing within himself. A man without heart has no feeling or sensation.⁵⁸ It is the heart that feels the inner pleasure or pain derived from sight or touch, hearing or smelling, and eating and drinking of pleasurable or painful things.⁵⁹ As light shows the colors of things to sight, so the mind is the organ that reflects and shows the sensations of all sensible objects in the head.

⁶⁰ Whoever thinks the mind is a dull material substance, or whose gross understanding cannot understand the nature of consciousness, is the dullest of beings.⁶¹ The mind is neither intelligence (*chetana*) nor inert matter (*jada*). It is individual ego that has sprung amidst the various joys and griefs in this world.⁶² The mind that is one with Divine Consciousness perceives the world as absorbed into itself. But the mind polluted with matter falls into the error of taking the world for real.

⁶³ Know Rama, that neither the pure immaterial intellect nor matter as gross as inert stone can be the cause of the material world.⁶⁴ Know then, O Raghava, that neither intelligence nor inertia is the cause of the world. The mind is the cause of visible objects, just as the mind is the light which unfolds them to view.⁶⁵ Where there is no mind, there is no perception of the outer world. Dull matter does not know of the existence of anything. Everything is extinct with the extinction of the mind.

⁶⁶ The mind has many synonyms depending on its many activities, just like the one continuous duration of time undergoes a hundred different names depending on the variations of its times and seasons.

⁶⁷ If ego is not recognized as a mental action, and if sensations are reckoned as actions of the body, then the name “living principle” still applies to all acts of the body and mind.⁶⁸ Whatever names or qualities of the mind are mentioned in the reasoning of different systems of philosophy, and sometimes by the advocates of an opinion, and at other times by their adversaries,⁶⁹ they are neither intelligible nor distinguishable from one another. They are all powers of the same mind which, like the flowing sea, pours its waters into innumerable outlets.

⁷⁰ As soon as men begin to attribute materialistic powers and force to the nature of pure consciousness, they fall into the error of these varieties of their own making.⁷¹ As a spider lets out its thread from itself, in the same manner the inert has sprung from consciousness and matter has come into existence from the ever active spirit of Brahma.⁷² Ignorance has introduced various opinions concerning the essence of the mind. From this arose the various different expressions among opponents, all of which have the same meaning, Consciousness.

⁷³ The same pure Consciousness is labeled the mind, understanding, living principle and egoism. The same is expressed by the words intelligence, heart, animation and many other synonyms which, being taken as meaning the same thing, should put an end to all dispute.

Chapter 97 — Three Spheres: Pure Consciousness, Mental & Physical

¹ Rama said, “O venerable sage, from all you have explained, I come to understand that this grandeur of the universe, being the work of the Divine Mind, is all derived from the same.”

² Vasishta answered:—

As already said, the Mind having assumed a substantial form manifested itself like water in a mirage raised by the shining blaze of its own light.³ The mind within the Spirit of Brahma became one with the contents of the world, now showing itself in the form of man, and now appearing as a god.

⁴ Somewhere he shows himself as a demon and at another place like a yaksha. Here he was as a gandharva, and there in the form of a kinnara.⁵ The vast expanse of the Mind includes the many countries and pictures of many cities and habitable places.⁶ Such being the capacity of the mind, there is no counting the millions of bodies contained within it, like the trees and plants in a forest. All those are not worth our consideration in our inquiry about the mind.

⁷ It was this mind that spread out the world with all its contents. Other than the mind, there exists nothing but the Supreme Spirit.⁸ The soul is beyond every category. It is omnipresent and the substratum of all existence. It is by the power of this soul that the mind moves and manifests itself.

⁹ The mind is known as the cause of the body. The body is work of the mind. The mind is born and becomes extinct with the body, which the soul does not. The soul has no quality that belongs to the mind.¹⁰ By right reasoning, the mind is found to be a perishable object. When the mind perishes, the individual soul attains final liberation. The desires of the mind are the bondage of its reincarnation, but the dissolution of the mind and its desires secures its liberation.¹¹ After mental desires cease there is no more exertion for acts. This state is called liberation of individual souls from trouble and care. The mind thus released, never comes to be born and die again.

¹² Rama said, “Sage, you have said before that human nature is principally of three kinds: the good, the gentle and the base (*satva, rajas* and *tamas*), and it is owing to the good or bad nature of their minds that men differ from one another.¹³ Now please tell me, how could the wonderful mind with its good or bad propensities that are lacking in Divine Consciousness originate from pure Consciousness?”

¹⁴ Vasishta replied:—

Rama, know that there are three spheres of infinite emptiness that are at immense distances from one another. These are the intellectual, mental and physical spheres.¹⁵ These environments are common to all mankind and they are spread out everywhere. They have all sprung and come to being from the essence of Divine Consciousness (*chit*).

¹⁶ Space is both inside and outside of everything, pervading throughout all nature. Space implies being occupied by something or its absence. Space is called the empty sphere of Consciousness.

¹⁷ Space is called the sphere of Consciousness which embraces all space and time and which has spread out the other spheres or environments. Consciousness is the highest and best of all.

¹⁸ The physical sphere (*bhutakasha*, element-space) contains all created beings and extends to all ten directions about, above and below us. It is a space filled with air that supports the clouds and waters

above the sky.¹⁹ Then the emptiness of the mental sphere (*chittakasha*, mind-space), which has also sprung from the sphere of consciousness (*chidakasha*, consciousness-space), likewise has consciousness for its cause like the others, as the day is the source of all works and animal activities.

²⁰ What we call the mind is the spoiled intellect that views itself as a dull thing amidst the gross material objects of the physical sphere. It thinks of both spheres from where it is born and where it is placed.

²¹ I have made use of the metaphor of spheres for the understanding of the unenlightened. Figures are used to instruct the unenlightened and not to lighten the enlightened.²² In the consciousness sphere, you will see one Supreme Brahma filling its whole space, without parts or attributes, and intelligible only to the enlightened.²³ The ignorant need to be instructed with appropriate words and precise language showing the distinction between monotheism and belief in two gods, which is unnecessary for the instruction of the enlightened.²⁴ I have contrived to explain to you the nature of divine knowledge, by the parable of the three spheres, which will enlighten you as long as you are in dark on the subject.

²⁵ The consciousness sphere is hidden by ignorance, so we are led to look into the mental and physical spheres. They are as delusive as sunbeams in a mirage, and as destructive as the flames of fire.

²⁶ Pure consciousness, being changed to the state of the changeful mind, takes a debased figure. Then being confounded in itself, the mind weaves the magic web of the world in which it becomes entangled.²⁷ The ignorant guided by the dictates of their perverted minds know nothing about the nature of consciousness, which is identical with the Supreme. So the witless who unwittingly mistake white shells for bright silver are seen to labor under their delusion, until they are freed from it by the clear light of their understanding.

Chapter 98 — Story of the Origin of the Heart; Deluded Men Punishing Themselves in the Desert

Vasishta speaking:—

¹ Whatever may be the origin and nature of the human heart (which some take to be the mind), it should be always inquired into if seeking one's own liberation.

² The heart fixed in the Supreme becomes purified of its worldly desires and attachments. Then, O Rama, it perceives in itself that soul which transcends all imaginations of the mind. ³ The province of the heart is to secure the stillness of the world in itself. It lies in the power of the heart either to become trapped or get its freedom from the desires and troubles of the world.

⁴ On this subject there hangs a curious tale relating the legend of the heart. Brahma himself told me the story a long ago, which I will now share it with you, Rama, if you will listen with attention.

⁵ There is a long, open and dreary desert named Ramatavi that was quite still and solitary and without an inhabitant. It was so vast that a pace in it was equal to a league. ⁶ In it stood a man of a terrific and gigantic figure, with a sorrowful face and troubled mind, having a thousand arms and a thousand eyes.

⁷ He held many clubs and maces in his many arms, and he was using them to strike his own back and breast, then running away in this direction and that. ⁸ Having struck himself fast and hard with his own hands, he fled a hundred leagues for fear of someone laying a hold of him. ⁹ Thus striking and crying and fleeing, he became tired and spent and lank in his legs and arms.

¹⁰ He fell flat with his languid limbs in a large blind pit, amidst the deep gloom of a dark night and in the depth of a dire dark cave. ¹¹ After a long time, he scrambled out of the pit with difficulty, and again continued as before, running away and striking himself with his own hands. ¹² He ran a long way until at last he fell upon a thorny thicket of karanja plants that caught him tightly in its brambles, like a moth or grasshopper caught in a flame. ¹³ With much difficulty, he extricated himself from the prickles of the karanja thickets and began to beat himself as before, and run in his wonted course as usual.

¹⁴ Having gone a great way off from that place, he arrived at a grove of plantain trees under cooling moonbeams, where he sat for a while with a smiling face. ¹⁵ Then he left the plantain grove and went running and beating himself in his usual way. ¹⁶ Going again a great way in his hurry, and being exhausted in all his limbs and his whole body, he fell down again in a great and darksome ditch. ¹⁷ Rising from the ditch, he entered a plantain forest, and coming out from that spot, he fell into another ditch, then in another karanja thicket. ¹⁸ Thus he was falling into one ditch after rising from thorny bushes, and repeatedly beating himself and crying in secret.

¹⁹ I saw him going on in this way for a long time, then with all my force, I rushed forward and stopped him. ²⁰ I asked, "Who are you, sage, and why do you act in this manner? What business have you in this place, and why do you wail and trouble yourself for nothing?"

²¹ O Rama, he answered me saying, "I am nobody, O sage! Nor am I doing any such thing as you are saying. ²² You have stricken me here and you are my greatest enemy. You have seen me here and you persecute me, both to my great sorrow and delight." ²³ Saying so, he looked sorrowfully at his bruised

body and limbs, then cried aloud and wept a flood of tears that fell like a shower of rain on the forest ground.²⁴ After a short while he ceased weeping, then looking at his limbs, he laughed and cried aloud in his joy.²⁵ After his laughter and loud shouts were over, hear, O Rama, what the man next did before me.

He began to tear off and separate the members of his big body, and cast them away on all sides.²⁶ He first let his big head fall, then his arms, and afterwards his breast and his belly also.²⁷ Thus the man, having cut off the parts of his body one after another, was now ready to remove himself elsewhere with only his legs, by the decree of his destiny.

²⁸ After he had gone, another man appeared to my sight. He had the same form and figure as the previous one, and striking his own body like the other.²⁹ He kept running with his big legs and outstretched stout arms until he fell into the pit, from where he rose again and resumed his flight as before.³⁰ He fell into a pond, then rose and ran with his body wringing with pain. He fell again in hidden caves, then moved to the cooling shade of forest trees.³¹ For some time, and to my horror and surprise, I watched him now ailing, now regaling, and now torturing himself with his own hands.³² I stopped him and asked what he was doing, to which he answered by returning to crying and laughter by turns.³³ Finding at last his body and limbs losing their strength, he thought upon the power of destiny and the state of human lot, and was prepared to depart.

³⁴ I saw yet another following him on the same desert path. He also had been flying and torturing himself in the same way as the others before him.³⁵ He fell into the same dark pit in his flight. I stood there for some time watching his sad and fearful plight.³⁶ Finding after a long time that this wretched man was not climbing out of the pit, I advanced to help him up when I saw another man following his footsteps.³⁷ Seeing him to be of the same form and hastening to his impending fall in the doleful pit, I ran to stop him with the same question I had asked the others before.³⁸ But, O lotus-eyed Rama, the man paid no heed to my question and only said, "You must be a fool to know nothing of me.³⁹ You wicked brahmin!" he said to me, then went on in his course. I kept wandering in that dreadful desert in my own way.

⁴⁰ I saw many such men coming one after the other to their unavoidable ruin. Though I addressed each and every one of them, yet they softly glided away by me, like phantoms in a dream.⁴¹ Some of them gave no heed to what I said, like a man pays no attention to a dead body. Some among the pit-fallen had the good fortune of rising again.⁴² Some were unable to get out of the plantain grove for a long while, and others were lost forever in the thorns and thistles of karanja thickets.⁴³ There were some pious persons among them who had no place for their homes, even though that great desert was so very extensive, as I have told you already.

⁴⁴ This vast desert still exists, together with these sorts of men in it. That place is well known to you, Rama, as the common range of mankind. Do you remember it now, with all the culture of your mind from your early youth?⁴⁵ O that dreadful desert is this world, filled with thorns and dangers on all sides. It is a dark desert amid a thick spread darkness. Nobody who comes here finds peace and quiet in his heart except those who have acquired divine knowledge, which makes it a rose garden to them.

Chapter 99 — Heart Origin: Deluded Men in the Desert Explained

¹ Rama said, “What is that great desert, sage? When did I see it and how did I come to know it? Who were those men and what were they doing?”

² Vasishta replied:—

Attend O great-armed Rama, and I will tell you all. That great desert is not distant or different from this wilderness of the world.³ That which bears the name of the world is a deep and dark abyss in itself. Its hollowness is unfathomable and impassable. Its unreality appears as reality to the ignorant, and it is the great desert spoken of before.

⁴ True reality is obtainable only by the light of reason, and only by the knowledge of one object. This one is full without union with any other. It is one and only by itself.

⁵ The big bodied men you saw wandering, they are the minds of men bound to the miseries of the world.⁶ Their observer was Reason personified as myself. Only I by my guiding reason and no other person could discern the folly of their minds.⁷ It is my business to awaken drowsy minds to the light of reason, just as it is the work of the sun by his enlivening rays to open lotus buds to bloom.⁸ My counsels have prevailed on some minds and hearts that have received them with attention, and they have turned away from earthly troubles to the way of true contentment and tranquility.

⁹ But there were others who paid no attention to my lectures because of their great ignorance. They fell down into the pit after I scolded them with reproofs and rebukes.¹⁰ Those deep and dark pits were no other than the pits of hell. The plantain groves that I described were the Nandana gardens of paradise.¹¹ These gardens are the place of those minds that long for heavenly joys. The dark pits are the homes of hellish hearts that can never get their release from those dark dungeons.¹² Those who, having once entered the plantain grove and never come out, are the minds of the virtuous filled with all their virtues.

¹³ Those who fell into karanja thickets and were unable to extricate themselves from the thorns are the minds of men entangled in the snares of the world.¹⁴ Some minds that were enlightened with the knowledge of truth got released from the snares, but the unenlightened are bound to repeated reincarnations.¹⁵ Souls subject to rebirth have their repeated rises and falls, from higher to lower births, and likewise vice-versa.

¹⁶ The thick thicket of karanja brambles represents the bonds of conjugal and family relations. They are the source of various human desires that are springs of all other sorrows, difficulties and dangers.

¹⁷ Minds stuck in karanja bushes are those repeatedly born in human bodies and repeatedly entangled in domestic attachments from which all other animals are quite free.

¹⁸ O support of Raghu’s race, the plantain grove that I described was cooling with moonbeams. Know that it is the refreshing arbor of heaven that gives delight to the soul.¹⁹ Those persons are placed here who have their bodies filled with virtuous deeds and edified by persevering tapas and austerities, and whose souls are elevated above others.

²⁰ Those ignorant, thoughtless and unmindful men who slighted my advice were themselves slighted by their own minds which were deprived of the knowledge of their own souls and of their reason.

²¹ Those who told me, "We are undone at your sight, and you are our greatest enemy," were demented fools, melting away with their lamentations. ²² Those who were loudly wailing, weeping a flood of tears, were men who were bitterly sad in their minds because they were snatched from the snare of pleasures to which they had been so fondly attached. ²³ Those having a little sense and reason, but not arriving to the pure knowledge of God, bitterly complained in their hearts for being forced to give up their fond enjoyments of life. ²⁴ Those who came to their understanding wept over the pains they had inflicted on their bodies for the support of their families, and were grieved in their minds to leave behind the objects of their care, for whom they had taken such pains.

²⁵ The minds that had some light of reason, but had not yet arrived to divine knowledge, were still sorrowing for having to leave behind their own bodies where they had their previous life. ²⁶ Those who smiled in the cheerfulness of their hearts were men who had come to the light of reason, and it was their reason that gave consolation to their hearts. ²⁷ The reasonable soul, removed from its bondage of the world, exults with joy to find itself liberated from the cares of life. ²⁸ Those men who laughed to scorn their battered and shattered bodies were happy to think about how they had rid themselves of the confines of their bodies and limbs, the accomplices of their actions. ²⁹ Those who laughed with scorn to see their falling body parts were happy to think in their minds that they were no better than instruments to their various labors in the world.

³⁰ Those who had come to the light of reason and had found their rest in the supreme state of joy, from a distance looked down with scorn upon the former homes of their meanness. ³¹ The man I stopped who asked with concern (about what he was going to do) was made to understand how the power of wisdom could endure the desperate. ³² The weakened limbs that gradually disappeared from sight meant the subjection of the members of the body to the control of the mind that is freed from its corruption by riches.

³³ The man with a thousand arms and eyes is a symbol of the covetous mind which looks to and longs after everything, and wants to grasp all things, as with so many hands. ³⁴ The man striking himself with his blows symbolized the torments that a man inflicts on his own mind by the strokes of his anxieties and cares. ³⁵ The man running away striking hard blows upon his body signified how the mind runs all about, being lashed at every moment by the strokes of his unsatisfied desires. ³⁶ The man who afflicts himself with his own desires, then flies this way and that, signifies his fool-heartedness to hunt after everything and be a runaway from himself.

³⁷ Thus every man is harassed by his ceaseless desires and yearns in his mind to fly to his Maker and set his heart to yoga meditation. ³⁸ All these ceaseless sorrows are the making of one's own mind, which being worried at last by its constant anxieties, strives to retire from them and find its final repose in meditation. ³⁹ The mind is trapped in the net of its own wishes, just like the silk worm is trapped in the cocoon by the thread of its own making. ⁴⁰ The more a man's mind is afflicted by troubles, the more busily is it employed in its moral weaknesses, just like a boy indulges himself in his playfulness, unmindful of the evils waiting upon it. ⁴¹ The mind of man is in the same plight as that of a foolish ape who straddles a half split timber, struggles to pull it out, and loses its life by smashing its own testicles.

⁴² No flight can release the mind unless it is practiced to resignation, restrained from its other

pursuits, and constrained to the continued practice of pious meditation, which only can relieve its sorrows.⁴³ The mind's misjudgments cause accumulated sorrows that increase in height like the peak of a mount. It is the government of the mind that melts our sorrows, like hoarfrost under sunbeams.

⁴⁴ Throughout your lifetime, accustom your mind to the righteous ways pointed out by the scriptures. Restrain your appetites, govern your passions, and observe the silence of holy saints and sages. At last you will arrive at the holy state of holies and rest under the cooling shade of holiness. You shall no more have to grieve under the disasters that happen to all mankind.

Chapter 100 — Healing the Heart: All within God; No Bondage or Liberation

¹ Vasishta continued:—

I have told you how the mind originates from the essence of the Supreme Being. It is of the same kind, and yet not the same with its source, but like the waves and waters of the sea.² The minds of the enlightened are not different from the Divine Mind because those who have knowledge of the community of waters do not regard the waves as different from the waters of the sea.³ The minds of the unenlightened are the causes of their error, because those not knowing the common property of water find a difference between waves and the sea.

⁴ For the instruction of the unlearned, it is necessary to teach them about the relationship between significant words and their meanings.

⁵ The Supreme Brahman is omnipotent, full and perfect and without decay forever. The mind does not have these properties that belong to the omnipresent soul.⁶ The Lord is almighty and omnipresent and distributes his all-diffusive power in proportion as he pleases to everyone he likes.⁷ Observe Rama, how intellectual powers are distributed in all animated bodies, and how His moving force is spread in the air, and His immobility rests in rocks and stones.⁸ His power of fluidity is deposited in water, and His power of inflammation is exhibited in fire. His emptiness manifests in vacuum, and His substantiality is in all solid substances.⁹ The omnipotence of Brahman is seen to stretch itself to all ten sides of the universe. His power of annihilation is seen in the extinction of beings. His punishment is evident in the sorrows of the miserable.¹⁰ His joy is felt in the hearts of the holy, and His prowess is seen in the bodies of giants. His creative power is known in the works of His creation, and His power of destruction is displayed in the desolation of the world at the end of the great kalpa age.

¹¹ Everything is situated in Brahman, just as the tree is contained in the seed of the same kind and afterwards develops in its roots, sprouts, leaves and branches, and finally its flowers and fruit.¹² The power called the living principle is a reflection of God. It has a nature between the thinking mind and dull matter, and it is derived from Brahman.¹³ The nature of God is unchangeable, although it is usual to attribute many varieties to him, just like we call the same vegetable by different names at its different stages of growth, like a germ, a sprout, a shrub, a plant and a tree.

¹⁴ Rama, know that the entire world is Brahman who is otherwise called the Ego. He is the all pervading soul and the everlasting stupendous fabric of the cosmos.¹⁵ That property in Him that has the power of thinking is called the mind. The mind appears to be something other than the Soul, thus we falsely see peacock's feathers in the sky and froth in whirlpools of water.¹⁶ The principles of thought, animation, mind and life are only partial reflections of the Divine Soul. The form of mind is the faculty of thought, just as that of life is the power of motion.

¹⁷ Thus the mind, being only the thinking power of Brahman, receives the name of Brahma. This power appearing as a part of the impersonal Brahman is identified with Ego (the personal Brahma).

¹⁸ It is our error to differ between the soul and mind, and Brahman and Brahma, because the properties that belong to the mind are the same as those of the self-existent Soul.¹⁹ That which is variously named the principle of mind or thought is the same power of omnipotence that is settled in the mind.²⁰ So all the properties of the individual soul are contained in and derive from the Universal

Soul of Brahma, just like all the properties of vegetation, blossoming and fructification of trees are contained in the season of spring and are dispensed among plants agreeably to their respective soil, climate and other environments.

²¹ As the earth yields its various fruits and flowers in their season, so the hearts and minds of men entertain their thoughts and passions in their proper times. Some appearing at one time and others at another. ²² As the earth produces its harvests according to their particular soil and season, so the heart and mind exhibit their thoughts and feelings of their own accord, and not caused by another.

²³ The numbers and forms that convey ideas, as distinguished from others of the same kind (such as the figures in arithmetic and geometry), are all expressed in words coined by the mind from the mint of the mind of Brahma, the original source of ideas. ²⁴ The mind adopts the same image as the reflections which it receives from without or the thoughts and imaginations it forms of itself. The example of the ten Aindava brothers serves to support this truth. ²⁵ The animating principle (*jiva*) that is the cause of this creation resides in the Supreme Spirit, like the fluctuation seen over the still waters of the oceans.

²⁶ The intelligent soul, as he beholds the innumerable waves, billows and surges of the sea rolling on the surface of the waters, sees these hosts of creation to be moving in the essence of Brahma. ²⁷ There is no other reality that bears a name or form or figure or any action or motion except the Supreme Spirit in which all things move about like waves of sea water. ²⁸ As the rising and falling and continuation and disappearance of waves occur on the surface of the sea by the fluctuation of its waters, so the creation, preservation and annihilation of the universe take place in Brahma by the agency of Brahma himself.

²⁹ It is by the inner heat of his spirit that Brahma causes this world to appear like a mirage in himself. Whatever varieties it presents in its various scenes, they are all expansions and manifestations of the Divine Spirit. ³⁰ All causality and instrumentality, and their effects as well as the production, continuation and destruction of all things, take place in Brahma himself, beside which there is no other cause whatever.

³¹ There is no craving or pleasure, or any desire or error in he who rests his dependence in the Supreme. How can one have any desire or error in himself who lives in the Supreme Self that is devoid of them? ³² Everything is a form of the Supreme Soul. All things are only forms of the Supreme Soul. The mind also is a form of it, just like a golden ornament is only a form of the gold.

³³ The mind that is ignorant of its Supreme Origin is called the individual soul. Its ignorance of the Supreme Soul resembles a friend who has alienated himself from his true friend. ³⁴ The mind misled by its ignorance of the all-intelligent God imagines its own personality to be a reality. It is like one who believes his individual soul to be produced from nothing. ³⁵ The individual soul, although it is a particle of the Supreme Soul, shows itself in this world as no soul at all (but a form of mere physical vitality). So the weak in understanding see two moons in the sky and are unable to distinguish the true moon from the false one.

³⁶ Because the soul is the only real entity, it is improper to speak of its bondage and liberation. The imputation of error to the soul is quite absurd in the sight of lexicographers, who define it as infallible. ³⁷ It is a wrong impression to speak of the bondage of the soul which is ever free from

bonds. It is untrue to seek the emancipation of the soul which is always emancipate.

³⁸ Rama asked, "Sometimes the mind is certain, then it becomes uncertain. How then do you say that the mind is not under the bondage of error?"

³⁹ Vasishta answered:—

It is a false conceit of the ignorant to imagine its bondage. Emancipation is their imagination, and equally false conception.

⁴⁰ Ignorance of the Smriti scripture causes one to believe in his bondage and emancipation. In reality there are no such things as bondage and liberation.⁴¹ Imagination represents an unreality as reality, even to men of enlightened understandings, like a rope presents the appearance of a snake even to the wise.⁴² The wise man knows no bondage or liberation or any error of any kind. All these three are only ideas of the ignorant.

⁴³ At first the mind, then its bondage and liberation, and afterwards its creation of the unsubstantial material world, are all only fabulous inventions that have come into vogue among men, as the story of the boy of old.

Chapter 101 — An Old Nurse Makes up a Story of Three Princes for a Boy

¹ Rama said, “Tell me, O chief of sages, the story of the boy that illustrates the Mind.”

² Vasishta replied:—

Hear me Rama, tell you the tale of a silly and stupid boy who once asked his nurse to recite some pretty story for his amusement.³ With a pleased face and with an accent sweet as honey, the nurse began to relate her fine wrought story for the pleasure of the boy.

⁴ Once upon a time in a desolate country, there were three high minded and fortunate young princes noted for their virtues and valor.⁵ They shone in that vast desolate land resembling the spacious sky, like stars reflected in the expanse of waters below. Two of them were un-begotten and uncreated, and the third was not born of a mother’s womb.

⁶ Once it happened that these three went out together from their dreary abode to find a better place to live. They had no other companion with them, and they were sad in their minds and long faces as if they were exiled from their native country.⁷ Having left that desert land, they set out with their faces looking forward and proceeded onward like the three planets Mercury, Venus and Jupiter in their conjunction.

⁸ Their bodies, delicate as sirisha flowers, were scorched by the powerful sun shining on their backs. On their way they were dried by the heat of the summer day, like wilted leaves on trees.⁹ Their lotus-like feet were singed by the burning sands of their desert path, and they cried aloud like some tender fawns straying from their herd crying, “O Father save us.”¹⁰ The soles of their feet were bruised by the blades of grass, and the joints of their bodies were weakened by the heat of the sun. Their fair forms were covered with dust flying from the ground on their lonely journey.

¹¹ They saw a clump of three trees by the wayside, braided with tufts of spikes upon them and loaded with fruit and flowers hanging down. They were a refuge for birds and desert animals resting above and around them.¹² The first two of these trees did not grow wild, and the third, which was easy to climb, bore no seeds to produce other plants in future.¹³ Under the shade of these trees, the three princes were refreshed from the fatigue of their journey. They halted there like the three gods Indra, Vayu and Yama under the thick shady branches of the parijata tree of Paradise.¹⁴ They ate the ambrosial fruits of these trees. They drank their nectar juice to their fill and, after decorating themselves with guluncha garlands, they resumed their journey.

¹⁵ Having gone a long way, around midday they came to a confluence of three rivers flowing with rapid currents and swelling waves.¹⁶ One of these was a dry channel and the other two were shallow with little water in them. They looked like the blinded eyeballs of blind men.¹⁷ The princes, wet with perspiration, bathed joyfully in the almost dried up channel, just like the three gods Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva wash their sweating limbs in the clear stream of the Ganges.¹⁸ They played a long while in the water and drank it, which was as sweet as milk and cheered their spirits with full satisfaction of their hearts.

¹⁹ They resumed their journey and at the end of the day, about sunset, they arrived at their future home, a newly built city standing far away on the height of a hill.²⁰ There were rows of flags fluttering like

lotuses in the clear lake of the blue sky. The loud noise of the songs of the citizens was heard at a distance.²¹ Here they saw three beautiful and good looking houses with turrets of gold and gems shining afar, like the peaks of Mount Meru under the blazing sun.²² Two of these were not the works of art, and the third was without foundation. At last the three princes entered the last of these.

²³ They entered this house and sat and walked about with happy faces. Inside, they chanced upon three pots as bright as gold.²⁴ The first two broke into pieces upon their lifting, and the third was reduced to dust at its touch. The far sighted princes, however, took up the dust and made a new pot with it. It means that though these sheaths are as volatile as air, yet it is possible to employ the vital principle to action.²⁵ Then these gluttonous princes used the pot to cook a large quantity of rice for their food, amounting to a hundred bushels minus one, enough to live on for their whole lifetime.

²⁶ The princes then invited three brahmins (childhood, youth and age) to the food prepared by them, two of whom (childhood and youth) were bodiless and the third (old age) had no mouth with which to eat.²⁷ The mouth-less brahmin took a hundred bushels of the rice and ate it up because he had devoured the child and the youth. The princes took the remainder of the brahmin's food for their meal (which was nothing).²⁸ The three princes having refreshed themselves with the traces of the brahmin's food, took their rest in the same house of their next home, then went out on their journey to hunt for new homes (or repeated reincarnations).

²⁹ Thus I have related to you, O Rama, the entire story of the boy and princes. Now consider its significance well in your mind and you will become wise thereby.³⁰ After the nurse finished telling her pretty parable, the boy seemed happy with what he had heard.³¹ I have told you this story, O Rama, in connection with my lecture on the subject of the mind. The story serves to explain how the mind fabricates this imaginary being of the world.

³² This air-built castle of the world which has come to be taken for a reality is like the story of the body, only a false fabrication from the old nurse's imagination.³³ It is the representation of the various thoughts and ideas of our minds that exhibit themselves to view according to our notions of them in our states of bondage and liberation.³⁴ Nothing really exists except the creations of our imagination. It is our fancy that fashions all the objects in their peculiar fantastic forms.³⁵ The heavens, earth, sky and air, and also the rivers, mountains and the sides and quarters of the sky, are all creations of our fancy, like the visions in our dreams that join and disjoin and fashion scenes in their fantastic forms.

³⁶ Like the princes, the rivers and the future city were mere creations of the nurse's imagination. In the same way, the existence of the visible world is only the product of man's imaginative power.

³⁷ Imaginative power manifests all things all around, like moving waters show the rise and fall of waves in the sea. "It gives a shape of airy nothing." "It is the power of apprehending ideas and combining them into new forms and combinations."

³⁸ The imaginative power of God raised the ideas of things in his omniscient and all comprehensive soul. These ideals afterwards manifested as real by his omnipotence, just like things lying in the dark are brought to view by daylight.

³⁹ Know from here on, O Rama, that the whole universe is the network of imagination, and your

imagination is the most active power of the mind. Therefore repress the thickening phantoms of your fleeting fancy and obtain your tranquility by relying solely upon the certainty of the immutable Soul of souls.

Chapter 102 — On the Indivisibility and Immortality of the Soul

¹ Vasishta continued:—

The ignorant are subject to errors caused by their false fancies, from which the wise are entirely free. By imagining and attributing perishable properties to the imperishable soul, the ignorant beguile themselves like children who take their dolls to be men.

² Rama replied, “What is this imagined perishable property that is imputed to the imperishable soul? Tell me also, O greatest of theologians, what misrepresentation misleads the mind to the false conception of the unreal world for a reality?”

³ Vasishta replied:—

The soul, by its continued association with unreal and perishable things, thinks itself to be one of them and takes the title of an unreal and perishable ego, just like a boy by association of his thoughts imagines a false apparition to be a real ghost.

⁴ All things being situated in one absolute reality, it is hard to account for one’s personal ego and to say how and from where this conception became established. ⁵ In fact, there is no ego except that of the Supreme Soul. Yet is the nature of the unwise to make a difference between a finite ego and infinite Ego, and between a mortal and immortal soul, as if we see two streams of water in the sunbeams of a hot, sandy desert.

⁶ The mind is a spacious mind (of richest gems) in this extensive creation and depends on the Supreme Soul for its support, just like waves depend upon the waters of the sea for their rise and existence.

⁷ Therefore, O Rama, give up your false view of the reality of the world and your reliance upon the baseless fabric of the universe. Rely with delight upon your judicious view of the true foundation and support of all. ⁸ Inquire now into the nature of Truth with a rational understanding. Being freed from all error and bias, discard all that is false and untrue.

⁹ Why do you think that the unconfined soul is confined in the body? It is vain to suppose the infinite soul is confined in any place. ¹⁰ To suppose one to be many is to make a division and create a variety in the nature of the Supreme Spirit. Again, the Divine Essence being diffused alike in all, it cannot be said to be confined in one thing and absent in another.

¹¹ The body being hurt, the soul is supposed to be hurt likewise, but no pain or hurt or sickness of any kind can affect the unchanging soul. ¹² The body being hurt or weakened or destroyed, there is no injury done to the soul, just like a blacksmith’s bellows being burned, the wind with which it was filled escapes unconsumed. ¹³ Whether the body lasts or falls is of no matter to us, like a flower being destroyed deposits its fragrance in the air. ¹⁴ Let any pain or pleasure befall on the body, like dewdrops falling on lotus leaves. It cannot affect us any more than a fading lotus affects or afflicts a flying bee in any manner. ¹⁵ Let the body rise or fall or fly in smoke and mix with the air. These changing forms can have no effect whatsoever on the soul.

¹⁶ The connection of the body with the soul is like that between the cloud and the wind, and between the lotus and the bee. ¹⁷ If the mind that forms a part of all living bodies is not affected by physical pain, then how is it possible that the primary power of consciousness that resides in the soul can be

subject to death? ¹⁸ If you know, O wise Rama, that the soul is indestructible and inseparable, then what is the need to have sorrow for the supposed separation or disappearance of the all pervading spirit?

¹⁹ After the body is destroyed, the soul flies from it to live in the infinite space of empty air, like wind mixing with air after dispersing clouds, and a bee flying away after the lotus has faded away. ²⁰ The mind is not relaxed with all its enjoyments of life unless it is burnt down by the knowledge of truth. Then why speak of the annihilation of the soul? ²¹ The connection between perishable body and imperishable soul is analogous to that of a vessel and the fruit it holds, and of a pot and the air in it. ²² As a plum is held in the hand or it falls into a pit, so the empty soul is reposed in or deposed from the body. ²³ As a pot being broken, its empty part mixes with the air. So the body being dissolved, the soul remains unhurt in empty space.

²⁴ The minds and bodies of living beings are apt to disappear at times from where they live and hide under the shroud of death. Why should we sorrow for such renegades? ²⁵ Seeing the death and disappearance of others, no fool learns to think for himself but fears to die like all ignorant fools.

²⁶ Therefore renounce, O Rama, your selfish desires and know the falsity of ego. Give up the bond of the body and fly upward, like a new fledged bird leaves its nest and flies above.

²⁷ It is an act of the mind to lead us to good or evil. It is another function of the mind to fabricate the false fabric of the world, like appearances in a dream. ²⁸ Our incorrigible ignorance stretches out these imageries only for our misery. Our imperfect knowledge shows these falsehoods as realities to us. ²⁹ The mind gives us a dim sight of things, as we view the sky hidden by a mist. It is the nature of the mind to have a false view of objects. ³⁰ The dull and unreal world appears as a reality to us. The imaginary duration of the universe is like a protracted dream in our sleep. ³¹ The thought or idea of the world is the cause of its physical existence, just as the blinking of the eye shows a thousand discs of the sun and moon in the clear sky.

³² Now Rama, employ your reason to annihilate the physical world from your mind, just as the sun dissolves snow by the heat of his beams. ³³ As one wishing to overcome cold gets his object at sunrise, so he who wishes to demolish his mind succeeds at the rise of his reason.

³⁴ As ignorance increases, so it introduces a train of deep seated errors and evils. It spreads a magic spell around it, just as Samvara the sorcerer showered a flux of gold dust about him. ³⁵ The mind by its worldliness makes the way to its own destruction, and acts the part of its own self-destructive catastrophe by all its acts. ³⁶ The mind wants only to preserve itself from destruction, but it is a fool who does not know its imminent death.

³⁷ The mind by its restless desires hastens itself to a painful death. The reasonable try to avoid restlessness by their government of the mind. ³⁸ The mind that is purified by reason is cleansed from its willingness and unwillingness and resigns itself to the will of the Divine Soul, which is ever present before it. ³⁹ The curbing of the mind is the magnanimity of soul and gives rise to liberation from pain. Therefore try to restrain your mind and do not give it a loose rein.

⁴⁰ The world is a vast wilderness full of the forests of our well being and sorrow and beset on all sides by the serpents of disease and death. The irrational mind is as the rampant lord of the desert

land and quickly drives us into all sorts of dangers and difficulties.

Valmiki speaking:—

⁴¹ As the sage ended his sermon, the day departed to its end and the sun declined to the west to his evening service. The assembly broke after mutual salutations and met again and greeted each other with the parting night and rising sun.

Chapter 103 — The Changing Mind

Vasishta speaking:—

¹ Some minds are seen to break forth in passion like the torrents of oceans, and to heave and overflow on earth on every side. ² They reduce the great to lowness and exalt the low to greatness. They make strangers of their friends and friends of strangers.

³ The mind by its thought makes a mountain of a particle, then thinks itself a lord with its little trifle.

⁴ The mind, elated by prosperity received by the will of God, spreads a large establishment for a while, then in a moment is reduced to poverty at its loss. ⁵ Whatever things are seen in this world as stationary or changing are all only accidents according to the perspective in which they are seen, just as a passing vessel is thought stationary by its passenger, but as moving by spectators on the shore.

⁶ The mind is so changing by the influence of time, place, power and nature of acts and things that it continually shuffles from one feeling to another, like an actor impersonating his many roles on the stage. ⁷ The mind takes the truth for untruth and its reverse for certainty, so it takes one thing for another and its joy and grief are all of its own making. ⁸ The fickle mind gets everything according to its own doing, and it regulates all the actions of our hands, feet and other members of the body.

⁹ Hence it is the mind that reaps the rewards of good or evil according to its past acts, just like the tree bears its fruit according to how it is pruned and watered.

¹⁰ As a child makes a variety of toy dolls from clay, so the mind is the maker of all its good and bad according to the merit or demerit of its past actions. ¹¹ Therefore the mind that is situated in the earthen dolls of human bodies can do nothing of its own will unless it is so destined by virtue of its former acts.

¹² As the seasons cause changes in trees, so the mind makes differences in the dispositions of living beings. ¹³ The mind indulges in its sport of deeming an inch a mile, and vice-versa of thinking something long as short, like the operations of our dreams and fancy. ¹⁴ A kalpa age is shortened to a moment and a moment is stretched into a kalpa by the different modes of the mind that regulate both the duration of time and the distance between places. ¹⁵ The perceptions of the quickness and slowness of motion, and of much or little in quantity, and also of swiftness or slowness of time, belong to the mind and not to the dull material body. ¹⁶ The feelings of sickness and error, sorrow and danger, and the passing of time and distance of place all rise in the mind like the leaves and branches of trees.

¹⁷ The mind is the cause of all its feelings, just as water is the cause of the sea and heat of fire. Hence the mind is the source of all things. It is intimately connected with whatever exists in the world. ¹⁸ The thoughts that we have of agent, effect and instrument of things, and also of the viewer, view and the instrumentality of sight, all belong to the mind. ¹⁹ The mind alone is perceived to be in existence in the world, and its representations of forests and all other things are but variations of itself!

So the thinking man sees only the substance of gold, and all its various forms of bangles and bracelets are taken for nothing.

Chapter 104 — A Magician, a Horse & a Stunned King Lavana

¹ Vasishta said:—

Rama, hear me relate a very pretty story about the world as an enchanted city stretched out by magic of the magician Mind.

² There lies on the surface of this earth a large and populous tract of land by name of Northern Pandava, a country full of forests of various kinds.³ The forests were deep and dense, and a number of holy hermits live in the fastness of these woods. Vidyadhara maidens had constructed many dwellings of swinging vines.⁴ The breeze blew up heaps of red dust from full blown lotuses, rising as high as crimson hills on the ground decorated with wreaths and garlands from loads of flowers fallen from surrounding trees.⁵ Groves of karanja plants were decorated with bundles of blossoms to the farthest boundaries of the jungle, and the sky resounded with the rustling noise of leafy date trees in the surrounding villages.⁶ There was a range of tawny rocks on one side, and fields brown with ripened grain on another; while the warbling of cerulean doves echoed in the resonant groves.

⁷ The shrill cry of the stork sounded in the forest, and the branches of spice and patali flowers hang down like earrings on the hills.⁸ Flocks of various birds made a chorus with their cries, and blooming crimson blossoms of paribhadra trees hung over the banks all along the length of running streams.⁹ Maidens in the cornfields were exciting the passion of love with their singing. Breezes blowing amidst forests of fruits and flowers dropped down the blossoms in copious showers.

¹⁰ Birds, spiritual masters and seers were sitting and singing outside their homes made in mountain caves, making the valley symphonious with their celestial strains of holy hymns.¹¹ Kinnara and gandharva choruses were singing under their bowers of plantain trees, and the grayish and gay groves of flowers were filled with the hum of the whistling breeze.

¹² The lord of this romantic country was the virtuous Lavana, a descendant of King Harish Chandra, and as glorious as his sire the sun upon earth.¹³ His fair fame formed a white diadem to crown his head and adorn his shoulders with its brightness. It whitened the hills in the form of so many Shivas smeared with white ash upon his tufted head and person.¹⁴ His sword had made an end of all his enemies who trembled as in a fit of fever on hearing his noble name.¹⁵ His greatest effort was devoted to support respectable men, and his name was uttered like that of Hari (Vishnu) by all his people.¹⁶ The apsara fairies sitting in the celestial seats of the gods on the tops of the Himalayan mountains gleefully sang songs of his praise.¹⁷ The lord of the skies heard the songs of the heavenly maids, and the aerial swans and cranes of Brahma responded to the praises with their gabbling cries.

¹⁸ His uncommonly magnanimous and wonderful acts, free from the fault of being stingy, were unlike anything that was ever heard or seen by anybody.¹⁹ His nature knew no guile and he was a perfect stranger to pride and arrogance. He kept himself steadfast to his magnanimity, as Brahma held himself fast to his rudraksha beads.

²⁰ He used to take his seat in the royal throne amidst his courtiers, as the lord of the day occupies his seat in the sky for the eight watches of the day.²¹ After he was seated there as happily as the moon in the sky, his chieftains and legions appeared before the throne with their salutations.²² Then, as the royal party was seated in the court hall, beautiful singers began to sing and ravish the hearts of

listeners with the music of lutes.²³ Then a set of handsome maids waved the beautiful fans that they held in their hands over the body of the king. Ministers and counselors, as wise as the teachers of the gods and demons (Brihaspati and Shukra), took their seats beside him.²⁴ Ministers engaged in the public affairs pending before them, and capable officers reported to the king on the conditions of the county.²⁵ There were learned pundits reciting holy legends from their books, and courteous eulogists chanting their sacred praises on one side.

²⁶ At this time a magician appeared before the court in his fantastic attire. He boasted and blustered like a roaring cloud threatening to flood the earth with showers of rain.²⁷ He bowed down to the ruler of the earth, and lowly bent his capped head and neck before the court, like a tree hangs down its loads of fruit at the foot of a mountain.²⁸ He approached the king like a monkey advances to a shady and lofty tree loaded with fruit and flowers.

²⁹ Then the cunning trickster conveyed the fragrance of his sense with the breath of his mouth. He addressed the lofty headed king with his sweet voice, as the humble bee hums to the lotus.³⁰ “Allow, O lord who sits on the earthly throne like the moon enthroned on high, to mark one wonderful feat of my art, known as the trick of Kharolikika.”³¹ Saying so, he began to twirl his magic staff set with peacock feathers, which began to display many wonders like the wonderful works of creation.³² The king saw it describing a bright circle emitting particles of its rays around. He saw it like God Indra sees his variegated rainbow sparkling afar in the sky.

³³ As this time a chieftain of Sindh entered the court, like a cloud appears in the starry heaven.³⁴ He was followed by his swift and beautiful war-horse, just like Uchchaihshravas, the seven-headed horse of Indra, follows his master in the celestial regions.³⁵ The chieftain brought the horse before the king and said, “My lord, this horse is a match for Uchchaihshravas who was produced from the Milky Ocean and flies with the swiftness of the mind.³⁶ This horse of mine, O king of the earth, is the best of his kind and an equal of Uchchaihshravas. He is a personification of the wind in the swiftness of his flight.³⁷ My master has made a present of this horse to you, my lord, because the best of things is a suitable present to the best of men.”

³⁸ After the chief ended his speech, the magician spoke in a voice as sweet as that of the swallow after the roaring of clouds is hushed to silence.³⁹ “My lord, ride upon this horse and wander at your pleasure with full luster on earth, as the sun shines forth in splendor by revolving round the heavens.”

⁴⁰ Hearing this, the king looked at the horse and, in a voice like that of a peacock answering a roaring cloud, ordered the horse to be brought before him.⁴¹ The king saw the horse like a figure drawn in painting, and gazed upon him with fixed eyes and without closing his eyelids, as if the king himself had been turned into a painting.

⁴² Having looked upon the horse for a long time, he mounted on his back and sat still with his closed eyelids, as sage Agastya was confounded at the sight of the sea and its rocks.⁴³ He continued for a couple of hours as if he was drowned in his meditation, and as unconscious saints remain in the enjoyment of their internal and spiritual samadhi.⁴⁴ He remained spellbound and overpowered by his own might. None could rouse the king roused from his stupefaction. He remained absorbed in some thoughts of his own mind.⁴⁵ Flapping fans ceased to wave about his body and the holders of the fans

remained as still as moonbeams at night.⁴⁶ Courtiers remained motionless at seeing his stillness, as when the filaments of the lotus remain unmoved when smeared in the mud.⁴⁷ The noise of people in the courtyard became hushed and quiet, like the roaring of the clouds stops at the end of the rains.

⁴⁸ Ministers were drowned in their thoughtfulness and questions at the state of their king, just like the host of gods were filled with anxiety on seeing the club-bearing Vishnu fighting with the demons.

⁴⁹ People were struck with terror and dismay at seeing this paralysis of their king who remained with his eyes closed, like closed lotuses shorn of their beauty.

Chapter 105 — The Magic Spell on King Lavana Is Broken

¹ Vasishta continued:—

After a couple of hours the king returned to his senses, like the lotus flower resuming its beauty after the mists of the rainy weather are over.² He shook his body decorated with ornaments upon his saddle, like a mountain shakes with its peaks and woods at an earthquake.³ His seat also shook under him as he came to his senses and moved his body, just like the seat of Shiva on Kailash Mountain is shaken by the movement of the world-supporting elephant.

⁴ As he was about to fall down from the horse, he was held up by the arms of his attendants, like Mount Meru is kept from falling by the hills at its feet and sides.⁵ Attendants bore the king in the deranged state of his mind, like the still waters of the sea bear the figure of the moon that is disturbed by the waves.

⁶ The king softly asked them, “Where am I and whose court is this?” He was like a bee shut up in the flower cup of the lotus and about to sink in the water saying, “Ah! Where am I, and where am I going?”⁷ The courtiers, with a voice as sweet as the lotus uttering to the sun when he is eclipsed by Rahu, respectfully asked the king what was the matter with him.⁸ The attendants and all the ministerial officers asked him what had happened, like the gods, terrified at the great flood, asked sage Markandeya about what had happened.

⁹ “Lord, we were greatly dismayed,” said they, “upon seeing you in that plight, because the stoutest hearts are broken by accidents proceeding from unknown causes.¹⁰ What were those pleasant objects of your desire that had so bewitched your mind? You know that all objects that appear pleasant for the present prove to be bitter at the end.¹¹ How could your clear understanding, which has been pacified by the grand doctrines and precepts of the wise, fall in to the false fascinations of the foolish?¹² The minds of fools are fascinated by the trivial and cheap trifles of common people, but they are of no value to the high minded as one like yourself.”

¹³ “Those who are elated by the pride of their bodies have their minds always excited by uncontrollable passions that take their lead through life.¹⁴ Your mind is elevated above common things. It is calm and quiet, enlightened by truth, and filled with excellent qualities. Yet it is strange to find it out of its wits.¹⁵ The mind unpracticed to reasoning is led away by the currents of time and place, but the noble-minded are not subject to the influence of incantations and enchanting spells.¹⁶ It is impossible for the reasoning mind to be weakened or deranged. A high mind, like towering Mount Meru, is not to be shaken by the boisterous winds.”

¹⁷ Thus consoled by his companions, the king’s face resumed its color, as the face of the full moon collects its brightness in the bright fortnight of the month.¹⁸ The moonlike face of the king was brightened by his full open eyes, as the spring season is beautified by blooming blossoms after the winter frost has passed away.¹⁹ The king’s face shone forth with astonishment, and it was mixed with fear, upon remembering the charm of the magician, just like the moon shines pale in the sky after her deliverance from the shadow of an eclipse.

²⁰ He saw the magician and said to him with a smile, as the serpent Takshaka addresses his enemy, the weasel.²¹ “You trickster,” said the king. “What was this snare that you used to trap me? How did you

disturb my tranquil soul by your wily trick, like a gale disturbs the calm of the sea?"

²² "How wonderful are the captivating powers of spells derived from the Lord, whose influence had overpowered the strongest sense of my mind. ²³ What are these bodies of men that are subject to death and disease, and what are our minds that are so susceptible of errors and lead us to continued dangers? ²⁴ The mind residing in the body may be filled with the highest knowledge, yet the minds of the wisest of men are liable to errors and illusion."

²⁵ "Hear ye courtiers the wonderful tale of the adventures that I experienced under this sorcery from the moment I first met this magician. ²⁶ I have seen as many passing scenes in one single moment under this wizard, as had been shown of old by Brahma in his destruction of the divine sorcery of Indra."

²⁷ Having said so, the king smiled and began to relate to his courtiers the strange wonders that he had seen in his state of hallucination.

²⁸ The king said:—

I saw a region full of objects of various kinds, such as rivers, lakes, cities and mountains, with many boundary hills, and the ocean surrounding the earth.

Chapter 106 — King Lavana Marries a Tribal Maiden

¹ The king related:—

My own land abounding in forests and rivulets appeared like a miniature of this planet earth.² This land of which I am king and where I am now sitting in my royal assembly hall, amidst my courtiers and all these citizens, appeared like the paradise of Indra.

³ That sorcerer appeared here from a distant country, like a demon rising from the infernal region to the surface of the ground.⁴ He whirled his magic wand emitting its radiance around, like the tempest rends and scatters the rainbow of Indra in fragments in the air.⁵ I was looking intently at the whirling wand and the horse standing before me, then mounted on the back of the steed in the dizziness of my mind.

⁶ I sat on the back of this unmoving horse and seemed to ride on a fleet horse with the swiftness of pushkara and avartaka clouds riding over the tops of immovable rocks.⁷ Then I went on a chase at full speed, passing over an ownerless desert, howling like the surges of the boundless ocean.⁸ The horse bore me through the air as if we were blown by the winds. We dashed onward like common people who are carried afar by the currents of the unsatisfied desires of their minds.

⁹ Then being fatigued with my journey, and moving slowly on my wearied horse, I reached the edge of a desert which was as vacant as the mind of a pauper, and as empty as the heart of a woman.¹⁰ It was like the wilderness of the world burned down by a conflagration, without even a bird flying over it. It was like a waste of sandy frost without a tree or any water in it.¹¹ In its extent, it appeared like another sky or like the eighth ocean of the world. It was like a sea on earth with its bed entirely dried up.¹² It was as expanded as the mind of a wise man, and as furious as the rage of the ignorant. There was no trace of human feet and no track with any grass or herb in it.

¹³ My mind was bewildered in this boundless desert, like that of a woman fallen into adversity and having no friend, food or fruit for her support.¹⁴ The face of the sky was washed by waters appearing in the mirage of the sandy desert. I traveled panting in that dreary spot until it was sunset.

¹⁵ It was with great pain and sorrow that I crossed that vast desert, like a wise man who crosses this world, all hollow and void within.¹⁶ After passing this desert and as the sun was setting, I reached a thick forest, tired with traversing through the hollow sphere of heaven.¹⁷ Here birds were warbling amidst jamb and kadamba trees. They were the only friends that weary travelers could meet in their weary and lonely journey.¹⁸ Here detached plots of long grass were seen waving their tops, like covetous men nodding their heads on finding some riches to their heart's content.¹⁹ This shady forest afforded me a little joy after my pains in the dry and dreary desert, just like a lingering disease seems more desirable to men than the pains attending death.

²⁰ I got under the shade of a jambira tree and felt myself as pleased, as when sage Markandeya got to the top of the mountain during the great deluge.²¹ I took shelter under the vines descending from its branches, just as the scorching top of a mountain finds temporary shade under a dark cloud.²² As I was holding the hanging roots in my hand, the horse slid away from underneath me, like the sins of a man glide under him who puts his trust in the sacred Ganges River.²³ Fatigued with my travel that

long day through the dreary waste, I took refuge under this tree like a traveler rests under the shelter of a kalpa tree at the setting of the sun.²⁴ All this business of the world was stopped as the sun went down to rest in the western hills

²⁵ As the shade of night spread over the bosom of the universe, the entire forest below took itself to its nightly rest and silence.²⁶ I rested in the grassy hollow of a branch of that tree, my head on a mossy bed like a bird in its nest.²⁷ I remained there as unconscious as one bitten by a snake, and like a dead body that has lost its past memories. I was as impotent as a sold slave and as helpless as one fallen in a dark pit.²⁸ That one night I passed in my senselessness seemed like a long kalpa aeon. I thought I was buffeting in waves like sage Markandeya at the great deluge.²⁹ I passed the night under a train of dangers and difficulties that invaded me as in the state of dreaming. I had no thought about bathing or eating or worshipping my Maker.³⁰ I passed the night in restlessness and disquiet, shaking like the branch of a tree. This single night of trouble was as long as it was tedious to me.

³¹ A melancholy spread over my face, as darkness veils the face of the night. My waking eyes kept watching for the day, like the watchful eyes of blue lotuses expect the rising moon.³² The demonic noise of wild beasts hushed in the forest at the end of the night. I began to shiver from the cold, my teeth clattering.³³ Then I saw the east red with the flush of intoxication, as if it was laughing at seeing me drown in my difficulties.³⁴ I saw the sun advancing towards the earth, mounted on his Airavata, the regent elephant of that quarter. He seemed as full of glee as an ignorant man has in his folly, and as a poor man in obtaining a treasure.

³⁵ I got up from my mossy bed and shook off my bed cloth, like Shiva tossing off his elephant hide during his giddy evening dance.³⁶ Then I began to wander in the wide forest, just as God Rudra (Shiva) roves about the wide world after its desolation by his demons at the end of kalpas.³⁷ There was no animal of any kind to be seen in the desolate desert, just as the good qualities of good breeding are never found in the illiterate.³⁸ I saw only lively birds, perched and chirping all about the woods without intermission.

³⁹ It was midday, when the sun had run his eighth hour and plants had dried up the dew of their morning baths,⁴⁰ when I saw a maiden carrying some food and a drinking bowl of water, just as Hari (Vishnu) in his disguise in the shape of Madhavi bore the poisonous liquor to the demons.⁴¹ She was of a swarthy complexion and dressed in dark black clothing. When I advanced towards her like the bright moon appears towards the black and dark night, she looked at me suspiciously.

⁴² I asked her to give me some of her food in my great distress, because, I told her, one is enriched by relieving the distress of the needy.⁴³ "O good maid," I said, "increasing hunger is consuming my stomach and I would take any food, even as the female serpent in extreme hunger devours her own young."⁴⁴ I begged of her and yet she gave me nothing, but remained as unmoved as the goddess of fortune who declines to favor the wretched however much they implore her aid.⁴⁵ For a long time I kept following her closely from one wood to another, moving behind her in the afternoon and clinging to her like her own shadow.

⁴⁶ Then she turned to me and said, "Know me to be a tribal (*chandala*, an outcaste) girl bearing the name of Harakeyuri. We are as cruel as rakshasa demons. We feed on human flesh and the meat of

horses and elephants.⁴⁷ O king, you cannot get your food simply by begging me for it, as it is hard to have the favor of men without first meeting their own desires.”

⁴⁸ Saying so, she continued moving with quick light steps at every move, then entered a grove of trees on the wayside. Then she spoke merrily to me saying,⁴⁹ “Well, I will give you some of this food if you will agree to be my husband, because base and common people do not do good to others before securing their own good.⁵⁰ My tribal father is here plowing in the field with his sturdy yoke of bulls. With his haggard, hungry and dusky stature, he looks like a demon standing in the cemetery.⁵¹ This food is for him. I may give it to you if you agree to marry me, because the husband deserves to be served even at the peril of one’s life.”

⁵² To this I replied, “I agree to take you to my wife, for what fool would adhere to his family customs when his life is in danger?”⁵³ Then she then gave me half of the food she had with her, as Madhavi parted with half of her ambrosia to the hungry Indra of old.⁵⁴ I ate the tribal’s food and drank the beverage of jambu fruits that she gave me. Then I rested at that place and fell into a sleep caused by my fatigue and long walking.

⁵⁵ Then she approached me like a black cloud approaches the sun. She held me in her arms and led me onward with her guiding hand as fondly as her second self.⁵⁶ She took me to her father, a fat and ugly fellow of repulsive appearance, like the tormenting agony of death leads a person to the hideous cell of the devil.⁵⁷ My companion whispered the news of our situation to his ears, like a black bee hums her tale softly to the ear of an elephant.⁵⁸ “This man,” she said, “is to be my husband, if you, my father, will give your consent.”

To this he expressed his approval by saying, “*Vadham*. Be it so by the end of this day.”⁵⁹ He loosened the bulls from their yoke, as the lord of death releases his hell hounds. It was dusk when the sky was hidden by evening mist and the dust rising as the herds return, and we were dismissed from the demons’ presence to make our own way.

⁶⁰ We passed the great jungle in a short time and reached the tribal’s house in the evening, just like demons pass through a cemetery to rest in their funeral vaults at night.⁶¹ One side of the house had slaughtered monkeys, cocks and crows, swarms of flies flying over them and sucking the blood sprinkled over the ground.⁶² Moist entrails and arteries of slaughtered beasts were hung up to be dried in the sun and chased by ravenous birds hovering over them. Flocks of birds fluttered over jambira trees.⁶³ Heaps of fat were laid up to be dried in the portico, ravenous birds flying over them. The skins of slain animals smeared with blood lay in piles.⁶⁴ Little children had bits of flesh in their hands beset by buzzing flies, and older tribals sat and rebuked the children.

⁶⁵ Then we entered the house scattered with disgusting entrails and intestines. I thought I was like the ghost of a dead man standing beside the lord of death.⁶⁶ I was offered a seat of a big plantain leaf, given with due respect so that I might be seated as a welcome guest in the abominable abode of my newly earned father-in-law.⁶⁷ My squint eyed mother-in-law then eyed me with her blood-red eyeballs, and muttered with gladness in her look, “Is this our would be son-in-law?”

⁶⁸ Afterwards we sat on some seats made of skin and I partook of the meal served to me as reward for my sins.⁶⁹ I heard many of those endearing words that are the seeds of endless misery, and many

speeches that were unpleasant to my mind because they were of no benefit to me.

⁷⁰ One day afterwards, when the sky was cloudless and the stars were shining, it came to pass that they presented a dowry of cloths and other articles before me. ⁷¹ With these they gave that frightful maiden to me and we were joined together as black and white, and as sin and its torment together. ⁷² The flesh-eating tribals celebrated the marriage ceremony with a profusion of wine and loud shouts of joy. They beat their noisy drums with merriment, as wicked men delight in carrying on the acts of their vileness.

Chapter 107 — Life among the Tribals

¹ The king continued:—

What more shall I say of those festivities that had quite subdued my soul? From then on, my fellows called me Pushta-Pukkusha or cherished tribal.² After a week long celebration, and after I had spent a full eight months at that place, my wife discharged blood and then her child also.³ She delivered a daughter which is the cause of sorrow as danger is the spring of disasters. This daughter grew up as quickly as the cares and sorrows of the ignorant.⁴ In another three years she again brought forth, this time a black boy, just like the fruit of folly raises false expectations of fruition.⁵ She gave birth to another daughter, then another boy, and thus I became an old tribal with a large family in that forest land.

⁶ In this manner many years passed in that place with these shoots of my sorrow, like one who murders a brahmin has to pass long years of torment in hellfire.⁷ I had to undergo all the pains of heat and cold and chill winds and frost without any help in that dreary forest, like an old tortoise is constrained to move about in the mud of a pool forever.⁸ Being burdened with the cares of my family and troubled by anxieties of my mind, I saw my increasing afflictions like a fire burning all around me.

⁹ Clad in bark and wrapped in old and ragged cloths, with a covering of grass and a straw hat on my head, I bore loads of logs from the woods, like we bear the burden of sins on our backs and heads.¹⁰ I had to pass many a long year under the shade of dhavali trees with no other cloth or covering on me than an old tattered, dirty and stinking *kaupina* loincloth beset by flees and leeches.¹¹ I was exposed to chill cold winds during all my toils to support my family. I lay like a frog in some cave in the woods under the sharp blasts of winter.

¹² The many quarrels, bickering, sorrows and wailings to which I was often exposed at home and abroad made my blood gush out in tears from my weeping eyes.¹³ We passed nights on marshy grounds in the jungle, and being drenched by raining clouds, we took shelter in mountain caves with no food other than the roasted flesh of bears.

¹⁴ After the rainy season of sowing was over and the dark drizzling clouds dispersed, I was driven from my house by the unkindness of my relations and continued quarrelling with others.¹⁵ Being thus in dread of everybody in the neighborhood, I moved to the house of another man where I lived with my wife and prattling children for some years.¹⁶ Then vexed by the scolding of the quarrelsome tribal woman and the threats of the villainous tribals, my face became as pale as the waning moon under the shadow of Rahu.¹⁷ My wife bit and scratched me as if a tigress had torn and gnawed upon my flesh and muscles. I was like a slave caught and sold to a hellish fiend. I thought that I had become changed into an infernal being.

¹⁸ I suffered under the torrents of snow thrown out of the caves of the Himalayas. I was exposed to showers of frost that fell continually in the dewy season.¹⁹ I felt the iron shafts of rain on my naked body, like arrows fired from the bow of death. In my sickly and decrepit old age, I had to live upon the roots of withered vegetables.²⁰ I dug them out plentifully from the woodland grounds and ate them with a zest, like a fortunate man has tasting his dainty dishes of well cooked meat.²¹ I took my food

apart and untouched by anybody for fear of being polluted by the touch of a vile and base born family, and because the pungency of my unsavory diet made my mouth scowl at every morsel.

²² While I was famishing in this manner, I saw others eating animal flesh and sheep's flesh bought from other places, and who pampered their bodies with the flesh they cut out from other living animals and devoured raw with great zest. ²³ They bought animal flesh sold in iron pots and stuck in spits, earning rebirths into as many thousand bodies as they have killed and fed upon. ²⁴ I often went with my spade and basket in the cool of the evening to the tribals' gardens in order to collect the raw flesh that had been cast in the dirt for my food of them.

²⁵ But when I was about to be cast into hell, time seemed to turn favorable by leading me to take refuge in mountain caves to seek my food there from the roots and plants growing there. ²⁶ In this state and by my good luck, I met some tribals driving away village dogs with their clubs. ²⁷ They gave my wife and children some bad rice like the villagers used to take, and we passed the night under the shade of a palm tree whose withered leaves rattled with the raindrops that fell in showers upon them.

²⁸ We passed the night in company with these woodland apes, our teeth clattering with cold and the hairs of our bodies standing on their ends from the cold like a thousand thorns. ²⁹ Raindrops decorated our bodies like granules of vivid pearls. From our hunger and lack of food, our bellies were as lean and lank as an empty cloud.

³⁰ Then my wife and I began to quarrel in this dreadful forest. We kept shouting at each another with our clattering teeth and eyes ruddy from the cold. ³¹ My foul and dirty body resembled that of a dark black demon, and we roved about the borders of rivers and brooks to fish with a rod and hook in my hand. ³² I also wandered with a trap in my hand, like Yama with his noose at the desolation of the earth, and caught, killed and drank the heart blood of deer in my hunger and thirst. ³³ I sucked the warm heart blood like milk from my mother's breast. Smeared in blood, I stood like a blood sucking demon in the cemetery. ³⁴ The vetalas of the woods fled before me, as they do from the furies of the forests.

I set my snares and nets in the woods for catching deer and birds of the air. ³⁵ As people spread the nets of their wives and children, only to be entangled in them in the false hope of happiness, so did I spread my net of thread to beguile the birds to their destruction. ³⁶ Though worried and worn out in the nets of worldly cares and surrounded on every side by the miseries of our vicious lives, yet our minds still take delight in cruel and foul acts (to the injury of others).

³⁷ Our wishes are stretched as far and wide as a running river overflows its banks in the rainy season. But the objects of our desires fly far away from us, like snakes through their own wisdom hide themselves from the snake-eating weasel. ³⁸ We have cast kindness off from our hearts, like the snake leaves off his skin, and take delight letting the hissing arrows of our malice fly, just as a thunderstorm falls on all animals. ³⁹ Men delight at the sight of cooling clouds at the end of the hot season, but they avoid at a distance the rough briny shore spreading wide before them.

⁴⁰ I underwent many difficulties that multiplied as thickly upon me as weeds growing in valleys. During my destined time, I moved about all corners of that hellish spot. ⁴¹ I have sown the seeds of sin under the rainwater of my ignorance to grow speedily as thorns on my way. I have laid hidden snares

for the unwary innocent to bind myself in the mountain caves.⁴² I have caught and killed innocent deer in traps to feed upon its flesh. I have killed the fly-whisk cow to lay my head on the hair hanging down their necks.⁴³ I slept unconscious of myself in my ignorance, as Vishnu lay on his huge hydra. I laid with my outstretched legs and limbs in the brown cell, resounding to the yell of wild beasts outside.⁴⁴ I also laid my body on the frost of a cave in the marshy ground of Vindhya, and wrapped my swarthy form in a tattered quilt full of fleas and hanging down my neck.⁴⁵ I bore it on my back, as a bear carries the long bristles upon him even in the hot season. I suffered the heat of wildfires that burned many wild animals that perished in groups like in the last conflagration of the world.

⁴⁶ My wife bore her young ones, both for our pleasure as well as pain, like a glutton's food serves both his gratification and sickness, and like the influence of planets is for both our good and evil.

⁴⁷ Thus I, the only son of a king, had to pass sixty painful years of my life as so many kalpa ages of long duration.

⁴⁸ I raved sometimes in my rage, and wept at others in my bitter grief. I lived on coarse meals and dwelt, alas, in the houses of vulgar tribals. Thus I passed so many years of my misery at that place, as one fastened to the chains of his insatiable desires is doomed to toil and moil for nothing until his death.

Chapter 108 — King Lavana's Description of Drought & Wildfire

¹ The king continued to say:—

Time passed away. Old age overtook me and turned my beard to blades of grass covered with white frost.² My days passed away in alternate joy and grief brought on by my fate and acts, just like a river flows with green and dried leaves scattered on it by the wind.³ Every moment I suffered quarrels and arguments, misfortunes and bad luck. They beset me as thick and as fast as the arrows of sorrow flying in battle.⁴ My foolish mind kept fluttering like a bird in the maze of my wishes and fancies. My heart was disturbed by passions, like the sea by its raging waves.⁵ My soul was revolving on the vehicle of my wandering thoughts. I was carried away by them like floating straw to the whirlpool of the eventful ocean of time.⁶ I, who moved about like a worm in the woodlands of Vindhya for my simple support, felt in the passing of years to be weakened and pulled down in my frame like a two-legged beast of burden.⁷ In that state of my wretchedness, I forgot my royalty like a dead man and became convinced that I was a tribal bound to that hilly spot like a wingless bird.

⁸ The world appeared to me like the final desolation, a forest consumed by fire. It seemed like the seashore lashed by huge waves, or a withered tree struck by lightning.⁹ The marshy ground at the foot of Vindhya was all dried up and left no grain, vegetable or water for food or drink. The whole group of tribals was about to die in dearth and dryness.¹⁰ Clouds ceased to rain and disappeared from sight. Winds blew with sparks of fire in them.¹¹ Forest trees were bare and leafless and withered leaves were strewn over the ground. Wildfires were raging here and there, and the woodlands became as desolate as the homes of austere ascetics.¹² There followed a severe famine and a furious wildfire spread all around. It burnt down the whole forest and reduced grass and gravel to ashes.

¹³ People had ash all over their bodies and were starving for want of food and drink. The land was without any article of food or even grass or water. It had turned into a dreary desert.¹⁴ The mirage of the desert glistened like water and deluded dry buffaloes to roll in it. There was no current of breeze to cool the desert air.¹⁵ Only calls and cries for water came to the ears of men who were parched under the burning rays of the torrid sun.¹⁶ The hungry mob, hurrying to browse upon branches and herbs, yielded their lives in those acts, while others sharpened their teeth tearing and devouring one another.¹⁷ Some ran to bite the gum of catechu, thinking it to be a bit of flesh. Others swallowed stones as if they were cakes lying on the ground before them.¹⁸ The ground was sprinkled with blood from men biting and tearing each other, like blood profusely spilled when a lion kills a big and starving elephant.¹⁹ Every one was as ferocious as a lion in his attempt to devour another as his prey. Men fought each other like wrestlers in a contest.

²⁰ Trees were leafless and hot winds blew like firebrands on all sides. Wild cats licked human blood spilled on the rocky ground.²¹ The wildfires' flames rose high in the air with clouds of smoke whirling with the howling winds of the forest. It growled aloud everywhere and filled the forestland with heaps of brown cinders and burning firebrands.²² Huge serpents were burnt in their caves, and the fumes rising from these burning bodies served to grow poisonous plants while the flame stretching aloft with the winds gave the sky an appearance of the glory of the setting sun.

²³ Strong, howling winds raised heaps of ashes like dust that stood like domes in the sky unsupported

by pillars. Little children stood by their weeping parents, crying for fear of them.²⁴ There were some men who tore a dead body with their teeth and, in their great haste to devour the flesh, bit their own hands and fingers that were covered with their own blood.²⁵ Vultures flying in the air darted upon the smoke, thinking it a turret of trees, and pounced upon the firebrands, taking them for bits of raw flesh.²⁶ Men biting and tearing one another were flying in all directions when the splitting of burning wood hit their breasts and bellies and made them gory with blood gushing out of them.²⁷ Winds were howling in hollow caves and the flames of the wildfire flashed with fury. Snakes were hissing for fear of these, and the burned woods were falling down with hideous noise.

²⁸ Thus beset by dangers and horrors, with no shelter other than the rugged hollows of rocks, this place presented a picture of this world with its encompassing flames burning like the twelve zodiacal suns on high.²⁹ Winds blowing hot in the burning woods and rocks dried up everything. The heat of the fire below and the sun above, together with the domestic disasters caused by influence of the planet Saturn, made this place a counterpart of this sorrowful world.

Chapter 109 — Migration of the Tribals; Mind Creates All

¹ The king continued:—

As the displeasure of destiny continued these disasters to rage in this place, prematurely overtaking the forest and people with the disasters of the last dissolution,² some of these men with their wives and children went out from that place in search of some new places to live in foreign lands; like clouds disperse and disappear from the sky after the rainy season is over.³ Wives, children and close relatives accompanied them, clinging like the members of their bodies, but the lean and infirm were left behind like branches broken from trees.

⁴ Some of these emigrants were devoured by tigers as they went out of their houses, like hatchling birds are caught by falcons as they come out of their nests.⁵ Some entered into the fire like moths to put an end to their miserable lives. Others fell into pits, like fragments of rocks falling from the hills.

⁶ I separated from the connections of my father-in-law and others and depending upon myself, I escaped narrowly from that distressed country with my wife and children.⁷ We passed pitfalls, storms, wild beasts and snakes without any harm. We came out of that forest safe from all the deadly perils along the way.⁸ Arriving at the edge of that forest, we got under the shade of some palm trees where I let my children down from my shoulders as burdens of my sin and sorrows.⁹ I halted here after my tiring journey and lengthened troubles, like one who had fled from the confines of hell. I took my rest like the withering lotus from the scorching sunbeams and heat of summer.¹⁰ My tribal wife also slept under the same tree, and my two children lay fast asleep in each other's embrace under the cooling shade.

¹¹ Afterwards my younger son, Prach'chhaka, who was as dear to us as he was the less intelligent, rose up and stood before me.¹² He said with a depressed spirit and tears gushing out of his eyes, "Father give me soon some meat-food and drink or else I die."¹³ The little boy repeatedly made the same request, saying with tears in his eyes that he was dying of hunger.¹⁴ I told him that I had no meat and the more I said so, the more he repeated his foolish craving, which could neither be supplied with nor put down to silence.

¹⁵ I was then moved by paternal affection and affliction of my heart to tell him, "Child, cut off a slice of my flesh, and roast and eat it."

¹⁶ He agreed to it, and said, "Give it then." His hunger was so pressing and his vitality was so exhausted that he could not decline to crave my flesh for his food.¹⁷ Being then overpowered by affection and compassion, I thought of putting an end to all my grief with my life which had become so intolerable to me at his extreme distress.¹⁸ Being unable to endure the pain of my affection, I despaired of my own life and resolved to resort to death as my only friend at this last extreme.

¹⁹ I collected some wood and heaped them together for my funeral pile. Having put it on fire, I saw it blazing as I wished.²⁰ As I was hurrying to throw myself on this burning pile, I suddenly was roused from my reverie by the sound of music proceeding from this palace, hailing me as king and shouting "jaya!" for my victory.

²¹ I understood this conjurer had wrought this enchantment on me and put me to all these imaginable

troubles for so long a period.²² Like the ignorant, I was subject to a hundred changes of fortune.

Vasishta speaking:—

As the great and mighty King Lavana was describing his fluctuations of fortune,²³ the sorcerer suddenly disappeared from sight. The courtiers looked around with staring eyes, then addressed the king saying,²⁴ “Our loyal lord, this man was no sorcerer with his own mercenary views. It was divine magic shown to our lord to demonstrate the lot of humanity and the state of the world.”

²⁵ “Evidently this world is a creation of the mind and the imaginary world is only a display of the infinite power of the Almighty.²⁶ These hundreds of worldly systems display the various powers of omnipotence that delude even the minds of the most wise to believe in the reality of unrealities, as it were by the spell of magic.²⁷ This delusion being so powerful on the minds of wise, it is no wonder that our king would be overpowered when all common minds are laboring under the same error.”

²⁸ “This delusive magic was not spread over the mind by any trick or art of a conjurer who wanted nothing more than his own gain.²⁹ They who love money never go away by themselves without getting something. Therefore we are tossed on the waves of doubt to take him for a sorcerer.”

³⁰ Vasishta said:—

Rama, though I am sitting here at this moment before you and others of this assembly, yet I am quite aware of the truth of this story. It is no fiction like the tale for the boy that I told you before, nor is it any invention or hearsay of mine.

³¹ Thus the mind is enlarged by the various inventions of its imagination, just as a tree is extended by the expansion of its boughs and branches. The extended mind encompasses all things, like an outstretched tree spreads over the ground. The mind’s comprehension of everything and its familiarity with the nature of all things serve to lead it to its state of perfection.

Chapter 110 — Description of the Mind's Play

¹ Vasishta said:—

In the beginning, the subjective Consciousness (*chit*) derived the power of knowing objective phenomena (*chetiyas*) from the Supreme Cause. Then it went on to multiply and diversify the objects of its intelligence and thus fell from the knowledge of the one intelligent Universal Ego to the delusion of particular non-egos without end.² Thus Rama, the faculties of the mind, being deluded by the unrealities of particulars and to their utter error, continue to attribute specialty and differences to the general ones.

³ Mental powers are ever busy multiplying unrealities to infinity, just as ignorant children are prone to create false demons of their fancy only for their terror and trouble.⁴ But reality soon disperses troublesome unrealities, and unsullied understanding drives off the errors of imagination, as sunshine dispels the darkness.

⁵ The mind brings distant objects near it and throws the nearer ones at a distance. It trots and flutters in living beings, like children leaping and jumping in bushes after little birds.⁶ The wistful mind is fearful when there is nothing to fear, like a frightened traveler takes the stump of a tree for a demon standing on his way.⁷ The suspicious mind suspects a friend for a foe, like a drunken sot thinks himself lying on the ground while he is walking along.⁸ The distracted mind sees fiery Saturn in the cooling moon, and nectar being swallowed as poison acts as poison itself.⁹ The building of a castle in the air, however untrue, is taken for truth for the time being. The mind dwelling on hopes is a dreamer in its waking state.

¹⁰ The disease of desire is the delusion of the mind. Therefore it is to be rooted out from the mind at once and with all diligence.¹¹ The minds of men are entangled in the net of greed like poor stags. They are rendered as helpless as beasts of prey in the forest of the world.¹² He who by his reasoning has removed the vain anxieties of his mind has displayed the light of his soul, like that of the unclouded sun to sight.¹³ Therefore know that the mind makes the man, and not his body as some think. The body is dull matter, but the mind is neither a material nor immaterial substance.

¹⁴ Whatever is done with the mind by any man, know Rama, that act is actually done by him. Whatsoever is shunned by the mind, know that is kept out in actuality.¹⁵ The mind alone makes the whole world to the utmost end of the spheres. The mind is the emptiness and the air and earth in its greatness.¹⁶ If the mind does not join a thing with its known properties and qualities, then the sun, planets and stars would appear to be without their light.¹⁷ The mind assumes the properties of knowledge and ignorance, from which it is called a knowing or unknowing thing. But these properties are not to be attributed to the body, for a living body is never known to be wise, or a dead carcass an ignorant person.

¹⁸ The mind becomes sight in its act of seeing and hearing when it hears anything. It is feeling when the skin touches anything and smelling when something touches the nose.¹⁹ It becomes taste connected with the tongue and palate, and takes many other names besides according to its other faculties. Thus the mind is the chief actor on the stage of the living animal body.²⁰ It magnifies the minute and makes the true appear as untrue. It sweetens the bitter and sours the sweet, and turns a foe to a friend and

vice-versa.²¹ In whatever manner the mind represents itself in its various aspects, the same becomes evident to us both in our perceptions and conceptions of them.

²² It was by virtue of such a representation that the dreaming mind of King Harish Chandra took the course of one night for the long period of a dozen years.²³ It was owing to a similar idea of the mind that the whole creation of Brahma appeared to be situated within himself.²⁴ The presentation of a fair prospect before the imagination turns the present pain to pleasure, like a man bound in chains forgets his painful state in the hopes of his release the next morning.

²⁵ The mind, being well fortified and brought under the subjection of reason, brings all the parts of the body and internal passions of the heart under our control. But a loose and ungoverned mind gives a loose rein to go astray, like the loosened thread of a string of pearls scatters the precious grains at random over the ground.²⁶ The mind that preserves its clear sightedness, equanimity and stability in all places and under all conditions retains its even temper and good discernment at all times under the testimony of its consciousness and approbation of its good conscience.²⁷ Oh Rama, you must retain your self-possession at all times, and remain like a unmoved, dumb and dull body, with your mind acquainted with the states of all things, but undisturbed by the fluctuations of the objects that come into your awareness.

²⁸ The mind by its own nature is restless with all its vain thoughts and desires within itself. Man is carried abroad by its currents over hills and deserts and across rivers and seas to far and remote cities and countries.²⁹ The waking mind deems the objects of its desire to be as sweet as honey, and whatever it does not like to be as bitter as gall, even though they may be sweet to taste.³⁰ Some minds with too much self reliance upon themselves and without considering the true nature of things give them different forms and colors according to their own conceptions and opinions, though they are far from truth.

³¹ The mind is a pulsation of the power of Divine Consciousness. It ventilates in breeze and glares in luminous bodies, melts in liquids and hardens in solid substances.³² It vanishes in emptiness and extends in space. It dwells in everything at its pleasure and flies from everywhere at its will.³³ It whitens black and blackens white, and is confined to no place or time but extends through all.³⁴ The mind being absent or settled elsewhere, we do not taste the sweet that we are sucking, swallowing or grinding under our teeth or licking with the tongue.³⁵ What is seen by the mind is seen with the eyes, and what it does not see is never seen by the visual organs, just like things lying in the dark are not perceptible to the sight.

³⁶ The mind is embodied in the physical body accompanied by the organs of sense. But it is the mind that actuates the senses and receives the sensations. The senses are the products of the mind, but the mind is not a production of sensations.³⁷ Those great souls (philosophers) who have investigated the connection between the two quite different substances of body and mind, and those learned men who show us how boy and mind are mutually related, are truly worthy of our veneration.

³⁸ A beautiful woman decorated with flowers in the braids of her hair and looking loosely with her amorous glances is like a log of wood in contact with the body of one whose mind is absent from himself.³⁹ The dispassionate yogi who sits reclined in his abstract meditation in the forest, owing to

the absence of his mind, has no sense of his hands being bitten off by a voracious beast.⁴⁰ The mind of a sage practiced in mental abstraction may with ease be inclined to convert his pleasures to pain and his pains to pleasure.

⁴¹ The mind employed in some other thought and inattentive to the present discourse finds it like a piece of wood cut off by an axe.⁴² A man sitting at home and thinking of standing on the precipice of a mountain, or falling into the hollow cave, shudders at the idea of his imminent danger. So also, one is startled at the prospect of a dreary desert even in his dream and is bewildered to imagine the vast deep under the clouds.⁴³ The mind feels a delight at the sight of a lovely spot in its dream, and at seeing the hills, cities and houses stretching or the clusters of stars shining in the extended plain of the sky.⁴⁴ The restless mind is busy stretching many a hill, valley, cities and houses in our dreams, like waves in the vast ocean of the soul.⁴⁵ As the waters of the sea display themselves in huge surges, billows and waves, so the mind that is in the body displays itself in the various sights exhibited in our dreams.

⁴⁶ As the leaves and branches, flowers and fruits are the products of the shooting seed, so everything that is seen in our waking dreams is the creation of our minds.⁴⁷ As a golden image is no other than gold, so the creatures of our living dreams are nothing but the creations of our fanciful mind.⁴⁸ As a drop or shower of rain, and a foam or froth of the wave, are only different forms of water, so the varieties of phenomena that are sensed are only transformations of the same mind.⁴⁹ These are only the thoughts of our minds seen in our waking dreams, like the various costumes that an actor wears to represent different characters in a play.⁵⁰ As King Lavana believed himself to be a tribal for some time, so we believe ourselves to be so-and-so by the thoughts of our minds.⁵¹ Whatever we think ourselves to be in our consciousness, the same soon comes to pass upon us. Therefore mold the thoughts of your mind in any way you like.

⁵² An embodied being sees many cities, towns, hills and rivers before him, all of which are only visions of waking dreams stretched out by the inner mind.⁵³ One sees a demon in a god and a snake where there is no snake. It is the idea that fosters the thought, as King Lavana fostered the thoughts of his ideal forms.⁵⁴ As the idea of man includes that of a woman, and the idea of father implies that of the son, so the mind includes the wish, and with every person the wish is accompanied by its action.

⁵⁵ It is by its wish that the mind is subject to death to be born again in other bodies. Though the mind is a formless thing of its nature, yet by its constant habit of thinking, it contracts the notion of it being a living substance (*jiva*).⁵⁶ The mind is busy with thoughts of long drawn wishes that cause its repeated births and deaths, and their accompaniments of hopes and fears, and pleasure and pain.

⁵⁷ Pleasure and pain are situated in the mind like oil in sesame seed. These are thickened or thinned like oil under the particular circumstances of life. Prosperity thickens our pleasure and adversity our pain; these are thinned by their reverses again.⁵⁸ Like the greater or lighter pressure of the oil-mill that thickens or thins the oil, so the deeper or lighter attention of the mind aggravates or lightens its sense of pleasure or pain.⁵⁹ As our wishes are directed by the particular circumstances of time and place, so the measurements of time and place are made according to the intensity or laxity of our thoughts.

⁶⁰ It is the mind that is satisfied and delighted at the fulfillment of our wishes, and not the body which is unconscious of its enjoyments. ⁶¹ The mind is delighted with its imaginary desires within the body, like a secluded woman takes delight in the harem. ⁶² He who does not give indulgence to levities and fickleness in his heart is sure to subdue his mind, as one binds an elephant by its chain to the post.

⁶³ He whose mind does not wave back and forth like a brandished sword, but remains fixed as a pillar to its best intent and object, is the best of men on earth. All others are like insects continually moving in the mind.

⁶⁴ He whose mind is free from fickleness and is sedate in itself is united with his best object in his meditation of the same. ⁶⁵ Steadiness of mind is attended with stillness of worldly commotions, just as the suspension of churning Mandara Mountain was attended with the calmness of the ocean of milk.

⁶⁶ The thoughts of the mind embroiled in worldly cares become the sources of those turbulent passions in the heart which, like poisonous plants, fill this harmful world.

⁶⁷ Foolish men, infatuated by their giddiness and ignorance, revolve round the center of their hearts like giddy bees flutter about the lotus flowers of the lake until at last, weary from their giddy circles, they fall down in the whirlpools that hurl them in irreparable ruin.

Chapter 111 — The Necessity to Control the Heart & Mind

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Now listen to what I will tell you is the best remedy to heal the disease of the heart. It is within one's own power and harmless and a sweet potion to taste.

² It is by your own exertion of your own consciousness and by diligent renunciation of the best objects of your desire that you can bring back your unmanageable mind under your control. ³ He who remains at rest by giving up the objects of his desire is truly the conqueror of his mind which is reduced under his subjection like an elephant lacking its tusks. ⁴ The mind is to be carefully treated like a patient with prescriptions of reason and by discriminating truth from untruth, just as we distinguish a good diet from what is injurious. ⁵ Mold your heated imagination by cool reasoning, by precepts of the scriptures, and by association with the dispassionate, as they do heated iron with a cold hammer.

⁶ Like a boy who suffers no pain turning himself this way and that in his play, so it is not difficult to turn the mind from one thing to another at pleasure. ⁷ Employ your mind to acts of goodness by the light of your understanding and join your soul to the meditation of God by light of your spirit.

⁸ The renunciation of a highly desirable object is within the power of one who resigns himself to the Divine Will. Therefore, it is a shame to that worm of human being who finds this teaching difficult to practice. ⁹ He who in his understanding can take the unpleasant for the pleasurable may with ease subdue his mind, like a giant by his might overcomes a boy. ¹⁰ It is possible to govern the mind by one's attention and effort, like controlling a horse. When the mind is brought still, it is easy to enter into divine knowledge.

¹¹ Shame on that jackass man who does not have the power to subdue his restless mind. It is entirely under his own control and he can easily govern it. ¹² No one can reach the best course of his life without tranquility of his mind. This is to be acquired by means of his own effort to get rid of the fond objects of his desire. ¹³ By destroying the mind's appetites and through reason and knowledge of truth, one can have his absolute dominion over the mind without any change or rival in it.

¹⁴ The precepts of a teacher, the instructions of the scriptures, the efficacy of mantras, and the force of arguments are all trifles like bits of straw if the mind is not calm. Calmness can be gained by renouncing our desires and knowledge of truth. ¹⁵ Only when all the desires of the mind are cut off by the weapon of indifference to all worldly things can the one all-pervading quiescent Brahman be known. ¹⁶ All men's bodily pains are quite at an end as soon as the mind is at rest, after the removal of mental anxieties by means of true knowledge.

¹⁷ Many persons turn their minds away from mindfulness by too much trust in their efforts and imagined expectations, and disregarding the power of destiny that rules over all human efforts.

¹⁸ The mind when becomes long practiced in its highest duty, the cultivation of divine knowledge, becomes extinct in consciousness and is elevated to its higher state of intellectual form. ¹⁹ Join yourself first to your intellectual or abstract thoughts, and then to your spiritual speculations. Then, being the master of your mind, contemplate on the nature of the Supreme Soul. ²⁰ Thus relying on your own efforts and converting the conscious mind to its state of detached unconsciousness, you can attain

that highest state of stability that knows no decay or destruction.

²¹ It is by your efforts and fixed attention, O Rama, that you can correct the errors of your mind, just like one gets over his wrong perceptions of mistaking one thing for another. ²² Calmness of mind dispels anxiety. A man who is able to subdue his mind doesn't care a fig for his subjection of the world under him. ²³ Worldly possessions are attended with strife and warfare. The enjoyments of heaven also have their rise and fall. But in the improvement of one's own mind and nature, there is no contention with anyone or any obstruction of any kind.

²⁴ Those who cannot manage to keep their minds under proper control find it hard to manage their affairs well. ²⁵ The thought of being dead and being born again as a man continually occupy the minds of the ignorant with the idea of their ego. ²⁶ Nobody is born here or dies at anytime. The mind conceives its birth and death and migration in other bodies and worlds. ²⁷ It goes from here to another world, and there it appears in another form, or it is relieved from the encumbrance of flesh, which is called its liberation. Then where is this death and why fear to die?

²⁸ Whether the mind wanders here or goes to another world with its earthly thoughts, it continues in the same state as before unless it is changed to another form by its attainment of liberation. ²⁹ It is in vain that we are overwhelmed in sorrow upon the death of our brethren and dependents. We know it is the nature of the mind to be deluded from its state of pure consciousness to that of error. ³⁰ It is repeatedly stated, both before and afterwards and in many other places (of this work), that there is no other means of obtaining true knowledge without subduing the mind. ³¹ I repeat the same lesson, that there is no way except by government of the unruly mind to come to the light of the truly real, clear and universal knowledge of the Supreme.

³² The mind destroyed, the soul attains its tranquility and the light of the intellect shines forth in the cavity of the heart. ³³ Hold fast the discus of reason, and cut off the bias of your mind. Be sure that no disease will have the power to molest you if you can have the good sense to despise objects of pleasure that are attended by pain. ³⁴ By lopping the members of the mind, you cut it off altogether. These members, the essence of the mind, are ego and selfishness.

Shun your sense that "It is I" and "These are mine." ³⁵ Without these feelings, the mind is cast down like a tree felled by the axe. It is dispersed like a scattered cloud from the autumn sky. ³⁶ The mind is blown away by its lack of ego and selfishness, like a cloud by the winds.

³⁷ It is dangerous to wage a war against winds, weapons, fire or water in order to obtain the objects of worldly desire, but there is no danger whatever in destroying the growing soft and tender desires of the mind. ³⁸ What is good and what is not are well known for certain, even to children. Therefore employ your mind to what is good, as they train children in the paths of goodness.

³⁹ Our minds are as stubborn and indomitable as ferocious lions of the forest. They are true victors who have conquered these and are thereby entitled to salvation. ⁴⁰ Our desires, with their unsatisfied thirst after monetary gain, are like fierce lions. Desires lead us to dangers and are as delusive as the mirage of the desert.

⁴¹ The man without desires cares for nothing: whether the winds howl with the fury of storms, or the seas break their bounds, or the twelve suns (of the Zodiac) rise at once to burn the universe. ⁴² The

mind is the root that grows the plants of our good and evil and all our happiness and sorrow. The mind is the tree of the world, and all peoples are like its branches and leaves.⁴³ One who has freed his mind from its desires prospers everywhere. He who lives in the dominion of detachment rests in his heavenly joy.⁴⁴ The more we curb the desires of our minds, the greater we feel our inward happiness. Like the fire being extinguished, we find ourselves cooled from its heat.

⁴⁵ Should the mind long for millions of worldly mansions in its highest ambition, it is sure to have them spread out to view within the minute particle of its own essence.⁴⁶ Opulence in expectancy is full of anxiety to the mind. When gained, the expected wealth is no less troublesome to the mind. But the treasure of contentment is filled with lasting peace of mind. Therefore, be victorious over your greedy mind by abandonment of all your desires.

⁴⁷ With the highly holy virtue of your un-mindfulness, and with the even-mindedness of those who have known the Divine Spirit, and also with the subdued, moderated and defeated yearnings of your heart, make the state of the uncreated One as your own.

Chapter 112 — Motion (Restlessness) Is Inherent in the Mind; the Mind Is Its Own Cure

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Whatever the nature of the object of any man's desire, his mind does not fail to run after it with great eagerness in every place.² This eagerness of the mind rises and sets by turns with the view of the desired object, like clear bubbles of water foaming and bursting of themselves with the breath of winds.³ As coldness is the nature of frost and blackness is that of ink, so is swiftness or momentum the nature of the mind, as stillness is that of the soul.

⁴ Rama said, "Tell me sage, why is the mind identified with motion, and what is the cause of its velocity? Tell me also if there is any other force that can impede the mind's motion?"

⁵ Vasishta replied:—

We have never seen the motionless quiet of the mind. Speed is the nature of the mind, like heat is that of fire.⁶ This vacillating power of motion which is implanted in the mind is known to be of the same nature as that of the self-motive force of the Divine Mind that is the cause of the momentum and motion of those worlds.⁷ As the essence of air is imperceptible without its movement, so we can have no notion of the momentum of our minds apart from the idea of their vibration.

⁸ The mind which has no motion is said to be dead and defunct. The suspension of mental agitation is the condition of yoga stillness and leads to our ultimate liberation.

⁹ The mortification of the mind is attended with the subsidence of our sorrows, but agitated thoughts in the mind are causes of all our sorrows.¹⁰ The monster of the mind, being roused from its rest, raises all our dangers and disasters, but its falling into rest and inaction causes our happiness and perfect joy.¹¹ The restlessness of the mind is the effect of its ignorance. Therefore Rama, exert your reason to destroy all its desires.¹² Destroy the internal desires of your mind that are raised by ignorance alone and attain your supreme joy by your resignation to the Divine Will.

¹³ The mind is a thing that stands between the real and unreal, and between intelligence and dull matter. The mind is moved to and fro by the contending powers on either side.¹⁴ Impelled by dull material force, the mind is lost in the investigation of material objects until at last, by its habitual thought of materiality, it is converted to a material object, resembling dull matter itself.¹⁵ But the mind being guided by its intellectual powers to investigate abstract truths becomes an intelligent and intellectual principle by its continued practice of thinking itself as such.

¹⁶ By virtue of the exertion of your manly powers and activities, and by force of constant habit and continued practice, you can succeed in attaining anything to which you employ your mind with diligence.¹⁷ You also can be free from fears and find your rest in your reliance upon the Being without sorrow, provided you exercise your manly activities and use your intelligence to curb the tendencies of your mind.¹⁸ By the force of your intelligent mind, you must lift up your deluded mind that is drowned in the cares of this world. There is no other way.¹⁹ Only the mind is capable of subduing the mind, for who can subdue a king unless he is a king himself?

²⁰ Our minds are the boats to lift us from the ocean of this world where we are carried too far by its beating waves and thrown into the whirlpools of despair, and where we are caught by the sharks of

our greediness.²¹ Let your own mind cut the mind's net that is ensnared in this world and extricate your soul by this wise policy, which is the only means of your liberation.²² Let the wise destroy the desires of their minds and this will set them free from the bonds of ignorance.²³ Shun your desire for earthly enjoyments and forsake your knowledge of dualism. Then get rid of your impressions of entity and non-entity and be happy with the knowledge of one unity.

²⁴ Thought of the unknowable will remove the thoughts of known phenomena. This is equivalent to the destruction of desires, and also of the mind and ignorance.²⁵ The unknown One of which we are unconscious by our knowledge of phenomena transcends anything and everything known by our consciousness. Our unconsciousness is our nirvana and final extinction, while our consciousness is the cause of our sorrow.²⁶ By their own attention, men soon come to the knowledge of phenomena, but it is the unknowing or unconsciousness of these that is our nirvana. Our consciousness is the cause of our sorrow.

²⁷ Destroy, O Rama, whatever is desirable to your mind and is the object of your affection. Then knowing them as reduced to nothing, forsake your desires as seedless sprouts and live content without the feelings of joy and grief.

Chapter 113 — Description of Ignorance & Delusion (*Avidya*)

¹ Vasishta continued:—

False desires that continually rise in the heart are like the appearances of false moons in the sky and should be shunned by the wise.² They rise in the minds of the unwise amidst their ignorance. Everything that is known only by its name and not in actuality cannot reside in the minds of wise people.

³ Be wise, O Rama, and do not think like the ignorant. Consider well all that I tell you. There is no second moon in the sky, but it appears so only by deception of our optical visions.⁴ There exists nothing real or unreal anywhere except the only true essence of God, just like there is no substantiality in the continuity of the waves other than the body of waters.⁵ There is no reality in anything, whether existent or non-existent, all which are mere creations of your shadowy ideality. Therefore do not impute any shape or figure to the eternal, boundless and pure spirit of God.

⁶ You are no maker or master of anything. Then why consider any act or thing as your own? You do not know what these existences are, or by whom and from what they are made.⁷ Do not think you are an actor because no actor can attempt to do anything. Discharge whatever is your duty and remain at your ease with having done your part.⁸ Though you are the actor of an action, do not think of yourself as such. Mind your inability to do or undo anything. How can you boast of being the actor when you know your inability for action?

⁹ If truth is delectable and untruth is odious, then remain firm to what is good and be employed in your duties.¹⁰ But as the whole world is a gallery, a magic, and an unreality, then say what reliance is there in it and what signifies pleasure or displeasure to anybody?

¹¹ Know Rama, this egg of the world is a delusion and being nonexistent in itself, it appears as a real existence to others.¹² Know this busy sphere of the world, so full with its non-existence, to be an ideal fantasy presented for the delusion of our minds.¹³ It is like a beautiful bamboo plant, all hollow within and without pith or marrow inside, or like the curling waves of the sea, both of which are born to perish without being uprooted from the bottom.

¹⁴ This world is as evaporated as the air and water flying in the air, incapable of being touched or held in the hand, and as precipitous as a waterfall in its course.¹⁵ It appears as a flowery garden, but never comes to any good use at all. The billowy sea in the mirage presents the form of water without quenching our thirst.¹⁶ Sometimes it seems to be straight, and at others a curve. Now it is long and now short, and now it is moving and quiet again. Everything in it, though originally for our good, conspires to our evil only.¹⁷ Though hollow inside, the world appears to be full with its apparent contents. Though all the worlds are continually in motion, yet they seem to be standing still.

¹⁸ Whether they be dull matter or intelligences, their existence depends upon their motion. And these, without stopping anywhere for a moment, present the sight of their being quite at rest.¹⁹ Though they are as bright as light to sight, they are as opaque in their bowels as the dark coal. Though they are moved by a superior power, they appear to be moving of themselves.²⁰ They fade away before the brighter light of the sun, but brighten in the darkness of the night. Their light is like that of the mirage created by the reflection of sunbeams.

²¹ Human greed is like a black serpent, crooked and venomous, thin and soft in its form, but rough and dangerous in its nature, and ever unsteady as a woman. ²² Without the objects of our affection, our love of the world soon ceases, like the lamp is extinguished without its oil and as the vermillion mark is soon worn off. ²³ Our false hopes are as transient as the impermanent flashes of lightning. Hopes glare and flare for a moment, then disappear in the air like these transitory flashes of light.

²⁴ The objects of our desire are often had without our seeking, but they are as frail as the fire of heaven. They appear to vanish like twinkling lightning, and being held carefully in the hand, they burn it like an electric fire. ²⁵ Many things come to us unasked and though appearing delightful at first, they prove troublesome to us at last. Hopes delayed are like flowers growing out of season which neither bear their fruit or answer our purposes. ²⁶ Every accident tends to our misery, as unpleasant dreams annoy our sleep and disturb our rest.

²⁷ It is our delusion (*avidya*) that presents these many and big worlds before us, just like our dreams produce, sustain and destroy all appearances of vision in one minute. ²⁸ It was delusion that made one minute appear as many years to King Lavana, and the space of one night seem like the long period of a dozen of years to Harish Chandra. ²⁹ Such also is the case with separated lovers among rich people: that in the absence of their beloved, a single night seems like an entire year to them. ³⁰ It is this delusive *avidya* that shortens the flight of time to the rich and happy and prolongs its course with the poor and miserable, all of whom are subject to the power of delusion (*vipary'asa*).

³¹ The power of this delusion is essentially spread over all the works of creation, like the light of a lamp spreads over things in its brightness and not in substance. ³² As a female form represented in a picture is no woman and has no power to do anything, so this delusion that presents us the shapes of our desired objects in the picture of the mind can produce nothing in reality.

³³ The delusion consists in building aerial castles without substance in the mind. Though these appear in hundreds and thousands of shapes, they have no substance to them. ³⁴ It deludes the ignorant, like a mirage misleads deer in a desert, but false appearances cannot deceive the knowing man. ³⁵ These appearances, like foaming waters, are as continuous as they are impermanent. They are as fleeting as the driving frost that cannot be held in the hand. ³⁶ This delusion holds the world in its grasp and flies aloft with it in the air. It blinds us like flying dust raised by its furious blasts. ³⁷ Covered with dust and with heat and sweat of its body, it grasps the earth and flies all about the world. The deluded man ever works with persistence and runs everywhere after his greed.

³⁸ As drops of rainwater falling from the clouds form the great rivers and seas, and as scattered straw tied together make a strong rope to bind beasts, so the combination of all the delusive objects in the world makes the great delusion of reality and lust.

³⁹ Poets describe the fluctuations of the world as a series of waves and the world itself as a bed of lotuses, pleasant to sight but floating on an unstable element. But I compare it to the porous stalk of the lotus, full of perforations and openings inside, and to a pool of mud and mire with the filth of our sins.

⁴⁰ Men think much of their improvement and of many other things on earth, but there is no improvement in this decaying world that is like a tempting cake with a coating of sweets, but full of deadly gall within. ⁴¹ It is like a lamp whose flame is lost and fled we know not where. It is visible as

a mist, but try to lay hold on it and it proves to be nothing.⁴² This earth is a handful of ashes which being flung aloft flies in particles of dust. It is like the upper sky which appears to be blue but has no blueness in it.

⁴³ This delusion on earth as like the appearance of two moons in the sky, or in the vision of things in a dream, or in the motion of immovable things on the land to the passenger in a boat.⁴⁴ Men being long deluded by this error which has tightly laid hold of their minds, imagine a long duration of the world, as they do of the scenes in their dreams.⁴⁵ The mind being thus deluded by this error sees the wonderful productions of world to rise and fall within itself like the waves of the sea.

⁴⁶ Things which are real and good appear otherwise in our error, while those that are unreal and harmful appear real and good to our deluded understandings.⁴⁷ Our strong greed, riding on the vehicle of the desired object, chases the fleeting mind as bird-catchers chase flying birds with nets.

⁴⁸ Delusion, like a mother and wife, often offers us fresh delights with her tender looks and breasts distilling sweet milk.⁴⁹ But these delights serve only to poison us, while they seem to cool the worlds with their distillation, just like the crescent orb of the moon injures us with too much of her moistening influence, while it appears to refresh us with her full bright beams.

⁵⁰ Blind delusion turns meek, mild and mute men into giddy and clamorous fools, like silent vetalas ghosts in their dancing revelry in the silent woods at night.⁵¹ It is under the influence of delusion that we see shapes of snakes and serpents in our brick-built and stone-made houses at nightfall.⁵² It makes a single thing appear as double, like the sight of two moons in the sky, and brings near to us what is far away, like in our dreams. Delusion even causes us to dream that we are dead.⁵³ It causes long to appear as short, as our nightly sleep shortens the duration of time and makes a moment appear as a year, as in the case of separated lovers.

⁵⁴ Look at the power of this unsubstantial ignorance, a negative thing, and still there is nothing which it cannot alter to something else.⁵⁵ Therefore be diligent to stop the course of this delusion by your right knowledge, just as they dry up a channel by stopping the current of the stream.

⁵⁶ Rama said, "It is wonderful that a false conception that has no real existence and is so delicate as almost a nothing (but a name) should thus blind the understanding.⁵⁷ It is strange that something without form or figure, without sense or understanding, and which is unreal and vanishing, should so blindfold the world.⁵⁸ It is strange that a thing sparkling in darkness and vanishing in daylight, and shortsighted as the brooding owl, should keep the world in darkness.⁵⁹ It is strange that something prone to doing evil and unable to come to light and flying from sight, and having no bodily form whatever, should thus darken the world.⁶⁰ It is a wonder that one acting so miserly and consorting with the mean and vile, and ever hiding herself in darkness, should thus dominate the world.⁶¹ It is wonderful that fallacy attended with constant sorrow and peril, and which is devoid of sense and knowledge, should keep the world in darkness.⁶² It is to be wondered that error arising from anger and greed, creeping crookedly in darkness and liable to instant death, should yet keep the world in blindness.⁶³ It is surprising that error which is a blind, dull and stupid thing itself, and which is falsely talkative at all times, should yet mislead others in the world.⁶⁴ It is astonishing that falsehood should betray a man after attaching as closely to him as his consort, and showing all her endearments

to him, but flying at the approach of his reason.⁶⁵ It is strange that man should be blinded by the womanish attire of error which beguiles the man but dares not to look at him face to face.⁶⁶ It is strange that man is blinded by his faithless consort of error which has no sense or intelligence and which dies away without being killed.”

⁶⁷ “Tell me sage, how this error — which has its seat in the desires and is deeply rooted in the recesses of the heart and mind, and leads us to the channels of endless misery by subjecting us to repeated births and deaths and to the pains and pleasures of life — is to be dispelled?”

Chapter 114 — Description of Error

¹ Rama repeated, “Tell me sage, how to remove this stony blindness of man caused by the trick of ignorance (*avidya*)?”

² Vasishta replied:—

As the particles of snow melt at the sight of the sun, so this ignorance is dispelled immediately by a glance of the Supreme Spirit.³ Until then, ignorance continues to hurl down the soul and spirit, as from a precipice to the depths of the world, and expose them to sorrows as thick as thorny brambles.

⁴ As long as the desire of seeing spirit does not rise of itself in the human soul, there is no end of this ignorance (*avidya*) and unconsciousness.⁵ The sight of the Supreme Spirit destroys the knowledge of our self-existence that is caused by our ignorance, just like the light of the sun destroys the shadows of things.⁶ The sight of the all-pervading God dispels our ignorance in the same manner as the light of the twelve zodiacal suns (all shining at once) puts the shadows of night to flight from all sides of the horizon.

⁷ Our desires are the offspring of our ignorance, and the annihilation of these constitutes what we call our liberation. A man who is devoid of desires is reckoned the perfect and consummate master (*siddha*).⁸ As the night-shade of desires is dissipated from the region of the mind, the darkness of ignorance is put to flight by the rise of the intellectual sun.⁹ As the dark night flies away before the advance of sunlight, so ignorance disappears before the advance of true knowledge (*viveka* or discrimination).

¹⁰ The stiffness of our desires tends to bind the mind fast in its worldly chains, like the advance of night serves to increase the fear of demons in children.

¹¹ Rama asked, “The knowledge of phenomena as true makes what we call *avidya* or ignorance, and it is said to be dispersed by spiritual knowledge. Now tell me sage, what is the nature of the Spirit?”

¹² Vasishta replied:—

That which is not the subject of thought, which is all-pervasive, and the thought of which is beyond expression and comprehension is the Universal Spirit.¹³ That which reaches to the highest heaven of God and stretches over the lowest plots of grass on earth is the all-pervading spirit at all times, and is unknown to the ignorant soul.¹⁴ All this is truly Brahman, eternal and imperishable Consciousness. To Him no imagination of the mind can reach at anytime.

¹⁵ That which is never born or dead and which is ever existent in all worlds, and in which the conditions of being and change are altogether wanting,¹⁶ which is one and one alone, all and all-pervading, and imperishable Unity, which is incomprehensible in thought, and is only of the form of Intellect is the Universal Spirit.¹⁷ It is accompanied with the ever-existent, all-extending, pure and undisturbed Consciousness and is that calm, quiet, even and unchanging state of the soul which is called the Divine Spirit.

¹⁸ There resides also the impure mind, which is by nature beyond all physical objects and runs after its own desire. It is conceivable by Consciousness as sullied by its own activity.¹⁹ This ubiquitous, all-potent, great and godlike mind, in its imagination, separates itself from the Supreme Spirit and

rises from it like a wave on the surface of the sea.²⁰ There is no fluctuation or projection in the all-extending tranquil soul of God, but these take place in the mind owing to its desires which cause the production of all things in the world.²¹ Therefore the world, being the production of desire or will, has its extinction with the privation of desires, for that which is the growth of a thing causes its extinction also, like the wind that kindles the fire also extinguishes it.

²² The exertion of human effort gives rise to the expectation of results, but lack of desire causes the cessation of exertions and consequently puts a stop to the desire of activity and our ignorance that causes desire.²³ The thought that "I am distinct from Brahman" binds the mind to the world, but the belief that "Brahman is all" releases the mind from its bondage.²⁴ Every thought about one's self fastens his bondage in this world, but release from selfish thoughts leads him to his liberation. Cease from your selfish cares and you shall cease to work with persistence for nothing.

²⁵ There is no lake of lotuses in the sky, nor is there a lotus growing in the gold mine whose fragrance fills the air and attracts the blue bees to suck its honey.²⁶ The goddess of ignorance, with her uplifted arms resembling the long stalks of lotus plants, laughs over her conquests in exultation with the glaring light of shining moonbeams.²⁷ Such is the net of our wishes that our minds spread before us, which represent unrealities as real and take a delight to dwell upon them, like children in their toys.²⁸ So also is the trap spread out by our own ignorance all over this world. It ensnares busy people to their misery in all places, just as it tightly binds ignorant men and children in its chains.

²⁹ Men are busy with worldly affairs with such thoughts as, "I am poor and bound in this earth for my life; but I have my hands and feet with which I must work for myself."³⁰ But they are freed from all affairs of this life who know themselves as spiritual beings, and that their spiritual part is neither subject to bondage nor labor.³¹ The thought that "I am neither flesh or bones but some thing other than my body" releases one from his bondage. One having such assurance within is said to have weakened his *avidya* or ignorance.

³² The imagination of earthly men paint ignorance as dark as the darkness that surrounds the highest pinnacle of Mount Meru, blazing with the blue light of sapphire, or at the primeval darkness impenetrable by sunlight.³³ Earth-born mortals also represent ignorance as the blackness which naturally covers the face of heaven by its own nature, like the blue vault of the sky.³⁴ Thus, in the imagination of the unenlightened, ignorance is pictured with a visible form. But the enlightened never attribute qualities of physical sensation to inanimate and imaginary objects.

³⁵ Rama said, "Tell me sage, what is the cause of the blueness of the sky if it is not the reflection of the blue gems on the Meru's peak? Is it a collection of darkness (at night) by itself?"

³⁶ Vasishta replied:—

Rama, the sky being only an empty vacuum cannot have the quality of blueness which is commonly attributed to it. Nor is it the bluish luster of the blue gems that are supposed to abound on the top of Meru.³⁷ Nor is there any possibility of a body of darkness abiding in the sky when the cosmic egg is full of light (which has displaced the primeval darkness) and when the nature of light is the brightness that stretches over the extraterrestrial regions.

³⁸ O fortunate Rama, the sky which is a vast vacuum is open to a sister of ignorance with regard to its

inner hollowness.³⁹ As one after losing his eyesight sees only darkness all about him, so the lack of the objects of sight in the womb of emptiness gives the sky the appearance of a dark scene.⁴⁰ By understanding this, as you come to the knowledge that the apparent blackness of the sky is no black color of its own, so you come to learn the seeming darkness of ignorance to be no darkness in reality.

⁴¹ Want of desire or its detachment is the destroyer of ignorance. It is as easy to effect it as to annihilate a lake of lotuses growing in the sky.

⁴² It is better, O good Rama, to distrust the delusions of this world and disbelieve the blueness of the sky than to labor under the error of their reality.⁴³ The thought that "I am dead" makes one as sad as when he dreams of his death in sleep. Similarly, the thought that "I am living" makes one as cheerful as when he wakes from the deadly dream of his death-like sleep.⁴⁴ Foolish imaginations make the mind as dull as that of a fool, but reasonable reflections lead it to wisdom and clear sightedness.

⁴⁵ A moment's reflection of the reality of the world and of his own essence casts a man into the gloom of everlasting ignorance, while his forgetfulness of these removes all mortal thoughts from his mind.

⁴⁶ Ignorance produces passions and temptations for all transient objects. Ignorance is busy destroying the knowledge of the soul. It is destroyed only by knowledge of the soul.

⁴⁷ Whatever the mind seeks is instantly supplied by the organs of action which serve as ministers subservient to the orders of their king.⁴⁸ Therefore, he who, by his diligent application to spirituality, does not attend to the dictates of his mind in the pursuit of phenomena entertains the tranquility of his inmost soul.

⁴⁹ What did not exist at first has no existence even now. That which appears as existent is nothing other than the quiescent and immaculate essence, Brahma himself.⁵⁰ Let no other thought of any person, thing, place or object employ your mind at anytime, except that of the immutable, everlasting and unlimited spirit of Brahma.⁵¹ Rely upon the superior powers of your understanding, exert your sovereign intellect, and root out all worldly desires by enjoyment of the pleasures of your mind.

⁵² The great ignorance that rises in the mind and raises the desires of your heart has spread the net of your false hopes for your ruin, causing your death and decrepitude under them.⁵³ Your wishes burst out in expressions such as, "These are my sons and these are my treasures. I am such a one and these things are mine." All this is the effect of a magic spell of ignorance that binds you tightly.⁵⁴ Your body is a void in which your desires have produced all your selfish thoughts, like empty winds raising waves on the surface of the sea.

⁵⁵ Learn, you who are seekers of truth, that the words "I" and "mine" and "this" and "that" are all meaningless in their true sense. There is nothing that may be called real at anytime except knowledge of the true self and essence of Brahman.

⁵⁶ The heavens above and the earth below, with all the ranges of hills and mountains on earth and all the lines of its rivers and lakes, are only the dissolving sights seen in the same or different lights as they are represented by our ignorance.⁵⁷ Phenomena rise to view from our ignorance and disappear before the light of knowledge. They appear in various forms in the substratum of the soul, just as the fallacy of a snake appears in the substance of a rope.

⁵⁸ Rama, know that only the ignorant are liable to the error of taking the earth, sun and stars for realities; not so the learned to whom the great Brahman is present in all his majesty and full glory in all places and things. ⁵⁹ While the ignorant labor under the doubt of two ideas, a rope and a snake in the rope, the learned are firm in their belief and sight of one true God in all things.

⁶⁰ Therefore do not think like the ignorant, but well consider all things like the wise and the learned. Forsake your earthly wishes and do not grope like the vulgar by believing the not-self to be the self.

⁶¹ Of what good is this dull and dumb body to you, Rama, (in your future state) that you are so overcome by alternating joy and grief at its pleasure and pain? ⁶² Like the wood of a tree, its gum resin, and its fruit and seed are not one and the same thing, though they are so closely related to one another, so this body and the embodied being are quite separate from one another, though they are so closely united with each other.

⁶³ As the burning of a pair of bellows does not blow out the fire or stop the air blown by another pair, so the vital air is not destroyed by destruction of the body but finds its way into another form and frame elsewhere. ⁶⁴ The thought that "I am happy or miserable" is as false as the idea of water in a mirage. Knowing it as such, give up your misconceptions of pleasure and pain and place your reliance upon the sole truth. ⁶⁵ O how wonderful it is that men have so utterly forgotten the true Brahman and have placed their reliance on false ignorance, the sole cause of errors.

⁶⁶ Do not, O Rama, give way to ignorance in your mind, which being overspread by its darkness will render it difficult for you to pass over the errors of the world. ⁶⁷ Know ignorance to be a false fiend and deluder of the strongest minds. It is the baneful cause of endless sorrows and produces the poisonous fruits of illusion. ⁶⁸ It imagines hellfire in the cooling beams of the watery orb of the moon. Ignorance conceives the torments of infernal fires proceeding from the refreshing beams of that celestial light. ⁶⁹ It views a dry desert in wide waters rolling with waves and undulating with the fragrance of the aqueous kalpa flowers. It imagines a dry mirage in the empty clouds of autumn. ⁷⁰ Ignorance builds imaginary castles in empty air and causes the error of rising and falling towers in clouds. It is the delusion of our fancy that makes us feel the emotions of pleasure and pain in our dreams.

⁷¹ If the mind is not filled and led away by worldly desires, then there is no fear of falling into the dangers that the daydreams of our earthly affairs constantly present before us. ⁷² The more our false knowledge lays hold of our minds, the more we feel the torments of hell and its punishments in us, like nightmares in sleep. ⁷³ The mind pierced by error, as if by the thorny stalk of a lotus, sees the whole world revolving before it like the sea rolling with its waves. ⁷⁴ Ignorance takes possession of the mind, converts enthroned princes to peasants, and reduces them to a condition worse than that of beastly hunters.

⁷⁵ Therefore, Rama, give up the earthly desires that serve, at best, to bind down the soul to this mortal earth and its mortifying cares. Remain like the pure white crystal, reflecting the colors of all things around in your stainless mind. ⁷⁶ Employ your mind to your duties without being tarnished by your attachment to any. Remain like the unsullied crystal, receiving the reflections of outward objects without being stained by any.

⁷⁷ Knowing everything with eagerness in your watchful mind and performing all your duties with due submission, and staying away from the common track with your exalted mind, you will raise yourself above comparison with any other person.

Chapter 115 — Causes of Happiness & Misery

¹ Valmiki relates:—

Being thus encouraged by the high minded Vasishta, Rama's lotus eyes became opened like new blown flowers.² He shone forth with a pure grace, his heart expanded and his face blooming like the fresh lotus reviving at the end of night under the vivifying beams of the rising sun.³ His smiling face shone like the moon with inward enlightenment and wonder. Then, with the nectar beams of his bright and white pearly teeth, Rama spoke out these words.

⁴ Rama said, “What a wonder that the lack of ignorance should subdue all things, as if it could tie down huge hills with the thin threads of lotus stalks.⁵ O, that this straw of the earth, which shows itself to be so dense a body in the world, is no more than the production of our ignorance which shows the unreal as a reality.⁶ Tell me more for my enlightenment regarding the true nature of this magical earth which rolls like a ceaseless stream running amidst the ethereal worlds.”

⁷ “There is another great question that worries my heart. What happened to the fortunate Lavana in the end?⁸ Also, tell me more about the embodied soul and the animated body, whether they are in concord or discord with one another, and which of them is the active agent and recipient of the rewards of acts in this earth.⁹ Tell me also who was that sorcerer and where he fled after putting the good King Lavana to all his tribulation, and then restoring him to his former exalted position.”

¹⁰ Vasishta said:—

The body is like a frame of woodwork that contains nothing. It receives the reflection of an intelligence as in a dream, and this is called the mind.¹¹ This mind becomes the living principle (life) and also has the power of thinking. It is as unstable as a boat on the current of world of affairs, and it plays the part of a fickle monkey amidst the busy castle of the world.

¹² The active principle in the body is known under different names — the mind, life and ego — and having a body for its home, it is employed in a variety of actions.¹³ This active principle is subject to endless pains and pleasures in its unenlightened or un-awakened state, and the body has no relation with them.¹⁴ Unenlightened understanding also has received many fictitious names according to the various faculties that it exhibits in its acts.¹⁵ As long as an un-awakened mind is in its sleeping state, it perceives the busy bustle of the world as in a dream, which is unknown to the waking or enlightened mind.

¹⁶ As long as a living being is not awakened from its sleep, it has to labor under the inseparable mist of worldly errors.¹⁷ But the darkness hanging over the minds of the enlightened is put to flight as quickly as the shade of night spreading over the bed of lotuses is dispersed at sunrise.

¹⁸ That which the learned call the heart, the mind, the individual soul, ignorance, desire, and the principle of action is the embodied being that is subject to the feelings of both pleasure and pain.

¹⁹ The body is dull matter unconscious of pain and pleasure. Men of right reason say that the embodied being is subject to pain and pleasure because of its stubborn ignorance and irrationality. The embodied being is the cause of its own misery.²⁰ The individual soul is the subject of its good and bad actions. It becomes confined in its body because of its irrationality and remains trapped there

like a silkworm in its cocoon.

²¹ The mind being tied to its ignorance exerts its faculties in various ways, and turns round like a wheel in its various pursuits and employments. ²² The mind dwelling in the body makes it rise and sit, eat and drink, walk and go, and hurt and kill, all of which are acts of the mind and not of the body.

²³ As the master of the house does his many acts in it, and not the house itself, so the mind acts its different parts in the body, and not the body by itself. ²⁴ The mind is the active and passive agent of all actions and passions, and of the pains and pleasures of the body. It is only the mind that makes the man.

²⁵ Now hear me tell you the useful moral of the story of Lavana, and how he was transformed to a tribal (*chandala*, outcaste) by derangement of his mind. ²⁶ The mind has to feel the effects of its actions whether good or evil. In order that you may understand it well, listen attentively to what I will now tell you.

²⁷ Lavana was born of the line of King Harish Chandra. One day, as he was sitting apart from all others of his court, he was thinking to himself, ²⁸ "My grandfather was a great king and performed the rajasuya sacrifice. I, being born of his line, must perform the same in my mind."

²⁹ Having determined so, and getting the things ready for the sacrifice, he entered the sacrificial hall for his initiation in the sacred rites. ³⁰ He called the sacrificial priests and honored the holy saints. He invited the gods to it and lighted the sacrificial fire. ³¹ Having performed the sacrifice to his heart's content, and having honored the gods, sages and brahmins, he went to a forest to live there for a year (all in his own mind).

³² Then, having made presents of all his wealth to brahmins and other men, he awoke from his slumber in the same forest by the evening of that day. ³³ Thus King Lavana attained the merit of the sacrifice, in his internal satisfaction of having attained the merit of the sacrifice.

³⁴ Hence learn to know that the mind is the recipient of pleasure and pain. Therefore employ your attention, Rama, to the purification of your mind. ³⁵ Every man becomes perfect in his mind in its full time and proper place, but he is utterly lost who believes himself to be composed only of his body.

³⁶ The mind being roused to transcendental reason, all miseries are removed from rational understanding, just like the beams of the rising sun falling upon the lotus bud dispel the darkness that had closely contracted its folded petals.

Chapter 116 — Moral of King Lavana's Experience; Summary of Creation & Liberation

¹ Rama asked, “Sage, what is the evidence that Lavana obtained the reward of his mental rajasuya sacrifice through his transformation into the state of a tribal, as it was wrought upon him by the enchantment of the magician?”

² Vasishta answered:—

I was myself present at King Lavana’s court when the magician made his appearance and I saw everything that took place with my own eyes.³ After the magician finished his work and left, King Lavana respectfully asked me with the other courtiers to explain to him what had happened.⁴ After I pondered the matter and had clearly seen its cause, I explained the meaning of the magician’s spell. This is the way I will now explain it to you, my Rama!

⁵ I remembered that all those who performed rajasuya sacrifice were subjected to various painful difficulties and dangers which they had to suffer for a full dozen of years.⁶ It was then that Indra, the lord of heaven, had compassion for Lavana and sent his heavenly messenger in the form of the magician to avert his calamity.⁷ He taxed the king who would make the rajasuya sacrifice with the infliction of the very many hardships in his dream, then departed on his aerial journey to the abode of the gods and spiritual masters.

⁸ Thus Rama, it is quite evident and there is no doubt in it. The mind is the active and passive agent of all kinds of actions and their sequences. ^(a) Therefore rub out the dirt of your heart, and polish the gem of your mind. Using the fire of your reason to melt the mind down like a particle of ice, attain your chief supreme good at last. ^(b) Know the mind is identical to ignorance, which by its magical power presents these multitudes and endless varieties of beings and things before you. ^(c) There is no difference in the meanings of the words “ignorance,” “mind,” “understanding” and “individual soul,” as in the word “tree” and all its synonyms. ^(d) Knowing this truth, keep a steady mind free from all its desires. As the orb of the clear sun of your intellect has its rise, so the darkness of your willing and unwilling flies away from you. ^(e) Know also this truth: there is nothing in the world that you cannot see or which you cannot make your own or which can be taken away from you. There is nothing that does not die or what is not yours or some else’s. All things become all at all times.

⁹ The multitudes of existent bodies and their known properties meet together in the substantiality of Brahman, just like the various kinds of un-fired clay vessels are melted down in the same watery substance.

¹⁰ Rama said:— “Sage, you said that by weakening the desires of our mind, we can put an end to our pleasures and pains. But tell me now, how is it possible to stop the course of our naturally fickle minds?”

¹¹ Vasishta replied:—

Hear, O bright moon of Raghu’s race! I will tell you the proper course for quieting the restless mind. By knowing this you shall obtain peace of mind and be freed from the actions of your organs of sense.

¹² I have told you before about the triple nature of the production of beings here below which, I believe, you well remember. ¹³ Of these the first is that power (Brahma) who assumed to himself the

shape of the Divine Will and saw in his presence in whatever he wished to produce, through which he brought the physical system into existence.¹⁴ He thought of many changes in his mind, like those of birth and death, pleasure and pain, the course of nature and the effect of ignorance, and the like. Then having ordained them as he willed, he disappeared of himself like snow before sunlight.

¹⁵ Thus this god, the personification of Will, rises and sets repeatedly as he is prompted from time to time by his inner wish.¹⁶ So there are millions of Brahma born in this cosmic egg. Many have gone by and are yet to come, whose number is innumerable.¹⁷ All living beings are in the same predicament as Brahma, proceeding continually from the entity of God.

Now I will tell you how they live and how they are liberated from the bonds of life.

¹⁸ The mental power issuing from Brahma rests on the wide expanse of emptiness spread before it. Then being joined with the essence of ether, it becomes solidified in the shape of desire.¹⁹ Then finding the miniature of matter spread out before it, it becomes the quintessence of the five elements. Having assumed afterwards the inner senses, it becomes a suitable elementary body composed of the finest particles of the five elements. It enters into grains and vegetables, which reenter into the bowels of animals in the form of food.²⁰ The essence of this food in the form of semen, gives birth to living beings to infinity.²¹ The male child grows into boyhood, to his tutor for the acquisition of knowledge.

²² The boy next assumes his wonderful form of youth, which next arrives to the state of manhood.

²³ The man afterwards learns to choose something for himself, and reject others by the clear sightedness of his internal faculties.

²⁴ A man possessed of the right discrimination of good and evil, and of right and wrong, and who is confident of the purity of his own nature and of his belonging to the best caste (brahmin) by degrees attains supernatural powers for his own good, as also for the enlightenment of his mind, by means of his knowledge of the seven essential grounds of yoga meditation.

Chapter 117 — The Seven States of Ignorance

¹ Rama said, “Please sage, tell me briefly, what are the grounds of yoga meditation that produce the seven kinds of consummation that are the aims of yogi adepts. You are best acquainted with all esoteric truths. You, sage, must know better than all others.

² Vasishta replied:—

They consist of the seven descending states of ignorance and the seven ascending states of knowledge. These again diverge into many others by their mixtures together.³ All these states of ignorance and knowledge, being deep rooted in the nature of man either by his habit or training, produce their respective results.⁴ Attend now to the nature of the seven states or grounds of ignorance, and you will also come to know the nature of the seven grounds of knowledge.

⁵ This will be the shortest lesson that I will give you about the definitions of true knowledge and ignorance. One’s own true nature is his highest knowledge and liberation. Whatever distracts one from this knowledge to the false sense of individual ego is the cause of his ignorance that leads him to the error and bondage of this world.⁶ Those who do not deviate from their awareness of the self as composed of only pure consciousness are not liable to ignorance because they lack passions, affections, and the feelings of envy and enmity.⁷ The greatest ignorance and error of mankind is forgetting self awareness and diving into consciousness (*chit*) after thoughts of cognizable objects.

⁸ The space that takes place in the mind between a past and future thought of one object to another, that respite of the mind from thinking is the resting of the soul in the consciousness of its true form (*swarupa*).

⁹ That state of the soul when it is calm after the setting of the thoughts and desires of the mind, and which is as cold and quiet as the bosom of a stone, and yet without the dullness of slumber or dull drowsiness, is called the repose of the soul in its recognition of itself.¹⁰ The soul is said to be at rest in itself and shines forth with its unsleeping intelligence when it is devoid of its sense of ego, destitute of its knowledge of dualism, and lacking in any distinction between it and the state of the one Universal Soul.

¹¹ This state of the pure and self-intelligent soul is hidden by the various states of ignorance which I will now describe to you. These are three states of wakefulness known as embryonic waking, ordinary waking, and intense waking.¹² Again, the different states of dreaming are also said to be the grounds of its ignorance and these are waking dream, sleeping dream, sleepy waking and sound sleep (*susupti*). These are the seven grounds of ignorance.¹³ These are the seven grounds that produce sheer ignorance. When joined with one another they become many more mixed sattas known under different names, as you will hear by and by.

¹⁴ At first there was the intelligent Consciousness which gave rise to the nameless and pure intelligence which became the source of the would-be mind and individual soul.¹⁵ This intellect remained as the ever waking embryonic seed of all, which is why it is called the waking seed. It is the first condition of cognition, so it is said to be the primal waking state.

¹⁶ The waking state is next to the primal waking intelligence of God, and it is the belief in the individual personality of the ego.¹⁷ The great waking (*mahajagrat*) is the firm belief that I am such a

one, and this thing is mine, by virtue of my merits in this or bygone times (*karma*).¹⁸ The cognition of the reality of anything, either by bias or mistake, is called the waking dream. Examples are the sight of two moons in the halo, of silver in shells, water in the mirage, and the imaginary castle building of day dreamers.

¹⁹ Dreaming in sleep is of many kinds, as is known by one upon awaking who doubts their truth owing to their short-lived duration.²⁰ The reliance placed on things seen in a dream, after one wakes from his sleep, is called his waking dream, and lasts only in the mind as a memory.²¹ A thing long unseen and appearing dimly with a strong figure in the dream, if taken for a real thing of the waking state, is also called a waking dream.²² A dream dreamt either in the whole body or the dead body of the dreamer appears as a phantom of the waking state.

²³ Besides these six states, there is a sluggish state of the individual soul which is called his sound sleep (*susupta*) and is capable of feeling its future pleasures and pains.²⁴ In this last state of the soul or mind, all outward objects from a straw up to a mountain appear as mere atoms of dust in its presence, just as the mind sees a miniature of the world in profound meditation.

²⁵ I have thus told you Rama, the features of true knowledge and error in brief, but each of these states branches out into a hundred forms with various traits of their own.

²⁶ A long continuous waking dream is described as the waking state (*jagrat*) and it becomes diversified according to the diversity of its objects.²⁷ The waking state contains under it the conditions of the wakeful soul of God. Also, there are many things under these conditions that mislead men from one error to another, like a storm casts boats into whirlpools and eddies.²⁸ Some of the lengthened dreams in sleep appear like the waking sight of daylight, while others, though seen in the broad daylight of the waking state, are no better than night-dreams seen in the daytime, and therefore are called our daydreams.

²⁹ I have thus far related to you the seven grades of the grounds of ignorance which with all their varieties are to be carefully avoided by the right use of our reason and by the sight of the Supreme Soul in ourselves.

Chapter 118 — The Seven Stages of Knowledge

¹ Vasishta continued:—

O sinless Rama, now listen about the seven stages of awareness. This knowledge will keep you from plunging into the mire of ignorance.² Disputants are apt to describe many more stages of yoga meditation but in my opinion, these seven are sufficient to attain the chief good of ultimate liberation.

³ Knowledge is understanding. It is enough for understanding to know only these seven stages. However, liberation, which is the object of knowledge, transcends knowing these seven stages.

⁴ Knowledge of truth is liberation. Knowledge, truth and liberation are synonymous because the living being who has known the truth is freed from reincarnation by his liberation.

⁵ The grounds of knowledge comprise the desire of becoming good, and this good will is the first step. Then comes discretion or reasoning the second, followed by purity of mind, which is the third grade to gaining knowledge.⁶ The fourth is self reliance as the true refuge, then worldly apathy as the fifth. The sixth is the power of abstraction, and the seventh or the last stage of knowledge is generalization of all in one (*turya-gati*).⁷ Liberation is placed at the end of these and is attained without difficulty after them.

Attend now to the definitions of these steps as I shall explain them to you.

⁸ First of all is the desire of goodness springing from dispassion from worldly matters and consisting in the thought, "Why do I sit idle? I must know the scriptures in the company of good men."

⁹ The second is discretion, which arises from association with wise and good men, study of the scriptures, habitual aversion to worldliness, and consists in an inclination towards good conduct and doing all sorts of good acts.

¹⁰ The third is the subduing of the mind and restraining it from sensual enjoyments. These are produced by the two former qualities of good will and discretion.

¹¹ The fourth is self-reliance and dependence on the Divine Spirit as the true refuge of this soul. This is attainable by means of the three qualities described above.

¹² The fifth is worldly apathy, as shown by one's detachment from all earthly concerns and society of men, by means of the first four grounds of internal delight.¹³ By practice of these five virtues and by the feeling of self-satisfaction and inner delight, man is freed from his thoughts and cares about all internal and external objects.

¹⁴ Then comes the powers of analytic thought into the abstract meanings of things. This is the sixth step to attain true knowledge. It is fostered either by one's own effort or guidance of others in search of truth.

¹⁵ Continued practice of these six qualities, ignorance of differences in religion, and reducing all to the knowledge of the one true God of nature is called generalization.¹⁶ This universal generalization is like a living liberated man who sees all things in the same light. Above this is the state of that glorious light which is arrived by the disembodied soul.

¹⁷ Those fortunate men, O Rama, who have arrived at the seventh stage of knowledge are those great minds who delight in the light of their souls and have reached their highest state of humanity.¹⁸ The

living liberated are not plunged in the waters of pleasure and sorrow, but remain sedate and unmoved in both states. They are at liberty either to do or to slight the discharge of the duties of their conditions and positions in society.¹⁹ These men, being roused from their deep meditation by intruders, may assume their secular duties like men awakened from their slumber.²⁰ Being ravished by the inner delight of their souls, they feel no pleasure in the delights of the world, just as men immersed in sound sleep can feel no delight at the dalliance of beauties about them.

²¹ These seven stages of knowledge are known only to wise and thinking men and not to beasts, brutes or inert things all around us. They are unknown to barbarians and those who are barbarous in their minds and dispositions.²² But anyone who has attained these states of knowledge, whether it be a beast or barbarian, an embodied being or disembodied spirit, has undoubtedly obtained its liberation.

²³ Knowledge severs the bonds of ignorance and, by loosening them, produces the liberation of our souls. Knowledge is the sole cause of removing the fallacy of the appearance of water in the mirage and similar errors.²⁴ Those who are freed from ignorance, but not yet arrived at their ultimate perfection of disembodied liberation, have secured the salvation of their souls by being placed in these stages of knowledge in their embodied state during their lifetime.

²⁵ Some have passed all these stages and others two or three of them. Some have passed six grades, while a few have attained the seventh state all at once.²⁶ Some have gone over three stages, and others have attained the last. Some have passed four stages, and some no more than one or two of them.²⁷ There are some who have advanced only a quarter or half or three-quarters of a stage. Some have passed over four quarters and a half, and some six and a half.

²⁸ Common people walking upon this earth know nothing regarding these passengers in the paths of knowledge. They remain as blind as if their eyes were dazzled by some planetary light or eclipsed by its shadow.²⁹ Wise men who stand victorious on these seven grounds of knowledge are comparable to victorious kings. Celestial elephants are nothing before them, and mighty warriors must bend their heads before them.³⁰ Those great minds who are victors on these grounds of knowledge are worthy of veneration as conquerors of the enemies of their hearts and senses. They are entitled to a station above that of an emperor and an autocrat (*samrat* and *virat*) both in this world and in the next in their embodied and disembodied liberations.

Chapter 119 — Illustration of the Gold Ring: Form Versus Substance

¹ Vasishta said:—

The human soul reflecting on its sense of ego forgets its essence of the Supreme Soul, just as a gold ring thinking on its round form loses its thought of the gold substance of which it is made.

² Rama said, “Please tell me sage, how can gold have consciousness of its form of a ring, like a soul is conscious of its sense of ego?”

³ Vasishta said:—

The consciousness of men relates only to their substance and not the production and dissolution of their forms. So you should ask about the substance of the soul and gold, and not of ego and the ring, which are unsubstantial nothings in nature. ⁴ When the jeweler sells his gold ring for the price of gold, he undoubtedly delivers the gold which is the substance of the ring and not the ring without its substance.

⁵ Rama asked, “If such is the case, that you take the gold for the ring, then what becomes of the ring as we commonly take it to be? Explain this to me so that thereby I may know the substance of Brahman.”

⁶ Vasishta said:—

All form, O Rama, is formless and accidental quality without any essential property. So, if you would ascertain the nature of a non-existence, then tell me the shape and qualities of a barren woman’s son.

⁷ Do not fall into the error of taking the roundness of a ring as an essential property of it. The form of a thing is only apparent and not prominent to sight. ⁸ Water in a mirage, two moons in the sky, men’s sense of ego, and the forms of things, though appearing as real to sight and thought, cannot be proved as separate existences apart from their subjects. ⁹ Again, the likeness of silver appears in oyster shells but you cannot find even a particle of silver in the shell. ¹⁰ An imprudent view of a thing makes a nothing appear as real, like the appearance of silver in a shell or water in a mirage. ¹¹ The invalidity of a nothing appears falsely as an existent entity to sight, the fallacy of a thing as something where there is nothing of the kind. ¹² Sometimes an unreal shadow acts the part of a real substance, such as the false apprehension of a ghost kills a lad from fear of being killed by it.

¹³ After its form of jewelry is destroyed, there remains nothing in gold jewelry except gold. Therefore, the forms of the ring and bracelet are no more than drops of oil or water on a heap of sand. The forms are absorbed in the substance, just as the fluids in the sand.

¹⁴ There is nothing real or unreal on earth other than the false creations of our brain, and these whether known as real or unreal are equally productive of their consequences, like the sights and fears of ghosts in children. ¹⁵ A thing, whether it is so or not, proves itself as it is believed to be by different kinds and minds of men. Poison becomes as effective as an elixir to the sick, and ambrosia proves as heinous as hemlock with the immoderate.

¹⁶ Belief in only the essence of the soul constitutes true knowledge. Belief in individual ego and mind, as these are generally believed in this world, is ignorance. Therefore abandon the thought of your false and unfounded sense of ego as individual existence. ¹⁷ As there is no roundness of the ring inherent in gold, so there are no individual egos in the all-pervading Universal Soul.

¹⁸ There is nothing everlasting beside Brahman and no personality of Him as a Brahma, Vishnu or any other. There is no substantive existence such as the world, only Brahma's offspring called the patriarchs. ¹⁹ There are no other worlds beside Brahma, nor is there any heaven without Him. Hills, demons, mind and body all rest in that spirit which is not any of these. ²⁰ He is no elementary principle, nor is he any material cause. He is none of the three times of past, present and future but all. He is not anything in being or not-being. ²¹ He is beyond your concepts of individual ego, selfhood and selfishness, and all your entities and non-entities. There is no attribution or particularity in He who is above all your ideas. He is none of the ideal personifications of your notions.

²² He is the fullness of the world, supporting and moving all, being unmoved and unsupported by any. He is everlasting bliss without decay, having no name or symbol or cause of his own. ²³ He is no being (*sat*) that is born and existent, nor is He non-existent. He is neither the beginning, middle or end of anything, but is all in all. He is unthinkable in the mind, and unutterable by speech. He is vacuum about the emptiness, and a bliss above all joy.

²⁴ Rama said, "Now I understand that Brahman is the same in all things, yet I want to know what is this creation that we see all about us?"

²⁵ Vasishta replied:—

The Supreme Spirit being perfectly tranquil and all things being situated in Him, it is wrong to speak of this creation or that when there is no such thing as a creation at anytime.

²⁶ All things exist in the all containing spirit of God, just as the whole body of water is contained in the universal ocean. But there is fluctuation in the waters owing to their fluidity, whereas there is no motion in the quiet and motionless spirit of God.

²⁷ The light of the luminaries shines of itself, but not so the Divine light. It is the nature of all lights to shine of themselves, but the light of Brahma is not visible to sight. ²⁸ As the waves of the ocean rise and fall in the body of its waters, so these phenomena appear as concepts in the mind of God (as his ever-varying thoughts). ²⁹ To men of little understanding, these thoughts of the Divine Mind appear as realities. They think this sort of ideal creation will last for ages.

³⁰ Creation is determined to be a thought of the Divine Mind. Creation is not anything different from the mind of God, just as the visible sky is nothing other than a part of Infinity. ³¹ The production and extinction of the world are mere thoughts of the Divine Mind, just as the formation and dissolution of ornaments take place in the same substance of gold.

³² The mind that has obtained its calm composure views creation as full of the presence of God. Those who are led by their own convictions take the nonexistent for reality, like children believing ghosts are real existences. ³³ The consciousness of individual ego causes the error of the objective knowledge of creation. The tranquil unconsciousness of ourselves brings us to the knowledge of the Supreme, who is above the objective and inert creation.

³⁴ These different created things appear in a different light to the wise who view them all in the unity of God, just as the intelligent well know that toy puppets of play soldiers are composed of mud and clay. ³⁵ This plenitude of the world is without beginning or end and appears like a faultless or perfect piece of workmanship. It is full with the fullness of the Supreme Being and remains full in the fullness

of God.³⁶ This fullness which appears as the created world is essentially the Great Brahma and is situated in his greatness, just as the sky is situated in the sky, tranquility in tranquility, and joy in joy.

³⁷ Look at the reflection of a very long landscape in a mirror or the picture of a far stretching city in a miniature and you will find distances lost in their closeness. So the distances of worlds are lost in their proximity to one another in the spirit of God.

³⁸ Some think of the world as a non-entity and others as an entity by taking the world in different lights of being a thing beside God or a reflection of Brahman.³⁹ After all, it can have no real entity, being like the picture of a city and not the city itself. It is as false as the appearance of clear water in a desert mirage, and that of a double moon in the sky.

⁴⁰ Magicians show magic cities in the air by sprinkling handfuls of dust before our eyes. In the same way our false consciousness represents the unreal world as a reality.⁴¹ Unless our inborn ignorance, like an arbor of harmful plants, is burnt down to the very root by the flame of right reasoning, it will not cease to spread out its branches and grow the rankest weeds of our imaginary pleasures and sorrows.

Chapter 120 — King Lavana Visits the Forest Where He Lived as a Tribal; Lamentation of the Woman Tribal

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Now Rama, listen to the wonderful power of error displayed in changing phenomena, like the changing forms of ornaments in the substance of the same gold.

² King Lavana, having perceived the falsehood of his vision at the end of his dream, resolved the following day to visit that great forest himself. ³ He thought to himself, “Ah! When shall I revisit the Vindhyan region? It is inscribed in my mind and I remember having undergone a great many hardships in my life there as a forester.”

⁴ So saying, he traveled south accompanied by his ministers and attendants, as if he was going to make a conquest of that quarter. In a few days he arrived at the foot of the mountain. ⁵ There he wandered about the southern, eastern and western shores of the sea. He was as delighted with his round course as the luminary of the day in his daily journey from east to west. ⁶ In a certain region, he saw a deep and sorrowful forest stretching wide along his path, like the dark and dismal realms of death.

⁷ Wandering in this region he saw everything he had seen in his dream. He inquired into former circumstances, and wandered to learn whether they were that same as what he saw in his vision.

⁸ He recognized the tribal (*chandala*) hunters of his dream, and being curious to know the rest of the events, he continued in his wandering about the forest. ⁹ Then he saw a hamlet at the edge of the wilderness, foggy with smoke, and appearing like the place where he bore the name of Pushta-Pukkusha or cherished tribal. ¹⁰ There he saw the same huts and hovels and the various kinds of human houses, fields and plains, with the same men and women that dwelt there before. ¹¹ He saw the same landscapes and leafless branches of trees, shorn of their foliage by the all devouring famine. He saw the same hunters pursuing their chase and the same helpless orphans lying around.

¹² He saw the old lady (his mother-in-law) wailing at the misfortunes of other women who were lamenting like her with their eyes drowned in tears at the untimely deaths and innumerable miseries of their fellow brethren. ¹³ The old matrons with their eyes flowing with brilliant drops of tears, their bodies and bosoms emaciated under the pressure of their afflictions, were mourning with loud cries of sorrow in that dreary district, stricken by drought and dearth.

¹⁴ They cried, “O you sons and daughters who lie dead with your emaciated bodies for want of food for these three days, say where have your lives fled, stricken as they were by the steel of famine from the armor of your bodies. ¹⁵ We remember your sweet smiles showing your coral teeth resembling red gunjaphalas to our lords as they descended from towering palm trees with red-ripe fruit held in their teeth, and growing on the cloud-capped mountains. ¹⁶ When shall we again see the fierce leap of our children springing on wolves crouching in groves of kadamba, jamb, lavanga and gunja trees? ¹⁷ Even in the face of Kama, the god of love, we do not see those graces that we used to see in the blue and black faces, the dark color of spice leaves, of our children when they feasted on their dainty food of fish and flesh.”

¹⁸ “My blackish daughter,” says one (the mother-in-law), “has been snatched away from me with my dear husband like the dark Yamuna by the fierce Yama. O they have been carried away from me like a

tremendous gale blows a tamara tree branch with its clustering flowers from this woodland scene.

¹⁹ O my daughter, with your necklace of the strings of red gunja seeds gracing the firm breast of your youthful person, and with your swarthy complexion like the sea of ink gently shaken by the breeze. Ah! Where have you fled with your clothing of woven withered leaves and your teeth as black as the jet-jambu fruits?"

²⁰ "O young prince, who was as fair as the full moon and did forsake the fairies of your harem, and who took so much delight in my daughter, where have you fled from us? Ah my daughter! She too is dead in your absence and fled from my presence. ²¹ Being cast on the waves of this earthly ocean and joined to the daughter of a tribal, you were, O prince, subjected to mean and vile employment that disgraced your princely character. ²² Ah! that daughter of mine with her trembling eyes, like those of the timid fawn, and O, that husband valiant as the royal tiger, you are both gone together, just as the high hopes and great efforts of men flee with the loss of their wealth."

²³ "Now without a husband and lately having also lost my daughter, and being thrown in a distant and barren land, I have become the most miserable and wretched of beings. Born of a low caste, I am cast out of all prospects in life. I have become a personification of terror to myself and a sight of horror to others. ²⁴ O, that the Lord has made me a widowed woman and subjected me to the insult of the vulgar and the snobbery of the affluent. Prostrated by hunger and mourning at the loss of husband and child, I rove constantly from door to door begging for alms for my support."

²⁵ "It is better that one who is unfortunate and friendless, or subject to passion and diseases, should die sooner than live in misery. Dead and inanimate beings are far better than the living miserable.

²⁶ Those who are without friends and who have to toil and moil in unfriendly places are like the grass of the earth, trampled under feet and overwhelmed under a flood of disasters."

²⁷ The king seeing his aged mother-in-law mourning in this manner, offered her some consolation through the medium of her female companions. Then he asked that lady to tell him, "Who are you? What do you do here? Who was your daughter and who is your son?"

²⁸ She answered him with tears in her eyes. "This village is called Pukkasa-Ghosha. Here I had a Pukkasa for my husband who had a daughter as gentle as the moon. ²⁹ She happened to have a husband, beautiful as the moon, who was a king and chanced to pass by this way. By this accident they were matched together, like an ass finding by chance a pot of honey lying on her way in the forest.

³⁰ She lived long with him in married bliss and produced to him both sons and daughters who grew up in this forest like a gourd plant grows on a tree serving as its support."

Chapter 121 — The Reality of King Lavana's Dream Explained; Proof of the Futility of Mind

¹ The tribal continued, “O lord of men! After lapse of some time, there occurred a famine in this place owing to the drought of rain, which broke down all men under its dire pressure. ² Pressed by extreme scarcity, all our village people scattered far abroad and they perished in famine and never returned.

³ From then on, O lord, we are exposed to utmost misery. We sit here lamenting in our helpless poverty. Behold us lord, all bathed in tears falling profusely from our never drying eyelids.”

Vasishta speaking:—

⁴ At hearing these words from the mouth of the elderly lady, the king was lost in wonder. Looking at the face of his follower the faithful minister, he remained in dumb amazement like a figure in a picture. ⁵ He reflected repeatedly on this strange occurrence and its curious concurrence with his adventures in the dream. He made repeated queries relating to other circumstances. The more he heard and learned, the more he found their coincidence with the occurrences of his vision. ⁶ He sympathized with their sorrows and saw them in the same state as he had seen them before in his dream. Then he gave suitable gifts and presents to relieve their wants and sorrows. ⁷ He stayed there a long while and pondered on the decrees of destiny.

Then the wheel of fortune brought him back to his house, where he entered amidst the loud cheers and low salutations of the citizens. ⁸ In the morning the king appeared in his court hall and sitting there amidst his courtiers, he asked me, “How is it, O sage, that my dream has come to be verified in my presence to each item and to my great surprise? ⁹ They answered me exactly and to the very point all that I asked of them. They have removed the doubt in my mind of their truth, like winds disperse the clouds of heaven.”

¹⁰ Know this, O Rama, it is the illusion of ignorance (*avidya*) that is the cause of a great many errors. It makes the untruth appear as truth, and represents sober reality as unreality.

¹¹ Rama said, “Tell me sage, how could the dream be verified? It is a mysterious account that cannot find a place in my understanding.”

¹² Vasishta replied:—

O Rama, everything is possible to the illusion of ignorance which shows the fallacy of a picture in a pot. Illusion represents the actual occurrences of life as dreams and dreams as realities. ¹³ Distance appears to be near, as a distant mountain seen in the mirror. A long time seems a short interval, as in a night of undisturbed repose. ¹⁴ What is untrue seems to be a truth as in dreaming one's own death in sleep. That which is impossible appears possible, as in flying in a dream. ¹⁵ The stable seems unsteady, as in the false notion of the motion of fixed objects to one passing in a vehicle. The unmoving seem to be moving to one under the influence of his inebriation. ¹⁶ The mind infatuated by its interest sees all that it thinks upon within itself as exposed to its view. It sees things in the same light as they are painted in his fancy, whether they exist or not, real or unreal.

¹⁷ As soon as the mind contracts its ignorance by its false notions of “I” and “you”, it becomes subject to endless errors without beginning, middle or end. ¹⁸ It is notion that gives shape to all things. It makes a kalpa age appear as a moment and it prolongs a moment of time to a whole kalpa. ¹⁹ A man

deprived of understanding believes himself to have become a sheep, and a fighting ram thinks himself to be a lion in his ideal bravery.²⁰ Ignorance causes the blunder of taking things for what they are not and falling into the errors of "I" and "you." All errors in the mind produce errors in actions also.²¹ It is by mere accident that men come into possession of the objects of their desire, and it is custom that determines the mode of mutual dealings.

²² Lavana's memory of his dream living in with the tribals of Pukkasa was the internal cause that represented to him the external picture of that place as if it were a reality.²³ As the human mind is liable to forget many things that it had actually done, so it is susceptible to remember those acts as true which were never done but merely had been thought upon in the mind.²⁴ In this manner, as long as I am thinking of having eaten something, it appears true to me even though I am really fasting. The thought that I have been in a distant country in a dream appears true to me while I think the thought.

²⁵ This is how the king came to find the same conduct where the tribals lived by the Vindhya Mountains. He had been impressed with its notion in his dream as said before.²⁶ Again, Lavana's false dream of the tribals took possession of their minds also.²⁷ The notion of Lavana settled in the minds of the tribals just like the thoughts of these people arose in the mind of the king.

²⁸ The same sentiments and figures of speech occur to different poets of distant ages and countries, so it should not be unexpected that the same thoughts and ideas should rise simultaneously in the minds of different men.²⁹ In common experience, we find notions and ideas stand for the things themselves, otherwise nothing is known to exist at all without our mind's notion or idea of it.³⁰ One idea embraces many others under it, like those of waves and currents are contained under that of water. So one thought is associated by others relating its past, present and future conditions of being, just as the thought of a seed accompanies the thoughts of its past and future states and its fruits and flowers of the tree.

³¹ Nothing is an entity or a non-entity and nothing can be said to exist or not exist unless we have a positive idea of its existence or a negative notion of its non-existence.³² All that we see in our error is as non-existent as oil in sand. In reality, the bracelet is nothing but a form of the substance of gold.

³³ A fallacy can have no connection with the reality, just as the fallacy of the world with the reality of God, the fallacy of the ring with the substance of gold, and of the serpent with the rope. The connection or mutual relation of things of the same kind is quite evident in our minds.

³⁴ The relationship between gum resin and the tree is one of dissimilar union and affords no distinct ideas except that the tree contains the gum.³⁵ As all things are full of the Spirit, so we have distinct ideas of them in our minds. Minds are also spiritual substances. They are not like dull material stones which have no feelings.³⁶ All things in the world are intellectually true and real. Therefore we have their ideas impressed in our minds.³⁷ There cannot be a relationship or connection between two dissimilar things which may be lasting but are never united together. Without such mutual relation of things, no idea of both can be formed together.³⁸ Similar things being joined together form the wholes of the same kind, presenting one form and differing in nothing.³⁹ Consciousness being joined with an abstract idea produces an invisible, inner and uniform thought. Dull matter joined to another dull object forms a denser material object to view. But consciousness and material can never unite together owing to their different natures.

⁴⁰ The intellectual and material parts of a person can never be drawn together in any picture. The material picture lacks the intellectual part which has consciousness and the power of knowledge.

⁴¹ Intellectual beings do not take into account the different material things like wood and stone which combine for some useful purpose, such building a house. ⁴² The relationship between the tongue and taste is also homogeneous. Taste and the instrument of tasting are both watery substances and there is no heterogeneous relation between them. ⁴³ But there is no relation between consciousness and matter, like there is between stone and wood. Consciousness cannot combine with wood and stone to form anything.

⁴⁴ Spiritually considered, all things are alike because they are full of the same spirit. Otherwise the error of distinction between the viewer and the view creates endless differences, like those between wood and stones and other things. ⁴⁵ The combination of unseen spirits is easily conceived because spirits can assume any form at one's pleasure and having no end.

⁴⁶ Know, you who seek truth, that all things are identical with the entity of God. Renounce your knowledge of non-entities and the various kinds of errors and fallacies and know the one as all.

⁴⁷ Consciousness is full with its knowledge, so there is nothing lacking in us. Consciousness presents us everything in its circumference, just like imagination in its wide range shows us the sights of its air-built castles and everything beside. ⁴⁸ To Him there is no limit of time or place, but his presence extends over all his creation. Ignorance separates the creator from creation and raises the errors of "I" and "you."

⁴⁹ Forgetting the knowledge of the substance of gold, man contracts the error of taking it for the form of ornament. The mistake of jewelry for gold is like taking one thing for another, and mistaking the production for the producer. ⁵⁰ The error of phenomenon vanishes upon loss of its sight, and the differences among pieces of jewelry is lost in the substance of gold. ⁵¹ The knowledge of unity removes that of a distinct creation, just as the knowledge of clay takes away the sense of toy soldiers made from it.

⁵² The same Brahma causes the error of the reality of the exterior worlds, just as the underlying sea causes the error of waves on its surface. The same wood is mistaken for the carved figure, and common clay is mistaken for the pot made of it.

⁵³ Between sight and its object lies the eye of the beholder which is beyond the sight of its viewer and is neither the view nor the viewer. ⁵⁴ The mind traversing from one place to another leaves the body in between, which is neither moving nor quite unmoved because only its mental part is in its moving state.

⁵⁵ Remain always in that quiet state which is not waking, dreaming or sleeping, and which is not the state of consciousness or unconsciousness, but one of everlasting tranquility and rest. ⁵⁶ Drive away your dullness and remain always in the company of your sound intellect like a solid rock. Whether in joy or grief, commit your soul to your maker. ⁵⁷ There is nothing to lose or earn in this world. Therefore remain in uniform joy and bliss whether you think yourself to be blessed or unblessed in life. ⁵⁸ The soul residing in your body neither loves nor hates anything at anytime. Therefore rest in quiet and fear nothing for what happens to your body. Do not engage your mind with the actions of

your body.⁵⁹ Remain free from anxiety about the present, just as you are unconcerned about the future. Never be impelled by the impulses of your mind but remain steadfast in your trust in the true God.

⁶⁰ Be unconcerned with all and remain as an absent man. Let your heart remain detached from everything like a block of stone or a toy made of wood. Look with the spiritual light of your soul and see your mind as an inanimate thing.

⁶¹ As there is no water in stone or fire in water, so the spiritual man has no mental action, nor does the Divine Spirit have any.⁶² If something unseen should ever come to do any action, that action is not attributed to the unseen agent but to something else in the mind.⁶³ The uncontrolled selfish (unspiritual) man who follows the dictates of his fickle and willful mind resembles a man of the border land following the customs of outcastes or barbarians.

⁶⁴ Having disregarded the dictates of your vile mind, you may remain at ease and as fearless as an unconscious statue made of clay.⁶⁵ He who understands that there is no such thing as the mind, or that he had one before but it is dead in him today, becomes as immovable as a marble statue with this assurance in himself.⁶⁶ There being no appearance of the mind in any case, and you having no such thing in you in reality except your soul, then say, why do you vainly infer its existence for your own error and harm?⁶⁷ Those who vainly subject themselves to the false apparition of the mind are mostly men of unsound understandings who bring destruction on themselves instead of the full moon of the pure soul.

⁶⁸ Remain firm as you are with yourself (soul) by casting your fancied and fanciful mind far away from you. Be free from the thoughts of the world by being settled in the thought of the Supreme Soul.

⁶⁹ They who follow a non-existence such as the unreal mind are like fools who shoot at the empty air and are cast into the shade.⁷⁰ He who has cleansed off his mind is indeed a man of great understanding. He has gone across the error of the existence of the world and has become purified in his soul.

We have considered long and we have never found anything like the impure mind in the pure soul.

Chapter 122 — Ascertainment of the Self or Soul

¹ Vasishta said:—

After the birth of a man and a slight development of his understanding, he should associate with the company of good and wise men.² Except by the light of scriptures and association with the good and wise, there is no way to cross the river of ignorance that runs in its constant course flowing in a thousand streams.

³ By reasoning man is able to discern what is good for him and what he must avoid.⁴ Then he arrives to that ground of reason which is known as good will, or a desire to do what is good and keep from what is bad and evil.⁵ Then he is led by his reason to the power of reasoning, discerning truth from untruth and right from wrong.⁶ As he improves in knowledge, he gets rid of his improper desires and purifies his mind from all worldly cares.⁷ Then he is said to have gained that stage of knowledge which is called the purity of his soul and mind, and of his heart and conduct.

⁸ When a yogi or adept attains full knowledge, he is said to have arrived at his state of goodness.⁹ By this means and the curtailing of his desires, he arrives at the state called detachment or indifference to all worldly matters and he is no more subjected to the consequence of his actions.¹⁰ From the curtailment of desires, a yogi learns to withdraw his mind from the unrealities of the world.

¹¹ Whether sitting inactive in samadhi meditation, or doing anything for himself or others, he must fix his mind to whatever produces real good to the world. His soul being cool by the faintness of his desires is habituated to do its duties without the knowledge of what it is doing.¹² Truly, he who has subdued his mind has reached the contemplative stage of yoga meditation.

¹³ Thus one who has his mind dead in himself learns by practice of years to perform his duties by refraining from his thoughts of external objects. Such a one is said to have attained *turiya* or the fourth stage of spiritual elevation and has become liberated in his lifetime.¹⁴ He is not glad to get anything or sorry to miss it. He lives without fear of accidents and is content with whatever he gets.

¹⁵ O Rama, you have known whatever is to be known by man. You certainly have extinguished your desire in all your actions through life.¹⁶ Your thoughts are all spiritual and transcend the actions of the physical body, though you are in your embodied state. Do not give yourself to joy or grief but know you are free from decay and defect.¹⁷ Spiritually you are a pure and bright substance that is omnipresent, ubiquitous and ever in its ascendancy, devoid of pleasure and pain, and of death and disease.¹⁸ Why do you lament at or loss of a friend when you are so friendless in yourself? Being thrown alone in this world, whom do you claim as a friend of your soul?

¹⁹ We see only the particles of matter of which this body is composed. It exists and passes away from its place in its time. But there is no rising or falling of the soul.²⁰ Being imperishable in yourself, why do you fear to fall into nothing? Why think of the destruction of your soul, which is never subject to death?

²¹ When a jar is broken in two, its emptiness is not lost but mixes with the air. The body being destroyed, the indestructible soul is not lost with it.²² As the sunlight that causes the appearance of a river in a mirage is not lost at the disappearance of the apparent river, so the immortal soul does not

perish upon dissolution of the frail body.

²³ There is a certain illusion which raises false appetites within us. Otherwise, the unity of the soul requires the help of no duality or secondary substance in order to be united with the sole unity.

²⁴ There is no object of sense — whether visible, tangible, audible or of taste or smelling — that can affect the unconnected soul. ²⁵ All things and their powers are contained in the all-powerful and all-comprehensive soul. These powers are displayed throughout the world, but the soul is as void as the empty air.

²⁶ O Raghava, mental deception presents the phenomena of the three worlds representing diverse forms according to the threefold nature (*gunas*) of man. ²⁷ There are three methods of dispelling this delusion of the mind, namely, by the tranquility of the mind, by destroying its desires, and by abandonment of acts.

²⁸ The world is a crushing mill with its lower and upper stones of the earth and heaven. Our desires are the cords that constantly drag us under it. Therefore Rama, break off these ropes. ²⁹ Our ignorance of spiritual knowledge is the cause of all our errors, but our acquaintance with it leads us to endless joy and ultimately to Brahman himself. ³⁰ A living being, having proceeded from Brahman and travelled over the earth at pleasure, in the end turns to Brahman through his knowledge of Him.

³¹ Rama, all things have sprung from one being who is perfect joy itself, inconceivable and without decay in its nature. All these things are like the rays of that light, or like the light of that everlasting fire.

³² These are like lines on the leaves of trees, and like the curls and waves on the surface of waters. They are like ornaments made of that gold, and like the heat and cold of fire and water.

³³ Thus the three worlds exist in the thought of the Divine Mind. It has sprung from the mind of God and it rests in its same state with the all-comprehending Mind.

³⁴ This Mind is called Brahma, who is the soul of all existence. He being known, the world is known also. As he is the knower of all, he gives us the knowledge of all things. ³⁵ This all pervasive Being is explained to us by the learned with labels like soul, intellect and Brahma, used both in scriptures and popular language. ³⁶ The pure notion that we have of an everlasting being, apart from all ideas from physical senses and impressions, is called Consciousness and soul. ³⁷ This Consciousness or Intelligent Soul is much more transparent than the ethereal sky. It is the fullness that contains the plenitude of the world as a disjoined and distinct reflection of itself.

³⁸ The knowledge that the unreal reflection of world is a separate existence is the cause of all our ignorance and error. But the view of their existence in the mirror of the Supreme Soul blends them all to myself also.

³⁹ Now Rama, you have a bodiless soul of the form of pure consciousness. You can have no cause to fall into the error of being sorry for or afraid of the vanities of the world. ⁴⁰ How can the unembodied soul be affected by the passions and feelings of the body? It is only the ignorant and unintelligent who are subject to vain suspicions about unrealities. ⁴¹ Even the indestructible consciousness of the unintelligent is not destroyed by the destruction of their bodies. How then should the intelligent be afraid of their dissolution?

⁴² Consciousness is irresistible in its course and roves about the solar path. It is the intellectual part

that makes the man, and not the outer body.⁴³ The soul called the inner person (*purusha*), whether it abides in the body or not, and whether it is intelligent or otherwise, never dies upon the death of the body.

⁴⁴ Whatever miseries you meet with in this transient world, they all appertain to the body and not to the intangible soul or consciousness.⁴⁵ The intellectual soul is removed from the region of the mind. It is not approached by the pleasures and pains affecting the body and mind.

⁴⁶ The soul that has curbed its earthly desires after the dissolution of its prison house of the body flies to its seat in the spirit of Brahman in the same manner as a bee lying hidden under the cover of lotus petals in the darkness of the night takes to its heavenward flight by the dawning light of the day.

⁴⁷ If life is known to be frail and the living state to be a transient scene, then say, O Rama, what is lost by the loss of this prison-house of the body, and what is it that you mourn for?⁴⁸ Think therefore, O Rama, on the nature of truth and mind and not about the errors of ignorance. Be free from your earthly desires and know the sinless soul to be void of all desires.

⁴⁹ The intellectual soul being tranquil and transparent, a mere witness of our doings without any doing or desire of its own, receives the reflection of the God without desire, just as a mirror reflects the images of things.⁵⁰ The soul being, as said before, a translucent particle, reflects the images of all worlds in itself like a polished gem reflects the rays of light in its bosom.⁵¹ The relation between the detached soul and the world is like that of the mirror and its reflections. The difference and identity of the soul and the world are of the same kind.

⁵² As the activities of living beings have a free play with the rising sun, so the duties of the world are fully discharged by the rising of consciousness.⁵³ As soon as you get rid of your error of the substantiality of the world, you come to the consciousness of it being a vacuum resting in the spirit of God.⁵⁴ As the nature of a lighted lamp is to spread its light all around, so the nature of mental philosophy is to enlighten us with the real state of the soul.

⁵⁵ The essence of the Supreme Soul at first gave rise to the mind (will) which spreads out the universe with its network of endless varieties. It was like the sky issuing out of the infinite emptiness and assuming the shape of blue atmosphere which is also a nothing.⁵⁶ Removal of desires melts down the mind and dissolves the mist of ignorance from the face of consciousness. Then appears the bright light of the one infinite and uncreated God, like the clear sky of autumn after the clouds disperse.

⁵⁷ At first the mind grows out from the Supreme Soul with all its activities and takes the nature of the lotus-born Brahma by its desire of creation. It stretches out a variety of worlds by its creative will, like fancied apparitions appearing before the imaginations of deluded children.⁵⁸ Nonentity appears like an entity before us. It dies away at death and reappears with our new birth. The mind itself takes its rise from Divine Consciousness and displays itself in the substance of the Divine Soul, like waves playing on the surface of the waters of the deep.

BOOK IV
On Existence
(*Sthiti Khanda*)

This section discusses the place of the individual being (jiva) in the scheme of creation. Vasishtha points out that the individual is none other than the ego sense or I known as ahamkara. This ego sense is the chief impediment to living with the knowledge of ones true self (atman stithi). It is because of the ego sense that human beings fail to recognize themselves as they really are and suffer misery. It is only when the identification with the ego sense is extinguished that a seeker attains realization of the atman, the Supreme Soul.

The body and the senses are inert. It is the chidabhasa, the reflected light of the atman, that gives life to the body and makes the senses perform their functions. The objects perceived by the senses are not different from the atman. The perceiver and the objects perceived both originate from the atman and therefore are identical. When a person gains firm comprehension of this truth, he or she realizes that nothing exists apart from ones own atman or Self.

This atman is then realized as both the origin of this universe and its enjoyer as well. When this knowledge becomes firm a person is freed from the duality of happiness and sorrow. Chastity (bramacharya), constant practice (abhyas), and detachment (vairagya) are the means for attaining this knowledge, which in turn leads to a firm abidance in the Self (atman stithi).

Chapter 1 — Immortal Spirit Cannot Have a Material Seed to Produce any Material World

¹ Vasishta said:—

Attend now Rama, to the subject of existence which follows that of production. This knowledge produces nirvana or utter annihilation of the self or soul.

² Know that the world of phenomena that exists before you, and your knowledge of ego or self-existence are only false conceptions of the formless nonexistence or emptiness.³ You see tints of various colors painting the empty sky without any paint or their cause. This is only a conception of the mind without its visual perception, like the vision in a dream of one who is not in a state of sound sleep.⁴ It is like a city in the sky built and present in your mind, or like shivering apes warming themselves by red clay thinking it to be red hot fire. It is pursuing an unreality.

⁵ The world of phenomena is only a different aspect of Brahma, like that of a whirlpool in water, and like the unsubstantial sunlight appears as a real substance in the sky.⁶ It is like the baseless fabric of gold of the celestials on high, and like the air-built castle of gandharvas in the midway sky.⁷ It is like a false sea in a mirage, appearing true at the time, and like the celestial utopian cities of imagination in empty air that are taken for truth.⁸ It is like romantic realms with their picturesque scenes in poets' imaginations which are nowhere in nature. It seems to be solid and thick within, but it is without any pith or solidity, like a thing in an empty dream.

⁹ It is like the ethereal sphere full of light all around but all hollow within. It is like the blue autumn sky with its light and flimsy clouds without any rainwater.¹⁰ It is like an unsubstantial vacuum with the cerulean blue of solid sapphire, and like mansions and women appearing in dreams, fleeting as air and intangible to touch.¹¹ It is like a flower garden in a picture painted with blooming blossoms and appearing as fragrant but without any fragrance. It is luminous to sight without the inherent heat of light, and resembles the orb of the sun or a flaming fire represented in a picture.¹² It is like a domain of ideas, the language of the brain, an unreal reality, or a seeming something. It is like a painting of a bed of lotus flowers without essence or fragrance.¹³ It is like the variegated sky painted with colors that it does not possess. It is as un-solid as empty air and as many colored as the rainbow without any color of its own.

¹⁴ All its various colorings of materiality fade away under the right discrimination of reason, and in the end it is found to be as un-solid a substance as the stem of a plantain tree.¹⁵ It is like the rotation of black spots before the eyes of a blind man, and like the shape of a shadowy nonexistence presented as something existent before the naked eye.

¹⁶ Like a bubble of water, the world seems like something substantial to sight, but in reality all hollow within, and though appearing as juicy, it is without any moisture at all.¹⁷ Bubbling worlds are as wide spread as the morning dews or frost, but take them up and you will find them to be nothing. Some think it is gross matter; others a vacuum. Some believe it is a fluctuation of thought or a false vision. Many believe it to be mere compounds of atoms.

¹⁸ I am partly of a material frame, my body and mind, but spiritually I am an empty immaterial substance. Although I can be felt by the touch of the hand, yet I am as intangible as a nocturnal fiend (an empty shadow only).

¹⁹ Rama said. "Sage, it is said that at the end of a great kalpa age, the visible world remains in its seed, after which it develops again in its present form. Please fully explain this to me. ²⁰ Are they ignorant or knowing men who think in these ways? Please sage, tell me the truth to answer my questions and tell me about the process of development."

²¹ Vasishta replied:—

Those who say that the physical world existed in the form of a seed at the final sleep of Brahma are altogether ignorant of the truth and talk like children to children. ²² Hear me tell you how contrary it is to right reason and how far removed from truth. It is a false supposition leading both the preacher and hearer of such a doctrine to great error and an egregious mistake. ²³ Those who attempt to show the existence of the world in the form of a germ in a physical seed maintain a very silly position, as I shall now explain unto you.

²⁴ A seed is in itself a visible thing. It is more an object of sense than that of the mind, like seeds of rice and barley are seen to sprout forth in their germs and leaves. ²⁵ The mind is beyond the six organs of sense and is a very minute particle. It cannot possibly be born of itself, nor become the seed of the universe. ²⁶ The Supreme Spirit also, being more rarefied than the subtle ether and indefinable by words, cannot be of the form of a seed.

²⁷ That which is as minute as a nothing is equivalent to nothing. It could never be a physical seed, without which there could be no germ nor sprout. ²⁸ That which is more rare and transparent than the empty and clear sky cannot possibly contain the world with all its mountains and seas, and the heavens with all their hosts in its transcendent substratum.

²⁹ There is nothing in any way like a substance in the substantiality of that Being. If there is anything there, why is it not visible to us? ³⁰ There is nothing that comes of itself, and nothing material comes from immaterial spirit. Who can believe a hill proceeds from the hollowness of an earthen pot?

³¹ How can a thing remain with another which is opposed to it in its nature? How can there be any shadow where there is light, and how does darkness reside in the disc of the sun, or even coldness in fire? ³² How can an atom contain a hill, or anything exist in nothing? The union of a similar with its dissimilar is as impossible as that of shadow with the light of the sun.

³³ It is reasonable to suppose that the material seeds of the fig and rice should bring forth their shoots in time, but it is unreasonable to believe that a large material world to be contained in an immaterial atom.

³⁴ We see the same organs of sense and their sensations in all men in every country, but there is no uniformity in men's understandings, nor can there be any reason assigned to this difference. ³⁵ Those who assign a certain cause to some event betray their ignorance of the true cause. What produces the effect except the very thing by some of its accessory powers?

³⁶ Throw far away the doctrine of cause and effect invented by the ignorant. Know the truth that there is no beginning or end and it appears as the world.

Chapter 2 — There Is No Material Explanation for the World; It Exists only in Divine Consciousness

¹ Vasishta said:—

Now Rama who best knows the knowable, in order to dispel your belief in any separate existence of the world, all false fabrications of men, I will explain that there is only one pure and empty principle of Consciousness.

² If we assume there was the germ of the world in the beginning, it still leaves the question, what were the accompanying causes of its development? ³ Without cooperation of the necessary causes, there can be no vegetation of the seed, as no barren woman is ever known to bring forth an offspring in spite of the seed contained in her womb. ⁴ If it was possible for the seed to grow without the aid of accompanying causes, then it is useless to believe in the primary cause when it is possessed of such power in its own nature.

⁵ It is Brahma himself who abides in his self in the form of creation at the beginning of the world. This creation is as formless as the creator himself, and there is no relation of cause and effect between them.

⁶ It is wrong to say that the earth and other elements are the accompanying causes of production because it is impossible for these elements to exist prior to their creation. ⁷ To say the world remained quiescent in its own nature, together with the accompanying causes, is like talk proceeding from the mouths of children and not of the wise.

⁸ Therefore Rama, there neither is or was or ever will be a separate world in existence. It is the one intelligence of the divinity that displays the creation in itself. ⁹ So Rama, there being an absolute absence of this visible world, it is certain that Brahma himself is All throughout endless space. ¹⁰ The knowledge of the visible world is destroyed by destruction of all its causalities, but the causes continuing in the mind will cause phenomena to appear to the view even after their outward extinction. ¹¹ Elimination of phenomena can only result from the elimination of its causes, but if they are not suppressed in the mind, how can you eliminate the sight of phenomena? ¹² There is no other means of destroying our false conception of the world except by a total elimination of phenomena from our view.

¹³ It is certain that the appearance of the visible world is no more than our inner conception in the emptiness of consciousness. The knowledge of "I," "you," and "he" are false impressions on our minds like figures in paintings. ¹⁴ Mountains and hills, lands and seas, revolutions of days and nights, and months and years, the knowledge that this is a kalpa age and this is a minute and moment, and this is life and this is death, are all mere conceptions of the mind. ¹⁵ Knowledge of the duration and termination of a kalpa and great kalpa, and that of creation and beginning and end, are mere misconceptions of our minds. ¹⁶ It is the mind that conceives millions of kalpas and billions of worlds, most of which are gone by and many are yet to come. ¹⁷ The fourteen regions of the planetary spheres and all the divisions of time and place are contained in the infinite space of Supreme Consciousness.

¹⁸ The universe continues and displays itself serenely in the Divine Mind, as it did from before and

throughout all eternity. It shines with particles of light of that Consciousness as the sky is full with the radiance of sunlight.¹⁹ The inexpressible light thrown into the mind by Divine Consciousness shows itself as creation, which in reality is a baseless fabric by itself.²⁰ It does not come into existence or dissolve into nothing. It neither appears nor sets at anytime but resembles a crystal glass with certain marks in it which can never be effaced.²¹ Creations display of themselves in the clear Intellect of God, as the variegated skies form portions of the indivisible space of endless vacuum.²² These are only properties of Divine Consciousness, as fluidity is that of water, motion of the wind, eddies of the sea, and the qualities of all things.

²³ This creation is only a compact body of Divine wisdom, and it is contained in Divinity as its component part. Its rising and setting and continuance are exhibited alike in the tranquil soul.²⁴ The world is empty owing to its lack of any accompanying secondary cause. It is self-born, and to call it born or produced is to breathe the breath of a madman.

²⁵ Rama, purify your mind from the impurity of false representations and rise from the bed of your doubts and desires. Drive away your protracted sleep of ignorance and be free from the fears of death and disease with every one of your friends in this court.

Chapter 3 — The World Is Eternal; There Can Be No Creation or Dissolution

¹ Rama said, “But it is said that Brahma, the lord of creation, springs up by his memory at the end of a kalpa and stretches out the world from his memory of it, in the beginning of creation.”

² Vasishta answered:—

So it is said, O support of Raghu’s race, that after the universal dissolution, the lord of creatures rises by his predestination and at the commencement of a new creation.³ It is by his will that the world is stretched out from his recollection and is manifested like an ideal city in the presence of Brahma, the creative power.

⁴ The Supreme Being can have no memory of the past at the beginning of a new creation because he has no prior birth or death. Therefore this tree-in-the-sky of memory has no relation to Brahma.

⁵ Rama asked, “Doesn’t the memory of the past continue in Brahma at his recreation of the world, like the former memory of men upon being reborn? Or are all past memories effaced from the minds of men by the delirium of death in their past lives?”

⁶ Vasishta replied:—

All intelligent beings, including Brahma and all others of the past age, who attain nirvana or extinction are, of course, absorbed in one Brahma.⁷ Now tell me, my good Rama, where do these past memories and those-with-memories live when they are wholly lost at the final liberation of those-with-memories?⁸ It is certain that all beings are liberated and become extinct in Brahma at the great dissolution. Therefore, without the persons who remember, there cannot be memories of anything.

⁹ The memory of itself that lives impressed in the empty space of individual intellects, is truly the reservoir of the perceptible and imperceptible worlds. This memory is eternally present before the sight of God as a reflection of his own Consciousness.¹⁰ It shines with the brightness of his self-consciousness from time without beginning and end, and is identical with this world, which is therefore termed self-born.

¹¹ The spiritual body that is the attribute of God from time without beginning is the same as the manifestation of himself (*viraja*) exhibited in the form of the world or the microcosm.¹² But the world is said to be composed of atoms, which compose the land and woods, the clouds and the firmament. But there are no atoms to form time and space, actions and motions, or revolutions of days and nights.¹³ The atoms of matter that fill the world have other initial atoms (of spirit) which are inherent in them and cause them to appear in the forms of mountains and the like.¹⁴ But these forms seeming to be conglomerations of atomic particles, and showing themselves to our vision as lighted objects, are in reality no substantial things.

¹⁵ Thus there is no end of the real and unreal sights of things. The real presents itself to the view of the learned, and the unreal to that of the unlearned.¹⁶ The cosmos appears as the immutable Brahma only to the intelligent, and as the mutable visible world to the unintelligent.

¹⁷ As these bright worlds appear to roll about like eggs in their spheres, so there are multitudes of other orbs, shining in every atom in the universe.¹⁸ We see pillars carved with figures upon figures upon figures. In the same way the grand pillar of the universe is composed of systems under systems

to no end.¹⁹ As sand on a rock, is attached but separable to it, and the grains are countless in number, so the orbs of the three worlds are like dust particles in mountainous body of Brahma.²⁰ It may be possible to count the particles of ray scattered in sunbeams, but it is impossible to number the atoms of light emanating from the great sun of Brahma.

²¹ As the sun scatters his light particles on the sparkling waters and sands of the sea, so does the Intellect of God disperse the atoms of its light all over the emptiness of the universe.²² As the notion of emptiness fills the mind with the idea of the visible sky, so the thought of creation, which is identical to Brahma, gives us the notion of his intellectual sphere.

²³ To understand the creation as something different from Brahma separates man from him, but to take creation as synonymous with Brahma leads him to his joy.²⁴ The enlightened soul, free from its knowledge of the physical seed and knowing Brahma alone as the fullness filling the vacuum of intellect, knows the Knowable in his inward understanding as being that same as what has proceeded from Him.

Chapter 4 — The World Exists in the Mind

¹ Vasishta said:—

The overthrow of the battery of the physical senses supplies us with a bridge over the ocean of the world. There is no other act whereby we may cross over it.² Acquaintance with the scriptures, association with the good and wise, and practice of the virtues are the means whereby a rational and self-controlled man may come to know the absolute negation of phenomena.

³ I have told you, O handsome Rama, about the causes of the appearance and disappearance of the creation, resembling the heaving and resting of the waves of the sea of the world.⁴ There is no need for a long discourse to tell you that the mind is the germ of the forest of acts and this germ being nipped in the beginning prevents the growth of the tree and frustrates the doing of acts which are its fruits.⁵ The mind is all. Therefore by the healing of your heart and mind, you can cure all troubles and diseases you may incur in the world.

⁶ The minds of men are always troubled with thoughts of the world and bodily actions. But these being deadened and defunct, we see neither the body nor the outer world.⁷ The negation of the outer world and the suppression of the inner thoughts, by practice of self-denial for a long period of time, serve to curb the demon of the mind.⁸ It is possible to heal the inner disease of the internal mind by administration of this best and only medicine of negation of the external world.⁹ It is because of its thoughts that the mind is subject to the errors of its birth and death, and being bound to or liberated from the body and this world.

¹⁰ The mind deluded by its thoughts sees the worlds shining before it like a man in his delusion sees the imaginary city of the gandharvas drawn before him in empty air.¹¹ All these visible worlds exist in the mind where they seem to exist, like the fragrance in air consists in the cluster of flowers containing the essence.¹² The little particle of the mind contains the world, like a small grain of sesame contains the oil, like an attribute is contained in its subject, and a property abides in a substance.¹³ The world abides in the mind in the same manner as sunbeams abide in the sun and brightness in light and heat in fire.¹⁴ The mind is the reservoir of the worlds, as snow is the receptacle of coldness. It underlies all existence, as the sky is that of emptiness and as velocity is inherent in wind.

¹⁵ Therefore the mind is the same as the world and the world is the same as the mind, all owing to their intimate and inseparable connection with each another. The world is lost by the loss of the mind, but the mind is not lost by destruction of the world.

Chapter 5 — The Story of Shukra (Bhargava): Shukra Falls in Love with a Fairy Nymph

¹ Rama said, “Tell me sage, who knows all truths and is best acquainted with all that is past and is to come, how does the form of the world exist so vividly in the mind? ² Please explain to me by some illustration how this world appears as a visible object to the inner mind.”

³ Vasishta replied:—

The world truly is situated in the minds of men, just as it appeared in its firm and compact state to the ten bodiless sons of Indu. ⁴ It is situated in the same manner in the minds of men as the thought of King Lavana’s transformation of himself to a tribal (*chandala*) under the influence of sorcery. ⁵ It is in the same manner as Bhargava believed he possessed all worldly gratifications. Because true bliss has much more relation to the mind than to earthly possessions.

⁶ Rama said, “Sage, how did the son of Bhrigu came to enjoy earthly pleasures when he had been longing for heavenly joy?”

⁷ Vasishta replied:—

Rama, listen to my narration of the history of Bhrigu and Kala, whereby you will know how he came to possess earthly enjoyments.

⁸ There is a tableland of Mandara Mountain that has rows of tamala trees with beautiful flowers under them. ⁹ Here sage Bhrigu conducted his arduous tapas (spiritual penance) in olden times and it was in this place that his high-minded and valiant son Shukra also came to perform his tapas.

¹⁰ Shukra was as handsome as the moon, radiant with his brilliant beams. He took his seat in that happy grove of Bhrigu for the purpose of his tapas. ¹¹ Having long sat in that grove under the shade of a rock, Shukra removed himself to the flowery beds and fair plains below. ¹² He wandered freely about the bowers of Mandara pleasure garden in his youthful sport, and became revered among the wise and ignorant men of the place. ¹³ He wandered there at random like Trisanku, between the earth and sky, sometimes playing about as a boy, and at others sitting in fixed meditation like his father.

¹⁴ He remained without any anxiety in his solitude, as a king who has subdued his enemy. Then he happened to see an apsara fairy traversing in her aerial journey.

¹⁵ He saw her with the eyes of Hari (Vishnu) fixed upon his Lakshmi as the fairy skimmed over the watery plain, decorated with wreaths of mandara flowers, her tresses waving loosely with the playful air. ¹⁶ Her trinkets jingled with her movements and her fragrance perfumed the winds of the air. Her fairy form was as beautiful as a vine, and her eyeballs rolled as in the state of intoxication. ¹⁷ The moonbeams of her body shed their ambrosial dews over the landscape and bewitched the hard heart of the young devotee as he stared at the fairy form before him.

¹⁸ She also, with her body shining like the fair full moon and shaking like a wave of the sea, became enamored of Shukra as she looked at his face. ¹⁹ Shukra then checked the impulse of his mind which the god of love had raised after her, but losing all power over himself, he became absorbed in the thought of his beloved object.

Chapter 6 — Shukra Imagines Indra's Paradise

¹ Vasishta said:—

Henceforth Shukra with his closed eyes continued to think of the nymph and indulge himself in his dreams of an imaginary kingdom.² He thought that the nymph was passing through the air to the paradise of Indra, the god with thousand eyes. He imagined he was following her closely to the happy regions of the celestial gods.³ He thought he saw the gods decorated with garlands of beautiful mandara blossoms on their heads, hanging resplendent as liquid gold.⁴ He seemed to see the heavenly maidens with their eyes like blue lotuses regaling the eyes of their spectators, and others with their eyes as beautiful as those of antelopes playing with their sweet smiles all about.

⁵ He saw also the Marutas (gods of the winds) bearing the fragrance of flowers, breathing their sweet scent on one another and resembling the omnipresent Vishwarupa by their heavenly journey.⁶ He heard the sweet hum of bees, giddy with the perfume exuding from the trunk of Indra's elephant. He listened to the sweet strains sung by a heavenly choir.⁷ There were the swans and storks gabbling in lakes with lotuses of golden color in them.

There were celestial gods lying in the tree gardens beside the holy stream of the Milky Way (Mandakini), the heavenly Ganges.⁸ These were the gods Yama and Indra, and the sun and moon, and the gods of fire and the winds. And there were the regents of the worlds, whose shining bodies shaded the luster of vivid fire.⁹ On one side was Airavata, the warlike elephant of Indra, with the scratches of demonic weapons on his face and tusks gory with the blood of the defeated hosts of demons.

¹⁰ Those who were transported from earth to heaven in the form of luminous stars were wandering in their aerial vehicles, blazing with golden beams of the shining sun.¹¹ The gods were washed by showers falling from the peaks of Mount Meru below, and the waves of the Ganges rolled on with scattered mandara flowers floating on them.¹² The alleys of Indra's groves were tinged with saffron from heaps of mandara flower dust, and they were trodden by groups of apsara ladies playing wantonly upon them.

¹³ There were gentle breezes blowing among parijata plants, bright as moonbeams in the sacred bowers and blowing fragrant honey from the cups of kunda and mandara blossoms.¹⁴ The pleasure garden of Indra was crowded with heavenly maidens smeared with the frosty dust of kesara flowers covering them like vines of the grove in their yellow robes.¹⁵ Here were heavenly nymphs dancing in their gaiety at the tune of their lovers' songs. There were the heavenly musicians Narada and Tamburu joining their vocal music in unison with the melody of the stringed instruments, lute and lyre.

¹⁶ Holy men and the pious and virtuous were seen to soar high in their heavenly cars, sitting there with decorations of various kinds.¹⁷ The amorous maidens of the gods were clinging around their god Indra, like the tender vines of the garden twine about the trees.¹⁸ There were guluncha fruit trees studded with clusters of their ripening fruit resembling sapphires and rubies and set like rows of ivory teeth.

¹⁹ After all these sights, Shukra thought of making his obeisance to Indra, who was seated on his seat like another Brahma, the creator of the three worlds.²⁰ Having thought so, Shukra bowed down to Indra in his own mind, as Indra was the second Bhrigu in heaven (*i.e.*, a second father).²¹ Indra

received him with respect and having lifted him up with his hand, made him sit by himself.

²² Indra addressed him saying, “I am honored, Shukra, by your call. This heaven of mine is graced by your presence. May you live long to enjoy the pleasure of this place.” ²³ Then Indra sat in his seat with a graceful face that shone with the light of the unspotted full moon.

²⁴ Shukra, sitting by Indra’s side, was saluted by all the assembled gods of heaven. He continued to enjoy every joy there, having been received with paternal affection by the lord of gods and men.

Chapter 7 — Shukra Imagines Embracing the Fairy Nymph

¹ Vasishta said:—

Thus Shukra, being among the gods in the celestial city, forgot his former nature without passing through the pangs of death.² Having halted awhile by the side of Sachi's consort (*i.e.*, Indra), he rose up to roam about the paradise, charmed with all its various beauties.

³ He looked with rapture on the beauty of his own body and longed to see the lovely beauties of heavenly beings, just as a swan is eager to meet the lotuses of the lake.⁴ He saw his beloved one among them in the garden of Indra's paradise, her eyes like those of a young deer and with a stature as delicate as that of a tender amra vine.⁵ She also saw the son of Bhrigu and lost her self control. Thus he observed all her indications of amorous feelings.⁶ His whole body dissolved in affection for her, like a moonstone melting under moonbeams, and so did hers likewise in tenderness for him.⁷ He, like the moonstone, was soothed by her cooling beauty, beaming like moonlight in the sky. She also, being seen by him, was entirely subdued by her love to him.

⁸ At night they bewailed like ruddy geese at their separation from one another, and at daybreak they were filled with delight on seeing each other.⁹ They were both as beautiful to behold as the sun and the opening blossom of the lotus in morning. Their presence added a charm to the garden of paradise, which promised to confer their desired bliss.

¹⁰ She committed her subdued self to the mercy of Kama, the god of love, who in his turn darted his arrows relentlessly into her tender heart.¹¹ Her body was covered with Kama's arrows, like a lotus blossom hidden under a swarm of bees. She became as disordered as the leaves of a lotus disturbed under a shower of raindrops.¹² She fluttered at the gentle breath of playful winds, like the tender filaments of flowers. She moved as gracefully as a swan, her eyes as blue as the petals of blue lotuses.¹³ She was deranged by the god of love like a bed of lotuses is disturbed by a mighty elephant. Her lover, Shukra, in his fancy, saw her in that plight.

¹⁴ At last the shade of night spread over the landscape of heavenly paradise, as if the god of destruction (Shiva) was advancing to bury the world under universal gloom.¹⁵ A deep darkness spread over the face of the earth and covered it with thick gloom like the regions of the polar mountains where the hot, blazing sun is hidden by the dark shade of perpetual night, as if hiding his face in shame under the dark veil of gloom.

¹⁶ When the assembled crowds of the place retired in different directions to their respective homes, the loving pair met together in the midst of the grove.¹⁷ Then the love smitten lady approached her lover with sidelong glances, like a bird of air alights from her aerial flight in the evening to meet with her mate on the earth below.¹⁸ She advanced towards the son of Bhrigu, as a peahen comes out to meet the rising cloud. She saw a white washed building, a couch placed inside.

¹⁹ Bhargava (Shukra) entered the white hall like Vishnu entering the milk ocean accompanied by his beloved Lakshmi who held his hand with her down-cast countenance.²⁰ The apsara fairy graced Shukra like the lotus-stalk graces the bosom of the elephant. She spoke to him sweetly with words mixed with tender affection.²¹ She told him in a sweet and delightful speech filled with expressions of endearment, "Behold, O my moon-faced lover! I see the curve of your bow is bent for my

destruction.²² Kama is shooting his arrows to destroy this lovelorn maid. Therefore protect me from him. I am so helpless from his rage that I have come under your protection.”

²³ “Know, my good friend, that the duty of good people is to relieve the wretched from their distress. Those who do not look upon them with a compassionate eye are reckoned the basest of men.²⁴ Love is never abused by those who are acquainted with erotica, because the true love of faithful lovers endures to the end without any fear of separation.²⁵ Know my dear, that the delightful draught of love defies the dewy beams distilled by the moon, and the sovereignty of the three worlds is never as pleasing to the soul as the love of the beloved.”

²⁶ “I derive the same bliss from the touch of your feet as lovers when they first love one another.²⁷ I live by the nectar of your touch, as the kumuda blooms imbibe ambrosial moonbeams at night.²⁸ As the fluttering chakora is delighted drinking moonbeams, so this suppliant at your feet is blessed by the touch of the leaf-like palm of your hand.²⁹ Embrace me now to your bosom filled with ambrosial bliss.”

Saying so, the maiden fell upon his bosom with her body soft as a flower and her eyes turning like a small leaf in a gentle breeze.³⁰ The loving pair fell into their trance of love in that happy grove, like a couple of playful bees creep into a lotus cup under the fair filaments of the flower shaking by the gentle breeze.

Chapter 8 — Reincarnations of Shukra

¹ Vasishta related:—

Thus the son of Bhrigu, in his daydream, believed himself to be enjoying heavenly pleasures.² He thought of enjoying the company of his beloved, like the full moon accompanied by the evening star, bedecked with garlands of mandara flowers and inebriated with the drink of ambrosial draughts.

³ He roved about the ideal lake of heaven (Manasarovar) filled with golden lotuses and frequented by the giddy swans and gabbling geese of heaven. He roamed beside the bank of the celestial Mandakini River (the Milky Way) accompanied by celestial singers.⁴ He drank sweet nectar juice beaming like moonbeams in company with the gods. He rested under trees in groves formed by the shaking branches of parijata plants.⁵ He amused himself with his favorite air spirits (vidyadharas), swinging himself in hanging cradles formed by the shady vines of the arbor and screening him from the spring sunbeams.

⁶ The flower beds of the Nandana gardens were trodden down under the feet of Shiva's followers, as when the ocean was churned by Mandara Mountain.⁷ Tender weeds and willows growing like golden shrubs, and the tangled bushes by the beach of the river, were trampled under the legs of heated elephants, as when they infest the lotus lakes on Mount Meru.

⁸ Accompanied by his sweetheart, Shukra passed moonlit nights in the forest groves of Kailash, listening to the songs and music of heavenly singers.⁹ Roaming on the tablelands of Gandhamadana Mountain, he decorated his beloved from head to foot with lotus garlands.¹⁰ He wandered with her to the polar mountain which is full of wonders, having darkness on one side and light on the other. Here they played together with tender smiles and fond caresses and embraces.

¹¹ He thought he remained in a celestial abode beside the marshy lands of Mandara for sixty years, and passed his time in the company of the young aspara of the place.¹² He believed he passed half a yuga with his companion on the border of the Milky Ocean, and they associated with the maritime people and islanders of that ocean.¹³ Next he thought to live in a garden of the city of celestial singers (gandharvas), where he believed to have lived for an immeasurable period like the genius of Time himself, who is the producer of an infinity of worlds.¹⁴ He again found himself by the celestial seat of Indra, where he believed to have resided with his mistress for many cycles of the four yuga ages.

¹⁵ It was at the end of the merit of their acts that they were doomed to return on earth, shorn of their heavenly beauty and fine features.¹⁶ Being deprived of his heavenly seat and vehicle, and bereft of his godlike form and features, Shukra was overcome by deep sorrow, like a hero falling in the field of warfare.¹⁷ His great grief at his fall from heaven to earth broke his frame as if into a hundred fragments, like a waterfall falling on stony ground and breaking into a hundred streams below.

¹⁸ With their emaciated bodies and sad minds, they wandered about in the air, like birds without their nest.¹⁹ Afterwards their disembodied minds entered into the network of lunar beams. Then, in the form of molten frost or rainwater, they grew as vegetables on earth.²⁰ Some of these vegetables were prepared and eaten by a brahmin in the land of Dasarna, the confluence of ten streams. The substance of Shukra changed to the semen of the brahmin and then conceived as a son by his wife.²¹ The boy was trained in the society of ancient sages (*munis*) to the practice of rigorous austerities, and he dwelt

in the forests of Meru for a whole manvantara observing his holy rites.

²² There he gave birth to a male child of human figure in a doe (to which his mistress was transformed in her next birth), and became exceedingly fond of the boy, to the neglect of his sacred duties. ²³ He constantly prayed for long life, wealth and learning of his darling, and thus forsook the constancy of his faith and reliance in Providence. ²⁴ Thus his falling off from the thought of heaven, to those of the earthly success of his son, made his shortened life an easy prey to death, just as the inhaling of air by the serpent. ²⁵ His worldly thoughts weakened his understanding and caused him to be reborn as the son and successor to the King of Madras.

²⁶ Having long reigned in his Kingdom of Madras by eliminating all his enemies, he was overtaken at last by old age, as the lotus flower is stunted by frost. ²⁷ The King of Madras was released of his royal body by his desire for asceticism, whereby he became the son of a hermit in the following birth in order to perform his austerities. ²⁸ He retired to a bank of the meandering Ganges River and there, being devoid of all his worldly anxieties and cares, absorbed himself in tapas.

²⁹ Thus the son of Bhrigu, having passed in various forms in his successive births according to the desires of his heart, remained at last like a fixed tree on the bank of a running stream.

Chapter 9 — Description of Shukra's Body during His Austerities

¹ Vasishta related:—

As Shukra was indulging his reveries in this manner, he passed insensibly under the flight of a series of years which glided over him in the presence of his father.² At last his body withered away with age under the inclement sun, winds and rain. It fell down on the ground like a tree torn from its roots.

³ In all his former births his mind thirsted after fresh pleasures and enjoyments, just like a deer hunts from forest to forest after fresh vegetation.⁴ He underwent repeated births and deaths in his wanderings in the world in search of its enjoyments. He seemed like something whirled about in a mill or a turning wheel, until at last he found his rest in the cooling beach of the rivulet.

⁵ Now the disembodied spirit of Shukra remained to reflect on his past incarnations in all the real and ideal forms of his imagination.⁶ It thought of its former body on Mandara Mountain and how it was reduced to a skeleton of mere bones and skin by the heat of the sun and his austerities.⁷ It remembered how the wind instrument of its lungs breathed out the joyous music of its exemption from the pain of action.⁸ Seeing how the mind is plunged in the pit of worldly cares, the body seems to laugh at it by showing the white teeth of the mouth in derision.⁹ The cavity of the mouth, the sockets of the eyes, the nostrils and ear-holes in the open face, are all expressive of the hollowness of human and heavenly bodies.¹⁰ The body sheds the tears of its eyes in sorrow for its past pains and austerities, just like the sky rains after excessive heat to cool the earth.¹¹ The body was refreshed by breeze and moonbeams, just as woodlands are renovated by cooling showers in the rainy season.¹² It remembered how its body was washed on the banks of mountain streams by waterfalls from above, and how it was daubed by the flying dust and the dirt of sin.¹³ It was as naked as a withered tree, and rustled to the air with the breeze, yet it withstood the keen blasts of winter like unshaken devotion in a person.¹⁴ The faded face, the withered lungs and arteries, and the skinny belly resembled those of the goddess of famine who cried aloud in the forest in the howling of wild beasts.

¹⁵ Yet the holy person of the hermit, owing to its freedom from passions and feelings and its fervent tapas, was unhurt by envious animals and was not devoured by rapacious beasts and birds.¹⁶ The body of Bhrigu's son was weakened by his abstinence and self-denial, and his mind was employed in holy tapas, as his body lay prostrate on the bed of stones.

Chapter 10 — Bhrigu's Anger Evokes Yama Who Describes Shuka's Many Lives

¹ Vasishta continued:—

After the lapse of a thousand years, the great Bhrigu suspended his holy meditation, disengaged his mind from its meditation of God, and rose from his holy trance.² He did not find his son lowly bending down his head before him, the son who was the leader of the army of virtues and who was the personified figure of all merits.³ He saw only his son's body lying like a skeleton before him, like wretchedness or poverty personified in that shape.⁴ The skin of his body was dried by the sun and his nostrils snored like a hooping bird. The entrails of his belly sounded like dry leather-pipes with the croaking of frogs.⁵ His eye sockets were filled with new-born worms, and his rib bones had become like bars of a cage with the thin skin over them resembling a spider's web.

⁶ The dry and white skeleton of the body resembled the desire of fruition, which bends it to the earth to undergo all the favorable and unfavorable accidents of life.⁷ The crown of the head had become as white and smooth as a Shivalinga anointed with camphor at an *indu-varcha* ceremony in honor of the moon.⁸ The withered head erected on a bony neck bone was like the soul supported by the body.⁹ The nose had shriveled into a dry stalk for lack of flesh, and the nose bone stood like a post dividing the two halves of the face.

¹⁰ The face, standing erect over the shoulders on both sides, was looking forward towards the womb of the empty sky where its vital breath had fled from the body.¹¹ The two legs, thighs, knees and arms had doubled in length and lay slackened with the fatigue of a long journey.¹² The shriveled flesh and skin of the belly, lean like a thin strip of wood, showed the emptiness inside of the ignorant.

¹³ Seeing the withered skeleton of his son lying like a worn-out post, Bhrigu reflected and rose from his seat.¹⁴ At the sight of the dead body, he began to question in his mind whether it could be the lifeless carcass of his son or any other.¹⁵ Thinking it to be the dead body of his son, he became angry at the god of death.¹⁶ He prepared to pronounce his curse on the god of fate as vengeance for snatching his son so prematurely from him.

¹⁷ At this Yama, the lord of death and devourer of living beings, assumed his figurative form of a material body and appeared in an instant before the enraged father.¹⁸ He appeared in armor with six arms and as many faces, accompanied by an army of his adherents and holding noose, sword and other weapons in his hands.¹⁹ The rays of light radiating from his body gave it the appearance of a hill filled with heaps of crimson kinsuka flowers growing in mountain forests.²⁰ Rays of living fire flashing from his trident gave it the glare of golden ringlets fastened to the ears of all sides of the sky.²¹ The breath of his host hurled down mountain ridges hanging about them like swinging cradles.²² His dark sword flashed with somber light and darkened the disc of the sun, as if by the smoke of the final conflagration of the earth.

²³ Having appeared before the great sage, who was enraged as the raging sea, he soothed him to calmness, as after a storm, by the gentle breath of his speech.

Yama speaking:—

²⁴ The sages are acquainted with the laws of nature and know the past and future as present before

them. They are never moved with a motive for anything, and they are far from being moved without a cause.²⁵ You sages observe the many rules of religious austerities, and we observe the endless and immutable laws of destiny. We honor you for your holiness and not from any other desire.

²⁶ Do not defame your righteousness by your rage, nor think to do us any harm. We are spared unhurt by the flames of final dissolution and we cannot be consumed by your curses.²⁷ We have destroyed the spheres of the universe and devoured legions of Shivas, millions of Brahma, and multitudes of Vishnus. Therefore, what is there that we cannot do?

²⁸ We are appointed as devourers of all beings and you are destined to be devoured by us. This is ordained by destiny herself, and not by any act of our own will.²⁹ It is the nature of flame to ascend upwards and that of fluids to flow downward. It is destined for food to be eaten by its eaters, and that creation must be destroyed by us.

³⁰ Know this form of mine to be that of the Supreme Being, whose Universal Spirit acts in various forms all over the universe.³¹ To the unstained sight, there is no other agent or object here except the Supreme, although the stained sight sees many agents and objects.³² Agency and objectivity are terms coined only by the short sighted. They disappear before the expanded view of the wise.³³ As flowers grow on trees, so are animals born on earth. Their growth and birth, and also their fall and death, are of their own spontaneity and mistakenly called their causation.³⁴ As the motion of the moon is caused by no casual cause, though the unwise falsely attribute a causality to it, such also is the course of death in the world: its own spontaneous nature.³⁵ The mind is falsely said to be the agent of all its enjoyments in life, though it is no agent of itself. It is a mistaken belief like the false conception of a serpent in the rope where there is no serpent at all.

³⁶ Therefore, O sage, do not allow yourself to be so angry for your sorrow, but consider the course of events that befall humankind in its true light.³⁷ We were not moved to any act by desire of fame or influenced by pride or passion. We ourselves are subject to destiny which predominates over all our actions.³⁸ Knowing that the course of our conduct is subject to destiny appointed by Divine Will, the wise never allow themselves to be subject to darkness of pride or passion at our doings.

³⁹ That we must do only our duties at all times is the rule laid down by the wise Creator. You cannot attempt to remove it by subjecting yourself to ignorance and idleness.⁴⁰ Where is that enlightened sight, that gravity and that patience of yours, that you grovel in this manner in the dark like the blind, and slide from the broad and beaten path laid open for everybody?⁴¹ Why don't you consider your case as the sequence of your own acts? Why do you, who are a wise man, falsely accuse me like the ignorant?

⁴² You know that all living beings have two bodies here, of which one is known as the intellectual or spiritual body or mind.⁴³ The other is the inert or physical frame that is fragile and perishable. The minute thing of the mind lasts until its liberation and is what leads all to their good or evil desires.

⁴⁴ As a skillful charioteer guides his chariot with care, so this body is conducted by the intelligent mind with equal attention and fondness.⁴⁵ But an ignorant mind that is prone to evil destroys a good body, just like little children break their dolls of clay in sport.

⁴⁶ The mind is called the ruler of the body (*puruṣha*), and the working of the mind is taken for the act

of the man. It is bound to the earth by its desires and freed by its freedom from earthly attractions and expectations.⁴⁷ The mind is that which thinks in itself, "This is my body here, and these are the members of my body, and this my head."⁴⁸ The mind is called life because it has the living principle in it. The mind is one and the same and identical with understanding. It becomes the individual ego by its consciousness, and so the same mind passes under various designations according to its different functions.⁴⁹ It called heart because of the body's affections, and so it takes many other names at will. But all earthly bodies are perishable.

⁵⁰ When the mind receives the light of truth it is called enlightened intellect which, being free from its thoughts relating to the body, is set to its supreme joy.⁵¹ Thus, as you sat absorbed in meditation, the mind of your son wandered from your presence to regions far and wide in the ways of its various desires.⁵² He having left this body behind him in the mountain cave of Mandara, he fled to the celestial region, like a bird flies from his nest to the open air.

⁵³ This mind got into the city of the guardian gods and remained in a part of Nandana garden, in the happy groves of Mandara under a dwelling of parijata flowers.⁵⁴ There he thought he passed a revolution of eight cycles of the four yugas in company with Viswachi, a beautiful apsara maiden. He clung to her like a six-footed bee clings to a blooming lotus.

⁵⁵ But as his strong desire led him to the happy regions of his imagination, so he had his fall from them at the end of what he had earned, like nightly dew falling from heaven.⁵⁶ He faded away in his body and all his limbs, like a flower attached to an ear or head ornament. He fell down together with his beloved one, like ripened fruit from trees.⁵⁷ Being deprived of his aerial and celestial body, he passed through the atmospheric air and was born again on earth in a human figure.

⁵⁸ He became a brahmin in the land of Dasarna, then a king of the city of Kosala. He became a hunter in a great forest, then a swan on the banks of the Ganges.⁵⁹ He became a king of the solar race, then a king of the Pundras, and afterwards a missionary among the Sauras and Salwas. Next he became a demigod (vidyadhara), and finally the son of an ancient sage (muni).⁶⁰ He became a ruler in Madras, then the son of a devotee bearing the name of Vasudeva and living on the bank of Samanga.

⁶¹ Your son also has passed many other births to which he was led to by his desire. He also had to undergo some births in lower animals.⁶² He repeatedly has been a hunter (*kirata*) in the Vindhya Hills and at Kaikatav. He was a chieftain in Sauvira and became an ass at Trigarta.⁶³ He grew as a bamboo tree in the land of Keralas and as a deer in the outskirts of China. He became a serpent on a palm tree and a cock on a tamala tree.⁶⁴ This son of yours had been skilled in mantras and he practiced them in the land of vidyadharas.⁶⁵ Then he became a vidyadhara magician himself and worked his jugglery of taking ornaments from women.⁶⁶ He became a favorite of females, just as the sun is dear to lotus flowers. Being as handsome as Kama, the god of love, he became a favorite among vidyadhara ladies in the land of gandharvas.

⁶⁷ At the end of the kalpa age (of universal destruction), he saw the twelve suns of the zodiac shining at once before him. He was reduced to ashes by their heat, just as a grasshopper is burnt by falling on fire.⁶⁸ Finding no other world or body where he could enter, his spirit roved about in empty air like a bird soars on high without its nest.⁶⁹ After the lapse of a long time, as Brahma again awoke from his

long night of repose and again commenced his creation of the world in all its various forms,⁷⁰ the wandering spirit of your son was led by its desire, as if propelled by a gust of wind, to become a brahmin again and be reborn on this earth.

⁷¹ He was born under the name of Vasudeva as the son of a brahmin. He was taught all the Sruti scriptures among the intelligent and learned men of the place.⁷² In this kalpa age he became a vidyadhara again and committed himself to the performance of his tapas on the bank of Samanga, where he is still sitting in his yoga meditation.

⁷³ Thus his desire for the varieties of worldly appearances led him to various births in the woods and forests in the womb of this earth, covered with jungles of the thorny khadira, karanja and other bushes and brambles.

Chapter 11 — Yama (Time) on the Mind as the Cause Producing the World

¹ Yama (Time) continued:—

Your son is still engaged in his rigorous austerities on the bank of the Samanga River, rolling with its loud waves on the beach, and the winds blowing and howling from all sides.² He has been sitting still in his firm tapas with matted braids of hair on his head and beads of rudraksha seeds in his hand and controlling the members of his body from going astray.

³ O venerable sage, if you wish to know the dreams in his mind, you shall have to open your intellectual eye in order to pry into the thoughts of others.

⁴ Vasishta said:—

Saying so, Yama, the lord of world who sees all at one view, made the muni dive with his intellectual eye into the thoughts of his son.⁵ By his perception, the sage immediately saw all the incidents in the sequence of births in his son's mind as if they were reflected in the mirror of his own mind.⁶ Having seen the mind of his son in his own mind, the muni returned from the bank of Samanga to his own body on Mount Mandara where it was left in its sitting posture in the presence of Yama.

⁷ Surprised at what he saw, the sage looked upon Yama with a smile. Dispassionate as he was, he spoke to the god in the following soft and dispassionate words.

Bhrigu speaking:—

⁸ O god who is lord of past and future, we are only ignorant children before you, whose brilliant insight sees at once the three times of past, present and future.⁹ The knowledge of the existence of the world, by its varying forms and fluctuations, whether it is a real entity or not, is the source of all errors of the wisest of men.¹⁰ It is you, O powerful god, who knows what is inside this world, while to us it presents its outward figure only in the shape of a magic scene.

¹¹ I knew very well that my son is not subject to death. Therefore I was struck with wonder to see him lying like a dead body.¹² Thinking that the imperishable soul of my son was snatched by death, I was led to the brainless desire of cursing you on his untimely death.¹³ For though we know the course of things in the world, yet we are subject to impulses of joy and grief owing to prosperity and adversity.

¹⁴ Moreover, to be angry with wrong doers, and to be pleased with those that act rightly, have become the general rule in the course of the world.¹⁵ As we are subject to the error of the reality of the world, we labor under the sense of what is our duty, and what we must refrain from. But deliverance from this error removes all such responsibilities from us.¹⁶ When we fret at death, without understanding its intention, we are to be blamed, of course.

¹⁷ You have made me acquainted with the thoughts of my son. I can see the whole scene on the bank of Samanga River.

¹⁸ Of the two bodies of men, the mind alone is omnipresent, the leader of the outer body of animated beings. The mind therefore is the true body that reflects and makes us conscious of the existence of ourselves, as also of the exterior world.

¹⁹ Yama replied:—

You have rightly said, O brahmin, that the mind is the true body of man. It is the mind that molds the body according to its will, just as the potter makes a pot at his pleasure.²⁰ The mind frames a form and gives a feature to the person that it did not have before, and it destroys one in existence in a moment. Imagination gives an image to an airy nothing, like children see ghosts before them in the dark.²¹ It is well known to everybody that the mind's power creates apparent realities out of absolute unreality, in dream and delirium, in misconceptions and fallacies and all kinds of error, like the sight of magic cities and talismans.

²² It is from their reliance on visual sight that men consider the material body to be the principal body, and they conceive the mind as a secondary or supplementary part.

²³ It was the Divine Mind that formed the world from its thought. Therefore the world of phenomena is neither a substance by itself nor is it a nothing.²⁴ The mind is part of the body and spreads itself into many forms through its thoughts and desires, like the branch of a tree shoots forth in blossoms and leaves. As we see two moons by optical deception, so one mind appears as many in many individuals.

²⁵ The variety of the mind's desires makes it perceive and produce varieties of things, like pots and pictures and the like.²⁶ The same mind thinks itself as many by the diversity of its thoughts, such as "I am weak," "I am poor," "I am ignorant," and the like.²⁷ The thought, "I am none of the fancied forms which I feign to myself, but of that form from where I am," causes the mind to be one with the everlasting Brahman by divesting it of the thoughts of all other things.

²⁸ All things springing from Brahma sink at last in him, like the huge waves of the wide and billowy ocean rise only to subside in its calm and undisturbed waters below.²⁹ They sink in the Supreme Spirit, resembling one vast body of pure, transparent, cold and sweet water, and like a vast mine of brilliant gems of unfailing brightness.

³⁰ One thinking himself to be a little wave diminishes his soul to littleness.³¹ But one believing himself to be a large wave enlarges his spirit to greatness.³² He who thinks of himself as a little being, fallen from above to suffer in the nether world, is born upon earth in the form he took for his pattern.³³ But he who thinks himself to be born to greatness soon rises by his energy and becomes as big as a hill and shines with the luster of rich gems growing upon it.

³⁴ He rests in peace who thinks himself to be in the cooling orb of the moon. Otherwise the body is consumed with cares, like a tree on the bank is burnt down by fire.³⁵ Others like forest trees are fixed and silent and shudder for fear of being burnt down by the wildfire of the world, though they are situated at ease, such as beside the running streams of limpid water, and as high as on mountain tops of inaccessible height.

³⁶ Those who think they are surrounded by worldly affairs are like wide-stretching trees awaiting their fall by impending blasts of wind.³⁷ Those who wail aloud for being broken to pieces under the pressure of their misery are like the noisy waves of the sea breaking against the shore and shedding their tears in the form of watery spray.³⁸ But the waves are not of one kind, nor are they altogether entities or nullities in nature. They are neither small or large nor high or low, nor do these qualities abide in them.³⁹ Waves do not abide in the sea, nor are they without the sea or the sea without them.

They are of the nature of desires in the soul, rising and setting at their own accord.

⁴⁰ The dead are undying and the living are not living. Thus is the law of their mutual succession which nothing can prevent or alter.

⁴¹ As water is universally the same and transparent in its nature, so the all pervading spirit of God is pure and holy in every place. ⁴² This one and the same spirit is the body of God and is called the transparent Brahman. It is omnipotent and everlasting and constitutes the whole world appearing as distinct from it. ⁴³ The many wonderful powers that it contains are all active in their various ways. The different powers produce different ends and are all contained in that same body. All the natural and material forces have the Divine Spirit for their focus. ⁴⁴ Brahma was produced in Brahman just as the wave is produced in water. Male and female are produced from the neuter Brahman, changed to and forming both of them.

⁴⁵ That which is called the world is only an attribute of Brahma. There is not the slightest difference between Brahma and the world. ⁴⁶ Truly this plenitude is Brahma, and the world is nothing other than Brahma himself. Think intently upon this truth and shun all other false beliefs.

⁴⁷ There is one eternal law that presides over all things, and this one law branches forth into many, bringing forth a hundred varieties of effects. The world is a collection of laws that are only manifestations of the Almighty power and omniscience. ⁴⁸ Both the inert and active proceed from the same, and the mind proceeds from the consciousness (*chit*) of God. Various desires evolve by the power of the mind from their exact prototypes in the Supreme Soul.

⁴⁹ Therefore it is Brahma that manifests itself in the visible world and is full with various forms, like the sea with all its waves and surges. ⁵⁰ It assumes to itself all varieties of forms by its volition of evolution or the will of becoming many. It is spirit that displays itself in itself and by itself, like seawater displays its waves in its own water and by itself. ⁵¹ As the various waves are nothing other than seawater, so all these phenomena are not different from the essence of the Lord of the world.

⁵² As the same seed develops itself in the various forms of branches and buds, twigs and leaves, and fruits and flowers, so the same almighty Seed evolves itself in the multitude of varieties of creation.

⁵³ As strong sunlight displays itself in variegated colors in different bodies, so does Omnipotence display itself in various vivid colors, all of which are unreal shades. ⁵⁴ As the bosom of a colorless cloud receives the variety of transient colors displayed in the rainbow, so the inscrutable spirit of the Almighty reflects and refracts the various colors displayed in creation.

⁵⁵ Inert matter and inactivity proceed from the active agent without a secondary cause, like the active spider produces the passive thread, and the living man brings his dull torpor in sleep upon himself.

⁵⁶ Again, the Lord makes the mind produce matter only for its own bondage, just like He makes the silkworm weave its own cocoon for its own confinement. ⁵⁷ The mind of its own will forgets its spiritual nature and makes a strong prison house for itself, like the silkworm weaves its own coating.

⁵⁸ But when the mind by its own free will inclines to think of its spiritual nature, it gets its release from the prison-house of the body and bondage in the world, just like a bird or beast is released from its cage, or a big elephant let loose from his chains and the tying post.

⁵⁹ The mind gradually molds itself into the form which it constantly thinks upon in itself. The mind

derives from within itself the power to be what it wishes to become.⁶⁰ The long sought power when acquired becomes as familiar to the soul as the dark clouds that attend the sky in the rainy season.

⁶¹ The newly obtained power is assimilated with its recipient, just like the virtue of every season is manifested in its effect upon the trees.

⁶² There is no bondage or liberation of human soul, or of the Divine Spirit. We cannot account for the use of these words among mankind.⁶³ There is no liberation or bondage of the soul which is the same with the divine. It is this delusive world that shows the immortal soul under the veil of mortality, or as eclipsed by and under the shadow of temporary affairs.⁶⁴ The unsteady mind has wrapped the steady soul under the sheath of error, just like the silkworm's cocoon covers the dormant worm.

⁶⁵ All bondages that bind the embodied soul to earth are the works of the mind which is the root of all worldly ties and affections.⁶⁶ All human affections and attachments to the visible world are born in and remain in the mind, although they are as distinct from it as the waves of the sea or moonbeams are produced from and contained in their receptacles.

⁶⁷ The Supreme Spirit is stretched out like one universal ocean agitated into myriads of waves and billows. Consciousness itself is spread out like the water of the universal ocean containing everything that is watery and earthly in its infinite bosom.⁶⁸ All those who appear as Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, and also they who have become gods and those who are called men and male creatures,⁶⁸⁻¹ are all like the waves of the sea raised spontaneously by the underlying spirit. So are Yama, Indra, the sun, fire, Kubera and the other gods.⁶⁸⁻² So too are the gandharvas and kinnaras, the vidyadharas and the other gods and demigods who rise and fall or remain for a while like the waves of the sea.⁶⁸⁻³ They rise and fall as waves on every side, though some continue for a longer duration, like the lotus-born Brahma and others.⁶⁸⁻⁴ Some are born to die in a moment, like petty gods and men. Others are dead almost as soon as they are born, such as insects and some worms.

⁶⁹ Worms and insects, gnats and flies, and serpents and huge snakes rise in the great ocean of the Divine Spirit like drops of water scattered about by waves of the sea.⁷⁰ There are other moving animals like men and deer and vultures and jackals that are produced on land and mountains, in woods and forests, and in marshy grounds.⁷¹ Some are long lived and others live for a short time. Some live with higher aims and ambitions, and others with no other care than self-preservation of their contemptible bodies.

⁷² Some think of their stability in this world of dreams, and others are betrayed by their false hope of the stability of worldly affairs, which are quite unstable.⁷³ Some subject to penury and poverty have little to effect in their lives. They always torment themselves with thoughts that they are poor, miserable, weak and ignorant.

⁷⁴ Some are born as trees and others have become like gods and demigods. Some are furnished with moving bodies; others are dissolved like water in the sea.⁷⁵ Some are no less durable than many kalpas, and others return to the Supreme Spirit by the moonlike purity of their souls.

All things have risen from the ocean-like Spirit of Brahman, like its moving undulations. The mind is everyone's intellectual consciousness.

Chapter 12 — Yama on the Mistake of Individual Consciousness; Different Levels of Awareness

¹ Yama said:—

The consciousness of gods, demigods and men as distinct beings is quite wrong because they are in no way distinct from the infinite ocean of Divine Spirit of which they are all like undulations.² Our false conceptions make us distinguish between ourselves and the Supreme Soul. The thought of being separate and apart from the Supreme Spirit is the cause of our degradation from our pristine holiness and the image of God, in which man was made at first and was infused with his holy spirit.

³ Remaining within the depth of the Divine Spirit, yet thinking ourselves to live without it, is the cause of keeping us in darkness on the surface of the earth.⁴ Our consciousness of ourselves as Brahma, being spoiled by the various thoughts in our minds, becomes the root of our activities; while the pure consciousness of “I am” is free from all actions and energies.⁵ The inner desire of the heart and mind becomes the seed of earthly actions which sprouts forth in thorny plants like the karanja, a handful of which fills the ground with thick weeds.⁶ Living bodies lie scattered like pebbles on earth, rolling about or lying down with their temporary joy and grief in continued succession, owing to their ignorance of themselves.

⁷ From the highest heaven of Brahma down to the lowest deep, there is a constant undulation of the Divine Spirit, like the vibration of the wind, which keeps all beings in their successive wailing and rejoicing, and in their constant births and deaths.⁸ There are some of pure and enlightened souls, like the gods Hari (Vishnu), Hara (Shiva) and others. Some are of somewhat darkened understandings, such as men and the inferior demigods.⁹ Some are placed in greater darkness, like worms and insects. Others are situated in utter darkness, like trees and vegetables.¹⁰ Some grow far away from the great ocean of the Divine Spirit, like the grass and weeds of the earth that are ever degraded owing to their being the emblems of sin. Others, like dull stones and heinous snakes, are barred from elevation.¹¹ Some have come to being only with their bodies and they do not know that death, like a mouse burrowing a house, has been undermining the fabric of their bodies.

¹² Some have gone through the ocean of divine knowledge and become like gods in their living bodies, like Brahma, Hari, and Hara.¹³ Some, having a little understanding, have gone down the depth of holy knowledge without ever reaching the bottom or finding its other shore.¹⁴ Some beings, having undergone many births and having many more yet to pass through, remain abortive and unenlightened without the light of truth.¹⁵ Some are tossed up and down, like fruit flung from the hand. Those flying upward have gone higher still, and those going down have fallen still lower and lower.

¹⁶ It is forgetfulness of Supreme joy that causes one to wander in various births of happiness or sorrow. Knowledge of the Supreme causes the cessation of reincarnation, just like the memory of Garuda destroys the power of the most destructive poison.

Chapter 13 — Yama Explains to Bhrigu How Thoughts Create; They Go to Shukra

¹ Yama said:—

Among these various species of living creatures, which resemble the waves of the ocean and are as numerous as the plants and vines of spring,² there are some among the yakshas, gandharvas and kinnaras who have overcome the errors of their minds and have well considered everything before and after them, and who have become perfect in their lives, passing as the living liberated persons in this world.³ There are others among the moving and unmoving who are as unconscious of themselves as wood or stone. Many are worn out with error and are incapable of judging for themselves.

⁴ But those awakened to sense have the rich mine of the scriptures, framed by the enlightened to guide their souls.⁵ Those awakened to sense and whose sins are washed off have their understanding purified by the light of the scriptures.⁶ The study of good works destroys the errors of the mind, just as the course of the sun in the sky destroys the darkness of the night.

⁷ Those who have not succeeded to dispel the errors of their minds have darkened their understandings by a mist of ignorance, like the frosty sky of winter, and they find the phantoms of their error dancing like demons before their eyes.

⁸ All living bodies are subject to pain and pleasure, but it is the mind which constitutes the body, and not the flesh.⁹ The body that is seen to be composed of the five elements to make flesh and bones is a creation of the imagination of the mind. It has no substantiality.

¹⁰ What your son had thought of in his mental body he found in that same body. He was not accountable to anybody for anything or whatever passed in his mind.¹¹ Whatever acts a man wills to do in his own mind, the same comes to take place in a short time. There is no other agency of anybody else required to bring them about.¹² Whatever the mind did in a moment and of its own accord, moved by its own will or desire, there is nobody in the world who has the power to do or undo at anytime.

¹³ The suffering of the torments of hell, the enjoyment of heavenly bliss, and the thoughts of birth and death are all fabrications of the mind that labors under these thoughts.¹⁴ What need I to tell more in the manner of writers of many words on this subject, other than go to the place where your son is situated?¹⁵ Shukra, having tasted the pleasure and pain of all these states at a moment's thought of his mind, is now seated in penance (tapas) on the bank of the Samanga River under spreading moonbeams.¹⁶ His vital breath, having fled from his heart, became like a moonbeam sparkling in a dew drop and entered the uterus in the form of virile semen.

Vasishta speaking:—

¹⁷ Saying so, the lord of death smiled to think of the course of nature, and taking hold of Bhrigu's hand in his own, they departed together like the sun and moon.¹⁸ “O wonderful is the law of nature!” said Bhrigu slowly to himself, and then rose higher and higher, as the sun ascends above his rising mountain.

¹⁹ With their luminous bodies, they arrived at the spot of Samanga River and shone on high above the tamala trees below. Their simultaneous rising in the clear sky made them appear like the sun rising

with the full moon over a cloudy horizon.

²⁰ Valmiki said:—

As the muni Vasishta was describing these things, the sun went down his setting mountain, and the day departed to its evening service. The court broke with mutual salutations to perform their evening rites and observances, after which they joined the assembly at the dawn of the next day.

Chapter 14 — Yama & Bhrigu Awaken Shukra from His Tapas; He Remembers His Past Lives

¹ Vasishta said:—

Yama and Bhrigu departed from the cave of Mandara Mountain and traveled towards the bank of Samanga River.² As they descended from the mountain they saw a great light below proceeding from the bodies of the celestials sleeping in the tree groves of golden vines.³ Birds were playing in sprays formed by cradling vines under the canopy of heaven. Lovely antelopes looked face to face, their eyes resembling blue lotuses.⁴ They saw spiritual masters sitting on their stony seats upon elevated rocks, their bodies full of vigor and their eyes looking on the spheres with defiance.

⁵ They saw the lords of the elephant herd, their big trunks as large as palm trees, plunging in lakes covered with flowers falling constantly from the branches of flowering trees on the shore.⁶ They saw mountain bulls dozing in their giddiness and sitting as if intoxicated, while their bodies were reddened by the red dust of flowers and their tails flushed with the crimson dust blown by the breeze.

⁷ There were deer whose tails served as fans for the mountain king immersed in pools filled with falling flowers.

⁸ They saw kinnara lads sitting on the tops of straight and stately date trees, playing by pelting each other with date fruit that stuck to the reeds below.⁹ They saw big monkeys jumping about with their hideous reddish cheeks and hiding themselves in wide spreading vines.¹⁰ They saw spiritual adepts clad with vests of the tawny clouds that shrouded them and being hit with mandara flowers thrown by celestial ladies.

¹¹ The uninhabited foothills of the mountain were like the solitary walks of Buddhist wanderers, and the streams at its foot were flowing as if they were running to meet the sea, covered under yellow vests of kunda and mandara flowers of the spring season.¹² Trees decorated with wreaths of flowers and shaken by the breeze seemed like bacchanals giddy with the honey of flowers, rolling their dizzy eyes formed of fluttering bees.

¹³ They walked about here and there and looked at and admired the grandeur of the mountain, until at last they descended on the nether earth decorated with its cities and human dwellings.¹⁴ In a moment they arrived at the bank of the Samanga, flowing with the loosened flowers of all kinds as if it were a bed of flowers itself.

¹⁵ Bhrigu saw his son on one of its banks, his body changed to another form and his features quite altered from his former state.¹⁶ His limbs were stiff and his sense at a standstill as he sat with his mind fixed on steady meditation.

He seemed to have been there a long time to rest from the turmoil of the world.¹⁷ He thought upon the course of the currents of the world that continually flow with successive joy and sorrow to man, who gets rid of them after his long trial.¹⁸ He became motionless as a wheel after its long winded motion. He found his rest after his prolonged whirling in the whirlpool of the ocean of the world.¹⁹ He sat retired like a lover reclined solely on the thought of his beloved object. His mind was at rest after its long wanderings.²⁰ He sat in a state of uniform meditation without a shadow of division or differentiation, smiling with a cold apathy at all the pursuits of mankind.²¹ Liberated from all concerns, released from the enjoyments of life, and free from the snare of desires and fancies, he

rested in the supreme bliss of the soul.²² His soul was at rest in the everlasting rest of God, just as a pure crystal catches the color of the gem that is next to it.

²³ Bhrigu saw his son in the calmly composed and awakened state of mind, freed alike from his thoughts of what was desirable and from his hatred of what was disgusting.

²⁴ Yama, seeing the son of Bhrigu, said to the father in a voice, hoarse as the sounding sea, "Lo there your son."²⁵ "Awake," he said to Bhargava (Shukra), which startled him from his meditation just like the roaring of a cloud rouses a slumbering peacock from his summer sleep.

²⁶ Upon opening and lifting up his eyes, Shukra saw the god standing with his father on one side, both so pleased at the sight that their faces glowed like the discs of the sun and moon.²⁷ Shukra rose from his seat of kadamba leaves and made his obeisance to them who appeared to have come to him like the gods Hari and Hara in the disguise of a couple of brahmins.²⁸ After their mutual salutations, Yama and Bhrigu sat on a slab of stone and appeared like the venerable gods Vishnu and Shiva seated on the pinnacle of Meru.

²⁹ The brahmin boy, having ended chanting his mantras on the bank of Samanga, approached them with a voice as sweet as nectarine juice of ambrosia.³⁰ "My lords, I am emancipated at your sight this day. You have blessed me by your sights, resembling those of the sun and moon appearing together.³¹ The darkness that reigned in my mind, which no light of scriptures or spiritual or temporal knowledge or even my austerities could remove, is dispelled today by the light of your presence.³² A kind look of the great gives as much joy to the mind as draughts of pure ambrosia satisfy the heart.³³ Tell me who are you, whose feet have sanctified this place like the glorious orbs of the day and night enlighten the sky?"

³⁴ Being addressed in this manner, Bhrigu desired that Shukra remember his prior births, which he could well do by his enlightened understanding.³⁵ Bhrigu acquainted him with the state of his former birth, and he remembered it instantly by the clairvoyance of his inward sight.³⁶ He was struck with wonder at the memory of his former state. He smiled with a joyful face and glad heart to think on what he had been.

Then Shukra said as follows.³⁷ "Blessed is the law of the Supreme Being that is without beginning or end and is known here below as destiny, and by whose power the world revolves like a two-wheeled carriage.³⁸ I see my countless and unknown births from first to last, and the innumerable accidents to which they were subject, for an entire kalpa duration of the world.³⁹ I have undergone great hardships and known prosperity also with the toil of earning. In different lives I have wandered, and I remember having roamed for a long time over the mountainous regions of Meru."

⁴⁰ "I drank water reddened with the pollen of mandara flowers and wandered along the bank of the heavenly Mandakini (the Milky Way) filled with lotuses.⁴¹ I wandered about mandara groves filled with flowering vines like gold. I wandered under the shade of the kalpa trees of Mount Meru, and in the flowery plains above and about it."

⁴² "There is nothing of good or evil that I have not tasted or felt or done myself. There is nothing that I have not seen or felt or known in my past lives.⁴³ Now I know the knowable and I have seen the imperishable one in whom I have my repose. Now I have rested after my toils were over and I have

passed beyond the domain of error and darkness."

⁴⁴ "Now rise, O father, and let us go see that body lying on Mandara Mountain which is now dried like a withered plant. ⁴⁵ I have no desire to remain in this place, or go anywhere of my own will. It is only to see the works of fate that we wander all about. ⁴⁶ I will follow you with my firm belief in the one adored deity of the learned. Let that be the desirable object of my mind, and I will act exactly in conformity with my belief."

Chapter 15 — Shukra Laments His Original Body; Behaving in the Physical Body

¹ Vasishta said:—

Thus contemplating on the course of nature, these lovers of learning (Brighu, Shukra and Yama) moved with their spiritual bodies from the bank of the Samanga.² They ascended into the sky and passed through the small openings in the clouds to the region of the spiritual masters, from where they descended to the lower world and arrived at the valley of Mandara.³ There, on a cliff of that mountain, Shukra saw the dried body of his former birth lying covered under dark and dewy leaves of trees.

⁴ He said, “Here is that shriveled body, O father, which you had nourished with many a dainty food.

⁵ There is that body of mine that my wet-nurse had so fondly anointed with camphor, aromatic agalwood, and sandal paste.⁶ This body of mine was used to repose on cooling beds made with heaps of mandara flowers in the airy spots of Meru.⁷ This body of mine used to be so fondly caressed by heavenly ladies of time past. Now it is lying on the bare ground below to be bitten by creeping insects and worms.⁸ This body of mine that was accustomed to ramble in the garden plots of sandalwood now lies like a dried skeleton on a naked place.⁹ My body now lies impassive of the feelings of delight in the company of heavenly nymphs and withers away unconscious of the actions and passions of its mind.¹⁰ Ah my pitiable body! How you rest here in peace, forgetful of your former delights in the different stages of life and unconscious of the thoughts of your past enjoyments and amusements.¹¹ O my body that has become a dead corpse dried by sunbeams. You have become so hideous in your skeleton frame as to frighten me.¹² I take fright to look upon this body in which I had taken so much pleasure before, now reduced to a skeleton.¹³ I see ants creeping over that breast of mine which was formerly adorned with necklaces studded with starry gems.¹⁴ Look at the remains of my body, now only a load of dry bones, but whose appearance of molten gold had attracted the hearts of beautiful women.¹⁵ Behold the stags of the forest flying with fear at the sight of the wide open jaws and withered skin of my carcass, which with its horrid mouth frightens the timid fawns in the woods.”

¹⁶ “I see the cavity of the withered corpse’s belly is filled with sunshine, like the mind of man enlightened by knowledge.¹⁷ My dried body, lying flat on a mountain stone, resembles the mind of the wise, abashed at the sense of its own unworthiness.¹⁸ It seems to be emaciating itself like an ascetic sitting in a trance (samadhi) on the mountain, dead to the perceptions of color, sound, touch and taste, and free from all its desires and passions.¹⁹ It is freed from the demon of the mind and is resting in its joy without any apprehension of the vicissitudes of fate and fortune, or fear of fall.²⁰ The joy that attends the body upon calming the demon mind is not to be had from possession of any vast dominion of the world.”

²¹ “See how happily this body is sleeping in this forest, free from all its doubts and desires in the world, liberated from the network of its fancies.²² The restlessness of the apish mind disturbs and troubles the body and is hurled down by its excitation like a tall tree uprooted from its bottom.²³ This body, free from the impulses of the mischievous mind, is sleeping in its highest and perfect joy and is quite released from the jarring turmoil of the world clashing like the mingled roaring of lions and elephants fighting each other.²⁴ Every desire is a fever in the bosom, and the group of our errors is

like the mist of autumn. Mankind has no release from these except by the dispassion of their minds."

²⁵ "They who have had the high-mindedness to lay hold on the tranquility of their minds have gone beyond the bounds of worldly enjoyments. ²⁶ It is by my good fortune that I came to find this body of mine, resting in these woods without its troublesome mind, and freed from all its tribulations and feverish anxieties."

²⁷ Rama said, "Venerable sage who is versed in all knowledge, you have already described Shukra's passing through many births in different shapes and feeling all their casualties of good and evil.

²⁸ Why did he have so much regret for his body begotten by Bhrigu, in disregard of all his other bodies and the pains and pleasures which attended upon them?"

²⁹ Vasishtha answered:—

Rama, the other bodies of Shukra were merely the creations of his imagination, but that of Bhargava, the son of Bhrigu, was the actual one, produced by the merit of his earlier acts.

³⁰ This was the first body with which he was born by the will of his maker, being first formed in the form of subtle air, then changed into the shape of wind. ³¹ This wind entered into the heart of Bhrigu in a flux for the vital and circulating breaths, and being joined in time with the semen, formed the germ of Shukra's body. ³² The person Shukra received the brahmin sacraments and became his father's associate until at last it was reduced to the form of a skeleton in course of a long time.

³³ It was because this was the first body that Shukra obtained from Brahma the creator that he lamented so much for it. ³⁴ Though dispassionate and devoid of desire as Shukra was, yet he sorrowed for his body, according to the nature of all being born of flesh.

³⁵ This is the way of all flesh, whether it be the body of a wise or unwise man. This is the usual custom of the world, whether the person was mighty or not. ³⁶ Those acquainted with the course of nature and those who are ignorant of it, like brutes and beasts, are equally subject to the course of the world, bound in the net of fate and liable to grief and sorrow. ³⁷ The wise and the unwise are on an equal footing with respect to their nature and custom. Only the difference in desire distinguishes one from the other. The lack of desires or the bondage to desires is the cause of their liberation or bondage in this world. Lack of desires is the great aim that distinguishes the great from the mean-mindedness of the base.

³⁸ As long as there is the body, there is the feeling of pleasure in pleasure and pain in pain. But the mind that is unattached to and unaffected by them makes itself show wisdom. ³⁹ Even great souls are seen to feel happy in pleasure and become sorrowful in matters of pain, showing themselves as wise in their outward circumstances.

⁴⁰ The shadow of the sun is seen to shake on water, but not so the fixed sun himself. So the wise are moved in worldly matters, though they are firm in their faith in God. ⁴¹ As the unmoved and fixed sun seems to move in his shadow on the wave, so the wise man who has rid himself of worldly concerns still behaves like the unwise in it. ⁴² He is free who has the freedom of his mind, although his body is held in bondage. But he labors in bondage whose mind is enslaved by error, though he is free in his body.

⁴³ Feelings of the mind cause happiness, misery, liberty and bondage, just like the flames of fire cause light. ⁴⁴ Therefore conform yourself with the custom of the society in your outward conduct, but remain indifferent to all worldly concerns in your inner mind. ⁴⁵ Remain true to yourself by giving up your concerns in the world, but continue to discharge all your duties in this world by the acts of your body. ⁴⁶ Take care of the inner sorrows, bodily diseases, and the dangerous whirlpools and pitfalls in the course of your life. Do not fall into the black hole of selfishness, which gives the soul its greatest anguish.

⁴⁷ Mind, O lotus-eyed Rama, that you mix with nothing and let anything mix with you. Be of a purely enlightened nature and rest content in your inner soul. ⁴⁸ Think in yourself the pure and holy spirit of Brahma, the Universal Soul and maker of all, the tranquil and uncreated All, and be happy forever.

⁴⁹ If you can rescue yourself from the great gloom of the individual ego and arrive at the state of pure indifference to all objects, you will certainly become great in your mind and soul and be the object of universal veneration.

Chapter 16 — Shukra's Original Body Is Brought Back to Life

¹ Vasishta continued:—

The god Yama interrupted Shukra's long lamentation and addressed him in words that sounded as deep as the roaring of a cloud.

² Yama said, "Now, O Shukra, cast off your body of the devotee at the Samanga River and enter this dead body in the manner of a prince entering his palace. ³ You shall perform austere penance with this your first born body and by virtue of that you shall become the teacher of the daitya race of giants.

⁴ Then at the end of the great kalpa, you shall have to leave your mortal body forever, as one casts off a faded flower. ⁵ Having attained the state of living liberation by merit of your prior acts, you shall continue as the teacher of the leader of the great asura demons forever."

⁶ "Farewell. We shall now depart to our desired dwellings. Know for certain that there is nothing desirable to the mind that it cannot accomplish."

Vasishta speaking:—

⁷ Saying so, the god vanished from before the weeping father and son, moving in the burning sky like the dispenser of light, the sun. ⁸ After the god had gone and gained his destined state among the gods, the two Bhrigus remained to contemplate on the inexplicable and unalterable course of destiny.

⁹ Shukra entered his withered corpse, as spring enters into a faded plant, in order to adorn it again with its spring bloom and its springing blossoms. ¹⁰ His brahmin body immediately fell down on the ground, staggering as when a tree falls down with its uprooted trunk, and immediately became disfigured in its face and limbs. ¹¹ The old sage Bhrigu, seeing the dead body of his son come back to life, sanctified it with propitiatory mantras and sprinkling of water from his sacred water pot (*kamandalu*).

¹² The veins and arteries and all the cells and cavities of the dead body were again supplied with their circulating blood, just like dry river beds are filled with floods in rainy weather. ¹³ The body filled with blood made the limbs bloom like the growth of lotuses in rainy lakes and the bursting of new shoots and buds in spring plants. ¹⁴ Shukra then rose up from the ground breathing the breath of life, like a cloud ascending to the sky by force of winds.

¹⁵ He bowed down to his father standing in his holy figure before him, like a rising cloud clings and kisses the foot of the lofty mountain. ¹⁶ Then the father embraced the revived body of his son and shed a flood of affectionate tears upon him, like a high risen cloud washes a mountain top with showers.

¹⁷ Bhrigu looked with affection on the newly risen old body of his son and smiled to see the resuscitation of the body that he had begotten. ¹⁸ He was pleased to know him as the son born of himself and to find his features impressed on him. ¹⁹ Thus son and father graced each other by their company, as the sun and lotus-lake rejoice to see one another after the shade of night. ²⁰ They rejoiced at their reunion, like a loving pair of swans at the end of the night of separation, and like a joyous couple of peacocks at the approach of rainy clouds. ²¹ The worthy father and son sat awhile to pause after all their works and troubles were at an end, then they rose up to discharge the duties that were at hand.

²² They set fire to the body of the Samanga River brahmin and reduced it to ashes. For who is there among earth-born mortals who should ignore the customary usages of his country?

²³ Afterwards the two devotees Bhrigu and Shukra continued to dwell in that forest, like the two luminaries of the sky, the sun and moon. ²⁴ They both continued as living liberated guides of men by their knowledge of all that was to be known, and by preserving the equanimity of their minds and the steadiness of their dispositions amidst all the changes of time and place. ²⁵ In course of time Shukra became the teacher of the demons, and Bhrigu remained in his patriarchal rank and authority among the sons of men.

²⁶ Thus the son of Bhrigu, who was first born as Shukra, gradually was led away from his holy state by his thought of the heavenly nymph, and subjected to various states of life to which he was prone.

Chapter 17 — The Difference between Shukra's Daydreams & Ordinary Daydreams

¹ Rama said, "Tell me sage, why do others' daydreams not have the same result as that of Bhrigu's son?"

² Vasishta replied:—

The reason is that Shukra's body at first issued from the will of Brahma. He was born of the pure family of Bhrigu without being corrupted by any other birth.³ The purity of mind which follows upon decreasing desires, is called its coolness, and the same is known as the stainless state of the soul.

⁴ Whatever the man of a pure and contrite spirit thinks in his mind, the same comes to take place immediately, like the turning of seawater turns into an eddy.⁵ As the errors of various wanderings occurred to the mind of Shukra, so it is with everybody, as Bhrigu's son is an example.

⁶ As the serum contained in the seed develops itself into shoots and leaves, so the mind evolves in all the forms that are contained therein.⁷ Whatever forms of things are seen to exist in this world, they are all false appearances, as are their disappearances also.⁸ Nothing appears or disappears to anyone in this world, only error and fantasies in the air that show themselves to those bewitched by this magic scene of the world.⁹ Our notions of this part of the world present their forms to our view, and the appearance of thousands of such worlds in the mind is mere idea, as false as the show of a magic lantern.¹⁰ As the sights in our dream and the images of our imagination are never apart from our minds, and as they cannot show themselves to be seen by others, such is our false conception of the world.

¹¹ So all places and things are only imaginary ideas. They show themselves as real objects only to the blind sight of the ignorant.¹² Ghosts, demons, and devils are also only imaginary figures of the mind, born in the shallow brain of men to terrify themselves with their hideous shapes.¹³ Thus have we all become like the dreaming son of Bhrigu, understanding the false creations of our imagination as sober realities.

¹⁴ So the creation of the world and all created things are pictured in the mind of Brahma and make their repeated appearances before him as the phantoms of a fantastic mental fabrication.¹⁵ All things that appear to us are as false as these phantoms. They proceed from the mind of Brahma just like the varieties of trees and shrubs are produced from the same sap of spring season.

¹⁶ Considered from a philosophical viewpoint, it will be found that the will or desire of each person produces the objects of his desire.¹⁷ Everybody sees everything in the world according to the nature of the thoughts in his mind, then he dies with his wrong view of it.¹⁸ In its idea, anything appears to exist which in reality is nonexistent, though it is apparent to sight. The existence of the world is like a lengthened dream. The visible world is a wide spread snare of the mind, like chains at the feet of an elephant.

¹⁹ The reality of the world depends upon the reality of mind which causes the world to appear as real. The loss of the one destroys them both because neither can exist without the other.²⁰ The pure mind has the true notions of things and reflects the true image of everything, as the gem polished from its impurities receives a perfect reflection of everything.

²¹ The mind is purified by its habit of fixed attention to one particular object. It is the mind undisturbed by desires that receives the true light and reflection of things. ²² As the gilding of gold or any brilliant color cannot stand on base metal or on a piece of dirty cloth, so it is impossible for the weakened mind to apply itself intensely to anyone particular object.

²³ Rama asked, "Sage, how did the mind of Shukra receive the reflection of the shadowy world and its temporary movement? How did these fluctuations arise and remain in his mind?"

²⁴ Vasishta said:—

Shukra was impressed with the thoughts of the world from his father's lectures. These impressions remained in his mind like the future peacock resides in the egg. ²⁵ The world is naturally situated in the embryo of the mind of every species of living being. The world gradually evolves from the mind like shoots, sprouts, leaves and flowers from a seed. ²⁶ Everybody sees in his mind what his heart desires to possess, as it is in the case of our prolonged dreams.

²⁷ Know it this way, O Rama, that a partial view of the world arises in each person's mind in the same manner as it appears in the mind in a dream at night.

²⁸ Rama said, "But tell me sage, whether the thought and the things thought of simultaneously meet in the mind of the thinker, or is it only the mind that thinks of the object which it never meets?"

²⁹ Vasishta replied:—

The soiled mind cannot easily unite with the object of its thought, just as a dirty and cold piece of iron cannot join with a pure red-hot one, unless it is heated and purified from its impurity.

³⁰ The pure mind and its pure thoughts are readily united with one another, as pure waters mix together into one body of the same kind, which muddied water cannot do. ³¹ Lack of desire constitutes the purity of the mind, which is readily united with immaterial things of the same nature like itself. The purity of the mind leads to its enlightenment, and these being united in one leads it to the Supreme.

Chapter 18 — Incarnations of the Living Spirit

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Living souls (*jivatman*) residing in the seeds of material bodies in all parts of the world differ from one another according to the difference in their knowledge of themselves.² As long as there is no willingness or unwillingness connected with the identity of the living soul, it reposes in a state of rest, not unlike that of sound sleep (*susupti*).³ But living souls addicted to their wishes identify with those wishes and find themselves born here below in their desired shapes.

⁴ The subtle particles of the living soul and its inclinations run in one channel to the reservoir of life and are thickened into one living being by their combinations.⁵ Some are situated apart from one another and dissolve separately. Some are joined together and are born like two gunja fruit growing together.⁶ The universe consists of thousands of orbs like gunja fruit and contains the combinations of atoms on atoms and those unconnected with one another. The totality forms the great garden of God, Brahman.

⁷ These particles of the living soul and its inclinations being joined with one another become dense and thick and remain in the same place where it has grown.⁸ As ideas in the mind fall away, the mind changes and a different succession of births follow to suit those changes.⁹ Thus every regeneration of the mind in a new life is accompanied by its particular desires and their results. The new life is attended with its proper body unless the mind has been cleared of those thoughts.¹⁰ As pure spirit in the form of vital breath (*prana*) performs the functions of the body, so the mind being reborn in a new body is employed in all the functions of that body.

¹¹ The souls of all living beings are subject to the three states of waking, dreaming and sound sleep. These states are caused by the mind and not by the body.¹² The soul in its state as an individual person does not give rise to the body and passes under the triple conditions like seawater gives rise to the waves.¹³ The living soul that has attained its intellectual state, beyond the conditions of sound sleep (*susupti*), is awakened to the knowledge of itself and is released from its rebirth, while the ignorant soul is subject to be born again.

¹⁴ Though knowing and unknowing souls attain the state of deep sleep and resemble each other in kind, yet the unknowing deep sleep soul that is not awakened to the knowledge of its spirituality is doomed to be reborn in the mortal world.¹⁵ Omnipresent consciousness makes it pass into the mind of its next birth and exhibit itself in different forms in all its succeeding and subordinate regenerations.

¹⁶ These repeated births and regenerations are as endless as the many layers in the trunk of a plantain tree. The spirit of Brahma is adjacent to and pervades the whole, like the lofty leaves of the same tree.

¹⁷ The influence of the Divine Spirit is as cool as the cooling shade of a plantain tree. It is of its own nature and it is as unchangeable as the core of the plantain tree, in spite of the changes in all its outer coats and coverings.¹⁸ There is no difference or diversity in the nature of Brahma the Creator in his repeated and manifold creations of worlds. He being the seed of the world shoots forth by his moisture into the form of the expanded tree of the world and becomes the same seed again.¹⁹ So Brahman taking the form of the mind becomes the same Brahma by the memories of his mind, just as

the sap of the soil makes the seed bring forth fruit which reproduces the same seed.²⁰ So the productive seed proceeding from Brahma displays itself in the form of the world. But as nobody can say what is the cause of the sap in the seed, so no one can tell why the spirit of God teems with productive seed (of Brahma) in it.

²¹ So no one should inquire into the cause of Brahma because his nature is inscrutable and indefinable. It is improper to say he is this or the other.²² One must not attribute causality to what is not the cause, or impute causation of material bodies to the immaterial spirit of God that is the prime and supreme cause of all. We must reason rightly regarding what is certain truth and not argue falsely about what transcends our knowledge.

²³ The seed casts off its seedy form and assumes the shape of fruit, but Brahman (the seed of all) contains the fruit (of the universe) in his bosom without laying aside the seed.²⁴ The seed of the fruit bears a material form, but Brahman the universal seed has no form at all. Therefore it is improper to compare the visible seed with the invisible Brahman who is beyond all comparison.²⁵ Brahman evolves himself in his creation and does not produce the world like fruit from seed. Therefore know the world is the empty heart of Brahman and is neither born nor unborn of itself.

²⁶ The viewer viewing the view is unable to see his inner self because his consciousness, engrossed by external objects, is disabled from looking into itself.²⁷ Of what use is wisdom to one whose mind labors under the error of water in a mirage? What power has a mirage over a mind that possesses wisdom?²⁸ As one who sees a clear sky does not see every part of it, and as the eye that looks on all others does not see itself, so we see everything about us outside ourselves.²⁹ As one who sees a clear sky does not see what is above the sky, so we see ourselves and others as material beings. But we cannot see the inner part of the immaterial soul, as wise men do.

³⁰ Brahma, who is as clear as the sky, cannot be perceived despite all our efforts because the sight of the sky as a visible thing cannot be compared to the invisible Brahman.³¹ Such a sight cannot present itself to us unless we can see the true form of God. But the sight of subtlest things is far from being visible to the beholder.³² We see only the outward sight because we cannot see the beholder of the sight. The beholder (God) is the only being in existence and all that can be seen is nothing.³³ God, permeate in everything that is visible, cannot be seen as a personal God or anything visible as a distinct thing. Because whatever the almighty King proposes to do, he instantly forms their notions and becomes the same himself.

³⁴ As the sweet saccharine juice of the sugarcane thickens itself into the form of the sugar candy, so the will of God becomes compact in the solid body of the universe.³⁵ As the moisture of the ground in spring becomes incorporated in plant life bringing forth flowers and fruit, so the energy of Divine Consciousness turns itself into the living spirit which soon appears in a physical form.

³⁶ Everything we see cannot be separated from our idea of it in our mind, so the inner notion shows itself in the shape of the visible object, like a vision in a dream, which is only a representation of thoughts entertained in our minds.

³⁷ The ideas of self and others are like granules in the mind, like grains of salt produced in salty ground from the earth's moisture. So the multitudes of thoughts in the mind are exactly like the grains

of salt on the seashore.³⁸ As the serum of the earth appears in various shapes, so the sap of consciousness produces an infinity of ideas and thoughts growing like trees in the wilderness of the mind.³⁹ These trees again shoot forth in branches and leaves, of which there is no end. So every other world is like a forest supplying its sap to innumerable plants, like thoughts in the mind.

⁴⁰ Consciousness perceives in itself the existence of everything as distinctly as the inherent power of the living soul exhibits itself in creation.⁴¹ Every one's intellect, by virtue of its former acts and their memories impressed upon the mind, perceives the existence of the world in the same manner as his living soul happens to meet with everything as present before it.⁴² There are some living souls who meet and join with others and propagate their species, then cease to exist after having lived a long time together.

⁴³ You must observe with keen sight and a well discerning mind in order to look into the different states and thoughts of others.⁴⁴ There are thousands of worlds contained in the mind, like atoms in earth, the ample space of the sky, and in water. Worlds reside in those atoms like oil in mustard seeds.

⁴⁵ When the mind becomes perfect, it comes to be a living being. Consciousness being purified becomes all pervasive. Hence consciousness becomes one with the living spirit.⁴⁶ The individual selves from the lotus-born Brahma and all other living beings are only their own self-deception. The sense of the existence of the world is like a protracted dream rising and setting in the mind.

⁴⁷ Some beings pass through successive states of existence, like a man passing from one dream to another, and they think they are firmly established in them, just as one supposes to be settled in some house appearing in his dream.⁴⁸ Whatever consciousness dwells upon at any time or place, it immediately sees the same appearing before it, just like anything seen in dream appears to be true to the dreamer at that time.⁴⁹ The atom of consciousness contains the particles of all our notions, just like the seed contains the powdery particles of future leaves, branches, flowers and fruit.

⁵⁰ I consider the atoms of consciousness and the mind contained within the particles of the material body to be both empty and joined in one without causing a duality in their nature.⁵¹ Consciousness conceives many other atomic germs within itself under the influence of particular times, places, actions and circumstances that cannot be extraneous from itself.⁵² It is this particle of consciousness that displays creation like the vision of a dream before it. It is this conception that led the gods Brahma and others to the idea of their visible bodies, as it makes little insects think of their own bodies.⁵³ All that is displayed in this (outer) world is in reality nothing at all. Yet these living beings, though possessing the particles of consciousness in them, falsely conceive the duality of an extraneous existence.

⁵⁴ Some intellects (of particular persons) display themselves in their bodies and derive pleasure from their consciousness through their eyes and external organs.⁵⁵ Others look on outer objects as receptacles of consciousness from the belief that the all pervasive, inseparable and imperishable Intellect (Soul) must abide in each and every one of them.⁵⁶ Some men view the entire physical world within the body instead of the all pervading consciousness of Brahma as Vishwarupa, the Universal Form. These being hardened by long habit of thinking so are plunged in the gulf of error.⁵⁷ They

wander from one error to another just like a man sees one dream after another. They roll about in the pit of their delusion, like a stone hurled down from a hill.

⁵⁸ Some persons rely on the union of the body and soul. Others who rely on the soul alone are placed beyond the reach of error. Many who rely only on their consciousness shine as rational beings.

⁵⁹ They who think in terms of other people's errors are to be considered as under the influence of false dreams in their sleep.

⁶⁰ God being the all-pervading spirit of nature is truly seen in the spirit of everybody. Because He is everywhere, his omnipresence is present in everything in all places. ⁶¹ God, shining as everyone's living soul, resides as the soul of each soul and mind whether directly or indirectly created. ⁶² One living being is born in another, and that again within another, like the layered bark of plantain trees that grow one under the other over the inmost core.

⁶³ By changing from thinking about phenomena to recognizing their essence in the invisible fullness, we get rid of our error of the reality of the world of form, as we do of the ornament in the material gold.

⁶⁴ He who does not inquire into the questions "Who am I?" and "What is the world?" is not liberated in his inner soul and suffers under the continuous fever of a false life. ⁶⁵ He is successful in his inquiry who by his good understanding comes to know how to curb his worldly greed day by day. ⁶⁶ As proper routine is the best medicine to secure the body's health, so the habit of keeping the organs of sense under control is the only way to improve understanding. ⁶⁷ He who rambles with his words and does not discern with his mind is like a blazing fire in a picture. No one can be wise until he gets rid of his false wit.

⁶⁸ As the perception of air comes by feeling and not by word of the mouth, so wisdom proceeds from the curtailing of desires. ⁶⁹ Ambrosia in a painting is no ambrosial food, fire in a picture is not burning flame, a beauty in a drawing is no beautiful maid, and wisdom in words only is lack of wisdom. ⁷⁰ At first wisdom serves to weaken our passions and enmity, then to uproot them at once, and at last it lessens our desires and endeavors and gives the appearance of holiness to its possessor.

Chapter 19 — Differences between Waking & Dreaming States

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Brahma is the seed of life and remains as empty air everywhere. Hence there are many kinds of living beings situated in the world within the womb of universal Life.

² All living beings composed of dense consciousness and soul contain other living animals underneath, like the manifold layers of the plantain tree, and insects contained in the womb of earth.

³ Worms and insects that grow out of the dirt and scum of earth and water in the hot season and appear filthy to our sight nevertheless are living beings full of particles of consciousness. ⁴ However living beings strive for their progress, so they prosper in their lives according to the different scopes of their thoughts and actions.

⁵ Those who worship gods go to the region of gods. Those who worship yaksha nature spirits meet in the world of yakshas. Those who adore Brahma ascend to the world of Brahma, Brahmaloka. Therefore resort to what is the best and greatest refuge.

⁶ Shukra the son of Bhrigu obtained his liberation at last by the purity of his conscience, even though he was enslaved of his own nature to phenomena at his first sight of them (the apsara fairy). ⁷ A child born on earth first has purity of its soul, then it becomes of the same nature as the education he gets, and not otherwise.

⁸ Rama said, “Please sage, tell me the difference between the states of waking and dreaming. What are the states of waking watchfulness, waking dream and waking delusion?”

⁹ Vasishta answered:—

The waking state is that in which we have a sure reliance. Dreaming is the state in which we place no certain reliance and we believe it to be untrue.

¹⁰ Dream is something that seems like the waking state but lasts only for a moment. If an object is seen over a length of time and distance, it is said to be a waking dream or dreaming wakefulness. ¹¹ The state of waking dream can be of longer or shorter duration during which what we see appears the same at all places and times. ¹² Dreaming, as long as it lasts, is also like waking, but waking seems like a dream when the objects of its vision are not lasting. ¹³ A dream that is understood as an occurrence of the waking state is believed to be waking, but the inner consciousness of dreaming makes it a dream. ¹⁴ As long as one knows anything to be lasting before him, he believes himself to be waking. But no sooner is it lost to him, than he thinks himself to have been dreaming it.

¹⁵ Now hear how it is. There is a principle of life in the body that causes it to live. This vital element is an electric force called life (*jiva chetana*). ¹⁶ When the body is active with the powers of the mind, speech and the other members of action, its vital element is put into motion by the vital breath that it breathes. ¹⁷ This breath circulating throughout the body gives it the powers of sense and consciousness which have their seats in the heart and mind where the false conception of the world is hidden. ¹⁸ The mind circulates about the outer world, through the passages of sight and other organs, and sees within itself the forms of many changing shapes and figures. ¹⁹ As long as these forms remain permanent in the mind, it is called the waking state.

So far have I told you about the cause of waking, now hear me expound on the laws of sleep and dreaming.

²⁰ When the body is weary with action of its limbs, mind or speech, the living element becomes still and remains at rest with the calm and quiet soul residing within the body. ²¹ The internal actions of the body and mind being quieted and the motion of the heart being at rest, the living principle becomes as still as the flame of a lamp unshaken by wind. ²² The vital power ceases to exert itself in the members of the body and ceases to keep consciousness awake. The senses of sight and others do not act upon their organs, nor do they receive sensations from without.

²³ Life lies latent in the inner heart, like liquid oil residing in a sesame seed. It lies as dormant in the interior part as cold within frost and fluidity in clarified butter. ²⁴ The particle of consciousness that has taken the form of life, after being purified from its earthly impurity, mixes with the internal soul and attains the state of sound sleep, as if lulled to unconsciousness by a cooling breeze.

²⁵ One who feels that his mind to be incapable of passion, who deals unconcernedly with every one, and who has reached the fourth stage of consciousness beyond the three states of waking, dreaming and sleeping, is said to be deadened in life (*turiya*).

²⁶ When the vital principle again comes to action after the enjoyment of its sound sleep, either in this or the other world, it takes the name of living element or mind or self-consciousness. ²⁷ This principle of life and though, sees within itself the ebbs and flows of many worlds, just like a large tree and all its parts and productions are observed to be contained within the seed.

²⁸ When the breeze of the vital breath puts a slight motion to the element of life, it becomes conscious of its self-existence as "I am." The motion being accelerated, life finds itself flying in the air. ²⁹ When the vital breath is immersed in the fluids (phlegm) of the body, life gets the feeling of humidity in itself, as a flower perceives its own fragrance. ³⁰ When it is assailed by internal bile, then it has the feeling of its inner heat and sees all outward objects with its melancholy temperament. ³¹ When it is full of blood, it perceives a fiery redness in itself, like that of a red rock, or like the crimson red of the setting sun in the sky. ³² Whatever one desires to have, he sees the same in himself in his sleep, and this is by the force of his inner vital breath acting upon his mind as it does upon his outward organs.

³³ When the organs are not besieged by external objects that disturb the inner senses of the mind, the mind indulges itself reflecting upon many things. This is called its dreaming state. ³⁴ But when the organs are besieged by outward objects and the mind is moved by motion of vital breath (*vayu*) to their sight and perception, it is called the state of waking.

³⁵ Now, O great-minded Rama,! you have learned the inner process of your mind. But there is no reality in it or in this existent world which is subject to the evils of death, desire and destruction.

Chapter 20 — The Mind Is the Person, not the Body

¹ Vasishta said:—

Now Rama, I have told you all this in order to explain the nature of the mind to you, and for no other reason.² Whatever the mind often thinks upon with a strong conviction of its reality, it immediately assumes that form, like an iron ball igniting from contact with fire.³ Therefore the convictions of being or not being and of receiving or rejecting a thing depend upon the imagination of the mind. They are neither true nor untrue but merely fluctuations of the mind.

⁴ The mind is the cause of error, and it is the mind which is the framer of the world. The mind also stretches itself in the form of the universe (*vishwarupa*) in its gross state.⁵ The mind is called the person (*purusha*, person, *i.e.*, the ruler of the body) which, being brought under control and directed in the right course, produces all prosperity.⁶ If the body were the person, how could the high-minded Shukra pass into various forms in his very many transmigrations?⁷ Therefore the mind (*chitta*) is the ruler of the body (*purusha*) which is rendered conscious (*chetya*) by it. Whatever form the mind assumes to itself, it undoubtedly becomes the same.

⁸ So inquire into what is great, devoid of attributes and error, and which is easily attainable by everybody. Be diligent in your inquiry and you will surely succeed to obtain it.

⁹ Hence whatever is seated in the mind, the same comes to pass on the body. But what is done by the body never affects the mind. Therefore, O fortunate Rama, apply your mind to truth and shun whatever is untrue.

Chapter 21 — Philosophy of the Mind Creating Its Own Reality; Different Schools of Thought

¹ Rama said, “Venerable sage who is acquainted with the mysteries of all things, I have a great question swelling in my heart like a huge surge of the sea. ² How is it, sage, that any foulness could attach to the mind when it is situated in the eternal purity of the infinite Spirit unbounded by time and space? ³ Again, as there is nothing, there never was anything, and there never will be anything other than the entity of the Holy One, how and from where could this foulness come in Him?”

⁴ Vasishta answered:—

Well said Rama! I see that your understanding is approaching the way to your liberation and exhaling the sweetness of the blossoms of the Nandana garden of paradise. ⁵ I see your understanding is capable of judging both deductively (reason) and inductively (observation) and is likely to attain that acme which was gained by the gods Shankara (Shiva) and others. ⁶ However, it is not yet the proper time and place for you to ask this question. It should be asked when I come to the conclusion of the subject. ⁷ You should ask this question when I come to the conclusion, and it will be demonstrated to you as clearly as the location of a place on a map placed in the palm of your hand.

⁸ Your question will be most suitable at the end, just as the sounds of the peacock and swan are best suited to the rainy season and autumn. ⁹ The blueness of the sky is pleasant to look upon at the end of the rainy weather, but it is odd to speak of it during rain.

¹⁰ It is best to investigate into the mind by the nature of its acts and operations that tend to be the causes of the repeated births of mankind. ¹¹ The mind by its nature has the power of thinking and, as determined by the seekers of salvation, the mind leads all the organs and body part to their several actions. ¹² Men learned in scriptures and eloquent in speech have given various names to the mind in different systems of philosophy according to the mind’s various perceptive faculties and different functions and operations in the body. ¹³ Whatever nature the mind assumes by the fickleness of its thoughts, it receives the same name and nature for itself, just like the same fleeting air receives from blowing different smells.

¹⁴ The mind delights itself with thoughts of its desired objects and assimilating itself into their natures.

¹⁵ It receives the same form in which it delights and which it assumes to itself in its imagination.

¹⁶ The body, being subject to the mind, is molded in the same form as the mind, just as wind is perfumed by the fragrance of the flower bed through which it passes. ¹⁷ The inner senses being excited actuate the outward organs of sense in their own ways, just as the exciting motion of winds drives the dust of the earth before their course. ¹⁸ The mind exerts its powers to make the external organs perform their several functions, just as flying winds drive dust in different directions.

¹⁹ Such are the acts of the mind which is said to be the root of action, and these combine together as inseparably as the flower and its fragrance. ²⁰ Whatever nature the mind adopts to itself by its accustomed habit, the same shoots forth in the form of the mind’s two kinds of movement: will and action. ²¹ The mind does its action and brings about the result by its diligent application. In the same way, the mind enjoys the results and enslaves itself to the enjoyment.

²² The mind understands what is its right course, which is whatever agrees with its temperament, and the mind knows for certain that there is no other way to its real good other than its accustomed course.

²³ Minds of different casts follow different pursuits according to their particular inclinations. Minds employ themselves in the acquisition of wealth and virtues, desired objects and liberation according to whatever they think is their best choice.

²⁴ Kapila (Samkhya) philosophers say the mind is a pure substance, like immaterial consciousness, and this view is adopted in their philosophy and scriptures. ²⁵ These men, relying on the error of their own hypothesis, teach their supposed view of the mind to others as the only light to guide them in the way of their salvation.

²⁶ But the teachers of Vedanta doctrines acknowledge the mind as Brahma himself and preach peace and self-control as the only means to attain liberation. ²⁷ The authoritative assertion of Vedanta is that there is no other way to the salvation of the supposed mind, and it is an assumed dogma in other schools also. ²⁸ The Vijnanavada philosophers also have ascertained and upheld peace and self-government as the leaders to liberation, but this too is an expression of their false understandings.

²⁹ Thus all sects give out their own views in the false rules they have adopted for the salvation of their supposed minds. Each school asserts that there is no other way to salvation except what they lay down. ³⁰ So Buddhists and the other sectarians propose a variety of fictitious methods for the liberation of the mind out of their arbitrary will in their respective scriptures. ³¹ The arbitrary rules of the learned, and those unsupported by the Sruti scriptures, are as numerous and varying from one another as bubbles in clear water.

³² Mighty Rama, know that the mind is the source of all these rules and methods, just as the sea is the source of every kind of gem. ³³ There is no innate sweetness in sugarcane or bitterness in the neem leaf, both of which are sucked by insects. There is no heat or cold inherent in the sun or moon. It is the intrinsic habit of the mind that makes the difference. ³⁴ Thus those who want to enjoy the unadulterated happiness of their souls should habituate their minds to assimilate themselves to that happy state, and they are sure to have the same. ³⁵ The mind having fled from the sphere of the phenomenal world becomes exempt from all its pleasure and pain, like a young bird with feathers flying in the air by casting off its eggshell and leaving its cage below.

³⁶ O sinless Rama, cherish no fondness for the phenomenal world, which is an unreal illusion full of fear and un-holiness stretched out to catch the mind. ³⁷ The wise describe our consciousness of the world as a magic scene (*maya*), an appearance of ignorance (*avidya*), a mere thought, and the cause and effect of our acts. ³⁸ Know that the delusive mind stretches the visible world before you. Therefore rub it off from the mind like dirty mud.

³⁹ This visible appearance that naturally appears before you in the form of the world is called a product of ignorance by the wise. ⁴⁰ Men being deluded by it are at a loss to know their real good, like the blinded eye is incapable of seeing the brightness of the day. ⁴¹ Contemplation of objects presents phenomena to our view, like trees in the empty sky. Being without thought of objects removes their images from inner and outer sights.

⁴² The abstract meditation of the thoughtful yogi weakens the outward impressions, and by dissociating the soul from all external things, keeps it steady and calm in itself. ⁴³ The mind, by removing its attention from unreal sights, is inclined to the right view of things and produces clarity of

understanding and a detached tranquility of the soul.⁴⁴ The mind that regards neither realities nor unrealities and is unconscious to pleasure and pain feels in itself the delight of its singleness or unity.

⁴⁵ Application of the mind to unworthy thoughts and to the internal or external sights of things blocks the soul from tasting the sweets of its unity.⁴⁶ The mind that is subject to endless desires is like the clear sky hidden by clouds. Such a mind wanders in the maze of doubt between truth and untruth, such as supposing the rope to be the serpent.

⁴⁷ Man, by the mist of his doubts, obstructs his own sight of the clear sky of his consciousness. But he is unaware of his error's obstruction and indulges the fancies of his imagination that adds to his error.

⁴⁸ He takes the true, incorruptible and supreme Brahma in a different light, as one mistakes one thing for another in the dark or in his error.⁴⁹ When man is rid of his false imagination, he comes to the knowledge of true God and his happiness, like one freed from his false apprehension of a tiger in a thicket is set at rest with himself.⁵⁰ The imaginary monster of one's imprisonment in the emptiness of the body is dispersed by his insight into it, just as the fear of a lion lurking in the jungle is removed upon finding no such thing.⁵¹ So when you look deeply, you will find no bondage in the world. The notions that this is the world and this is myself are only errors of the mind.⁵² Flight of fancy fills the mind with illusions of good and evil, just as the shade of evening presents apparitions of vetalas to little children.

⁵³ Our fancies alight on us at one time and depart at another. They assume different forms at will, just like our consorts act the part of wives in our youth and nurses in our old age.⁵⁴ She acts the part of a housewife in her management of household affairs, and she is taken as a mistress when she embraces us in her bosom.⁵⁵ Like an actress, the mind forgets to display its parts when it plays another, so everybody is absorbed in the thoughts he has in his head and neglects other thoughts which are absent.

⁵⁶ The ignorant do not perceive the selfsame unity in all the things he sees in the world. They see everything in the light of the ideas they have imprinted in their minds.⁵⁷ They also meet with results in the forms they have in mind, even though in reality they are not what they seem to be, nor are they entirely false.⁵⁸ Man sees everything in the same manner in which he thinks it in himself. If his fancy is an elephant in the sky, he sees elephants in clouds.⁵⁹ In his thought he believes these elephants are pursuing their mates, so it is the thought that gives the outward forms of things.

⁶⁰ Rama, repel your drowsiness and behold the Supreme Soul in your soul. Be like a bright jewel by repelling the shadows of all external things.⁶¹ It is impossible, O Rama, that one so enlightened as you will receive the reflection of the world as dull matter, like others do.⁶² Being certain of its immateriality. Never taint your mind with its outward coloring or the knowledge of its reality, but know the reflection of the world is in no way distinct from the Supreme Spirit.⁶³ Keep in your mind that Being who is without beginning or end, and meditate on the spirit in Spirit. Do not let the reflections of your mind stain the pure crystal of your soul.⁶⁴ Be on your guard so you never allow the reflections of your mind to taint the clear crystal of your soul. Remain unmindful of phenomena and do not regard any worldly desire.

Chapter 22 — Qualities of the Mind Resting in Supreme Joy

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Men of sound judgment are free from mental disturbance and are perfect in their mastery over themselves by restraining the flight of the mind and fastening it to its inner awareness.² They swerve from the sight of phenomena as unworthy of their notice. They seek knowledge of their chief good. They behold the all-seeing God in their mental and external sights and have no perception of unintelligent phenomena.

³ They are dormant amidst the thick gloom of error spreading over the confused paths of life. They are awake under the transcendent light of divine knowledge that requires the vigilance of the living.

⁴ They are utterly indifferent to the sweet pleasures of this life, as they are also indifferent to the cheerless prospects of future enjoyments.⁵ They are mixed with the water of spiritual unity and in the boundless ocean of omnipresence. By their rigorous austerities, resembling the vigorous heat of the sun, they melt away like ice in a river.⁶ At the disappearance of their ignorance, all their restless desires and passions are set to rest, like the turbulent waves of rivers subside of themselves in the absence of stormy clouds.

⁷ The net of desires that ensnares men like birds in traps is cut asunder by a spirit of dispassion, just like the meshes of a net are torn apart by a mouse's teeth.⁸ As the seeds of kata fruit serve to purify foul water, so philosophy tends to cleanse human nature of its errors.⁹ The mind that is free from passions, from worldly connections and contentions, and from dependence on anyone or anything, is also liberated from the bonds of ignorance and error, like a bird set free from its cage.

¹⁰ When the disturbances of doubts are settled and the wandering of curiosity is over, then the full moon of internal fullness sheds its light over the mind.¹¹ As the mind's true greatness appears after it sets from the height of its dignity and high-mindedness, so it begins to have its equanimity in a state resembling the calm sea after a storm.¹² As long as the shadow of concerns hangs over the mind, it is darkened and stupefied and broken in the heart, until the sun of renunciation rises to dispel its gloom.

¹³ The sunshine of consciousness makes the lotus-bed of intelligence shine in its pure luster and unfolds the foliage of its virtues before the dawning light above it.¹⁴ Intelligence is charmer of hearts and delighter of all in the world. It is fostered by the quality of goodness, just as the moon becomes full by her increasing digits (phases).

¹⁵ What more shall I say on this subject, other than he who knows the knowable (God) has his mind expanded like the sphere of heaven which has no beginning nor end.¹⁶ The mind enlightened by reasoning is as exalted in its nature as to take pity on even the gods Hari, Hara, Brahma and Indra.

¹⁷ The gods, continually seeking to quench their thirst from waters appearing in the mirage, like the thirsting deer (running to them by mistake), are far from tasting the happiness of egoistic yogis.

¹⁸ Desires in the hearts of all beings subjects them to repeated births and deaths causing the ignorant, but not the wise, to appear and disappear like waves of the sea.

¹⁹ The world presents no other show in its course except that of the appearance and disappearance of bodies. Now they are seen to move about as the sport of time, and then fall as a prey to it forever.

²⁰ But the spiritual body is neither born nor dies in this world. It is not affected by the decoration or

loss of the material body but remains unchanged as the emptiness of a pot, both when it exists and when it is broken to pieces.

²¹ As understanding rises with its cooling moonbeams within us, it dispels the mist of false desires rising before us like a mirage in a dreary desert. ²² The spectacle of the world presents its dusky appearance to our view only as long as we do not consider the questions, "What am I, and what are all these about me?"

²³ He sees rightly who sees his body as an apparition of his error and the abode of all evils, and that his body does not serve the spiritual meditation of his soul and his maker. ²⁴ He sees rightly who sees that his body is the source of all the pain and pleasure which afflict at different times and places, and that the body does not answer his purpose of spiritual edification.

²⁵ He sees rightly who sees the One Ego pervading infinite space and time as the source of all accidents and events that constantly take place in them. ²⁶ He knows rightly who knows the Ego to be as minute as a millionth or billionth part of the point of a hair, and pervading the entire infinity of space and eternity of time. ²⁷ He perceives rightly who perceives the Universal Soul to permeate all the various objects of his sight and knows them as sparks of the Light of Consciousness. ²⁸ He perceives rightly who perceives within himself the omnipotence of the infinite Spirit present in all states and conditions of beings, and the same Consciousness to abide in and preside over all. ²⁹ He understands rightly who understands by his wisdom that he is not his body that is subject to diseases, dangers, fears and anxieties, and to the pain and pangs of old age and death.

³⁰ He understands rightly who understands his soul as stretching above and below and all about him, whose magnitude has no bounds nor equal to it. ³¹ He knows full well who sees his soul as a string to which all things are strung like pearls on a necklace, and that it is not the mind or heart that is seated in the brain or bosom.

³² He thinks rightly who imagines neither himself nor anything else as existent except the imperishable-Brahman, and who knows himself as living between reality and unreality. ³³ He is right who beholds what they call the three worlds to be only parts of his self, and that the three worlds have been rolling about him like the waves of the sea. ³⁴ He is wise who looks with pity upon the frail world and who has compassion for the earth as his younger sister. ³⁵ That great soul who has withdrawn his mind from the earth looks brightly upon the earth by repressing his reliance on the interests of his individual ego.

³⁶ He sees the truth who finds his body and the whole world filled by the colossus figure of Consciousness without the opposition of any sensible object. ³⁷ He who looks on the states of misery and happiness that attend worldly life as only the fluctuating conditions of ego has no cause to regret or rejoice at them. ³⁸ He is the right-sighted man who sees himself situated in a world filled with Divine Spirit. He has nothing to desire or dislike in this state of existence.

³⁹ He is the discerning man who has weakened his estimation and dislike of what is desirable and disgusting to him in the world, and who sees the world as full of the essence of that Being whose nature is beyond comprehension and conception. ⁴⁰ That man of great soul is a great god whose soul, like the all-pervading sky, extends over all and penetrates through every state of existence without

receiving the color dye of any.

⁴¹ I bow down to that great soul who has passed beyond the states of light, darkness and fancy. ⁴² I bow down to Shiva of transcendental understanding whose faculties are wholly engrossed in meditation of the Eternal Being who presides over the creation, destruction and preservation of the universe, and who is manifest in all the various wonderful and beautiful grandeurs of nature.

Chapter 23 — The Wonders within the Realm of the Body

¹ Vasishta continued:—

The man liberated in this life and settled in the Supreme state of joy is not tarnished by reigning over the realm of his body and turning about like a wheel.² The body of a wise man is like a princedom to him, calculated for his benefit and of no disadvantage. It is comparable to the dwelling of a holy hermit for the consummation of his efforts and liberation.

³ Rama said, “O great sage, how can you call the body to be the dominion of a man, and how can a yogi have his princely joy in it?”

⁴ Vasishta replied:—

Beautiful is this city of the body. Being enlightened by the light of the mind, it is filled with every good to mankind and it produces endless blessings in both worlds.

⁵ The eyes are the windows of this city, letting out the light for the sight of distant worlds. The two arms are like the two hinges of this city-gate, with hands like latches reaching to the knees.⁶ The hairs on the body are like moss and grass on the walls, and the porous skin resembles the netted covering of the palace. Thighs and legs are like the columns of a building, and the feet with ankles and toes are like pedestals of the columns.

⁷ Lines marked under the soles of the feet are like inscriptions marked on the foundation stone and upon the base of column pedestals. The outer skin that covers flesh, marrow, veins and arteries, and the joints of the body are like the beautiful plaster of the building hiding the mortar and bricks inside.

⁸ The middle part of the body above the two thick thighs contains the aqueducts, beset by hairy bushes about them, and like rivers running amidst a city, between rows of trees on both sides of the banks.

⁹ The face is the royal garden beautified by eyebrows, forehead and lips. Glances of the eyes are like blooming lotuses, and the cheeks are like flat planes in it.¹⁰ The broad bosom is like a lake with nipples like lotus buds. Streaks of hair on the breast are as its herbage, and the shoulders are the rocks projecting from it.¹¹ The belly is the store-house, eager to receive the delicious articles of food. The long lungs of the throat are blown loudly by internal winds.¹² The bosom is considered to be the treasury where jewels are kept.

The nine openings of the body serve as so many windows for the citizens to breathe.¹³ There is the open mouth like an open doorway, with its teeth slightly seen as its gratings. The tongue moving in the door way like a naked sword is like the tongue of goddess Kali, thrust out when she devours her food.

¹⁴ The ear-holes are covered by hair-like long grass, and the broad back resembles a large plain surrounded by rows of trees on its borders.¹⁵ The two private passages serve as sewers and drains of the city to let out its dirt.

The heart is the garden-ground where passions promenade like ladies.¹⁶ Here understanding is bound in chains like a prisoner, and the organs of sense are let loose as monkeys to play about.

The face is like a flower garden. Its smiles are its blooming blossoms.

¹⁷ The life of the man who knows the proper use of his body and mind is prosperous in everything. It is attended by happiness and advantages and no disadvantage whatever.¹⁸ This body is the source of

infinite trouble to the ignorant, but it is the fountain of infinite happiness to the wise man.¹⁹ Its loss is no loss to the wise, but its continuance is the cause of continued happiness to the wise man.²⁰ The body serves as a chariot to the wise who can travel everywhere by riding in it. The body of a wise man can produce and procure everything conducive to his welfare and liberation.

²¹ Having a body is of no disadvantage to the wise man. He can use it to obtain everything: all the objects of his hearing and seeing, of his touch and smelling, and his friends and prosperity.²² It is true that the body is subject to a great amount of pain and pleasure, but a wise man can well bear with them.

²³ A wise man reigns over the dominion of his body without any pain or trouble in the same manner as one remains the lord of his house without any anxiety or disturbance.²⁴ He is not addicted to licentiousness like a high spirited horse. He is not subject to greed after some poisonous plant, so he does not part with the auspicious daughter of his prudence.

²⁵ The ignorant can see the cities of others, but not see the gaps and breaks of their own. It is better to root out the fears of our worldly enemies (passions) from the heart, than live under their subjection.

²⁶ Beware of diving into the perilous river that flows fast by the dreary forest of this world with its currents of desires, whirlpools of greed, and sharks of temporal enjoyment.²⁷ Men often bathe their outer bodies in holy streams without looking to the purification of their inner souls. They shave their hair where rivers meet the sea in hopes of obtaining their object.

²⁸ All sensual people are adverse to the unseen happiness of the next world and dwell on the pleasure of their own imagination in the inner recesses of their minds.

²⁹ This city of the body is pleasant to one acquainted with his spiritual nature because he deems it as the paradise of Indra filled with pleasurable fruit as well as the fruit of immortality.³⁰ All things depend on the existence of the city of the body, yet nothing is lost by its loss since the mind is the seat of everything. These bodily cities that fill the earth cannot be unpleasant to anybody.³¹ The wise man loses nothing when he loses the citadel of his body, just as the emptiness in a vessel is never lost when the vessel breaks.³² As the air in a pot is not felt by touch like the pot itself, so is the living soul that resides in the city of the body.

³³ The omnipresent soul situated in this body enjoys all worldly enjoyments until at last it comes to partake of the joy of liberation which is its main object.³⁴ The soul does all actions, yet it is no doer of them but remains as witness of whatever is done by the body, and sometimes presides over the actions actually done by it.

³⁵ The playful mind rides on the swift car of the body, like mounting on a carriage to get to one's destination, and passes in its unimpeded course to distant journeys.³⁶ Seated there, the mind plays with its favorite and lovely objects of desire that are seated in the heart as its mistresses.³⁷ These two lovers, (mind and heart, will and desire) reside side by side in the same body, just as the moon and the star Vishakha happily remain gladly in the same lunar mansion.

³⁸ The sage, like the sun, looks down from above the earth's atmosphere on the hosts of mortals who have been cut down by misery, like heaps of brambles and branches scattered in the woods.³⁹ The

sage has full satisfaction of his desires and full possession of his best riches. He shines like the full moon without fear of waning.⁴⁰ The worldly enjoyments of the wise do not tend to spoil their nature, just as the poisonous drink of Shiva was not capable of doing him any injury.

⁴¹ The food that is one's habit is as gratifying to him as a thief who by long acquaintance forgets his thievishness and becomes friendly to his neighbors.⁴² The wise man looks upon the separation of his friends and possessions in the light of the departures of the visiting men and women, or actors and actresses at the end of a play in a theatre.⁴³ As passengers chance to meet unexpectedly on their way to see a play, so the wise people look unconcernedly at their meeting and separation from the occurrences of life.

⁴⁴ As our eyesight falls indifferently on all objects about us, so the wise man looks unconcernedly upon all of life's things and transactions.⁴⁵ The wise man is self sufficient in all conditions of life. He neither rejects the earthly blessings that are presented to him, nor does he long or strive hard for what is denied to him.⁴⁶ The regret of longing after what one does not possess, like the fear of losing what he possesses, does not trouble the mind of the wise, like the plumes of a dancing peacock do not shake the unshaken mountain.

⁴⁷ The wise man reigns like a monarch free from all fears and doubts, devoid of all cares and curiosity, and with a mind free from false fancies.⁴⁸ The soul that is immeasurable in itself is situated in the Supreme Soul, just like the boundless Milky Ocean is contained in the body of the one universal ocean.

⁴⁹ Those who are sober in their minds and tranquil in their spirits laugh to scorn the vile beasts of sensuality as being madmen, as are those who have debased themselves to the state of mean reptiles by the meanness of their sensual appetites.⁵⁰ The sensualist eager to gratify his senses is as much ridiculed by the wise as a man who takes a woman deserted by another is derided by his tribe.

⁵¹ The unwise man becomes wise by renouncing all the pleasures of his body and subduing the emotions of his mind by his reason, just like a rider subdues an uncontrollable elephant by the goad in his hand.⁵² He whose mind is bent on the enjoyment of bodily pleasures should first of all check that inclination, just like they pull poisonous plants from the ground.⁵³ The well governed mind, once let loose, returns to its former habits like a spoiled boy, like a tree withered in summer heat grows luxuriant at a slight rainfall.⁵⁴ That which is full out of its time does not become fuller in its season, like the river that is ever full receives no addition over its fullness in the rains.⁵⁵ The mind that is naturally greedy wishes for more with all its fullness, like the sea with enough water to flood the earth receives rain waters and the outpourings of innumerable rivers in its unsatisfied womb.

⁵⁶ The mind that is restrained in its desires is gladdened with little gains, and these being increased are reckoned as blessings by the restrained mind.⁵⁷ A captive prince, who when he was free was unsatisfied with his realm, is content with his morsel of bread when freed.

⁵⁸ You must chastise your reprobate members and mind with the writhing of your hands gnashing of your teeth and twisting of your limbs and body.⁵⁹ The brave and wise man who intends to overcome his enemies must first of all strive to subdue the internal enemies of his own heart and mind and the members of his body.⁶⁰ On this earth, those men are reckoned the most prosperous and best disposed

in their minds who have the courage to govern their minds instead of being governed by them.

⁶¹ I revere those pure and holy men who have quelled the huge and crooked serpent of their minds, lying coiled in the cave of their hearts, and who rest in the inner tranquility and serenity of their souls.

Chapter 24 — The Non-Entity of the Mind

¹ Vasishta continued:—

The vast domain of death in the region of hell is full with the furious elephants of our sins and the uncontrollable enemies of the senses with the arrows of desires.² Our senses, being the sources of all misdeeds and wicked actions, are our invincible enemies. They are the ungrateful miscreants working against the body in which they have found their refuge.

³ Wandering senses, like flying birds, have found their nest in the body from where, with outstretched wings of right and wrong, they pounce on their prey like vultures.⁴ He who can trap these greedy birds of the senses under the snare of right reason is never ensnared in the trap of sin, but breaks its bonds as an elephant does his chains.

⁵ He who indulges himself in sensual pleasures which at first are pleasant, will be disgusted with them in process of time.⁶ He who possesses the treasure of knowledge in his frail body is not overcome by his inner enemies of sensual appetites.⁷ The kings of earth are not as happy in their earthly citadels as the lords of the cities of the own bodies and the masters of their own minds.⁸ He who has brought his senses under his slavery and reduced the enemy of his mind to subjugation has the blossoms of his understanding ever blooming within him as in the spring meadow.⁹ He who has weakened the pride of his mind and subdued the enemies of his senses has his desires all shrunken like lotuses in cold weather.

¹⁰ So long as the demons of our desires infest the region of our hearts, we are unable to bring the mind under the subjugation of our knowledge of the true One.

¹¹ He is the faithful servant who acts according to the will of his master. He is the true minister who does good services to his prince. He is the best general who has command over the forces of his own body, and the best understanding is guided by reason.¹² The wife is loved for her endearments and the father is revered for his protection of the child. A friend is valued by his confidence, and the mind for its wisdom.

¹³ The mind is called our father because it enlightens our understanding with the light of the scriptures, and for leading us to perfection by losing itself in the Supreme Spirit.¹⁴ The mind that has well observed and considered all things, that is enlightened and firm in its belief and is employed in laudable pursuits, is truly a valuable gem within the body.¹⁵ The mind as a counselor of our good teaches us how to cut down the tree of our transmigration and produce the tree of our future bliss.

¹⁶ Such is the gem of the mind, O Rama, unless it is soiled by the dirt and filth of sin and vice. Then it requires washing and cleaning with the water of reason in order to throw its light on you.¹⁷ Be not dormant to cultivate reason as long as you abide in the dark abode of this world. Do not thrust yourself to every accident that awaits upon ignorant and unreasonable men.¹⁸ Do not overlook the mist of error that spreads over this world of illusion, abounding with multitudes of mishaps and mischief.

¹⁹ Try to cross the wide ocean of the world by riding on the strong boat of your reason, using your discrimination to chart the right course against the currents of your sensual desires.²⁰ Know your

body to be a frail flower and all its pleasure and pain to be unreal. So never take pleasure and pain for realities, as in the instance of the snare, snake and the matting, but remain above sorrow for anything as in the instance of Bhima and Bhasa.

²¹ O high minded Rama, give up your misjudgments of reality and of yourself, and of this and that thing. Direct your understanding to the knowledge of the Reality which is beyond all these. Then, by forsaking your belief and reliance in the mind, continue in your course of eating and drinking as before.

Chapter 25 — Story of Dama, Byala & Kala Created by Demon King Sambara

¹ Vasishta said:—

O intelligent Rama, who shines as the delight of mankind in this world and endeavors to attain your chief good by the accomplishment of your best objects,² do not let the example of the demons Dama the snare and Byala the snake apply to your case. Try to extricate yourself from vain sorrowing by the lesson of fortitude as given in the story of Bhima and Bhasa.

³ Rama asked, “What is that parable of the snare and the snake which you say must not apply to my case? Please tell me in order to remove the sorrows of my mind and of all mankind. And what is that example of fortitude by Bhima and Bhasa that I should imitate in order to rid all earthly sorrow?

⁵ Please tell me and enlighten me with your purifying words, like the roaring of rainy clouds serves to alleviate the summer heat of peacocks.”

⁶ Vasishta replied:—

Rama, hear me relate both of these stories so that you may derive the benefit of learning from their examples.

⁷ There lived one Sambara, the chief of demons and a profound sorcerer in an underground cavern filled with enchanting wonders like a sea of gems.⁸ He constructed a magic city in the sky with gardens and temples of gods and artificial suns and moons emblazoning its ceiling.⁹ It was decorated with rich stones resembling the gems of Sumeru Mountain. The demon’s palace was full with opulence and treasures of every kind.

¹⁰ The beauties in his harem vied with the celestial dames in their charming strains. The trees of his pleasure garden were shaded by an awning of bright moonbeams on high.¹¹ Blue lotuses blooming in his bedroom made the blue eyed maids of his court blush. Swans in the lakes cackled about the beds of golden lotuses in them.¹² The high branches of golden plants bore blossoms of artificial lotuses, and rows of karanga trees dropped down showers of mandara flowers on the ground.

¹³ His garden-house consisted of both cold and hot baths, and refrigerators and fireplaces for hot and cold seasons. The turku weapons of the demons had baffled the arms of Indra himself.¹⁴ Flower gardens on all sides surpassed the mandara groves of paradise. Demon magic skill had planted rows of sandalwood trees with their encircling snakes all around.

¹⁵ The inner compound was strewn over with gold dust and vanquished the glory of heaven. The palace courtyard was covered with heaps of flowers up to the knee.¹⁶ The earthen figure of Shiva that was exposed for show surpassed the image of Hari (Vishnu) holding his discus and the mace. Jewels sparkling like fireflies in the inside apartment resembled the twinkling stars in the arena of heaven.

¹⁷ The dark night of the subterranean dwelling was illuminated by a hundred moon-lights like the starry heaven, and he chanted his martial songs before his idol deity.¹⁸ His magical elephant drove away Indra’s Airavata, and his inner apartment contained a hoard of precious treasures from the three worlds.

¹⁹ All wealth, prosperity, grandeur and dignity paid their homage to him. The whole host of demons honored him as their commander.²⁰ The protection of his arms gave shelter to the whole body of

demons. He was the receptacle of all sound judgment and the reservoir of every kind of treasure.

²¹ This destroyer of gods (devas and suras) had a gigantic and terrific appearance. He commanded a large army of demons (asuras) to defeat the deities.

²² Whenever this magician demigod went to sleep or left for somewhere out of his city, the gods sought every opportunity to harass the demonic force. ²³ This enraged Sambara to such a degree that he broke trees in his rage and he ordered his generals to protect his legions. ²⁴ The gods, finding their opportunities, killed the demons one by one like hawks pounce and kill feeble and timid sparrows.

²⁵ The king of the demons then appointed other generals over his army, and they were as swift-footed and hoarse sounding as the waves of the sea. ²⁶ When the leader of the demon band pursued his enemies to their station above the heavens, the gods also destroyed them in a short time.

²⁷ The gods fled from their heavenly abode for fear of them, like timid deer flying into the thick thickets at the sight of Shiva's and Gauri's bull. ²⁸ The gods were weakened with weeping, and the faces of apsara nymphs were covered in tears. The demon saw the heavenly abode abandoned by the celestials, as if the desolation of the world. ²⁹ He wandered about in his rage, plundering and took away all the valuables of the place. He burnt down the cities of the rulers of heaven, and then returned to his own abode.

³⁰ The enmity between the deities and demons was so intense on both sides that it forced the gods to quit their heavenly abodes and hide in distant parts of the world. ³¹ But the enraged gods succeeded at last by their perseverance to defeat and slay all the generals and combatants that Sambara set against them.

³² Then the defeated demon gave vent to his fury and began to breathe out living fire from his nostrils like a burning mountain. ³³ After much searching in the three worlds, he found the hiding place of the gods, as a wicked man succeeds in his purpose by his best endeavors. ³⁴ Then to protect his army, he produced by his sorcery three very strong and fearful demons with hideous appearances like that of death. ³⁵ These horrible leaders of his army, being produced in his magic, flew upward with their enormous bodies resembling the flying mountains of old. ³⁶ They had the names of Dama the snare, Byala the snake, and Kata the mat given them for their entrapping, enfolding and enwrapping the enemy, according to the demon's wish.

³⁷ They were beings without previous births and devoid of changing desires. The lack of their prior acts made them move about as freely as spiritual beings in one uniform tenor of their course. ³⁸ These were not born like men from the seeds of their previous acts with solid and substantial bodies. They were mere artificial forces and airy forms, copies of images in the demon Sambara's mind. ³⁹ Being born in this way, they followed events as they happened like blind sheep. Just like a boy moves his limbs when he is not in sound sleep, these three demon generals performed actions devoid of subtle karmic impressions and self or egoism.

⁴⁰ They did not know the sudden attack of the enemy on them or their attack on the enemy. ⁴¹ They did not know running away from battle. They did not know birth or death, victory or defeat, or war as a matter of fact. ⁴² But they attacked the enemy in front of them with blows that turn even mountains into dust.

⁴³ Sambara was pleased with them. He was confident that with their help he would defeat the enemy.

⁴⁴ Sambara was confident that his army, strong and stable under the shades of the shoulders of the three demons, could withstand the onslaught of the gods just as Mount Meru stands firm in spite of the blows of the teeth of the elephants carrying earth from the eight quarters.

Chapter 26 — Description of Battle between Gods and Demons

¹ Vasishta continued:—

So thinking, the chief of the demons dispatched his generals Dama, Byala and Kata to lead his armies to destroy the gods upon earth. ² The demonic army rose out of the foaming sea and infernal caverns in full armor and wielding fiendish arms. Then bursting forth with hideous noise, the demon soldiers soared aloft with their huge bodies like mountains flying on high. ³ Their monstrous and mountainous bodies hid the disc of the sun in the sky, and their stretching arms smote him of his rays. They increased in number and size under the leadership of Dama, Byala and Kata.

⁴ Then the dreadful hosts of the celestials issued out from the forests and caverns of heavenly Mount Meru like torrents of the great deluge. ⁵ The forces under the flags of gods and demons fought together with such obstinacy that it seemed to be an untimely and deadly struggle between the gods and demons as during the prior world. ⁶ The heads of decapitated warriors decorated with shining earrings fell down on the ground like the orbs of the sun and moon which, being shorn of their beams as at the end of the world, were rolling in the great abyss of chaos. ⁷ Heroes hurled huge hills with the hoarse noise of roaring lions. Hills were blown up and down by the blast of an all destroying tornado.

⁸ Warriors' broken weapons fell on mountain tops and were ground to granules. They fell like hailstones upon lions that had been resting on their sides below. ⁹ The sparks of fire that flew about from the clashing of the weapons were like the scattered stars of the sky flying at random on the last day of dissolution. ¹⁰ Vetala ghosts as big as tala palm trees were beating the tala time of their giddy dance with the tali clapping of their palms, dancing over heaps of carnage floating on floods of blood flowing like a bloody sea on the surface of earth. ¹¹ Showers of flowing blood put down the flying dust of the battlefield. Numbers of crowned heads separated from their bodies glistened among the clouds like so many stars sparkling in the sky.

¹² Demons filled all sides blazing like burning suns with their luminous bodies. They held tall kalpa branches in their hands to strike the enemy and used to break down the tops and peaks of mountains.

¹³ They ran about with their swinging swords in hand, breaking down buildings by the speed of their motion, like blasts of a gale. The rocks they hurled at the enemy were reduced to dust, like the ashes of a burning mountain.

¹⁴ The gods also pursued them like sacrificial horses, driving the weaponless demons like clouds before the storm. ¹⁵ They fell upon and laid hold of them like cats pouncing upon rats, seizing them for their prey. Meanwhile demons also seized gods like bears lay hold of men climbing tall trees with fear. ¹⁶ Thus gods and demigods dashed against one another, like forest trees in a storm strike each other with their branching arms, and scattered the flowers of bloodshed on both sides. ¹⁷ Their broken weapons lay scattered on all sides, like heaps of flowers lying on the sides of a hill after a strong gale has passed.

¹⁸ There was a close fight between both armies, a confused noise filling the vault of the sky which, like the hollow of an udumbara tree, resounded to the combined hum of gnats rumbling within. ¹⁹ The elephants that rule the different quarters of the skies sent their loud roars, answering the tremendous noise of the world-destroying cloud. ²⁰ The thickened air grew as hard as the solid earth with

gathering clouds, and thickened clouds, so dense a fist could grab them, were heavy and slow in their motion.²¹ Broken weapons repelled by war-chariots hit against the hills and emitted a rattling noise from their inner hollowness, like the discordant sounds of a chorus.²² Mountain forests were set on fire by fiery weapons, and burning rocks melted down their lava with a noise as dreadful as that of volcanic Mount Meru with its melting gold and blazing with the brightness of the twelve suns of the zodiac.

²³ The clamor of battle was like that of the beating waves of a boisterous ocean filling the vast deep of the earth, resounding hoarsely by their impact.²⁴ Demons hurled huge rocks that flew like birds in the air with their flapping wings sounding like thunder claps, while the hoarse noise of rocky caverns sounded like the deep sounding ocean.²⁵ The clamor of warfare resembled the rumbling of the ocean when it was churned by Mandara Mountain, and the clashing of weapons sounded like the gods clapping their hands in their revelry for the ambrosial nectar.

²⁶ In this war between the two armies, the haughty demons gained the day and laid waste to the cities and villages of the gods, together with their lands of hills and forests.²⁷ The mountainous bodies of demons were also pierced by the gods' great weapons, and the roof of heaven was filled with flying weapons flung by the hands of both parties.²⁸ Bursting rockets broke the peaks and pinnacles of rocks by the hundreds, and flying arrows pierced the faces of both gods and demigods.²⁹ Whirling discs lopped off the heads of the warriors like blades of grass, and the clamor of the armies rolled with an uproar in the midway sky.³⁰ Struck by flying weapons, heavenly chariooteers fell upon the ground and their celestial cities were deluged by the hydraulic engines of the demons.³¹ Flights of swords, spears and lances flew in the air like rivers running down mountain sides. The vault of heaven was filled with war-whoops and shouts of the combatants.

³² The palaces of the ruling gods were falling under the blows of demons from behind, and their female apartments echoed with the lamentations and jingling bells of the goddesses.³³ The stream of flying weapons from the demons washed the bodies of fighting men with blood, making them fly off from the battlefield with hideous cries.³⁴ Death was now lurking behind, now hovering over the heads of the gods and leaders of armies, like a black bee now skulking in, and then flitting over the lotuses. Armies on both sides were defeated by the blows of the gods and demigods on the battlefield.³⁵ Demons flew in the air like winged mountains moving around the sky, making a whizzing rustle that was dreadful to hear.

³⁶ The mountainous bodies of the demons, pierced by the gods' weapons, were gushing out with streams of blood that converted the earth below to a crimson sea and tinged the air with purple clouds over the mountain heights.³⁷ Many countries and cities, villages, forests, vales and dales were laid waste, and innumerable demons, elephants, horses and human beings were put to death.³⁸ Also numbers of elephants were pierced with long and pointed shafts of steel and iron, and the bodies of huge Airavatas were bruised by the blows of steeled fists.³⁹ Flights of arrows falling in showers like flood rains crushed the tops of mountains. The friction of thunderbolts broke down the bodies of mountainous giants.

⁴⁰ Furious flames of heavenly fire burned the bodies of the infernal hosts who, in their turn, quenched the flames with water-spouts drawn out of an underground deep.⁴¹ Enraged demons flung up and

hurled huge hills against the gods' falling fires which, like a wild conflagration, melted the hard stones to liquid water.⁴² The shadow of the demons' weapons spread a dark night in the sky which the gods destroyed by the artificial flame of lightning, blazing like so many suns in heaven.⁴³ The fire of the lightning dried up the waters of the raining clouds, and the clashing of arms emitted a shower of fire on all sides.⁴⁴ The shower of thunder-arms broke down the battery of mountain ramparts, and the sleep-weapon of slumber dispelled by that of its counteraction.⁴⁵ Some bore the sawing weapon, while others held the Brahmastra, the invincible weapon of warfare that dispels the darkness of the field by its flashing.

⁴⁶ The air was filled with shells and shots fired by firearms. Machines for hurling stones crushed the missile weapons of fire.⁴⁷ War chariots, with their up-lifted flags and moonlike discs, moved like clouds about the horizon, while their wheels rolled with loud roaring under the roof of heaven.⁴⁸ The constant thunders of heaven were killing demons in numbers, who were again restored to life by the great art of Shukra that gave immortality to demonic spirits.

⁴⁹ Now the gods were victorious, and now flying away defeated. Now they were looking to their good stars, and now to the inauspicious ones in vain.⁵⁰ They looked upon heaven with uplifted heads and eyes for signs of good and evil, but from the heaven above the world on the earth below appeared like a sea of blood.⁵¹ The rage of stubborn enmity made the world seem like a forest of full blown red kinsuka flowers, and like a sea of blood filled with mountains of dead bodies.⁵² Dead bodies hanging on tree branches appeared as their fruit moving to and fro by the breath of winds.

⁵³ The roof of the sky was filled with forests of long and large arrows, and with mountains of headless trunks with their hundred arms.⁵⁴ As these torsos leaped and jumped in the air, they plucked the clouds and stars and the heavenly cars of the celestials with their numerous arms and hurled their mountain-like missile arms and clubs and arrows to the heavens.⁵⁵ The sky was filled with the broken fragments of buildings falling from the seven spheres of heaven. Their constant fall raised a noise like the roaring of flood clouds.⁵⁶ These sounds were resounded by the elephants of the deep (Patala), while the bird of heaven, Garuda, was snatching gigantic demons as his prey.

⁵⁷ The dread of the demons drove the celestial deities, the siddhas and sadhyas (deities who guard sacred rites), and the gods of the winds, together with the kinnaras, gandharvas and charanas from all their different quarters to one indistinct side.⁵⁸ Then there blew a tremendous tornado like the all-destroying north wind of universal desolation, laying waste the trees of the garden of paradise and threatening to destroy the gods. The thunders of heaven were splitting and breaking down mountains flung to the face of the sky.

Chapter 27 — Brahma Advises the Defeated Gods to Foster the Demons' Ego

¹ Vasishta related:—

As the war of the gods and titans raged violently on both sides, and their bodies were cut by the others' weapons,² streams of blood gushed out from their wounds like waterfalls in the Ganges basin. Gods caught into the snares of demigods groaned and roared aloud like lions.

³ Byala with his stretching arms was crushing the bodies of the gods. Kata was harassing them in their unequal challenge with them.⁴ The demons waged their battle with the rage of the midday sun, and put to flight the Airavata elephant of Indra, the leader of the gods.⁵ Gods dropped down with their bodies gored with wounds and spouting with blood. Their armies fled on all sides like the currents of a river overflowing and breaking down its bank.

⁶ Dama, Byala and Kata pursued the flying and fleeing gods in the same manner as a raging fire runs after wood for its fuel.⁷ The demons sought and searched long after the gods in vain, for they had disappeared like deer and lions among the thickets after breaking loose from their traps.⁸ Failing to find the gods, the generals Dama, Byala and Kata returned with cheerful hearts to their chief in his home in the infernal region.

⁹ The defeated gods halted awhile, then prayed to almighty Brahma in order to consult him on the means of gaining victory over the demons.¹⁰ Brahma then appeared to the blood smeared gods with his purple countenance, like the bright and cooling moonbeams appear in the evening on the surface of the sea, colored with the crimson colors of the setting sun.

¹¹ The gods bowed down before Brahma and complained of the danger that was brought upon them by Sambara through his generals Dama, Byala and Kata, whose doings they fully described to him.¹² The judging Brahma, having heard and considered all this, delivered the following encouraging words to the host of gods before him.

¹³ Brahma said:—

“You will have to wait another hundred thousand years before you can destroy Sambara under the arms of Hari (Vishnu) in an open engagement.¹⁴ Today you have been forced to flee by the demonic Dama, Byala and Kata who have been fighting with their magical arts.¹⁵ They are elated with pride at their great skill in warfare, but it will soon vanish like the shadow of a man in a mirror.

¹⁶ These demons, led by their ambition to annoy you, will soon be reduced under your might like birds caught in a snare.¹⁷ The gods, being devoid of ambition, are free from the vicissitudes of pain and pleasure. They have become invincible by destroying the enemy through their patience.¹⁸ Those who are caught and bound fast in the net of their ambition, and led away by the thread of their expectation, are surely defeated in their aims, just like birds are caught with a string.

¹⁹ The learned who are devoid of desire and are unattached to anything in their minds are truly great and invincible, as nothing can elate or depress them at anytime.²⁰ A man, however great and experienced he may be, is easily overcome by a boy when he is enticed by his greed to pursue after everything.²¹ The knowledge that “this is I” and “these are mine” is the bane of human life. One with such knowledge of his self and egoism becomes the receptacle of evils like the sea of briny waters.

²² He who confines his mind within a narrow limit for lack of his great and extended views is called dastardly and narrow-minded man in spite of all his learning and wisdom. ²³ He who puts a limit on his soul (*atma*), which is both unbounded and infinite, surely reduces his divine grace to minuteness by his own making.

²⁴ If there is anything in the world beside the one Self that may be yours or worth your desire, you may long to have it. But all things being only parts of the universe, there is nothing particular for anyone to have or seek. ²⁵ Reliance on earthly things is the source of unhappiness, while our disinterest with all things is the fountain of everlasting joy.

²⁶ As long as the gods are independent of worldly things, they must remain invincible. But if they are dependent on them, they will perish like a swarm of gnats in the flame of a wildfire. ²⁷ It is man's inner desire that makes him miserable in himself and allows him to become subdued by others. Otherwise, worm-like man is as firm as a rock. ²⁸ Where there is any desire in the heart, it is thickened and hardened in time, just like everything in nature increases in its bulk in time. But not so things that are not in existence, such as the lack of desires.

²⁹ O Indra, if you want to cause their destruction, try to foster both ego selfishness and the ambition of Dama and others for their universal dominion. ³⁰ Know that it is greed that causes poverty and all dangers to mankind, just like the karanja tree is the source of its bitter and pernicious fruit. ³¹ All those men who rove about under the bondage of greed have bid farewell to their happiness by subjecting themselves to misery. ³² One may be very learned and well-informed in everything, and he also may be a noble and great man, but he is sure to be tied down by his greed, just like a lion is tied by his chain.

³³ Greed is known as the trap of the mind, which is situated like a bird in its nest of the heart, as it is within the hollow of the tree of the body. ³⁴ A miserable man by his greed becomes an easy prey of the clutches of death, just like a bird is caught in a boy's net and lies panting on the ground owing to its greed.

³⁵ You gods need not bear the burden of your weapons anymore, nor toil and moil in the field of war any longer, but try your best to inflame the pernicious greed of your enemies to the utmost. ³⁶ Know, O chief of the gods, that no arm or weapon or any program or policy is able to defeat the enemy until they defeat themselves by their lack of patience and excess of their greed.

³⁷ Dama, Byala and Kata have become elated with their success in warfare. Now they must cherish their ambition and foster their greed to their ruin. ³⁸ No sooner have these ignorant creatures of Sambara gained their high desires, than you are sure to foil their vain attempts. ³⁹ Now you gods, excite your enemies to the war by your policy of creating in them an ambition and intense desire for conquest. By this you will gain your object. ⁴⁰ They, being subject to their desires, will be easily subdued by you, for nobody that is led blindfold by his desires in this world is ever master of himself.

⁴¹ The path of this world is either even or rugged according to the good or restless desires of our hearts. The heart is like the sea in its calm after storm, when its waves are still as our subsided desires, or as boisterous as the stormy sea with our increasing greediness.

Chapter 28 — Description of Renewed Battle between Gods & Demons

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Saying so, the god Brahma vanished from the sight of the gods, just as the wave of the sea retires and mixes with its waters after having dashed and crashed against the shore.

² The gods, having heard Brahma's words, returned to their respective homes as the breeze bearing the lotus fragrance blows it to the forests on all sides.³ They stayed in their delightful houses for some days, like bees resting themselves in the cells of flowers after their wanderings.⁴ Having refreshed and invigorated themselves over the course of time, they gave the alarm of their rising with the beating of their drums, sounding like the peals of the last day.

⁵ Immediately the demons rose from the infernal regions and met the gods midway in the air, and commenced their dreadful attack upon them.⁶ There was a clashing of armor, clattering of swords and arrows, the flashing of lances and spears, and the crackling of mallets and various other weapons such as battle axes and discuses, thunderbolts, and hurling of rocks and huge trees and the like.

⁷ There were many magical weapons that ran on all sides like the torrents of rivers, while rocks and hills, high mountains and huge trees were flung and hurled from both sides, filling the earth with confused noise and rumbling.

⁸ The encampment of the gods was beset by a magical flood of demons resembling the Ganges River, while showers of firearms and missiles of all sorts were hurled upon their heads from above.⁹ Many big bodies of gods and demons rose and fought and fell by turns, like the elemental bodies of earth and other elements rise and disappear from view by the act of illusion (*maya*).¹⁰ Big bombs broke the heads of mountains, and the earth became a vast sheet of blood like a red sea. Heaps of dead bodies on both sides rose like forests to the face of heaven.¹¹ Living lions with iron bodies, rows of saw-like teeth, and nails white as kasa flowers were let loose by the magic art to roam rampant in the airy field. They devoured the stone flung by the gods and demons, and burst out into shells and shots and many other weapons.

¹² Serpentine weapons flew with their mountainous shapes in the ocean of the sky. Their eyes flashed with their venomous heat, burning with the fire of the twelve suns on the last day of desolation.¹³ A hydraulic engine sent forth floods of weapons, whirling like whirlpools and sounding loud as the rattling thunder, sweeping hills and rocks in their currents.¹⁴ Stone missiles thrown by the garuda engine to the gods' aerial battlefield emitted at intervals water and fire, sometimes shining as the sun, and at others becoming altogether dark.¹⁵ Garuda weapons flew and roared in the sky, and firearms spread a conflict of burning hills above. The gods' towers burned and fell upon the earth, and the world became as unendurable as in its conflagration on the last day.

¹⁶ Demons jumped up to the sky from the surface of the earth, as birds fly to heaven from mountain tops. Gods fell violently on the earth like pieces of rock plummeting to the ground.¹⁷ Long weapons sticking in the bodies of gods and demons were like bushes with their burning pain. Their big statures appeared like rocks decorated with trees growing on them.¹⁸ Gods and demons wandering with their mountainous bodies, all streaming in blood, appeared like the evening clouds of heaven pouring the purple floods of the celestial Mandakini River (the Milky Way).

¹⁹ Showers of weapons fell like waterfalls or rain showers, and the tide of thunders flowed as fast as the fall of meteoric fire in haphazard confusion. ²⁰ Those skilled in the arts were pouring floods of purple fluids mixed with the red clay of mountains from the pipes of elephant's trunks, just like they sprinkle the festive water of Holi mixed with red powder through a syringe. ²¹ Gods and demons, though worried by one another, did not yet give up their hope of victory, but hurled weapons from their hands to harass each other. Riding on the broad backs of big elephants, they wandered in the air spreading their brightness all around. ²² Then they wandered in the sky like flights of inauspicious locusts, their bodies pierced in the heads, hands, arms and breasts. They filled the vault of the world like flying clouds obscuring the sun and the sides of heaven, and the surface and heights of the earth.

²³ The earth was battered and rent to pieces by fragments of broken weapons falling from the waists of combatants who assailed one another with their loud shouts. ²⁴ The sky echoed to the thunderclaps of weapons striking each other, the clattering of the stones and trees, and the blows of the warriors on one another, as if it was the commotion of the day of universal destruction. ²⁵ The disordered world seemed to approach its untimely end from the blowing of furious winds mixed with fire and water, and the many suns of the gods and demons shining above and below. ²⁶ All quarters of heaven seemed to be crying aloud with the sounds of hurling weapons rolling as mountain peaks, roaring as lions, and borne by the blowing winds on all sides.

²⁷ The sky appeared as an ocean of illusion burning with the bodies of warriors like flaming trees, and rolling in surges of gods' and demons' dead bodies floating on it like mountains. The edges of the earth seemed like forest made by the clubs, lances, spears and many other weapons constantly falling upon them. ²⁸ The horizon was surrounded by the big and impenetrable line of demonic bodies resembling the chain of Mount Sumeru encircling the earth. The earth itself resembled an ocean filled with the mountainous bodies of fallen warriors and towers of celestial cities blown down by the winds.

²⁹ The sky was filled with violent sounds, and the earth and its mountains were washed by torrents of blood. Bloodsucking demons danced on all sides and filled the cavity of the world with confusion.

³⁰ The dreadful warfare between gods and demons resembled the tumults that rage through the endless space of the world that rise and fall with the alternations of pleasure and pain to which it is constantly subject.

Chapter 29 — Defeat of the Demons

¹ Vasishta continued:—

In this manner, the energetic and murderous demons repeated their attacks and waged many wars with the gods.² They carried on their warfare sometimes by fraud and often by their aggressiveness, and frequently after a truce of open war was made with the gods. They sometimes fled, renewed their strength, then attacked again in the open field. Other times they lay in ambush, concealed in their underground caves.³ Thus they waged their battle against the celestials for five and thirty years, by repeatedly flying and withdrawing from the field, then reappearing with their arms.⁴ They fought again for five years, eight months and ten days, shooting their firearms, trees and stones and thunders upon the gods.

⁵ Being used to warfare for such a long a period, at last they grew proud of their superior strength and repeated successes and entertained the desire of their final victory.⁶ Their constant practice in arms made them sure of their success, just as the nearness of objects casts their reflection in the mirror.

⁷ But as distant objects are never reflected in the glass, so the desire for anything is never successful without intense application to it.⁸ So when the desires of the demons Dama and others became identified with their selves, their souls degraded from their greatness and became confined to their belief of the desired objects.

⁹ All worldly desires lead to false expectations, and those entangled in the snares of their expectations are thereby reduced to meanness in their spirits.¹⁰ Falling into the errors of egotism and selfishness, the demons were led into the blunder of me-ism, thinking these things as “mine,” just as a man mistakes a rope for a snake.¹¹ Being reduced to the depravity of selfishness, they began to think their personalities consisted in their bodies. They began to reflect how their bodies could be safe and secure from harm from head to foot.¹² They lost their patience by continually thinking about protecting their bodies, their properties and their pleasures of life.

¹³ Desire of their enjoyments diminished their strength and valor. Their former acts of gallantry now became a dead letter to them.¹⁴ They thought only how to become lords of the earth, and thus became lazy and weak like lotus flowers without water.¹⁵ Their pride and egoism led their inclination towards the pleasures of good eating and drinking and to the possession of every worldly good.¹⁶ They began to hesitate to join in warfare and became as timid as timid deer afraid to encounter furious elephants ravaging the forest.

¹⁷ They moved slowly in despair of their victory and for fear of losing their lives in their encounters with the gods’ furious elephants in the field.¹⁸ These cowards, wishing to preserve their bodies from the hands of death, became so powerless that they rested satisfied with their enemies’ feet on their heads.¹⁹ Thus these unnerved demons were as unable to kill the enemy standing before them as a fire without enough fuel is unable to consume the sacred ghee offering.²⁰ They became like gnats before the aggressive gods, standing with their bruised bodies like beaten soldiers.

²¹ What more needs to be said? The demons were overpowered by the gods and fled from the battlefield in fear of their lives.²² When the demons Dama, Byala, Kata and others were repulsed by the prowess of the gods and fled cowardly in different ways,²³ the remaining demons fell down

before the gods and fled from the air on all sides, like the falling stars of heaven at the end of a kalpa age.

²⁴ They fell upon the summits of mountains, and in the trees of the Sumeru Range. Some were wrapped in the folds of the clouds above, and others fell on the banks of distant seas below. ²⁵ Many fell in the cavities of the eddies of seas, and in the abyss of the ocean, and in the running streams. Some fell into far distant forests, and other dropped down amidst the burning woods of wild fire.

²⁶ Some being pierced by the arrows of the celestials, fell in distant countries, villages and cities on earth. Others were hurled into thick jungles of wild beasts and in sandy deserts and in wild fires.

²⁷ Many fell in the polar regions, some landing on the mountain tops and others sinking in the lakes below. Several were tossed over the countries of Andhra, Dravida, Kashmir and Persia. ²⁸ Some sank in billowy seas and in the watery maze of the Ganges, and others fell on distant islands, in different parts of Asia, and in the nets of fishermen.

²⁹ Thus the enemies of the gods lay everywhere with their mountainous bodies, all full of scars from head to foot and mutilated in hands and arms. ³⁰ Some were hanging by their outstretched entrails on tree branches, gushing out with blood. Others with cropped off crowns and heads were lying on the ground with open and fiery eyes. ³¹ Many were lying with their broken armor and weapons, slashed by the superior power of the enemy, their robes and garments all dismantled and torn by their fall.

³² Their helmets which were terrific by their blaze were hanging down their necks. The braids of their hair, woven with stones, hung loosely about their bodies. ³³ Their heads covered with hard brazen and pointed crowns were broken by stone slabs hurled upon them from the hands of the gods.

³⁴ In this manner, at the end of the battle, the demons together with all their weapons were destroyed on all sides. They were devoured like seawater dissolves dust.

Chapter 30 — The Subsequent Lives of Dama, Byala & Kata

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Upon destruction of the demons, the gods were exceedingly joyous, but Dama and the other demon leaders became immersed in sorrow and grief.² Sambara was full of wrath, and his anger was ignited like an all-destroying fire against his generals, whom he called aloud by their names and said, “Where are they?”³ But they had fled from their abodes for fear of his anger.

Dama, Byala, and Kata hid themselves in the seventh sphere of the infernal regions.⁴ There dwelt the horrid instruments of death, formidable as their lord Yama himself, and who were glad with their duty of guarding the abyss of hell.⁵ The fearless guards of hell received them into their favor, and having given them shelter in the hell-pit, gave them their three maiden daughters in marriage.⁶ In their company, they passed a period of ten thousand years and gave a free vent to their evil desires up to the end of their lives.⁷ Their time passed away in such thoughts as these, that, “This is my consort and this my daughter, and I am their lord.” They were bound together with ties of mutual affection as strong as the chain of death.

⁸ It happened on one occasion that Yama, the god of retributive justice, came by to survey the state of affairs in that sad mournful pit of hell.⁹ The three demons, being unaware of Yama’s rank and dignity, failed to make their obeisance to the lord of hell, and at their peril took him to be one of Yama’s servants.¹⁰ Then a nod of Yama’s eyebrows assigned to them a place in the burning furnace of hell, where they were immediately cast by the stern porters of hell’s gate.¹¹ There they lay burning with their wives and children until they were consumed to death, like a straw hut and withered trees.

¹² The evil desires and wicked propensities that they contracted in the company of the hellish crowd caused their reincarnation in the forms of Kiratis to carrying on their slaughters and atrocities like Yama’s thralls.¹³ Getting rid of that birth, they were next born as ravens, and then as vultures and falcons of mountain caves.¹⁴ Then they were transformed into the forms of hogs in the land of Trigarta, and then as mountain rams in Magadha, and afterwards as heinous reptiles in caves and holes.¹⁵ Thus, after passing successively into a variety of other forms, they are now lying as fish in the woodland lakes of Kashmir.¹⁶ Being burnt in hellfire at first, they now have their temporary rest in the waters of the lake and drink its filthy water, whereby they neither die nor live to their hearts content.¹⁷ Having thus passed over and over into various births, and having been transformed again and again to be reborn on earth, they are rolling like waves of the sea to all eternity.

¹⁸ Thus like their endless desires, they have been eternally rolling like weeds in the ocean of the earth. There is no end to their pains until the end of their desires.

Chapter 31 — Reality is within God; There Is no Reality without

¹ Vasishta continued:—

It was for your enlightenment, O high minded Rama, that I have told you the story of Dama, Byala, and Kata so that you may derive instruction thereby, and not let it go for nothing as a mere idle story.

² Slighting the truth and following untruth incur endless miseries of which the careless pursuer of untruth is scarcely aware.³ See how great was the leadership of Sambara's army and how they defeated the hosts of the immortal gods. Reflect on the change of their state to contemptible fish in a dry and dirty quagmire.⁴ See their former strength which put legions of immortals to flight, and think on their later base servitude as hunters under the chief of Kiratis.⁵ See at first their unselfishness of mind and great patience, then at last their vain desires and assumption of the vanity of egotism.

⁶ In the forest of the world, selfish ego is the root of the extended branches of misery that produces and bears the poisonous blossoms of desire.⁷ Therefore, O Rama, be diligent to wipe the sense of your ego from your heart. Try to be happy by always thinking, "This I is nothing."⁸ The error of egoism hides the bright moon of truth like a dark cloud and causes the cooling moonbeams to disappear from sight.

⁹ The three demons Dama, Byala and Kata, being under the demonic influence of ego and by the excess of their illusion, believed their non-entity to be a positive entity.¹⁰ They are now living as fish in the muddy pool of a lake among the forest lands of Kashmir. Presently they are content feeding with zest upon the moss and weeds growing in it.

¹¹ Rama said, "Tell me sage, how did they come to existence when they were non-existent before? For neither can a nothing be an existent being nor an entity become a non-entity at anytime."

¹² Vasishta replied:—

So it is, O strong armed Rama, that nothing can ever be something and anything can never be nothing. But it is possible for a little thing to be great, and for a great one to be reduced to minuteness.¹³ Tell me, what non-entity has come to being or what entity has been lasting forever? All these I will explain to you by the best proofs and examples.

¹⁴ Rama answered, "Why sage, all that is existent is ever present before us as our own bodies, and all things beside ourselves. But you said Dama and the other demons were unreal, produced by the magic of Sambara. How could they become real?"

Vasishta speaking:—

¹⁵ Yes Rama, the non-existent and unreal Dama and others seemed to exist by mere illusion, like a mirage appears to be full of water by optical illusion.¹⁶ It is in the same manner that we, these gods and demigods, and everything else are unrealities in fact, and yet we seem to turn about and speak and act like real persons.

¹⁷ My existence is as unreal as yours, yet it appears as real as our dream of death in sleep.¹⁸ As the sight of a dead friend in a dream is not real, so the notion of the reality of the world ceases upon the conviction of its unreality, just as that of the death of the person seen in a dream.¹⁹ But such assertions of our non-existence are unacceptable to those deluded into the belief of the reality of the

objects of the senses. It is the habit of thinking its reality that will not listen to its contradiction.
²⁰ This mistaken impression of the reality of the world cannot be effaced without the knowledge of its unreality derived from the scriptures and the certainty of thinking it so.²¹ He who preaches the unreality of the world and the reality of Brahman is derided by the ignorant as a mad man.

²² The learned and the ignorant cannot agree on this subject, just as drunken and sober men cannot reach an understanding. One who has the distinct knowledge of light and darkness knows the difference between shade and sunlight.²³ It is impossible to turn the ignorant from their belief in the reality of unrealities to truth, just as it is impossible to make a corpse stand on its legs and walk.²⁴ It is in vain to preach the doctrine of that “Brahman is all” to the vulgar who do not know pure meditation and remain devoted to their ideas that things which can be sensed are real.²⁵ The learned who know themselves to be Brahman know that it is useless to lecture the ignorant on this subject.

²⁶ The intelligent man, who believes that the supremely quiet spirit of Brahman pervades the whole universe, cannot be distracted by anyone from his firm belief.²⁷ Nothing can shake the faith of the man who knows himself as nothing but the Supreme Being who is all in all, and who thinks himself to be dependant on the substantiality of God, just as the form of a ring depends on its substance of gold.

²⁸ The ignorant have no notion of the spirit, only matter which they believe to be the cause and effect of its own production. A learned man sees the substantive spirit in all forms of creation, just like he sees the substance of gold in all the ornaments made of that metal.²⁹ An ignorant man is composed of only his ego and a sage is filled with only his spirituality. Neither is ever thwarted from his own belief.³⁰ What is one’s nature or habit of thinking can hardly be altered, for it would be foolish for one habituated to think himself as a man to take himself for a pot or otherwise.

³¹ Therefore, though we and others, and that Dama and the other demons, are nothing in reality, yet who can believe that we or these or those are not ourselves?³² There is but One Being that is really existent, who is truth and consciousness himself and of the nature of emptiness and pure understanding. He is immaculate, all pervading, quiescent and without rise or fall.³³ Being perfect silence and void, he seems as nothing existent, yet all these creations exist in that emptiness as particles of his own splendor.³⁴ As the stars are seen to shine resplendent in the darkness of night, and as worms and waves are seen to float on the surface of waters, so do all these phenomena appear to occur in his reality.

³⁵ Whatever that Being purposes himself to be, he immediately conceives himself to be the same. It is only that empty Consciousness which is the true reality. All others are also real when viewed in It and rising and setting in It out of Its own will.³⁶ Therefore there is nothing real or unreal in the three worlds. It is all of or in the same form as it is viewed by Consciousness. It all arises before Consciousness of its own spontaneity.

³⁷ We also have sprung from that Divine Will, like Dama and others. Therefore there is no reality or unreality in any of us, except at the time when we exist or cease to do so.³⁸ This infinite and formless void of Consciousness is omnipresent and all pervading. In whatever form this Consciousness manifests itself in any place, it appears there in the same figure and manner.

³⁹ As divine Consciousness expanded itself with the images of Dama and others, it immediately

assumed those shapes by its notions of the same.⁴⁰ So it is with every one of us, that all things are produced to our view according to our notions presented to our consciousness.⁴¹ What we call the world is the representation of things to us as in our dream. It is a hollow body like a bubble rising in the empty ocean of Consciousness and appearing as the water in a mirage.

⁴² The waking state of the empty intellect is called the phenomenal world, and its state of sleep and rest is what we call liberation, emancipation or salvation from pain.⁴³ But Consciousness which never sleeps, nor has to be awakened at anytime, is the emptiness of the Divine Mind, in which the world is ever present in its visible form.⁴⁴ There the work of creation is united with the rest of nirvana, and the cessation of the act of creation is joined with uninterrupted quiet. Yet no difference whatever exists in God between alternating work and rest at anytime.⁴⁵ The Divine Intellect views its own form in the world, and it views the world in itself in its true sense; like a blinded eye sees the inner light in its orbit.⁴⁶ The Divine Intellect, like the blinded eye, sees nothing outside, but views every form within itself. This is because there is no visible or phenomenal world other than what is within the empty sphere of the Intellect.

⁴⁷ There are all these things everywhere, as we have ideas of them in our minds, but there is never anything anywhere if we have no previous idea of it in the mind. It is the one quiet spirit of God which lies extended in all these forms coming to our knowledge. Therefore knowing him as all in all, give up all your fears and sorrows and duality, rest in peace in his unity.

⁴⁸ The great intellect of God is as solid and clear as a block of crystal, which is both dense and transparent in the inside. They appear to be all hollow within, but replete with the images of all things from without.

Chapter 32 — Dama, Byala & Kata Obtain Liberation; On Good Conduct

¹ Rama said, “Tell me sage, how did Dama, Byala and Kata finally obtain their liberation, like all other virtuous souls, and become released from the torments of hell, like children getting rid of the fear of yaksha demons and pisacha ghosts?”

² Vasishta replied:—

Hear, O support of Raghu’s race, what Yama said about Dama, Byala and their companions when they asked for their liberation through his attendants in hell.³ Yama said that Dama and others would obtain their liberation upon death releasing them from their demonic bodies, and upon hearing the account of their lives and actions.

⁴ Rama said, “Tell me sage, how, when and from what source did Dama and others come to learn the accounts of their lives, and how they obtained their release from hell.”

⁵ Vasishta replied:—

These demons, transformed into fish in a pool by the bank of the great lotus lake in Kashmir, underwent many miserable births in their fish-like forms in that same pond.⁶ In that marshy ground, they were crushed to death under the feet of buffaloes. Then they were transformed into the shapes of cranes frequenting that lake of lotuses.⁷ They fed upon moss and mushrooms and tender petals of lotuses. They had to live upon the leaves of aquatic plants and vines that floated on the surface of the waves.⁸ They swung in cradles of flowers, rested on beds of blue lotuses, dived in vortices of the waters, and flew under the cooling showers of rainy clouds.⁹ At last, these charming cranes and herons were cleansed of their brutish foulness by their vegetable food of sweet fruits and flowers and by their pure beverage of the crystal lake, the food of holy saints.

¹⁰ Having by these means obtained a clear understanding, they were prepared for their release from their brutish states, like men who become able to distinguish and get hold of the good and virtuous qualities of *sattva* (purity, balance) and *rajas* (activity) from the evil of *tamas* (passivity) are entitled to their liberation.

¹¹ Now in the happy valley of Kashmir there is a city by name of Adhisthana which is surrounded on all sides by mountains and trees. It is very romantic in appearance.¹² In the middle of that city there is a hill known as Pradyumna Sekhara. It resembles a pistil rising from the center of a lotus flower.

¹³ On the top of that hill there is an building towering above all other buildings, and piercing the sky with its high turrets that appear like pinnacles above its summit.¹⁴ On the northeast corner of that building, there is a hollow at the top of its towering turret. It is overgrown with moss and continually resounds to the blowing winds.¹⁵ There the demon Byala, in the form of a sparrow, built his nest and chirped his meaningless notes, like one who repeats Vedic hymns without knowing their meaning.

¹⁶ At that time there was a king in that city named Yasaskara or the renowned who reigned there like Indra over the gods in heaven.¹⁷ The demon Dama became a gnat and dwelt in that building and continued to buzz his low tune in the crevice of a lofty column.

¹⁸ It came to pass that the citizens of Adhishtana prepared a playground named Ratnavati-vehara in that city.¹⁹ There resided the king’s minister, Narasimha by name. He understood the fates of human

kind, just as the astronomer knows the stars of heaven on a small celestial globe which he holds in his hand.²⁰ It also happened at that time that the deceitful demon Kata was as reborn as a parrot and became the minister's favorite, kept in a silver cage in his house.

²¹ It then turned out that the minister recited the poetic story of the war between demons and gods to the residents of his palace.²² The parrot Kata happened to hear it. He remembered his past life, whereby he was absolved of his sins and attained his final liberation.²³ The sparrow living on top of Pradyumna Hill also chanced to hear the story of his life in that palace, and he obtained his liberation thereby.²⁴ Dama, who lived in the palace in the form of a gnat, also happened to hear the minister's recital of his tale, and thereby obtained his peace and release.

²⁵ In this manner, O Rama, the sparrow on Pradyumna Hill, the gnat in the palace, and the parrot in the playground all had their liberation.

²⁶ Thus I have told you the whole story of the demon Dama and the others, which should fully convince you of the vanity of the world.²⁷ Only the ignorant are tempted to vanity by their error, just like those led to the delusion of water in a mirage. Even the great are liable, like these demons, to fall low by their error.²⁸ Think how one of these demons who had reduced the high Meru and Mandara Mountains with a nod of his eyebrows was constrained to remain as a contemptible gnat in the crack of a pillar in the palace.²⁹ Look at the other who threatened to destroy the sun and moon with a slap, living at last as a poor sparrow in a hole of the peak of Pradyumna Hill.³⁰ Look at the third who balanced Mount Meru like a flower bouquet in his hand, lying imprisoned as a parrot in the cage at the house of Narasimha.

³¹ When the sphere of pure consciousness is colored with ego, it is debased into another form and another birth without changing its nature.³² A man's wrong desires make him take the untruth for truth, just like a person's excessive thirst makes him mistake a mirage for water, and thereby he loses both his way and his life.

³³ Only those men can cross the ocean of the world who by the natural bent of their good understanding are inclined to study scriptures and look forward to their liberation by rejecting whatever is vicious and untrue.³⁴ Those prone to false reasoning and heresy by rejecting revelations are subject to various changes and miseries. They lose the best of life and fall like running water into a pit.³⁵ But those who walk by the dictates of conscience and follow the path pointed by the Vedas are saved from destruction and attain their best state.

³⁶ O high-minded Rama, he whose greed makes his mind always long after having this thing and that thing loses the highest goal of his being (*parama purushartha*), leaving not even ashes or any other trace behind.³⁷ The high-minded man regards the world like straw and shuns all its concerns like a snake casting off its skin.³⁸ He whose mind is illumined by the wonderful light of truth is always taken under the protection of the gods, just as the cosmic egg is protected by Brahma.

³⁹ Nobody should walk in paths that are long and wearisome, crooked and winding, and surrounded by dangers and difficulties. Rahu, the ascending node of the moon, lost its life by its curved course to drink the nectarine beams of the moon.⁴⁰ He who abides by the dictates of the true scriptures and associates with the best of men is never subject to the darkness of error.⁴¹ Those renowned for their

virtues have the power to bring their destiny under their command, convert all their evils to good, and render their prosperity perpetual.

⁴² Those who are unsatisfied with their qualifications, and those who thirst after knowledge and are seekers of truth, are truly called human beings. All others are only brutes. ⁴³ Those whose hearts are like lakes brightened by the moonbeams of fame have the form of Vishnu seated in their hearts, just as in the sea of milk.

⁴⁴ Repeatedly desiring enjoyments of what has been enjoyed and seeing what has often been seen is not the way to get rid of the world. It is the cause of repeated birth for the same enjoyments and sights.

⁴⁵ Continue to abide by the established rule of conduct, act according to the scriptures and good customs, and break off the bonds of worldly enjoyments, which are all only vanities. ⁴⁶ Let the world resound with the renown of your virtues reaching to the skies, because your fame and not the enjoyments you have enjoyed will immortalize your name. ⁴⁷ Those whose good deeds shine like moonbeams and are sung by the maidens of heaven are said to be truly living. All others unknown to fame are really dead.

⁴⁸ They who aspire to their utmost perfection by their unfailing effort and acting according to the precepts of the scriptures are surely successful in their attempt. ⁴⁹ Patiently adhering to the scriptures without hastening for success and perfecting one's self by long practice produce the ripe fruits of consummation.

⁵⁰ Now Rama, renounce all your sorrow and fear, your anxieties, pride and hastiness. Conduct yourself according to the law and scriptures and immortalize your name. ⁵¹ Take care that your sensuous soul does not perish like prey in the snare of your sensual appetites, or like a blind old man falling into the hidden pits of this world. ⁵² Do not allow yourself to be degraded below the vulgar, but consider well the scriptures as the best weapons to defeat the dangers and difficulties of the world.

⁵³ Why endanger your life in the muddy pit of this world, like an elephant falling in a pit under the keen arrows of the enemy? Avoid and only taste its enjoyments and you are free from all danger. ⁵⁴ Of what use is wealth without knowledge? Therefore devote yourself to learning and consider your riches to be only trash and bubbles. ⁵⁵ Knowledge of heretical scriptures has made beasts of men, making them miserable and unhappy by their unprofitable arguments. ⁵⁶ Now wake and shake off the dullness of your long, deep and death-like sleep, like the torpor of an old tortoise lying in a bog.

⁵⁷ Rise and accept an antidote to ward off your old age and death. This prescription is knowledge that all wealth and property are for our evil and all pleasures and enjoyments tend only to sicken and weaken our bodies.

⁵⁸ Know difficulty to be your prosperity and your detachment from the world to be your great gain. Conduct yourself according to the meaning of the scriptures, as they are supported by good custom.

⁵⁹ Acts done according to the scriptures and good customs produce the best fruits, that of immortality.

⁶⁰ He who acts well according to good customs, who considers everything by good reason, and who is indifferent to the pains and pleasures of the world flourishes like an tree in spring with the flowers and fruits of long life and fame, virtues and good qualities and prosperity.

Chapter 33 — Effort Attains; Ego & Its Three Forms

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Knowing that the complete success of every undertaking depends on your own effort at all times and places, you should never be slack in your efforts.² See how Nandi gratified the wishes of all his friends and relations by his own exertions, and how he became victorious over death itself by his adoration of Mahadeva Shiva by the side of a lake.³ See also, how the danava demigods by their greater wealth and prowess got the better of the gods who were filled with every perfection, just like elephants destroy a lake of lotuses.⁴ See how Marutta, the king of demons, by means of his sacrifice through the great sage Samvarta (the law giver), created another world like that of Brahma.

⁵ See, how Vishwamitra the general obtained the dignity of being one with Brahman by his great energy and continued efforts. By his austerities, he obtained what is impossible for another.⁶ See how in days of yore the poor and unfortunate Upamanyu obtained his nectar-like food of cake and curdled milk from the Milky Ocean by worshipping Shiva.⁷ See how the god Vishnu devoured the demons of the triple world like a wildfire destroys the tender filaments of lotuses, and how the sage Sweta became victorious over death by means of his firm faith in Shiva.⁸ Remember, how the chaste Savitri brought back her spouse Satyavana from the realm of death by prevailing on stern Yama with the sweet politeness of her discourse.

⁹ There is no great effort of any kind that goes unrewarded in this world. All impossibility is possible by ardent pursuit.¹⁰ So men having full knowledge of the spirit and exerting their utmost devotion are able to root out their destiny of reincarnation that is filled with so much pain and pleasure.¹¹ All visible things are full of danger in the sight of the intelligent. There is no pleasure to be had from anything without its accompanying pain.

¹² Though it is difficult to know the Supreme Brahman and easy to attain supreme joy, yet Brahman should be sought at first as the giver of all joy.¹³ Forsake your pride and rely on your unalterable peace of mind. Consider well your worthiness in your understanding and remain attentive to the wise and good.¹⁴ In this ocean of the world, there is no way for your salvation except by your attendance on the wise. All your pilgrimages, austerities and learning of the scriptures are of no avail to your liberation.

¹⁵ He is called wise whose greediness, anger and false conceptions decline day by day and who walks in the path of righteousness, as taught in the scriptures.¹⁶ The company of spiritual guides serves to dispel phenomena from the sight of the devout, like invisibles hidden from sight.¹⁷ In the absence of the objects of perception, only the Supreme Spirit remains in view and the human soul, having nothing else to rest upon, rests at last only in the Supreme Soul.¹⁸ Phenomena did not exist before nor are they produced from nothing. They are not in existence though we see them in our presence, nor will they exist in the future. The Supreme alone exists forever without change or decay.

¹⁹ I have already shown you by various examples the falsehood of phenomena. Now I will show you the falsity of existence, as it is known to the learned.

²⁰ Now that we have our passive consciousness of the three worlds, this being the sober truth of the wise, there can be no room for the unrealities of matter and illusion to enter into our belief.²¹ The

world is whatever wonders are displayed by the active consciousness to the inactive soul.²² The notion of the world is derived from the rays of the central intellect stretching to the circumference of understanding. There being no difference between the radiating point and the radiated circle, we acknowledge the identity of the radiator, the radius and the circle.

²³ The opening and shutting of intellectual eye causes the notions of the appearance and disappearance of the world in continued succession.²⁴ One unacquainted with the true sense of ego is blind within the luminous sphere of consciousness, but he who knows its true meaning finds himself within the sphere of spiritual light and loses himself in the divine light.

²⁵ He who understands Divine Ego no longer retains any notion of his own ego but mixes with the Supreme Soul like a drop of water lost in the waters of the ocean.²⁶ In reality there exists no "I" or "you" or any visible world or anything else. Upon right reasoning, all these blend in the one Ego which remains and exists after all other existences.

²⁷ Even clear understandings are sometimes clouded by false appearances, like children seized with false fear of demons or ogres.²⁸ As long as the moonlight of consciousness remains hidden by the darkness of individual ego, the lotus lake of spirituality will not bloom.²⁹ The feeling of ego being wiped from the mind, the sense of self and selfish passions will vanish of themselves from the heart and there will be an utter end to fears of death and hell, as also to desires of heaven and liberation.

³⁰ As long as ego feelings float like clouds over the mind, there will be no end of desires growing in the heart like weeds in the plains.³¹ As long as the cloud of ego continues to overcast the mind and obscure its consciousness, the humidity of dullness will fill its sphere and prevent the light of consciousness from piercing through it.

³² Ego pride is unmannerly in men. It is taken in the light of vanity. It is the cause of sorrow and not delight. It is like imaginary ghosts to children.³³ The vain assumption of egoism produces a great many errors. It leads to the ambition of gaining an infinity of worlds, as it was in the case of the foolish demons.³⁴ There is no error greater than the conceit that "I am such and such a great man." There will never be a greater error to lead us to utter darkness.

³⁵ Whatever joy or grief falls upon us at anytime in this changing world, it is all the effect of the rotating wheels of ego turning up and down at every moment.³⁶ He who weeds and roots out the germs of ego from his heart truly prevents the tree of worldliness from growing out in a hundred branches.³⁷ Belief in the individual ego is the sprout of the trees of our lives in their endless cycles through the world. The sense that "this is mine" is the cause that makes ego expand into a thousand branches.

³⁸ Our desires and the objects of our desires disappear as swiftly as birds in flight. Upon mature consideration, they prove to be only bubbles bursting on the fleeting, impermanent waves of our lives.

³⁹ It is because we have no knowledge of the one Ego that we think ourselves as "I", "you", "this" or the other. It is by shutting out our view of the only Soul that we see the constant revolutions of this world and that.⁴⁰ As long as the darkness of egoism reigns over the wilderness of human life, the goblin of selfishness infest it with its wanton revelry.⁴¹ The vile man seized by the avaricious demon of selfishness is at an utter loss to satisfy his needs with any moral precept or spiritual mantra.

⁴² Rama said, "Tell me, O venerable brahmin, how can we suppress our egoism or selfishness and evade the dangers and difficulties in our course through the world?"

⁴³ Vasishta replied:—

It is by seeking to settle the mind in the resplendent soul that shines in the transparent mirror of consciousness. In this way it is possible for anybody to suppress his sense of personal existence.

⁴⁴ A close investigation into human life proves it to be a maze full with the false shows of magic. It is not worth loving or hating and it is not capable of causing our ego pride. ⁴⁵ He whose soul is free from selfishness, who is devoid of the impressions of phenomena, whose course of life runs in an even course, is the man who can have no sense of ego in him.

⁴⁶ He who knows his inner self to be beyond the external world and who neither desires nor dislikes anything in the world, and who preserves the serenity of his temper at all times, is not susceptible of egoism. ⁴⁷ Whoever thinks himself to be the inner ideal, distinct from outward phenomena, and keeps the calm equanimity of his mind, is not ruffled by the feeling of his egoism.

⁴⁸ Rama said, "Tell me, sage, what is the form of ego? Does it exist in the body or mind or both? Is it eliminated when the body dies?"

⁴⁹ Vasishta replied:—

Rama, in this triple world there are three sorts of egoism. Two are of superior nature, but the third is of a vile kind and is to be abandoned by all.

⁵⁰ The first is the supreme and undivided Ego that is diffused throughout the world. It is the Supreme Soul (*paramatma*) beside which there is nothing in nature. ⁵¹ The feeling of this kind of Egoism leads to the liberation of men, as in the state of the living-liberated.

The next form of self-consciousness is the knowledge of ego as distinct and apart from all, and as minute as the hundredth part of a hair. This ego is good also. ⁵² This second form of ego also leads to the liberation of human souls, even in the state known as living-liberation.

⁵³ The last and worst kind of ego is identification with the body and all its parts. This ego takes the body to be the soul or self. ⁵⁴ This third and last kind is the popular belief of mankind who take their bodies as parts of themselves. It is the basest form of ego and must be forsaken in the same manner as we shun our inveterate enemies. ⁵⁵ The man debased by this kind of ego can never come to his right sense. Under the thrall of this powerful enemy, a man remains subject to all the evils of life.

⁵⁶ Possessed with this wrong notion of himself, every man is constantly troubled by various desires in his mind, and these expose him to all the evils of life.

⁵⁷ By means of the better senses of ego, men transform themselves into gods, but the common form of ego debases a man to the state of a beast and its attendant evils. ⁵⁸ That "I am not the body" is the certainty arrived at by the great and good who, believing themselves to be of the first two kinds of ego, are superior to the vulgar. ⁵⁹ Belief in the first two kinds raises men above the common level, but the ego of lower kind brings every misery on mankind.

⁶⁰ It was owing to their baser sense of ego that the demons Dama, Byala and others were reduced to

that deplorable state, as was related in their story.

⁶¹ Rama said, "Sage, describe to me the state of a man who has discarded the third or popular kind of ego from his mind, a man who attains the well being of his soul in both the present and future worlds."

⁶² Vasishta replied:—

Having cast off this poisonous ego, a man rests in the Supreme Spirit in the same manner as the believers in the two other sorts of ego.

⁶³ The first two views of ego place the egotist in the Ego of Divine Unity. ⁶⁴ But all these views of ego, in reality, are only different forms of dualism. When lost in the Unity, all consciousness of distinct personality is absorbed in the Supreme One. ⁶⁵ Good understanding should always strive to its utmost to get rid of its common and gross sense of ego, identity with the body, in order to feel in itself the indescribable joy of the Unity. ⁶⁶ The greatest good that one can attain for his highest state of joy (*parama padam*) is to renounce the unholy belief in one's separate personality in his material body.

⁶⁷ The man who gives up his identity as a personal ego in his body is not debased or lost, either by his indifference to or by his management of worldly affairs. ⁶⁸ The man who has rid his mind of ego by reducing his selfishness is indifferent to pain and pleasure, just as the satisfied are to the taste of sweet or sour. ⁶⁹ The man detesting the pleasures of life has his full bliss presented before himself. The mind is cleared of its doubts and darkness has nothing hidden from its sight. ⁷⁰ By investigation into the nature of the ego and forsaking this gross selfishness, a man crosses over the ocean of the world of his own accord.

⁷¹ The man who has nothing of his own, who knows himself as nothing, and yet who has all and thinks himself as all in all, and who though possessed of wealth and properties has the generosity of his soul to disown them to himself, he truly is situated in the Supreme Soul and finds his rest in the state of Supreme bliss.

Chapter 34 — End of the Story of Dama, Byala & Kata: Bhima, Bhasa & Dridha

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Now, hear me describe what Samvara did after the flight of Dama and his army, and how he remained in his rocky stronghold in the region of hell.

² After the complete overthrow of Samvara's entire army and their downfall from heaven like innumerable raindrops falling from a great cloud, and after dispersing itself and disappearing in autumn,³ Samvara remained motionless for many years in his strong citadel, numbed by the loss of his forces defeated by the gods. He wondered about the best means of overcoming the gods.

⁴ He thought, "The demons Dama and others that I produced by my black arts are all defeated in battle by their foolishness and vanity of pride and ego.⁵ Now I will produce some other demons by the power of my charm, and endue them both with the power of reason and acquaintance with spiritual science so that they may know and judge for themselves.⁶ These, being acquainted with the true nature of things and devoid of false views, will not be subject to pride or vanity, but will be able to defeat the gods in combat."

⁷ Thinking in this way to himself, the arch-fiend produced a host of good demons by his skill in sorcery. These creatures of his spell filled the space of the sky, like bubbles foam and float on the surface of the sea.⁸ They were all knowing and acquainted with what could be known. They were all dispassionate and sinless and solely intent on their allotted duties, with composed minds and good dispositions.⁹ They were known under the names of Bhima, Bhasa and Dridha, and by the holiness of their hearts, they looked upon all earthly things as mere straw.

¹⁰ These infernal spirits burst out of the ether and sprang up to the upper world, then spread over the face of the sky like a swarm of locusts. They cracked like guns and roared and rolled about like the clouds of the rainy season.¹¹ They fought with the gods for many cycles of years, yet they were not elated with pride owing to their being under the guidance of reason and judgment.

¹² No one could defeat them because they had no desire of having anything and no thought that "this is my own." They had no identity as a personal existence, such as, "This is me, and that one is another."

¹³ They were fearless fighting the gods because they knew that they were as mortal as themselves, and because they lacked any knowledge of any difference between one another.¹⁴ They attacked with a firm conviction that the unsubstantial body is nothing, the intellect is lodged in the pure soul, and that there is nothing which we call "I" or "another."¹⁵ These demons were devoid of the sense of themselves or their fears. They necessarily had no fear of death. They were employed in their present duties without thoughts of past or future.¹⁶ Their minds were attached to nothing. They slew their enemies without thinking themselves as their slayers. They did their duties and thought themselves as no doers of them. They were utterly free from all desires.¹⁷ They waged war under the sense of doing their duty to their master, while their own nature was entirely free from all passion and affection, always remaining at even tenor.

¹⁸ The infernal force under the command of Bhima, Bhasa and Dridha bruised and burned and slew and devoured the celestial phalanx, as men knead and fry and boil rice and afterward eat it up as their food.¹⁹ The celestial army, harassed on all sides by Bhima, Bhasa and Dridha, fled precipitately from

the height of heaven, as the Ganges runs down from the Himalayan heights.²⁰ The defeated legion of the gods then resorted to the god Vishnu, sleeping on the surface of the ocean of milk, just as the clouds of heaven are driven by winds to the tops of mountains.

²¹ The god Vishnu, lying as Narayana folded in the coils of the serpent like a consort in the arms of his mistress, gave the gods their hope of future final success.²² The gods hid themselves in that ocean, until it pleased Lord Vishnu to proceed out to destroy the demons.

²³ Then there was a dreadful war between Vishnu and Samvara which broke and bore away the mountains as in an untimely great deluge of the earth.²⁴ The mighty demon, finally overthrown by the might of Narayana, was sent to and settled in the city of Vishnu after his death.²⁵ The demons Bhima, Bhasa and Dridha were also killed in their unequal struggle with Vishnu and were extinguished like lamps by the wind.²⁶ They became extinct like flames of fire, and it was not known where their vital flame fled. It is the desire of a person that leads him to another state, but these having no wish in them had no other place to go.²⁷ Hence the soul without wish is liberated, but not the mind full of yearning desires.

Therefore, O Rama, use your reason to have a mind and soul without wishes.²⁸ A full investigation into truth will immediately put down your desires, and the extinction of desires will restore your mind to rest like an extinguished candle.²⁹ Complete wisdom consists in the knowledge of there being nothing real in this world, that our knowledge of reality is utterly false, and that nothingness is the true reality.

³⁰ The whole world is full with the spirit of God, whatever otherwise one may think of it at anytime. There can be no other thought of it except that it is a nothingness, and this forms our perfect knowledge of it.³¹ The two significant words "will" and "mind" are mere insignificant fictions, like the head and trunk of the ascending and descending nodes of a planet which, upon their right understanding, are lost in the Supreme Spirit.

³² The mind accompanied by its desires is confined in this world, but when the mind is released from desires it is said to have its liberation.³³ The mind gains its existence in the belief of men because of the many ideas of pots and pictures and other things that are imprinted in it. But when these thoughts are repressed, the mind also vanishes of itself, like the phantoms of yaksha demons.³⁴ The demons Dama, Byala and Kata were destroyed because they relied on their minds, but Bhima, Bhasa and Dridha were saved by their belief in the Supreme Soul as pervading all things. Therefore, O Rama, reject the examples of the former and imitate those of the latter.

³⁵ "Be not guided by the example of Dama, Byala and Kata," is the lesson that was first delivered to me by Brahma the lotus-born and my progenitor himself.³⁶ This lesson I repeat to you, O Rama, as my intelligent pupil, that you may never follow the example of the wicked demons Dama and others, but imitate the conduct of the good spirits Bhima and others in your conduct.

³⁷ It is constant pain and pleasure that forms the fearful feature of this world. There is no other way of evading all its pangs and pains except by your apathetic behavior, which must be your crowning glory in this life.

Chapter 35 — Description of Detachment & Bliss

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Blessed are the virtuous who have cleansed their hearts from the dirt of ignorance. Victorious are those heroes who have conquered their insatiable and uncontrollable minds.² It is self-control, the management of one's own mind, that is the only means of wading through all troubles and distress amid all the dangers and difficulties of this world.

³ Hear the summary of all knowledge and retain and cultivate it constantly in your mind. The desire of enjoyment is our bondage in the world and its abandonment is our release from it.⁴ What need is there of many teachings? Learn this one truth as the sum and substance of all. All pleasures are poisonous and destructive. You must fly from them as from venomous snakes and a raging fire.

⁵ Consider well and repeatedly that all that can be perceived by the senses are like hydras and dragons, and their enjoyment is gall and poison. Keep them at a distance and pursue your lasting good.

⁶ The mind of desires produces destructive evils, like sterile ground is fertile only for thorns and brambles.⁷ The mind devoid of desire lacks its expansion, as the heart lacking its passions and affections is curbed and contracted in itself.⁸ The well disposed mind always teems with virtues that are opposed to wrong acts and vice, just like fertile ground grows good and useful trees in spite of weeds and bushes.

⁹ When the mind gains its serenity by culture of good qualities, the mist of its errors and ignorance gradually fade and fly away like clouds before the rising sun.¹⁰ Good qualities shining in the mind, like stars in a moonlight sky, give rise to the light of reason, like the bright sun of the day.¹¹ As the practice of patience grows familiar in the mind, like medicinal vamsa-lochana within bamboo, it gives rise to the quality of firmness in a man, like the moon brightens the spring sky.

¹² Company of the good is a tree that gives its cooling shade of peace and yields the fruit of salvation. Its effect on righteous men is like that of the stately sarala tree distilling the juice of spiritual joy from the fruit of samadhi.¹³ Thus prepared, the mind becomes devoid of its desires and enmity and is free from all troubles and anxieties. It becomes dull to the feelings of grief and joy, and also of pain and pleasure, and all its restlessness dies in itself.¹⁴ Its doubts about the truth of scriptures die away, just as the table of values and all its curiosities for novelties are put to a stop. Its veil of myths and fictions is unveiled, and its ointment of error is rubbed out of it.

¹⁵ The mind's attempts, efforts, malice, disdain, distress and disease are all removed. The mist of its grief and sorrow and the chain of its affections are all blown and torn away.¹⁶ It discards the children of its doubts, repudiates the consorts of its greed, and breaks loose from the prison-house of its body. It then seeks the welfare of the soul and attains its godly state of holiness.¹⁷ It abandons the causes of its stoutness and relinquishes its choice of this thing and that. Then remembering the dignity of the soul, it casts off the covering of its body like straw.

¹⁸ The elevation of the mind in worldly affairs tends to its destruction, and its depression in these leads to its spiritual elevation. The wise always lower their minds (pride) but fools are for elevating them.¹⁹ The mind makes the world its own and ranges all about it. The mind raises mountains and climbs over them. The mind is like an infinite vacuum. It comprehends all emptiness in itself and it

makes gods of friends and foes of others.

²⁰ When understanding is soiled by doubts and forgets the true nature of consciousness, and when it is full of all its worldly desires, then it takes upon the name “mind.” ²¹ Consciousness perverted by its various desires is called the living soul or the animal soul, which is distinct from the rational soul.

²² Understanding which forgets its intellect and falls into the error of its own personality is what we call the internal principle of the mind which is all hollow within.

²³ The soul is not the man of the world nor is it the body or its blood. All material bodies are only gross and dull matter, but the soul in the body is empty air and intangible. ²⁴ The body being dissected into atoms and analyzed in all its particles presents nothing but blood and entrails, just like the plantain tree, when cut into pieces, presents nothing but its folded rinds.

²⁵ Know that the mind and living soul make a man assume his mortal form. The mind takes its form by itself according to his own choice. ²⁶ Man stretches his own sphere of action by his own choice only to entrap himself in it, just as the silkworm weaves its cocoon for its own imprisonment. ²⁷ The soul lays down its error of being the body when it has to leave the body at some time or other, then the soul assumes another form as the germ sprouts forth into leaves.

²⁸ As the desire or thought is in the mind, so is it born in its next state of transmigration. Hence the new born babe is given to sleeping because it thinks itself to be still dead, lying in the nighttime of his death. It is also given to the dreaming of those things which had been the objects of its desire or thought in its previous state or birth.

²⁹ So sour becomes sweet by mixture with sugar, and bitter seed produces sweet fruit by being sown with honey. So on the contrary, sweet becomes bitter by mixing in gall and wormwood. ³⁰ Aiming after goodness and greatness makes a man good and great. One wishing to be an Indra, a lord of gods, dreams of his lordliness in his sleep. ³¹ An inclination to meanness demeans a man and a tendency to vileness maligns his conduct in life, just like one deluded by his imagination of devils comes to see their apparitions in his nightly visions.

³² But what is naturally foul or fair can hardly turn otherwise at anytime, as a still lake never becomes muddy and a dirty pool never becomes glassy. ³³ The perverted mind produces the fruits of its perversion in all its actions, while pure-mindedness is filled with the effects of its purity everywhere.

³⁴ Good and great men never forsake their goodness and greatness, even in their fall and decline, so the glorious sun fills the vault of heaven with his glory even when he is sinking below the horizon.

³⁵ There is no restriction or freedom of the human soul to or from any action or thing in this world. The soul is a mere passive and neutral consciousness of all that passes before it like a magic scene.

³⁶ The world is a magical city, like a mirage appearing to sight. It is of the nature of a delusive panorama that shows many moons of the one whose unity admits of no duality. So the one Brahman is represented as many by delusion. ³⁷ All this truly is the essence of Brahman and this is the sober reality. The material world is insubstantial and when seen truly appears as a hollow phantom.

³⁸ The ignorant person’s misjudgment is that “I am not the infinite but an infinitesimal,” but the certainty of my infinity and supremacy is the means for my absorption into the Infinite and Supreme.

³⁹ The belief of one’s individuality as “I am this” in his undivided, all pervasive and transparent soul

is the cause of bondage to his personality. It is a web spun by his false dualism.⁴⁰ The supreme truths of true philosophy are the lack of knowledge of one's bondage or freedom, the knowledge of his unity or duality, and his belief in the totality of Brahman.

⁴¹ The conditions for beholding Brahman in the soul are its perfect transparency amounting to its emptiness, and its lack of attachment to visible appearances, and also its indifference to all that is. There is no other way.⁴² The condition for receiving the sight of Brahman is the purity of the mind produced by acts of holiness, just like the whiteness of a cloth can receive any color upon it.

⁴³ O Rama, think that your soul is same with the souls of all other persons and abstain from all other thoughts, whether what is desirable or undesirable, what invigorates or enfeebles the body, or what brings liberation after bondage, or salvation after sinfulness.⁴⁴ The mirror of the mind, cleansed by the knowledge of the scriptures and made dispassionate through understanding, receives the reflection of Brahman like a clear crystal reflecting the images of things.

⁴⁵ Sight which is familiar with visible objects, and not with images and ideas in the mind, is called false vision of what is soon lost from view.⁴⁶ When the mind is fixed upon God by abstracting its sight from all mental visions and what the eye sees, it has then the view of the Supreme before it.

⁴⁷ Visible sights which are obvious to view are all only unreal phantoms. It is the absorption of the mind in the Divine that makes it identical with the Divine and no other.⁴⁸ We see something with our attention now, but it was not in our sight before or after we turn away. Therefore it must be considered absent in between before and after. Therefore one unacquainted with his mind is as ignorant as the man who is unaware of what he holds in his own hand.

⁴⁹ One having no knowledge that the world is the same with the Supreme Spirit is always subject to misery, but the negation of any distinction between what can be perceived and God gives us both the pleasure of our enjoyments here and our liberation in future.⁵⁰ It is ignorance to say that water is one thing and its wave is another, but it shows intelligence to say they are the one and the same thing.

⁵¹ The vanities of the world are associated with sorrow. Therefore discard all aspects of vanity. The abandonment of extravagance ultimately will lead to your attainment of wisdom.⁵² The mind composed of vain desires is an unreality in itself. Therefore, O Rama, why should you sorrow for something which in reality is nothing?⁵³ O Rama, look upon all things as traps set to ensnare the soul and regard them with an eye of apathy and unconcern, as an unkind kinsman looks upon his relatives.

⁵⁴ As the unkind relative is unconcerned with the joys and grief of his relations, so should you remain aloof from all things by knowing the falsehood of their nature.⁵⁵ Rely on that eternal Spirit which is infinite knowledge and joy, and which is between the viewer and the view. After the swiftness of the mind's flight is at an end, it will be fixed to the truth and adhere to it like clay.⁵⁶ The airy flight of the mind being restrained, the sluggish body must cease to run about and the dust cloud of ignorance will no more spread over the city of the world.

⁵⁷ When the rains of our desires are over and the calmness of the mind is restored, when the shuddering cold of dullness has fled, when the mud of worldliness is dried up,⁵⁸ when the channel of our thirst is dried up, when drinking pots are sucked up and emptied, when the forest of the heart is cleared and its brambles are rooted out, and when the frost of false knowledge has disappeared,

⁵⁹ then the mist of error vanishes from view, like the shadow of night on the approach of dawn, and the cold of dullness is put to flight, like the poison of snake-bite by the potent charm of mantras.

⁶⁰ Then the streams of our desires do not run down the rock of the body, nor do the peacocks of our fleeting wishes fly and sport on its top. ⁶¹ The sphere of our consciousness becomes as the clear sky and the light of the living soul shines as brightly over the body like the midday sun. ⁶² The cloud of error is dispelled and succeeded by the light of reason. The longings of the soul, purified of their impurities, make it shine brilliantly amidst its sphere.

⁶³ Then raptures of serene delight shoot forth in the soul like blooming blossoms in the open air, and a cool light is shed upon it, like the cooling beams of the autumn moon. ⁶⁴ This ecstasy of the soul unfolds all prosperity before it and fructifies with abundance the well cultivated ground of the reasoning mind. ⁶⁵ It sheds its clear light all over the world and shows the depths of the hills and forests and everything on earth in their clearest light.

⁶⁶ This bliss expands the mind and makes it translucent. It makes the heart like a clear lake, blooming with blossoms of the lotus of truth (*sattva*) without the dust of ego activity (*rajas*). It is never infested by the swarming passions of pride or idleness (*tamas*). ⁶⁷ The mind, cleansed of its selfishness, turns to universal benevolence and philanthropy. Being quite calm in itself without any desire of its own, the mind reigns as lord over the city of its body.

⁶⁸ The man whose investigation has made him acquainted with all things, whose soul is enlightened with truth, whose mind is melted down from his pride, who is calm and quiet in his understanding, and who looks with pity at the unpleasant course of men's births and deaths, he truly lives happily in the realm of his body without feverish anxiety about anything.

Chapter 36 — Description of the Intellect's Creation

¹ Rama said, “Tell me O brahmin, for the sake of my advancement in knowledge, how does the mundane system exists in the extra mundane immaterial soul?”

² Vasishta replied:—

Worlds have no separate existence except in the Supreme Mind. They are all situated in Divine Consciousness like future waves exist in a calm sea.

³ As the all-pervading sky cannot be seen owing to its extreme lack of substance, so the undivided nature of the all-pervasive Consciousness cannot be perceived on account of its subtlety.⁴ As a gem has its own brilliancy whether or not someone moves it, so the unreal world has its potential existence in the Divine Spirit, both in its states of action and inactivity.

⁵ As clouds in the sky do not touch the sky or have a tangible feeling of the sky's emptiness, so the worlds existing in the receptacle of the intellectual soul have no contact with the extraneous intellect, which is unconnected with its contents.⁶ As the light residing in the waters of the sea or a pot of water is not connected either with the water or the pot, nor is it felt by us but by its reflection, so the intangible soul abides unconnected in its receptacle of the body and reflects itself only to our knowledge.

⁷ Consciousness is devoid of every desire and designation. It is nameless and formless, but our intelligence gives names and forms to its reflections from some one of our intelligible ideas, such as the living soul and the like.⁸ Consciousness is clearer than translucent air and finer than it by a hundred times. It is known as an undivided whole by the learned who view it as identical with the whole undivided world, which consciousness comprehends within itself.

⁹ As seawater shows itself in various forms in all its waves, so consciousness does not differ from various representations of its own motion that it shows to us.¹⁰ The diversities of our subjective and objective knowledge of “myself” and “yourself” and “these” are like the varieties of surging waves in the ocean of consciousness. These are false notions because they are only representations of the same element, the very same consciousness.

¹¹ The various states of consciousness (*chit*), exercise of consciousness (*chinta*), intelligence (*chittam*) and that which is intelligible (*chetiyas*), all belong to the main principle of the soul. They are differently conceived by the learned and ignorant, but the difference is a mere conceit.

¹² Consciousness presents two different aspects to wise and unwise people. To the ignorant, it shows its unreal nature in the realistic conception of the world. To the learned, it exhibits its luminous form in the identity of all things with God.

¹³ Consciousness by its internal (intellectual) light enlightens the luminous bodies of the sun and stars. It gives a relish to things by its internal taste and it gives birth to all beings from its inborn ideas of them.¹⁴ It neither rises nor sets, nor gets up or sits. It neither proceeds nor recedes back and forth. It is not here nor is it nowhere.¹⁵ The pure and transparent consciousness, which is situated in the soul, displays in itself the phantasmagoria which is called the world.

¹⁶ As a heap of fire emits its flame, a luminous body blazes with its rays, and as the sea swells in

surges and breaks in with its inlets, so consciousness bursts out in its creations.¹⁷ Thus consciousness which is self-manifest and omnipresent of its own nature, develops and envelops the world by its own manifestation and sight, and by its acts of integration and segregation, and its acts of accretion and secretion.¹⁸ By its own error and of its own accord, it is led to forget and forsake its state of infinity. By assuming its individual personality of ego, it is converted to an ignoramus.¹⁹ By its act of specialization, it falls from its knowledge of generals to that of particulars and comes to make differences between positive and negative, and inclusion and exclusion.²⁰ It strives and struggles within the confines of the sensuous body and it multiplies in these bodies like weeds sprouting out of the bosom of the earth.

²¹ It is consciousness that stretches the spacious vacuum to make room for the subsistence and growth of everything. Consciousness makes the all and ever moving air and the liquid water for the vitality and nourishment of all.²² It makes the earth firm and the fire bright and the fixed worlds all around. It employs time by its injunctions and prohibitions.²³ It gives fragrance to flowers, growing by degrees their filaments and pistils. It makes the moisture in porous ground to grow vegetables on earth.²⁴ The rooted trees bear fruit from their juicy saps beneath, displaying their leaves with outlines in them like their veins and arteries.²⁵ It renovates the forest with its gifts of various colors, and dies them with the variety of colors from the rainbow of Indra.

²⁶ Consciousness bids the thin layers of rocks, fruits and flowers to wait upon the flowery season of spring, then brings their fruits to perfection under the heat of the summer sun.²⁷ It makes the dark blue clouds of heaven wait for the approach of rainy weather, and causes the harvest of fields to follow in the train of autumn.²⁸ The cold season is decorated with its smiling frost, in its faces of the ten sides of the sky. Dewy weather is made to blow its icicles of dew drops on the wings of winter's chilling winds.²⁹ It makes ever-moving time revolve in its rotation of years and cycles and yuga ages, and it causes the tide of creation to roll on in its waves of worlds on its bosom of the ocean of eternity.

³⁰ The decrees of Consciousness remain fixed with a wonderful stability, and the earth continues firm with its quality of containing all things.³¹ It made the universe abound with fourteen kinds of beings in as many worlds, the fourteen planes of creation (*chaturdasa-bhuvana*). These are as different in their modes of life as in their forms and figures.³² These are repeatedly produced from and reduced to nothing, and move in their accustomed courses forever, like bubbles in the waterless ocean of eternity.

³³ Here the miserable multitudes move madly in vain struggles after their desired objects, and in their imbecility under the subjection of disease and death. They are constantly coming to life and going away in their exits, remaining in their living states and acquiring their ends, and forever running back and forth in their repeated births and deaths in this world.

Chapter 37 — *Upasama*: Stillness of the Soul; Apparent Activity of the Mind

¹ Vasishta added:—

In this manner, these series of worlds are revolving in their unchanging course, repeatedly appearing and disappearing in the substantiality of Brahman.² All this is derived from the one self-existence. All this has become the reciprocal causes of one another by their mutual transformations, and again they are destroyed of themselves by their mutual destructiveness of one another.

³ But as the motion of the waters on the surface does not affect the waters in the depth of the sea, so the fluctuations of the changing scenes of nature make no alteration in the ever tranquil spirit of Brahman.⁴ As the desert in summer heat presents the waters of mirage to the clear sky, so the false world shows its delusive appearances to the mind.⁵ As the calm soul seems to be giddy in the state of one's drunkenness, so the essence of consciousness, which is always the same, appears as otherwise in its ignorance.

⁶ The world is neither a reality nor unreality. It is situated in Consciousness but appears to be placed outside it. It is not separate from the soul, although it seems to be different from it, as the ornament appears to differ from its gold.

⁷ Rama, that soul of yours whereby you perceive form and figures and sound and smell is the Supreme Brahman pervading all things.⁸ The pure soul, being one in many and inherent in all external objects, cannot be thought of as being different from those that appear other than itself.⁹ Rama, it is the difference of human thoughts that judges differently of the existence and non-existence of things, and of their good and bad natures also. It judges the world to exist either within or outside the Divine Spirit.¹⁰ Because it is impossible for anything to exist outside the Spirit of God, it was the Spirit that willed to become many. As there was nothing beside itself which it could think of or find for itself, it was necessarily that it became so of itself without the aid of any extraneous matter.¹¹ Therefore the will to do this or that or try for one thing or other does not relate to the soul but to the mind.

Thus the soul without choice, having no will of its own, does nothing except think on what is in itself. It is not an active agent owing to the union of all agency, instrumentality and objectivity in itself. It abides nowhere, being both the recipient and content, the container and the contained of everything in itself. Neither is the will-less soul action-less when the acts of creation are perceptible in itself. Nor is it possible that there is any other cause of them.

¹² Rama, you must know the nature of Brahman to be no other than this. Knowing him as no agent and without a second, be free from all anxiety.

¹³ I will tell you more. Though you may continue to do a great many acts here, yet tell me in a word, what do you do that is worth doing? Rely on the lack of your own agency and be quiet as the wise sage. Remain as calm and still as the clear ocean when unshaken by breeze.¹⁴ Know well that it is not possible for the swiftest runners to reach their goal of perfection no matter how far they may run. You must desist in your mind from pursuing worldly objects and persist to meditate on the spirituality of your inner intellectual soul.

Chapter 38 — The Same Stillness of Spirit; the Mind as the Agent

¹ Vasishta resumed:—

Such being the state of the wise, the actions they are seen to do, whether of goodness or otherwise or pleasurable or painful, and regardless of what they are engaged in, are false and as nothing and do not affect them as they do other worldly mortals. ² For what is a person's action other than the exertion of mental and voluntary energies, with a fixed determination and desire of performing some physical acts?

³ The action of a man is defined to be the production of an act by appliance of the proper means, the exertion and action of the body in conformity with one's ability, and the completion of the effect compatible with one's intention, together with the enjoyment of the result of such agency. ⁴ Moreover, whether a man is agent or no agent of an action and whether he goes to heaven or dwells in hell, his mind is subject to the same feelings as the desires he has in his heart. ⁵ Hence the agency of the ignorant arises from their wishing to do a thing, whether they do it or not. But not so of the wise, who having no will, are not culpable even for their involuntary actions. Untutored minds are full with the weeds of vice, but well cultivated souls are quite devoid of them.

⁶ He who has the knowledge of truth becomes relaxed in his earthly desires. Though he acts his part well, he does not long eagerly for its result like others do. He acts with his body but with a quiet unconcerned mind. When successful, he attributes the gain to the will of God, but the worldly minded arrogate the result to themselves, though they could not bring it about.

⁷ Whatever the mind intends truly comes to pass, and nothing is achieved without the application of the mind. Therefore, agency belongs to the mind and not to the body. ⁸ The world proceeds from the Divine Mind. The world is a development of the mind and it is situated in the (infinite and eternal) mind. Knowing all things to be manifestations of the powers of consciousness, the wise man remains cool to his desires.

⁹ The minds of those who know the soul come to the state of perfect detachment from their desires, just as when a false mirage of water is set down by raining clouds, and particles of morning dews are dried up by the raging sun. It is then that the soul is said to rest in its perfect bliss (*turiya*). ¹⁰ This is not the joy of the gusto of pleasure or the pain of sorrow or discontent. It does not consist of the liveliness of living beings or the inertness of stones. It is not situated in the midst of these opposites but in the knowing mind which is all rapture and ecstasy, infinite bliss (*bhumananda*).

¹¹ But the thirst of an ignorant mind leads it to the moving waters of earthly pleasures, just like an elephant is misled to a foul pool where he is plunged in its mud and mire without finding anything that is really good.

¹² Here is another example based upon a stanza in the scriptures which says, "A man dreaming himself to be falling into a pit, feels the fear of his fall in his imagination even when he has been sleeping in his bed; but another who actually falls in a pit when he is fast asleep, is quite unconscious of his fall. Thus it is the mind which paints its own pleasure and pains, and not the bodily action or its inactivity."

¹³ Hence whether a man is the doer of an action or not, he perceives nothing of it when his mind is

engrossed in some other thought or action. But he sees everything within himself who beholds everything in the abstract meditation of his mind. The thinking mind sees outward objects as reflections that are cast out from his pure consciousness.

¹⁴ Thus the man knowing the knowable soul, knows himself to be inaccessible to the feelings of pleasure and pain. Knowing this as a certainty, he finds that nothing exists apart from what is within the container of his soul, which is as minute as a thousandth part of a hair. This being ascertained, he views everything in himself. With this certainty of knowledge, he comes to know his self as a reflection of all things, present in all of them. After these determinations, he comes to the conclusion that he is not subject to pain or pleasure. Thus freed from anxieties, the mind freely exercises its powers over all customary duties without being concerned about them.

¹⁵ He who knows the self remains joyous even in his calamity and shines like the moonlight which enlightens the world. He knows that it is his mind and not his self that is the agent of his actions, although he is the doer of them. Knowing that the mind is the agent in all his actions, he does not assume to himself the merit of the exercise of his limbs, hands and feet, nor does he expect to reap the rewards of all his constant labors and acts.

¹⁶ Unrestrained minds become unrestrained agents, their mental actions (thoughts) become habits, and their endurance brings about the consequences. Thus the mind is the root of all efforts and exertions, of all acts and actions, of all their results and productions, and the source of suffering the consequences of actions. By doing away with your mind, you make a clean sweep of all your actions and thereby avoid all your miseries resulting from your acts. All these are at an end with the trance of the mind is at an end. It is a practice in yoga to relieve the excitement of the mind from its ever varying purposes.

¹⁷ See how a boy is led by the fancy of his mind to build his toy or hobby-horse, which he dresses and paints in his willful play without showing any concern or feeling of pleasure or pain in its making or its breaking, however he pleases. So does man build his aerial castle and level it without any sense of gain or loss. It is by his acting in this manner in all worldly matters that no man is spiritually entangled to them.

¹⁸ Amidst the dangers and delights of this world, what cause can there be for your sorrow other than you have the one and not the other? But what is there so delectable and delightful to be desired in this world that at the same time is not impermanent and perishable? Only your self, your soul which is neither the active nor the passive agent of your actions and enjoyments, although people attribute actions and their fruitions to it by their error.

¹⁹ The importance of actions and emotions to living beings is a mistake and not veritable truth. If we consider things correctly, we find no action or emotion having any relationship to the soul. Only the sensualist feels attachment or aversion to the senses and conscious actions and enjoyments, and not those who are detached from sensuous affections.²⁰ There is no liberation in this world for the worldly minded, while liberation is fully realized by the yogi whose mind, in its state of living liberation (*jivan-mukta*), is free from attachments to the world.

²¹ Though the sage is established in the light of his self-consciousness, yet he is aware of the distinctions between unity and duality, the true entity from the non-entities, and he sees the

omnipotence in all powers that are displayed in nature.²² To him there is no bond or freedom, no liberation or bondage whatever, and the miseries of ignorance are all lost in the light of his enlightenment.

²³ It is in vain to wish for liberation when the mind is tied down to the earth. So it is redundant to talk of bondage when the mind is already fastened to it. Shun them both by ignoring your individual ego and remain fixed to the true Ego. Continue in this way to manage yourself with an unruffled mind on this earth.

Chapter 39 — Vasishta Postpones the Question of Impurity from Purity; the Unity of All Things

¹ Rama replied, “Tell me, O high-minded sage, how could creation proceed from the Supreme Brahma, whom you describe as remaining as still as a painting in the canvas of emptiness?”

² Vasishta replied:—

O prince, such is the nature of Brahman that all power constantly flows from him, therefore every power is said to reside in him.³ In him resides entity and non-entity. In him there is unity, duality and plurality, and the beginning and end of all things.⁴ This is one and nothing else. It is like the sea whose waters have endless varieties of shapes. It represents the images of myriads of stars in its bosom, rising spontaneously of themselves.

⁵ As Consciousness becomes dense, it makes the mind and the mind brings forth all the powers of thinking, willing and acting. These it produces, accumulates, contains, shows and then absorbs in itself.

⁶ Brahman is the source of all living beings, and of all things seen all around us. His power is the cause that exhibits all things in their constant course or quiescence.⁷ All things spring from the Supreme Spirit and they reside in his all comprehensive mind. They are of the same nature as that of their source, like the water of the sweet and salt lakes.

⁸ Rama interrupted and said, “Sage, your discourse is very dark, and I cannot understand the meaning of what you are saying.⁹ There is the nature of Brahman, which you said to be beyond the perception of the mind and senses. Then what are these perishable things which you say have proceeded from him? If your reasoning comes to this conclusion, then I cannot rely upon it.”

¹⁰ “It is the law of production that anything produced from something is invariably of the same nature with that of its producer.¹¹ As light is produced from light, grain comes from grain, and man is born of man, and all kinds come out of their own kind.¹² Therefore the productions of the immutable Spirit must also be unchangeable and spiritual in their nature.”

¹³ “Beside all this, the Intellectual Spirit of God is pure and immaculate. This creation is all impure and gross matter.”

¹⁴ Upon hearing these words, the great sage said:—

Brahman is all purity and there is no impurity in him. The waves moving on the surface of the sea may be foul, but they do not soil the waters of the deep.¹⁵ Rama, you cannot conceive of there being a second person or thing beside the one Brahman, just as you can have no conception of fire beside its heat.”

¹⁶ Rama replied, “Sage, Brahman is devoid of sorrow, while the world is full of sorrows. Therefore I cannot clearly understand your words when you say this to be the offspring of that.”

¹⁷ Valmiki said to Bharadwaja:—

At these words of Rama, the great sage Vasishta remained silent. He stopped his lecture and contemplated.¹⁸ His mind lost its accustomed clarity, then recovering its clear vision, he pondered within himself in the following manner.

¹⁹ The educated and intelligent mind that has known the knowable One has reached the end of the subject of liberation by its own reasoning and intuition, as that of Rama.²⁰ It is no fault of the educated to have questions until it is explained to them to their full satisfaction, as in the case of Rama.

²¹ The half-educated are not fit to receive spiritual instruction because their view of phenomena, which dwells on obvious objects, proves to be the cause of their ruin.²² But he who has come to understand in a transcendental light, and who has a clear insight of spiritual truths, feels no desire for sensual enjoyments and instead advances in course of time to the conclusion that Brahman is all in all things. (If the mind is pure, it instantly comprehends the truth.)

²³ First the disciple has to be prepared and purified with the teachings and practice of stillness and self-control. Then he is to be initiated in the creed that "All this is Brahman and you are that pure Spirit."²⁴ But who so teaches the faith of "all is Brahman" to the half taught and ignorant truly entangles him in the strong snare of hell.

²⁵ The well discerning sage should tell only those who are enlightened in their understanding, whose desire of sensual gratifications has abated, who are free from their worldly desires, who are cleansed of the dirt of their ignorance, and who are prepared to receive religious and spiritual instruction.

²⁶ The spiritual guide who instructs his student without weighing well his habits and conduct is a silly teacher and sinks into hell and has to dwell there until the last day of judgment.

²⁷ The venerable Vasishta, who was the chief of sages and like the bright sun on earth, having considered these things, spoke to Rama as follows.

²⁸ Vasishta said:—

I will tell you Rama, at the conclusion of this lecture, whether the attribution of the impurity of gross bodies is applicable to Brahman or not.

²⁹ For now, know that Brahma is almighty, all pervading, omnipresent and is all himself. Because of his omnipotence, he can do and become all and everything of itself.³⁰ You see various practices of magicians and tricks of jugglers in producing, presenting, and hiding many things in the sight of men. These are all only unreal shows. In the same way Brahman produces, presents and removes all things from and into himself.

³¹ The world is filled with gardens like those in fairylands, and the sky is full with the airy castles of gandharvas and the abodes of gods. Men are seen to descend from the cloudless sky to the surface of the earth, and rise upwards to heaven (in *vimanas*, flying chariots).³² Fairy cities, like the palaces of the gandharvas of the ethereal regions, are shown on earth and filled with the fairies of fairyland.

³³ Whatever there is or has been or is to be in this world are all like reflections of the revolving sky and heavenly bodies, or of a brass ball affixed to the top of a tower and darting its golden light below.³⁴ All these are only exhibitions of the various forms of manifestations of the selfsame God.

³⁵ Whatever takes place at anytime or in any place and in any form is only a variety of the One Self-existent reality. Therefore why, O Rama, should you give vent to your sorrow or joy, or wonder at any change of time or place or nature and form of things? They are all full of the spirit of God and exhibit the endless aspects of the Infinite Mood.

³⁶ Let the intelligent preserve the sameness of their minds and dispositions amidst all changes, knowing them to be the varying conditions of the same unvarying Mind. ³⁷ He who sees his God in all and is filled with equanimity has no cause for surprise, grief or delight or any other fluctuation of his mind in response to any change in nature or the ups and downs of his fortune. ³⁸ In all the variations of time and place, and in all external circumstances, the unaltered mind continues to see the varieties of the power of his Maker.

³⁹ The Lord proposes these plans in the formation of his creation and exhibits as the sea does its waves in endless varieties and successions from the fullness of his mind. ⁴⁰ So the Lord manifests the powers situated in himself, as the sea does its waves in itself, as milk forms butter, as earth produces earthenware, or thread is woven into cloth. The fig tree brings forth its fruit and all other varied forms are contained in their sources. But these changes in form are phenomena and not real. They are mere appearances of the spectrum, like those of apparitions and phantoms.

⁴¹ There is no agent or object, no actor or act, or anything which is acted upon, nor is there anything that becomes nothing except by the variety of the one unity. ⁴² The mind that witnesses spiritual truths and retains its calmness unimpaired and unaffected by external accidents comes to see the light of truth by itself. ⁴³ If there is a lamp, there is light also. The sun shining brings the day with him. Where there is a flower, there is its fragrance. So where there is a living soul, there is the knowledge of the world.

⁴⁴ The world appearing all around is like the light of the soul. It appears like the motion of the wind of which we have no notion of its reality or unreality.

⁴⁵ The immaculate Soul is the prime power of the appearance and disappearance of the myriads of gross bodies which, like the revolving stars of the sky and the seasonal flowers of spring, appear and reappear to us by turns, like the ups and downs of wheels in motion. ⁴⁶ All things die away when our souls are without us, but how can anything be nothing when we are in possession of our souls?

⁴⁷ All things appear before us in the presence of our souls and they vanish from before us in their absence from the body. ⁴⁸ Everything is born with us with our souls and is lost with loss of them. The living have all, but the dead are lost to view. (The human soul, when joined with the Divine, has a clear view of everything.)

⁵¹ The minds of men are endowed with their knowledge at their very birth. Then growing bigger by degrees in course of time, they expand themselves into the form of this spacious forest of the world.

⁵² The woods of the world are the fastening post of the soul where our blooming desires are filled with fruits of poignant grief. It branches out with gratifications, blossoms with old age, and is breaking its good post and wandering at large of its free will. Therefore Rama, cut off the tree of worldly existence (*samsara*) with the sword of discrimination.

Chapter 40 — Identity of the World with Brahman; Using Words

¹ Rama said, “Tell me, sage, about the production of animal beings from Brahman, and let me know their different names and natures in full length.”

² Vasishta replied:—

I will tell you in brief the manner in which different species of beings are produced from Brahman, and how they are destroyed afterwards, and also how they obtain their liberation in the end,³ also the manner of their growth and sustenance and fitness in the world.

⁴ The omnipotent energy (*chit-shakti*) of the consciousness of Brahman becomes whatever is thought of (*chetya*) in Divine Consciousness.⁵ The exercise of consciousness becomes condensed to a certain subtle form which, having the powers of thought, becomes the principle called the mind.⁶ Then the mind, by an effort of its conception (called the will), expands itself to an unreal (ideal) scenery like that of the fairyland, by falling off from the nature of thoughtlessness that is Brahman.

⁷ Consciousness, when remaining in its original state, appears as a vacuum or space, but upon manifesting itself in the form of the mind, men see it as the visible sky.⁸ Taking the conception of the lotus-born, it finds itself in its conceived form of the lotus, god Brahma the Creator, and then it thinks of creation in the form of Prajapati or lord of creatures.

⁹ He then formed this creation from his thought (*chitta*). It contains the fourteen worlds with all the multitudes and varieties of living beings in them.¹⁰ The mind itself is an emptiness with an empty body. Thought is the mind’s field of its action, and its sphere is full with the false workings of the mind.¹¹ In the mind of Brahma there are many kinds of beings, some laboring under great ignorance like beasts and brute creatures. There are some with enlightened minds such as the sages. Others stagger in the intermediate class, like the majority of mankind.

¹² Among all living beings confined in this earth, only the human race living in this part (India) are capable of receiving instruction and civilization.¹³ But most of these are subject to diseases and distress, suffering under the thrall of their ignorance, enmity and fear. Therefore it is for their benefit that I will deliver my lecture on social and saintly conduct.¹⁴ I will also talk about the everlasting, imperishable and omnipresent Brahman who is without beginning or end, whose mind is without error, and who is of the form of Intellectual light.¹⁵ I will explain how endless beings are put to motion by the momentum of a particle of his motionless body, resembling the rolling of boisterous waves on the surface of a clear and tranquil ocean.

¹⁶ Rama asked, “Sage, how can there be a part of the infinite Spirit, or a momentum of the motionless God, or a change or effort from one who is altogether without them?”

¹⁷ Vasishta replied:—

It is the usual and current mode of expression, both in scriptures and language, for people to talk in terms of, “All this is made by or come from Him.” But it is not so in its real and spiritual sense.

¹⁸ No change or partition, and no relation of space or time, bears any reference to the Supreme, who is unchangeable, infinite and eternal. There is no appearance or disappearance of Him at anytime or place, who is ever invisible everywhere.¹⁹ There never was nor can there ever be any way of

representing the incomprehensible, except by symbolical expressions. Therefore, I have made use of words that are used in common speech.

²⁰ Whatever words or expressions are used as symbolic of some sense, whether they express “produced from it” (*tajja*) or “change of the same” (*tanmaya*), the same should be used in that sense all along. ²¹ It is *tajja* when we say “fire proceeds from fire” (meaning, the “mundane Brahma comes out of the spiritual Brahma.” Here fire is symbolical of Brahma and the world). It is *tanmaya* in the expression “Brahma is the producer and produced” (meaning the identity and transformation of the Creator to the creation). ²² The first expression is applied to the world as proceeding from Brahma, but the other expression, that of the producer and produced, also means the creative power which made the world.

²³ The expression, “This is one thing and that another” (*idam-anyat*) is false. The difference is verbal and not real because there is no proof of it in the nature of God, which is one and all.

²⁴ The mind, by reason of its birth (*tajja*) from Brahma, possesses both the power and intelligence of his Consciousness, and is enabled to accomplish its intended purpose by means of its intense application. ²⁵ To say that one flame of fire produces the other is mere word dispute. There is no truth in this assertion. ²⁶ That one produces the other is also false reasoning because the one Brahma, being infinite, could produce no other thing beside reproducing himself.

²⁷ It is the nature of argument to contradict each another by replies and rejoinders, but it is not right to defeat an adversary by false reasoning.

²⁸ The learned know Brahman as the ocean rolling in its endless waves, and significant words and their meanings go together like Brahman and his creation. ²⁹ Brahman is consciousness, Brahman is the mind, Brahman is intelligence, and Brahman is substance (*vastu*). He is sound, he is understanding, and he is in the principles of things. ³⁰ The whole universe is Brahman and yet he is beyond all this. In reality the world is a nothing for all is Brahman alone.

³¹ This is one thing and that is another, and this is a part of the great soul, are all contradictory assertions of ignorance. No words can express the true nature of the unknown.

³² The spirit rises as the flame of fire and this flame signifies the mind. Its tremor signifies the fluctuation of the mind, which in reality is not the case, there being no rise or fall of the Divine Mind.

³³ It is untruth that wavers and equivocates in double meanings. It deviates from the truth, as the defective eye sees a double moon in the sky.

³⁴ Brahman being all of himself and all pervading and infinite of his own nature, there can be no other thing beside himself and anything that is produced of him is likewise himself. ³⁵ Beside the truth of the existence of Brahman, there is nothing which can be proved as absolutely certain. It is a scriptural truth that says, “Truly, all this is Brahman.”

³⁶ This also must be the conclusion, which you will arrive at by your reasoning, and which I will propose with many examples and teachings in the Book of Nirvana (Liberation).

³⁷ This single question raises many things of which you are ignorant. You will come to know fully in the future, and your questions on this subject will be dispelled. ³⁸ Unreality having disappeared,

reality appears to view, just as the darkness of night being dispelled, the visible world comes to sight.

³⁹ The spacious world which appears to your false sight will vanish, O Rama, on your attainment of the state of calm stillness. False appearances must disappear from your vision as soon as the light of truth comes to dawn upon your soul.

Chapter 41 — Use of Words; Description of Ignorance

¹ Rama said, “Sage, I feel your speech to be as cooling and shining as the water of the milky sea. It is as deep and full as the vast ocean. ² Sometimes I am puzzled, other times I am enlightened by the variety of your discourses, as a rainy day is now hidden by a cloud, and again shines forth brightly with sunshine. ³ I understand Brahman as infinite and inconceivable and the life and light of all that exists. I know that light never sets. But tell me, how do people attribute many qualities that are foreign to his nature?”

⁴ Vasishta replied:—

The wording and meaning of my lectures to you are all used in their right and ordinary sense. They are neither insignificant nor meaningless, equivocal or ambiguous, or contradictory of one another. ⁵ You will understand the proper significance of my phraseology when the eyesight of your understanding becomes clearer and when the light of reason rises in your mind. ⁶ Do not make the mistake of relying upon your ordinary understanding to interpret the meanings of my words or the phraseology I have used to explain the subject of my lectures and the intention of the scriptures. ⁷ When you come to know the clear truth of Brahman, you will know more regarding the distinctions of significant words.

⁸ Distinctive verbal signs are invented to communicate our thoughts, to convey our instructions to others, and for our knowledge of the intention of the scriptures. ⁹ Words and their meanings and phrases and their constructions are used for the instruction of others. They are applied for the use of the ignorant. They never apply to those who are acquainted with truth.

¹⁰ There is no attribute or imputation that bears any relation with the free and unsullied soul. It is the dispassionate spirit of the supreme Brahman, and the same is the soul of the existent world. ¹¹ This subject will again be fully discussed and expanded upon with various arguments when we arrive at the conclusion of this subject (in the Book of Nirvana).

¹² I have said this much about words and terminology because it is impossible to penetrate the deep darkness of ignorance without the means of much talk. ¹³ As conscious ignorance offers herself a willing sacrifice on the shrine of knowledge, she bids her adversary, the destroyer of error, to take possession of her seat in the bosom of man. ¹⁴ One weapon is foiled by another, one dart is removed by the other, one poison is destroyed by another, and one foe is driven out by another enemy.

¹⁵ So Rama, the mutual destruction of errors brings joy to the soul. It is hard to detect the error, but no sooner it is found out than it is destroyed. It means the refutation of false doctrines by one another.

¹⁶ Ignorance obscures the keenness of our insights and presents the false and gross world before us. We all view this wonderful universe, but we do not know what or how it is. ¹⁷ Unobserved, it rushes to our view, but being examined with attention and keen observation, it flies away. We know it is a phantasm, and yet find it appearing with dimensions and forms before us. ¹⁸ O the wonderful enchantment that has spread out this world and made unreality appear as a sober reality to the knowledge of every one of us.

¹⁹ This earth is a distinct, widely extended superstructure resting on the indistinct surface of an unknown foundation. He is the best of beings who has stretched this enchantment. ²⁰ When you are

enlightened with the thought that all this is non-existent in reality, you will become the knower of the knowable (God) and understand the meaning of my lectures.²¹ So long as you are not awakened to true knowledge, trust my words and know this immensity to be the creature of the incorrigible and immovable ignorance.²² All this immensity that appears to sight is only the picture of your mistaken thought. It is all unsubstantial, only a mere manifestation of your deluded mind.

²³ He is entitled to liberation whose mind is certain of the reality of Brahman, and who knows the moving and unmoving figures outside to be the thoughts of the mind presented to the sight.²⁴ The whole immensity of the earth is like a net set to catch the birds that are the fleeting mind. It is as false as a landscape in a dream, an unreality that appears as real to the mind.

²⁵ He who looks upon the world without attachment to it is never subject to grief or sorrow on any account. He who thinks all these forms are formless sees the formless spirit.²⁶ The forms of the formless spirit are the formation of ignorance. When the blemishes of passions and change do not belong even to great souls, how can these attributes relate to the greatest God?

²⁷ Attributes given to the Supreme Spirit are like dust thrown upon the surface of clear water. Only our thoughts attribute qualities to the inconceivable one, just as we attribute certain meanings to words that have no corresponding substance in reality.²⁸ Custom establishes the meanings of words that continue to be inseparably joined with them. It is custom that determines the use of words in scriptures.

²⁹ As cloth cannot be thought of without its thread, so the soul is unintelligible without the medium of words giving its true definition.³⁰ It is possible to gain knowledge of the soul from scriptures without one being self-conscious of it, just as it is possible to cross the sea of ignorance by means of spiritual knowledge.

³¹ Rama, when the soul is in any way polluted by the blemishes of ignorance, it is impossible to arrive at the state of what is called imperishable life and bliss.³² The existence of the world truly depends on the existence of the Supreme. Know this and do not question how or where it came to exist.³³ Let your thoughts be focused only on how to get rid of this unreality, for it is upon the disappearance of the unreality that you can know the real truth.³⁴ Leave off thinking from where all this came, how it is, and how it is destroyed at last. Believe that it is really nothing, only appearing without being actually seen.

³⁵ How can one know how his mistake makes unreality appear as reality when the mistake has taken a firm footing in his mind?³⁶ Try your best to destroy your mistaken prejudice and then you will know the truth. Truly men who are freed from prejudice are the greatest heroes and the most learned in the world.³⁷ Strive to destroy your harmful ignorance, or it is sure to overpower you as it does the rest of mankind.³⁸ Take care lest your ignorance should enthrall you to the pain of repeated reincarnations. Know ignorance to be the root of all evil and companion of every vice. It creates a man's interest in what proves to be his peril.³⁹ Quickly abandon this false view, the harmful cause of your fears and sorrows, and of your diseases and dangers, and the germ of errors in the mind, and thereby cross this perilous ocean of the world.

Chapter 42 — From Brahman to Ordinary Mind: Producing Individual Souls

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Rama, now hear what is the antidote against the widespread disease of ignorance and the raging epidemic of unreality, which vanish from view upon your close inspection of it.² I am going to expand upon something I was going to mention earlier (in Chapter 40) concerning the qualities of *sattva* (purity) and *rajas* (activity) in order to investigate the powers of the mind.

³ The same Brahman who is all-pervading, undecaying and immortal, without beginning or end and free from error, is known as intellectual light.⁴ The Intellect, which is the body of Brahma and has its vibration in itself, becomes agitated and condensed at intervals, like the translucent water of the ocean has its motion of itself and becomes dense and thickened by its disturbance.⁵ As seawater is agitated in itself without any motion or excitation from without, so the almighty Power exerts its force in itself throughout all eternity and infinity.

⁶ As the air stirs in its own bosom of emptiness forever, so the power of the Divine Spirit exerts itself spontaneously and freely in its own sphere of the spirit.⁷ As a flame rises high of its own accord, so the power of the Spirit extends in itself in all directions.⁸ As the sea seems to move with its sparkling waters, reflecting the sun and moonbeams upon its surface, so the almighty Spirit appears to shake with the fleeting reflections of creation in its bosom.⁹ As the sea sparkles with the golden beams of the starry sky, so the vast translucent soul of God shines with the light of its own intellectual sphere.

¹⁰ As chains of pearly rays glitter to our sight in the empty sky, so diverse forms of things fly about in the vast emptiness of Consciousness.¹¹ These intellectual images, being pushed forward by the force of Consciousness, begin to roll in its empty sphere like waves in the sea.¹² These images, although inseparable from the Consciousness of the Divine Spirit, yet seem to be apart from it, like light shining through the holes of needles and other openings.¹³ The universal Omnipotence exhibits itself in those particular forms, as the moon shows her various crescent shapes in her different phases.¹⁴ Thus the intellectual power of the Supreme Spirit, coming to shine forth as light, refracts itself in various forms as the very many appearances of that great light.

¹⁵ The Supreme Spirit, though conscious of its nature of infinity and indivisibility, yet assumes to itself the state of its individuality in every separate and limited form of created beings.¹⁶ When the Supreme Entity takes these several forms upon itself, it is immediately joined by a train of qualities and properties, with quantity, modality and the like as followers in its train.¹⁷ Unsubstantial Consciousness, deeming itself as a substance by being separated from the Supreme Soul, becomes divided into infinity like the waves of the seawater.

¹⁸ As there is no material difference of the armlet and bracelet from the same gold with which they are made, so Consciousness and the Soul are one and same thing. The thought makes the difference in their different modes.¹⁹ As there is no difference between one lamp and the others that are lighted from the same light, so it is of all souls and intellects: they are alike in their nature, but differ only in their particular attributes.

²⁰ Consciousness, being put to action by the force of the soul on particular occasions, pursues its desires and the objects of its fancy.²¹ The same consciousness also, taking its forms of will and

action at different times and places, is called the embodied soul or spirit, and also known as *kshetrajna*, the knower of the field.²² The witness consciousness is so named from its familiarity with the body (*kshetra*) and its knowledge of its inner and outward actions.²³ This being filled with its desires, is designated as ego or selfishness, and this again being soiled by its fancies, takes the name of understanding.²⁴ Understanding leaning towards its wishes is called the mind, which when it is compacted for action, takes the name of the senses or sensation.²⁵ Next the senses are furnished with their organs called the organs of sense, which being joined with the organs of action, the hands and feet, are together called the body.²⁶ Thus the living soul being tied to its thoughts and desires, and being trapped in the net of pain and sorrow, is called the heart (*chitta*, the memory aspect of the mind).²⁷ Thus the gradual development of consciousness produces its successive results. These are the different states or conditions of the living soul, and not so many forms of it, but all these are the impurities of the soul.

²⁸ The living soul becomes associated with egoism in its embodied state, and this being polluted by its egoistic understanding becomes entangled in the net of selfish desires, which becomes the mind.

²⁹ The lustful mind becomes eager to graft itself in its consorts and offspring, and to secure the false possessions of the world to itself and without a rival.³⁰ The tendencies of the mind pursue their desired objects, as the cow follows the lusty bull. The mind runs after its objects only to be polluted by them, as the sweet stream of the river meets the sea to become bitter and briny.³¹ Thus the mind, being polluted by its selfishness, loses the freedom of its will and becomes bound to its desires, like silkworms in their cocoons.

³² The mind exposes the body to confinement by its pursuit of its desires, until it comes to feel the bitterness of its own bondage and the bitter regret of the conscious soul.³³ Knowing itself to be enslaved, it bids farewell to the freedom of its thought and knowledge and begets gross ignorance within itself, which rages and ranges free in the forest of this world with its horribly monstrous appearance.

³⁴ The mind, containing within it the flame of its own desires, is consumed to death like a chained lion in a fire.³⁵ It assumes to itself the agency of all its various acts under its subjection to a variety of desires. Thus it exposes itself to the changes of its state in this life and all its future births.³⁶ It labors continually under all of its eight-fold states of understanding; namely knowledge, intelligence and activity or active agency, and its egoism or selfishness, all of which are causes of all of its sorrows.

³⁷ It is sometimes called nature (*prakriti* or character) or the seat of self delusion (*maya*). The mind is often converted to foulness (*malas*) and very often to activity.³⁸ It is sometimes called bondage and is often synonymous with the heart-mind. It is also called ignorance (*avidya*, literally, not-knowledge) and also frequently identified with the will or volition.

³⁹ Know Rama that the heart-mind is tied to the earth by a chain of sorrow and misery. It is full to the brim with greed and grief and it is the abode of passions.⁴⁰ It is living dead with the cares of age and the fear of death to which the world is subject. It is troubled with desires and disgust and stained by its ignorance and passions.⁴¹ It is infested with the prickly thorns of its wishes and the brambles of its acts. It is quite forgetful of its origin and it is beset by the evils of its own making.⁴² It is confined like a silkworm in its own cocoon where it is doomed to dwell with its sorrow and pain. Although it

is only a minute particle in its shape, it is the seat of endless hellfire.⁴³ It is as minute as the soul, and yet appears as huge as the highest hill. This world is a forest of wild poisonous trees branching out with their fruits of decay and death.⁴⁴ The snare of desire is stretched over the whole world. Its fruits are like those of Indian fig trees which have no core or flavor within.

⁴⁵ The mind being burnt by the flame of its sorrow and bitten by the serpent of its anger, and being drowned in the boisterous sea of its desires, has entirely forgotten its great Father (Brahma).⁴⁶ It is like a lost male deer straying out of its herd, and like one deprived of reason by his sorrows, or more like a moth burned by the flame of world affairs.⁴⁷ It is torn away like a limb from its place in the Spirit and thrown in an unsuitable spot. It is withering away like a lotus plant plucked from its root.

⁴⁸ Being cast amidst the bustle of business among men who are inimical or like dumb pictures to him, every man is groveling in this earth amidst dangers and difficulties.⁴⁹ Man is exposed to the difficulties of this dark and dismal world like a bird that has fallen into the waters of the sea. He is entangled in the snare of the world like one snatched to a fairyland in the sky.

⁵⁰ The mind is carried away by the current of business like a man borne by the waves of the sea. Lift it, O brave Rama, from this pit, as they do an elephant sinking in the mud.⁵¹ Lift up your mind by force, O Rama, like a bullock from this delusive puddle of the world where it is shorn of its brightness and is weakened in its frame.

⁵² Rama, the man whose mind is troubled in this world by successions of joy and grief, or by the vicissitudes of weakness from old age, disease and death, is no human being. He resembles a monstrous rakshasa demon, although he may have the figure of a man on him.

Chapter 43 — Varieties of Living Souls

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Thus the living soul, being derived from Brahman, assumes to itself the form of the mind and is tossed about with the thoughts and cares of the world. Then it is changed into thousands and millions of forms that it creates to itself in its imagination.

² It has undergone many prior births and is in the course of migrating into many more. It will reincarnate into many more as multitudinous as the flitting particles of a waterfall.³ These atomic souls of living beings, being subjected to their desires by the great variety of their wishes, are made to wander under many forms to which they are bound by their desires.

⁴ They wander constantly in different directions and in distant countries, both by land and water. They live or die in those places, like bubbles blow out only to float and burst and then sink in the water below.⁵ Some are produced for the first time in a new kalpa age and others are born a hundred times in it. Some have had only two or three births while the births of others are beyond number.⁶ Some are yet unborn and are to be born yet on earth and many others have passed their births by attainment of their liberation at last. Some are alive at present and others are no more to be born.⁷ Some are born again and again for myriads of kalpas. Some remain in one state all along and many in various states repeatedly changing their forms and natures.⁸ Some are subjected to the great misery of hell and some are destined to a little joy on earth. Some enjoy the great delights of the gods in heaven and others are raised to the glory of the heavenly bodies above.

⁹ Some are born as kinnaras (half-human, half-horse celestials) and gandharvas (male nature spirits), and others as vidyadharas (supernatural spirits) and huge serpents. Some appear in the forms of the Sun god, Indra and Varuna, and others in those of the three-eyed Shiva and the lotus-born Brahma.

¹⁰ Some become the kushmanda demons and vetala demon-ghosts, and others as yaksha (nature-spirit) and raksha demon cannibals. Some again become the brahmins and the ruling class, and others become vaisyas (merchant castes) and shudras (worker castes).¹¹ Some become swapacha (low caste) and chandala (outcaste), and others as Kiratis and Pukkasa tribals.

Some become the grass and greens on earth, and others as the seeds of fruits and roots of vegetables, or as moths and butterflies in the air.¹² Some are formed into varieties of herbs and creeping plants, and others into stones and rocks; some into jama and kadamba trees, and others into sala, palm and tamala forests.

¹³ There are some placed in prosperous circumstances, becoming ministers and generals and rulers of states, while others are clad in rags and remain as religious recluses, munis and silent hermits in the woods.

¹⁴ Some are born as snakes, serpents, worms, insects and ants. There are others in the forms of great lions, big buffaloes, deer and goats, and fleet antelopes in forests.¹⁵ Some are begotten as storks and cranes, ruddy geese and cuckoos. Others become their pastures in the shapes of lotuses, water lilies, and other aquatic shrubs and flowers.¹⁶ Some are brought forth as elephants and their cubs, and as wild boars, bulls and asses. Others come into being as bees and beetles, flies and gadflies, gnats and mosquitoes.

¹⁷ Many are born to difficulties and dangers, and many to prosperity and adversity. Some are placed in hell pits and others in their heavenly abodes. ¹⁸ Some are situated in the stars and some in the hollows of trees. Some move upon the wings of the winds and others rest in the still air above or fly freely in the sky. ¹⁹ Many dwell in the sunlight of the day and many subsist under the moonbeams at night. There are others subsisting upon the beverage they draw from herb-like plants.

²⁰ Some are liberated in their lifetime and wander about freely in this earth. Others live in blissful states. Some are altogether free in their reliance in the Supreme Spirit. ²¹ There are some that require long periods for their blessed and ultimate liberation. Others disbelieve the intellectuality and spirituality of mankind and dislike being reduced to the singleness of the One Soul, or to be reduced to their oneness or unity with the Supreme Soul.

²² Some become regents of the skies above and others roll down in the form of mighty streams. Some become females of beautiful appearances and others as ugly hermaphrodites and freaks. ²³ Some are of enlightened understandings and some are darkened in their minds. Some are preachers and lecturers of knowledge and others are in ecstatic consciousness of samadhi.

²⁴ The living souls who are dominated by their desires are so powerless of themselves that they have forgotten their freedom and are fast chained to their wishes. ²⁵ They rove about the world, now flying up and then falling down in their hopes and fears. They are constantly tossed up and down, like play balls flung on all sides by the relentless hands of playful Death. ²⁶ Trapped in the hundred fold snare of desire and converted to the various forms of their wishes, they pass from one body to another, as birds fly from one tree to alight on another. ²⁷ The endless desires of the living soul, bred and led by the false imaginations of the mind, have spread this enchanted snare of illusion (*maya*) known by the name of the great world.

²⁸ Stupefied souls are doomed to wander about in the world, like waters in a whirlpool, as long as they do not come to understand the true nature of their selves as selfsame with the Supreme-Self.

²⁹ Having known and seen the true Self by forsaking their false knowledge of their individual egos, they come to their consciousness of themselves as identical with the divine Self. Having attained this in process of time, they are released from their doom of revisiting this world of pain and sorrow.

³⁰ However, there are some unconscious beings who, in spite of their attainment of this knowledge, after passing into a hundred lives in it in various shapes, are so perverted in their natures that they have to return again to this earth. ³¹ Some, after having attained higher states, fall down again by the lowness of their spirits and appear in the shapes of brute creatures, and at last have to fall into hell.

³² There are some great minded souls who, having proceeded from the state of Brahman, have to pass here a single life, after which they are absorbed in the Supreme Soul. ³³ There are multitudes of living beings in other worlds also, some of whom have become like the lotus-born Brahma and others as Shiva. ³⁴ There are others who have become like the gods or brute creatures in them, and there are snakes and other reptiles also in them, as well as in this earth.

³⁵ There are other worlds as obvious to view as this earth, and there are many such worlds that have gone by, and others are yet to appear. ³⁶ In the other worlds there are various other creatures of different shapes produced by various unknown causes and which have their growths and deaths like

those of this earth.³⁷ Some are produced as gandharvas and others as yakshas. Some are generated as sura demigods and some others as asura and daitya gods.

³⁸ The manners and modes of life of the peoples in other parts of the globe are like those of men living in this part of the earth.³⁹ All creatures move according to their own natures and mutual relations for ever more, like the waves and currents of a river move forward, following and followed by others in regular succession.⁴⁰ The entire creation moves onward in eternal progression in its course of evolution and involution, and in its motions of ascent and descent like the waves of the ocean.

⁴¹ In this manner, multitudes of living beings with consciousness of their self-existence proceed from the Supreme Spirit, rising from and at last falling into it.⁴² All created beings are detached from their source, like light from the lamp and solar rays from the sun. They are like sparks of red hot iron and the flashing sparks of fire.⁴³ They are like the minute moments of time and the flying odors of flowers, or the cold icicles and particles of rainwater carried by breeze and cooling the air all around.⁴⁴ The flitting particles of life, flying from one spot to another and filling different bodies with animation, are at last absorbed in the mainspring of vitality from where they had risen.

⁴⁵ Particles of vital air, being thus spread out and scattered over the universe, come to assume the various forms of animated beings in all the worlds. But they are all mere creations of our ignorance. In reality they are like the rolling waves of water in the vast ocean of eternity.

Chapter 44 — Description of Brahma's Self-Birth

¹ Rama asked, "Now I understand how particles of the Divine Spirit take the forms of living souls, but I cannot conceive how it assumes the physical body composed of bones and ribs."

² Vasishta replied:—

Why don't you know it, Rama, when I have explained it to you before? Where have you lost your deductive reasoning of arriving to the conclusion from those premises?

³ All these physical bodies in the world and all these moving and unmoving persons and things, are only false representations rising before us like the visions in our dreams.⁴ The phenomenal world differs from dreams only in it being a longer and more delusive. It is like the optical illusion of seeing a double moon or seeing a mountain in the delusion of darkness.

⁵ The enlightened mind, cleared of its drowsiness of ignorance and freed from the chains of its desire, views the world to be no more than a dream.⁶ The world is a creation naturally conceived in the imagination of all living souls. The world remains impressed upon the soul until the soul attains its final liberation.⁷ The fleeting essence of the soul is like the whirling current of waters, or like the germ of a seed, or more like the leaflet of a sprout.⁸ As the flower is contained in the branch and the fruit within its flowers, so this creation of the imagination is contained in the receptacle of the mind.

⁹ As the ever-changing form of the chameleon exhibits only a particular color at a time, so the ever-varying mind shows only the form that is prominent in its thought for the time being.¹⁰ The same thought assumes a visible form, like clay taking the form of a pot. Good thoughts and actions of the prior state of life serve to give the soul a good form in its next birth on earth.

¹¹ We see the mighty lotus-born Brahma situated in the bud of that flower and find it to be the effect of the good thoughts he had in his mind.¹² This unlimited creation is the false fabrication of imagination from which the living soul in conjunction with the mind obtains the state of Virinchi, Brahma the Creator.

¹³ Rama said, "Sage, I need to be fully informed whether all other beings sprang from the same cause as Brahma, the lotus-born."

¹⁴ Vasishta answered:—

Let me tell you again, O long-armed Rama, how Brahma has a body. From his example, you will learn about the existence of the world.

¹⁵ The Supreme Soul, which is unlimited by time or space, of his own will and by the power of his omnipotence takes the limited forms of time and space upon himself.¹⁶ The same becomes the living soul and is filled with various desires in itself of becoming many.

¹⁷ When this limited power which is Brahma thinks on the state of his having been the Cosmic Egg (*hiranyagarbha*) in his former state of existence in the prior kalpa, he is immediately transformed to that state which is in his mind, and which is ever busy with its thoughts and imaginations.

¹⁸ First it thinks of the clear sky, the receptacle of sound, which is perceptible by the auditory organs. This thought being condensed in the mind makes it vibrate like the wind does the air.¹⁹ Then it thinks

about the vibrations of air, which are the objects of feeling, through the porous skin and the mind. It is moved by the thoughts of air and wind to assume that form which is invisible to the naked eye.²⁰ The condensation of the elements of air and wind together produce the idea of light which is the cause of sight and which has colors and forms for its objects. Thus the mind, moved by its triple thoughts of air, wind and light, produces the property of fire.²¹ These immediately join to produce the idea of coldness, the property of water. Then the mind forms the ideas of the four elements of air, wind, fire and water.²² These united together produce the gross form of earth, the receptacle of scent. Then the mind, filled with its thoughts of these minute elementary particles, forsook its fine form of the spirit for its gross body of the five elements (the fifth being ether, *akasha*).

²³ The mind saw this body shining like a spark of fire in the sky, which joined with its sense of self, ego, and understanding, formed its personality.²⁴ This is called the spiritual body within the eight-fold embodiment (earth, water, fire, air, space, mind, intellect and identity). The spiritual body is situated like a bee in the middle of the lotus-like heart and it gives growth to the outer body by its inner working.

²⁵ It is thickened by the action and internal heating process of the heart, like the bel fruit or woodapple. The outer body receives the qualities of the inner mind, just as a jewel shines with the luster of the little particle of gold, melted and infused within.²⁶ The quality of the inner soul or mind manifests itself in the outer body in the same way as the quality of a seed appears in the form and taste of its fruit.

Then the mind dwells upon the thoughts of its actions, which are expressed in the different organs and actions of the body, all produced by the motions of inner thoughts and acts, just like tree leaves and branches are projected by the inner process and operations of the seed.²⁷ Its thoughts of up and down lift and lower its head and feet upward and downward. Its thoughts of both sides extend its two arms to the right and left.²⁸ Its thoughts of backward and forward place its back behind and its breast and belly before. The hairs on the head and fingers of the hands are like the filaments and twigs of trees.

²⁹ In this manner did Brahma, who is called a muni and a mental being because his body sprung from his mind, produced the different parts of his body according to his thoughts of their usefulness to him.

³⁰ He brought the body and its limbs to compactness, just as the seasons bring their fruits and grains to perfection. Thus everything is perfected in time, and all beings have their beautiful bodies and figures.

³¹ He, Lord Brahma, was the progenitor of all beings filled with the qualities of strength and understanding, activity, dignity and knowledge.³² Being begotten by the empty Brahman, he resides in the lap of emptiness. He is of the form of melted gold, like every other luminous body in the heavens.

³³ Though situated in the Supreme, yet the mind of Brahma is liable to the mistakes of his own making, and at times it quite forgets having no beginning, middle or end, like his Source.

³⁴ Sometimes the lord thinks he is identical with the waters that existed in his mind before creation; at another as the cosmic egg which was as bright as the fire of universal destruction.³⁵ Sometimes the lord thinks he is the dark forest that covered the earth before creation of living animals, and then as a lotus bed. Afterwards he became many forms at each phase and epoch of creation.

³⁶ Thus Brahma became the preserver of many kinds of beings which he created of his own will from

his mind at each stage or kalpa-period. Of these beings, Brahma was the first that issued from Brahman himself.³⁷ When Brahma was first begotten, he remained in his happy state of unconsciousness and forgetfulness, but being delivered from his mental inactivity in the womb, he came to see the light.³⁸ He took a physical body with its breathings and respirations. It was covered with pores of hair and furnished with gums and thirty-two teeth.³⁹ It had the three pots of shin bones, thighs, and backbone standing on feet below, with the five airs, five partitions, nine cavities, and a smooth skin covering all the limbs.⁴⁰ It is accompanied by twice ten fingers and their nails, and with a couple of arms and palms and two or more hands and eyes.

⁴¹ The body is the nest of the bird of the mind and it is the hole of the snake of lust. It is the cave of the goblin of greediness and the den of the lion of life.⁴² It is a chain at the feet of the elephant of pride and it is a lake of the lotuses of our desire.

The lord Brahma looked upon his handsome body and saw that it was good.⁴³ Then the lord thought in himself, from his view of the three times of the past, present and future, and from his sight of the vault of heaven with a dark mist like a swarm of flying locusts,⁴⁴ "What is this boundless space? What had it been before? How did I come into being?" Thus pondering in himself, he was enlightened in his soul.

⁴⁵ He saw in his mind the different past creations and recollected the various religions and their various sects which had grown upon earth one after the other.⁴⁶ He produced the holy Vedas as spring does its flowers. He formed with ease all varieties of creatures from their archetypes in his mind.⁴⁷ He set them in their various laws and customs for their temporal and spiritual welfare, as he saw them in the city of his mind.⁴⁸ From their prototypes in his eternal mind, Brahma thought upon the innumerable varieties of scriptures which had existed before and all of which came to exist on earth in their visible forms, like flowers springing from the womb of spring season.

⁴⁹ Thus, O Rama, did Brahma take upon himself the form of the lotus-born and create by his activity all the different creatures from the models of them that existed in his mind, and which took their various forms in the visible world at his will.

Chapter 45 — Dependence of All on God; Nothing Is Lost Which Doesn't Exist

¹ Vasishta continued:—

The world appears as substantial but has nothing substantive in it. It is all a emptiness, a mere representation of images and aimless digressions of the mind.² Neither time nor space is filled by any world at all, but by the great Spirit who has no form except that of vacuum.

³ This is all imaginary and as visionary as a city seen in a dream. Whatever is seen anywhere is fallacy existing in infinite emptiness.⁴ It is a painting without its base, a vision of unrealities. It is an uncreated creation and a multi-colored picture without its canvas.⁵ The imagination of the mind has stretched the three worlds and made the many bodies contained in them. Memory is the cause of these creations, as the eyesight is the cause of vision.⁶ The spectacle and display of the world is like a false representation, like the elevations and depressions in a painting. They are not distinct from the Supreme Spirit in which they are situated as buildings stand on their foundation.

⁷ The mind has made the body for its own home, as some silkworms build their cocoons. The soul also has its sheaths.⁸ There is nothing which the mind can not get or build in its empty imagination, however difficult or unattainable it may appear to be.⁹ What impossibility is there when the mind in its secluded cell possesses the same powers that reside in omnipotence?

¹⁰ It is not impossible, O Rama, for anything to be or not to be at anytime or always, when there is the omnipotent Lord who can create or annihilate all things at his will.¹¹ Remember that if the mind is empowered to make its own body and to form others in its imagination, how much more is the power of the Almighty to make and unmake all things at his will.¹² It is Divine Will that has brought the gods, demigods and all mankind into existence. It is by the cessation of the Will that they cease to exist as a lamp is extinguished for lack of oil.

¹³ See the sky and all things under it to be displayed by Divine Will and understand the universe as the visionary scene of your dream laid open to your sight.¹⁴ There is nothing that is born or dies here at anytime, because everything is a nothing in its true sense.¹⁵ There is nothing that becomes more or less in any way when there is nothing in existence. How can soul have a body when it is bodiless? How can the soul be divided when it is an undivided whole?

¹⁶ Rama, by your keen sightedness you see that all these bodies are bodiless. As the mirage is made to appear by the heat of the sun,¹⁷ so do these false appearances seem as true to you from the certainty of your individual mind. So also Brahma and others are only creatures of your fancy.¹⁸ They are as false as the sight of two moons in the sky by your false imagination. It is the great fallacy of your mind that represents these false forms of the world before you.

¹⁹ As the passenger in a boat sees the fixed objects on earth to be moving about him, so these varieties of visible objects offer themselves to your view.²⁰ Know the world is an enchanted scene presented by the magic of your error (*maya*). It is a fabrication of the working of your mind. It is a nothing though appearing as a reality.²¹ All this world is Brahman. What else is there beside him? What other adjunct can he have? What is that? From where did it come and where is it located?

²² That this is a mountain and that is a tree are appendages affixed by our error and mistake. It is the

prejudgment of the mind that makes unreality appear as a reality.²³ The world is the creation of error and the idol of fools. Shun your fond desire and thoughts of it, Rama, and think of your unworldly soul.²⁴ The world is as false as the visionary scene of a prolonged dream, or a building in the sky of the fancies of the mind.²⁵ Shun this grand display of the world which is so substantial to sight and so insubstantial when felt. It is the den of the serpents of desire foaming with the poison of their passions.²⁶ Knowing the world as unreal, try to regard it as nothing, because the wise will never go after a mirage knowing it as such.

²⁷ The foolish man who runs after some imaginary object of his heart's desire is surely exposed to trouble and disappointment for his folly.²⁸ Whoever desires to have anything in this world, after knowing it as an unreality, surely perishes with his soul for his forsaking the reality.²⁹ Only an error of the mind makes it mistake a rope for a snake. It is the variety of the thoughts and pursuits of men that makes them roll about in the world.

³⁰ When some vain thought labors in the mind, like the moon appearing to move under water, it deceives only little children and not the wise like yourself.³¹ He who pursues virtues for his future happiness surely kindles the fire of his intelligence to destroy the frost of his ignorance.

³² All gross bodies seen here in this world are creatures of the workings of the mind, like building castles in the sky in our thoughts.³³ It is the heart's desire that produces these things, as it is lack of desire that destroys them all. The unrealities appear as true like fairylands appearing to view.

³⁴ Know Rama, that nothing that exists is lost upon the dissolution of the world, and nothing which is non-existent of its nature can ever come into existence.³⁵ Tell me Rama, what things are entire or broken, or are growing or decaying, when these ideas are only the formations of your sound or unsound mind or the working of your fancy?³⁶ Children make and break their toy dolls of clay at will. In the same way the mind raises and erases its thoughts of all things in the world.

³⁷ As nothing is lost or drowned in the magical trick of a conjuror, so nothing is dead or dissolved in the magical sea of this world.³⁸ The unrealities being all untrue, it is true that nothing is lost by their loss. Hence there is no cause for our joy or sorrow in this unreal world.³⁹ If the world is altogether an unreality, I do not know what there is that could be lost in it. And if nothing whatever is really lost in it, what reason can there be for the wise to sorrow for it?⁴⁰ If God is the only absolute existence, what else is there for us to lose? The whole universe being full with Brahman, there can be no cause for our joy or sorrow for anything whatever.⁴¹ If the unreality can never come into existence, it cannot have its growth. What cause is there of our sorrow for their lack of growth or existence?

⁴² Thus everything is only unreal and merely a cause of our delusion. What can a wise man have to desire that may be reckoned as the best boon for us?⁴³ But when all this is taken in the sense of being full with the Divine Spirit, what thing is there so trifling for a wise man to dispose or refuse to take?

⁴⁴ But he who considers the world as an unreality is never subject to joy or sorrow at his gain or loss of anything. Only the ignorant are elated or depressed at the one or the other.⁴⁵ That which was not before nor will remain afterwards is likewise the same nothingness at present. Therefore who desires the non-existent is said in the scriptures to be nothing himself.

⁴⁶ What was before and what will be in the end, the same is in being even now. Therefore, what is

always in being is that entity alone that is seen everywhere and at all times.

⁴⁷ There are the unreal sky and moon and stars seen underneath the water. It is only a deluded child who likes to look at them, but never the wise. ⁴⁸ Children take a liking for light, empty and flashy trinkets which are of no good or use to them or anybody else. Children prefer to be sad at their loss rather than derive any good from their gain whatever. ⁴⁹ Therefore, O lotus-eyed Rama, do act like a child but conduct yourself like the wise by looking at these fleeting trinkets as ever impermanent. Rely on the Everlasting alone.

⁵⁰ Rama, do be not sad or sorry to learn that all these, together with yourself and myself, are nothing in reality. Do not be glad or joyful to know that all these and ourselves are real entities. But consider alike whether these be or not be. Because it is the one Being that becomes and un-becomes anything. It is the only Being that becomes all things.

⁵¹ Valmiki said:—

As the sage was explaining in this manner, the day glided away to its dusk. The sun departed to his even tide and evening service, and with him the assembly parted to their evening ablutions and rest. After, with the rising sun, they assembled again in the court.

Chapter 46 — Description of Living-Liberation

¹ Vasishta said:—

No man knows sorrow as long as he is in possession of his pleasant home, family and wealth. But knowing them to be a short-lived enchantment and accompaniment, why should he be sorrowful when they disappear? ² What pleasure or pain can one derive either from the grandeur or destruction of his castle in the sky? What cause for joy can he have in his ignorant children, or of sorrow upon their death? ³ What joy is there in the increase of our wealth or family, seeing them as the increasing mirage of water which can never satisfy the thirsty. ⁴ There is increase of care with the increase of wealth and family. There is no happiness in the increase of worldly possessions and affections.

⁵ The abundance of carnal enjoyments which are delightful to the ignorant sensualist is quite distasteful and disgusting to the abstentious, wise and learned. ⁶ The wise seek their lasting welfare. What joy do the wise have in the possession of temporary wealth and family to which they are quite indifferent?

⁷ Therefore, O Rama, be truly wise in your conduct in this world. Shun the transient as they are transitory and lay hold of whatever offers itself to you. ⁸ Renunciation of what is not had and enjoyment of what one has are the true characteristics of the wise and learned. ⁹ Take care of this bewildering world where your enemies lurk in many deceitful shapes. Conduct yourself as a wise man evading the dangers that wait upon the unwise. ¹⁰ They are great fools who do not look deeply into things and who think the world is without any fraud or guile. ¹¹ Fools are led by the deceitful speech of cheats to fall into the temptations of the world. Men of right understanding place no reliance in them, nor do they plunge themselves into the pit of errors.

¹² He who knows the unrealities and who places no reliance in anything is said to have mastered all knowledge and is never liable to error. ¹³ He who knows himself to be as frail as anything in this frail world, who has his faith in neither, is never liable to fall into the error of taking either of them for real. ¹⁴ Placed between the unreality and reality of this and the next life, you must have the good sense to stick to the Truth and neither wholly reject nor stick to this or the next. ¹⁵ Though engaged in business, yet O Rama, you must remain quite indifferent to all things because the indifferent without desires are truly happy in this world.

¹⁶ He who has nothing to desire or leave, but lives as he is obliged to live, has his intellect unstained like the lotus leaf to which dripping waters never stick. ¹⁷ Let your accessory organs manage your outward affairs or not, but keep your impassive soul quite unconcerned with all. ¹⁸ Do not let your mind be plunged and deeply engaged with the objects of sense by vainly thinking they are your properties and possessions, but manage them or not with utter detachment of your mind.

¹⁹ Rama, when you come to feel that the objects of the senses have ceased to give any relish to your soul, then you shall know that you have reached the acme of your spiritual knowledge and passed over the boisterous sea of the world. ²⁰ The embodied or disembodied soul, whether living or dead, that has ceased to have any taste for sensuous enjoyments has attained its liberation without its wishing for it.

²¹ Rama, try by your superior intelligence to separate your mind from its desires, just like they extract

perfume from flowers.²² They who have not been swept away by the waves of their desires into the middle of this world ocean are said to have got over it; but others are no doubt drowned and lost in it.

²³ Sharpen your understanding like the edge of a razor, use it to erase the weeds of doubt, and after scanning the nature of the soul, enter into your spiritual state of blessedness.

²⁴ Move about as those who have attained true knowledge and who have elevated their minds with true wisdom. Do not act as the ignorant worldling who is mindful of the present state and unmindful of the future.²⁵ In conducting yourself in this world, you should imitate those who are liberated in their lifetime who are great in their souls and understandings, and who are ever satisfied with themselves. Do not follow the examples of the greedy and wicked.

²⁶ Those who have knowledge of both worlds neither slight nor adhere to the customs of their country, but follow them like other people during their lifetime.²⁷ Great men knowing the truth are never proud of their power or good qualities, nor of their honor or prosperity like vulgar people.²⁸ Great men are not depressed by adversity or elated by prosperity, but remain fixed like the sun in the sky without anything to support it.²⁹ Great minds, like warriors, ride in the chariots of their bodies, clad in the armor of their knowledge. They have no desire of their own but conduct themselves according to the course of the time.

³⁰ You too Rama have gained your extensive learning in philosophy. It is by virtue of your prudence that you can manage yourself with ease.³¹ Suppress the sight of what can be seen and avoid your pride and enmity. Then roam wherever you will and you will meet with success.³² Be sedate in all circumstances, unattached to the present and wishing to know all other things in future. Have the calm composure of your mind, and go where you will.

³³ Valmiki said:—

Being advised in this manner by the pure doctrines of the sage, Rama's face brightened. Full within himself with the ambrosia of his knowledge, he shone forth like the ambrosial moon with her cooling beams.

Chapter 47 — Description of Innumerable Different Worlds, their Gods & Time

¹ Rama said, “O venerable sage who is acquainted with all religious doctrines and is versed in all branches of the Vedas, I am set at perfect ease by your holy preaching. ² I never tire of hearing your speech, which is equally abundant, clear and elegant.”

³ “Sage, you have spoken of the birth of Brahma during your lecture on the productions of *sattva* and *rajas* qualities. I want you to tell me more about that subject.”

⁴ Vasishta answered:—

There have been many millions of Brahmans and many hundreds of Shivas and Indras together with thousands of Narayanas that have gone by. ⁵ There have also been various kinds of beings in many other worlds, having manners and customs widely differing from one another. ⁶ There also will be many other productions in the worlds, simultaneous with others, and many to be born at times remotely distant from one another. ⁷ Among these, the births of Brahma and the other gods in the different worlds are as wonderful as the productions of many things in a magic show.

⁸ Some creations were made with Brahma as the first born, others with Vishnu and some with Shiva as the next created beings. There were some other (minor productions) having the munis for the patriarchs.

⁹ One Brahma was lotus-born, another was produced from the water, a third was born of an egg, and the fourth was produced in the air. ¹⁰ In one egg the sun was born with all his eyes, and in another Indra as Vasava lord of the Vasus (his attendant gods). In some, one was born the lotus-eyed Vishnu, and in another he with his three eyes as Shiva.

¹¹ In one age a solid earth was born having no holes for the growth of vegetables. In another, it was overgrown with vegetation. In some it was filled with mountains and finally covered by living creatures. ¹² The earth was full of gold in some place and it was hard ground at others. It was mere mud in many places and covered with copper and other metals in some. ¹³ There are some wonderful worlds in the universe, and others more wonderful still than they. Some are luminous and bright and others whose light has never reached us. ¹⁴ There are innumerable worlds scattered in the vacuum of Brahma’s essence, and they are all rolling up and down like waves in the ocean.

¹⁵ The splendors of worlds are seen in the Supreme like waves in the sea, and as a mirage in the sandy desert. They abide in Him as flowers on a mango tree. ¹⁶ It may be possible to count the particles of the solar rays, but not the number of worlds abounding in the Supreme Spirit. ¹⁷ These multitudes of worlds rise and fall in the Universal Spirit, like gnats flying and following others in swarms during the rainy season. ¹⁸ It is not known how long they have been in existence, what numbers have gone by, or how many remain at the present time. ¹⁹ They have been rolling without beginning like the waves of the sea. Those that are past and gone had their previous ones, and they their prior ones also. ²⁰ They rise over and over to sink lower and lower again, just like the waves of the sea rise aloft and fall low by turns.

²¹ There are many series of mundane worlds like the egg of Brahma which pass away in the thousands, like the hours in course of the year. ²² There are many such bodies beside the world system

of Brahma (*brahmaṇda*) revolving at present in the spacious mind of Brahma.²³ Many more physical worlds will grow in the infinity of the Divine Mind, and they will also vanish away in course of time, like the fleeting sounds in the air.²⁴ Other worlds will come into existence in the course of other creations, just as pots come to be formed of clay and leaves grow from germs in endless succession.²⁵ The glory of the three worlds appears to sight in consciousness just like it exists in the Divine Mind.

²⁶ The rising and falling of worlds are neither true nor wholly false. They are like the bragging of fools and the orchids of the air.²⁷ All things are like sea waves which vanish no sooner than they appear to view. They are all like paintings impressed on the mind.²⁸ The world is a perspective, and all things are only paintings in it. Without the canvas of the mind, they are not. They are represented in it like figures on a canvas.

²⁹ Those learned in divine knowledge consider creations proceeding from the Spirit of God like showers of rain falling from water contained in the clouds.³⁰ Visible creation is no more distinct from God than seawater exuding from the earth and the earth itself, or the leaves and seeds of the simul tree from the tree itself.³¹ All created things that you see in their gross or subtle forms have proceeded from the emptiness of the Divine Mind. They are strung together, like a rosary of large and small gems and beads.

³² Sometimes the subtle air is solidified in the form of atmosphere, and from that is produced the great Brahma, thence called the air-born lord of creatures.³³ Sometimes the atmospheric air is condensed into a solid form, and that gives birth to a Brahma under the title of the atmospheric lord of creation.

³⁴ At another time light is thickened into a luminous body, and thence is born another Brahma bearing the name of the luminous lord of all creatures.³⁵ Again, water condensed at another time produces another Brahma designated the watery lord of creation.³⁶ Sometimes the particles of earth take a denser form and produce a Brahma known as the earthly Brahma.³⁷ By extraction of the essences of these four Brahma's a fifth is formed under the name of the fivefold Brahma who is the creation of the present world.

³⁸ Sometimes by the condensation of water, air or heat, a being is produced in the form of male or female.³⁹ Sometimes from the speaking mouth of this being, and from his feet and back and the eyes, different men are produced under the names of brahmins, kshatriyas, vaisyas and shudras (the four castes of priests, rulers and warriors, those engaged in business, and workers).⁴⁰ Sometimes the great Being causes a lotus to grow out of his navel in which is born the great Brahma known as the lotus-born.

⁴¹ All these theories of creation are idle dreams, false as the dreams in our sleeping state. They are the reveries of fancy like the whirling currents of water.⁴² Tell me, what do you think of these theories in your own judgment? Do they not appear like stories told to children?

⁴³ Sometimes they imagine a being produced in the pure emptiness of the Divine Mind. This they call the golden and mundane egg which gave birth to the egg-born Brahma.⁴⁴ It is also said that the first and Divine Male casts his seed in the waters which grows up into a lotus-flower which they call the great world.⁴⁵ This lotus is the great womb of the birth of Brahma, and at another time of the sun also.

Sometimes the gods Varuna and Vayu are born of it, and therefore they are called egg-born.

⁴⁶ Thus Rama are the different accounts of the production of Brahma the Creator. Equally various are the descriptions of this un-solid and unsubstantial creation.⁴⁷ I have already told you about the creation of one of these Brahmas, and mentioned the production of others without specifying their several works.⁴⁸ It is agreed by all that creation is only the development of Divine Mind, although I have described various processes of its production for your acquaintance.⁴⁹ The pure (*satwika*) and other productions, of which I told you before, have all come to existence in the manner I have described for you.

⁵⁰ Now know the endless succession of all things in the world. Creation is followed by destruction like pleasure is followed by pain, and ignorance is followed by knowledge, and bondage by liberation.

⁵¹ Past creations and objects of affection being gone, others come to rise in future, as lamps at home are lit and extinguished by turns.⁵² The production and destruction of all bodies are like those of Brahma and the lamps. They assume their forms in their time, but become an undistinguishable mass after death.

⁵³ The four ages of the world, namely the Satya, Treta, Dwapara, and Kali Yugas (golden, silver, brass and iron ages) revolve in endless rotation, like the wheel of the potter or of any other engine.

⁵⁴ The manvantaras (ages of Manu, fourteen to a day of Brahma) and kalpa cycles succeed one another like day and night, morning and evening, and the times of work follow those of rest.⁵⁵ All worlds and things are under the subjection of time. They are subject to repeated successions, and there is nothing without its rotation.⁵⁶ They all proceed of their nature from the vacuum of Divine Consciousness, like sparks of fire flash from a red-hot iron.

⁵⁷ All things once manifest, are next concealed in the Divine Mind, just as a season's fruits and flowers disappear after their appearance in season.⁵⁸ All productions are only fluctuations of the mind of the Supreme Spirit. Their appearances to our view are like the sight of two moons to weak eyes.⁵⁹ It is the consciousness alone that exhibits these appearances to our view. They are always situated in consciousness, though they appear outside it like beams from an inner disc.

⁶⁰ Rama, know that the world is never in existence. It is a motionless show of the power that resides in the Supreme Spirit.⁶¹ It is never as it appears to you, but quite a different thing from what it seems to be. It is a show that depends on the power of the Omnipotent.⁶² The conclusion of the learned holds good to the present time: What world exists since the great will of God (*mahakalpa*). There is no more any other world to come into existence in future.⁶³ All this is Brahman to the intelligent, and there is no such thing as the world, which is a mere theory of the unintelligent.

⁶⁴ The unwise consider the world as eternal from the continued uniformity of its course. But the effect of the everlasting error raises the false supposition of the world.⁶⁵ It is their theory of repeated reincarnations. They cannot say anything otherwise, but must conclude the world as such in order to keep pace with their doctrine.⁶⁶ But it is to be wondered, if they see the constant perishable nature of all things all around, why do they not consider the world to be destructible?⁶⁷ So others (the Samkhyas), seeing the continuous course of the sun and moon and the stability of mountains and seas

all about, conclude from these false analogies that the world is indestructible.

⁶⁸ There can be nothing whatever which does not reside in the wide expanse of the Divine Mind. But as these are only the conceptions of the mind, they can never have any visible or separate form of existence. ⁶⁹ All these appear in repetition, and also repeated is the course of our births and deaths, as those of pain and pleasure follow one another, and our rest and actions following each other for evermore. ⁷⁰ This same vacuum and these quarters of the sky, with all these seas and mountains, appear in the recurrent course of creation with their various colors, like sunshine seen through the chink of a wall. ⁷¹ Gods and demigods appear again and again and all people come and depart by turns. Bondage and liberation are ever recurrent, and Indras and Somas ever reappear to view.

⁷² The god Narayana and the demigods appear by turns, and the sky is always revolving with the regents of all its sides, the sun and moon, clouds and winds. ⁷³ Heaven and earth appear again like a lotus flower full open to view, having Mount Meru for its seed core and Sahya Peak for its filament.

⁷⁴ The sun resumes his course in the maze of the sky like a lion and destroys the thick darkness with his rays, just as the lion kills a huge elephant with his beaming nails. ⁷⁵ See again the moving moon shining with her bright beams resembling the white filaments of flowers and anointing the faces of the ethereal goddesses with sweet ambrosial light borne by the air and breezes of heaven.

⁷⁶ Again the holy tree of heaven sheds its heaps of flowers on the deserts of meritorious men as rewards of their virtuous acts. ⁷⁷ Behold again the flight of time, riding like an eagle on its two wings of acts and actions, and passing with the noise of pat-pat over the vast maze of creation. ⁷⁸ See another Indra appearing, after the bygone lords of gods have passed away, and taking his seat on the lotus-like throne of heaven like a contemptible bee. ⁷⁹ Again the wicked age of Kali appears to soil the holy Satya Yuga, like the black body of Narayana fills the clear waters of the deep, or like a blast of wind sweeps the dust of the earth on its transparent surface.

⁸⁰ Time forms the plate of the earth like a potter, turning his wheel constantly to bring on the revolutions of his creations in successive kalpas. ⁸¹ Veteran time, skilled in the work of renovation, withers away the freshness of creation, just like the autumn winds blast the foliage of a forest in order to produce them again. ⁸² The dozen zodiacal suns, rising at once and burning creation, leaves dead bodies all around like white bones scattered in a country. ⁸³ Again, pushkara and avartaka clouds pour down their rainwater, deluging the tops of the boundary mountains and filling the face of the earth with foaming bubbles swimming on the surface of one sheet of water. ⁸⁴ After the waters have subsided and the winds have ceased to blow, the world appears as a vast vacuum void of all beings.

⁸⁵ Again we see living beings filling the earth and feeding for some years upon the moisture of its vegetation, leaving their decayed bodies and being mixed up with their souls in the Universal Spirit.

⁸⁶ Again at other times, the Divine Mind stretches out other creations, and these are drawn like pictures of fairylands on the canvas of vacuum. ⁸⁷ Again creation appears to view, and again it is submerged in the waters of the flood, both of which follow one another like the axles of a wheel.

⁸⁸ Now Rama, consider whether there is any stability of anything in this revolutionary world, other than it being a maze of continuous delusion. ⁸⁹ The revolution of the world resembles the hallucination of Dasura's mind. It is a fantasy without any solidity in it. ⁹⁰ The world appearing so extensive and

thickly peopled is only a fancied unreality, like the false appearance of two moons in the sky. Though appearing as real by our ignorance of its nature, it is made of unreality and is not worth reliance.

Chapter 48 — Story of Dasura; He Receives Agni's Boon to Live Treetop

¹ Vasishta continued:—

All worldly men who are engaged in various activities and who are perverted in their understanding with desires of wealth and enjoyments, can never learn the truth until they get rid of their worldliness.

² Only he who has cultivated his understanding and subdued his sensual organs can perceive the errors of the world, as one knows a bel fruit held in his hand.

³ Any rational being who properly sees the errors of the world will forsake his delusion of egoism, like a snake casts off his skin. ⁴ Thus, being unaware of his selfishness, he has no more to be born. He is like a fried grain that can never germinate, though it be sown in the field and lie there forever.

⁵ It is pitiful that ignorant men take so much pains for the preservation of their bodies, which are ever subject to diseases and dangers and are liable to perish today or tomorrow, all at the expense of their souls. ⁶ Therefore, O Rama, do not take so much care for the dull body like the ignorant, but regard only for the welfare of your soul.

⁷ Rama said, “Tell me sage, the story of Dasura which illustrates the visionary and air-drawn form of this rotating universe, all hollow within.”

⁸ Vasishta replied:—

Hear me repeat for you, O Rama, the story of Dasura. It is an illustration of the delusive form of the world, which is no more than the built-in-the-air utopia of our brains.

⁹ On the surface of this land there is the great and wealthy province of Magadha which is full of flower trees of all kinds. ¹⁰ There is a forest of wide extending kadamba groves, which was the pleasant playground of charming birds of various sorts and colors. ¹¹ Here the wide fields were full of corns and grains, the edges of the land were filled with groves and trees, and stream banks were filled with blooming lotuses and water lilies. ¹² The groves resounded with the melodious strains of country girls, and the plains were filled with blades of blossoms bedewed by the nightly frost and appearing as arrows of the god of love.

¹³ Here at the foot of a mountain, decked with karnikara flowers and beset by rows of plantain plants and kadamba trees, was a secluded spot overgrown with moss and shrubs. ¹⁴ It was sprinkled over with the reddish dust of crimson flowers carried by the winds, and was resonant to the warbling of water fowls singing in unison with the melodious strains of aquatic cranes. ¹⁵ On a sacred hill overhanging that spot, there rose a kadamba tree crowded by birds of various kinds. There on it dwelt a holy sage of great austerity.

¹⁶ He was known by the name of Dasura. He was engaged in austere penance, sitting on a branch of his kadamba tree with his exalted soul, devoid of passions.

¹⁷ Rama said, “I want to know, O sage, from where and how did that hermit come to dwell in that forest, and why was he sitting on that tall kadamba tree?”

¹⁸ Vasishta replied:—

His father was the renowned sage Sharaloma, who lived on the same mountain and resembled the

great Brahma in his abstract meditation.¹⁹ Like Kacha, the only child of Brihaspati, the preceptor of the gods, Dasura was the only son of Sharaloma. From his boyhood, he and his father came to dwell in the forest.²⁰ Sharaloma lived many years in this way until he left his mortal frame for his heavenly abode, as a bird quits its nest to fly into the air.

²¹ Dasura, being left alone in that lonely forest, wept bitterly and lamented over the loss of his father with wailing as loud as the shrieks of a heron upon separation from its mate.²² Being deprived of both his parents, he was full of sorrow and grief in his mind. He began to fade away like the lotus blossom in winter.²³ He was seen in this sad plight by the woodland god of that forest who, taking compassion on the forlorn youth, approached him unseen and said in an audible voice,²⁴ “O sagely son of the sage! Why do you weep like the ignorant? Why are you so dejected, knowing the instability of worldly things?”

²⁵ “In this frail world everything is unstable. The course of nature is for all things to be born, live, then perish into nothingness.²⁶ Whatever is seen here, from the great Brahma down to the meanest object, is all doomed to perish beyond a doubt.²⁷ Therefore do not wail at the death of your father, but know that like the rising and falling sun, everything is destined to its rise and fall.”

²⁸ Hearing this audible voice, the youth wiped his eyes red hot with weeping and held his silence like the screaming peacock at the loud sound of the clouds.²⁹ He got up and devoutly performed the funeral ceremonies for his father, then set his mind to the success of his steady devotion.

³⁰ He engaged in austerities according to brahmin law and discharged his ceremonial rites according to the old Vedic Srauta ritual to accomplish his sundry vows.³¹ But not knowing the knowable (Brahman), his mind could not find rest in his ceremonial acts or find purity on the surface of the stainless earth.³² Not knowing that the world was full with Divine Spirit and the holiness of the earth is in every place, he thought the ground polluted and did not find his rest anywhere.³³ Therefore, of his own accord, he made a vow to sit on the branch of a tree, which he believed was untainted with the pollution of the earth.

³⁴ He thought, “I will perform my austerities on these branching trees and repose myself like birds and woodland spirits on the branches and leaves of trees.”³⁵ Thus sitting on high, he lit a burning fire underneath him and he was going to offer oblations of living flesh on it by paring bits of his shoulder blade (mixed with blood).

³⁶ Agni, the god of fire, thought in himself that because fire is the mouth through which the gods receive their food, the offering of a brahmin’s flesh would completely burn down their faces.

³⁷ Thinking so, the god of fire appeared before him in his full blaze, like the bright sun appears before the lord of speech, Brihaspati (Jupiter).³⁸ Agni uttered gently saying, “Young brahmin, accept your desired boon from me, as a shopkeeper takes out his treasure from the safe in which it is deposited.”

³⁹ Being thus approached by the god, the brahmin boy saluted him with a laudatory hymn. After adoring him with suitable offerings of flowers, the boy addressed him in the following manner.

⁴⁰ “Lord, I find no holy place upon earth. It is full of inequity and sinful beings. Therefore I pray that you make the tops of trees the only places where I live.”

⁴¹ Being so asked by the brahmin boy, the god pronounced, "Be it so," from his flaming mouth, and vanished from sight. ⁴² As the god disappeared from before him, like daylight from the face of the lotus flower, the son of the sage was fully satisfied with his desired boon. His face shone like the full moon. ⁴³ Conscious of the success of his desire, his gladdened countenance brightened with his blooming smiles, just as the white lotus, as soon as it perceives the smiling moonbeams falling upon it, blushes with its smiling petals.

Chapter 49 — Description of Dasura's Kadamba Forest

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Thus Dasura remained in the forest that reached to the region of the clouds and formed a stage for the halting of the tired horses of the meridian sun at midday.² Its far stretching boughs spread a canopy on all sides under the roof of heaven, and it looked to the skies all around with its full blown blossoming eyes.³ Gentle winds shed fragrant dust from the tufts of its hanging hairs, which, studded with swarms of fluttering bees and its leaves waving like palms of its hands, brushed over the face of its fairy sky.

⁴ The banks with their long shrubbery and the crimson filaments of their milk-white blossoms smiled like the fair faces of beauties with their teeth colored reddish from betel leaves.⁵ Creeping plants danced with delight and shed dust from the pistils of their flowers clustered in bunches and beaming with the luster of the bright full moon.⁶ The earth with its thickening thickets, warbling chakoras among them, appeared like the milky path of heaven studded with stars singing heavenly tunes.⁷ Groups of peacocks sitting on the tops of branching trees appeared with multi-colored trains, like rainbows among the green foliage, seeming as bluish clouds in the blue sky.

⁸ White fantail deer, half of their bodies hidden under the cover of the woods and their fore parts appearing outside, looked like so many moons with their dark and bright sides in the sky.⁹ The warbling of chataks, joined with the trill of cuckoos and the whistling of chakoras, filled the groves with a continuous harmony.¹⁰ Flocks of white herons sitting on their nestling boughs seemed like bodies of siddha-master aerial beings sitting quietly in their refuge places in heaven.

¹¹ Waving vines with ruddy leaflets shaking with the breeze, their blooming blossoms beset by bees, resembled the apsara nymphs of heaven flapping their rosy palms and looking at the skies.¹² Clusters of kumuda blue lotuses moving on the sky-blue waters with their yellow filaments, shedding their golden dust around, appeared like rainbows and lightning darting their radiance in the blue sky.

¹³ The forest's thousands of uplifted branches seemed like the god Vishwarupa lifting his thousand arms on high, dancing with the breeze, the sun and moon hanging like earrings on either side.

¹⁴ Elephant herds lying under the branches and clusters of stars shining above gave the woodlands an appearance of the sky, with its dark clouds moving below the blazing stars above.¹⁵ The forest was like a warehouse of all sorts of fruits and flowers, just as the god Brahma is the reservoir of all sorts of productions.¹⁶ The ground glistened with falling small flowers and the powdery dust of the flowers, just as the sky glitters with the luster of solar and stellar light.

¹⁷ Flights of birds flying on tree branches fluttering about their nests and flocks of fowls feeding on the ground made the forest appear like a city with its people above, below and all about it.¹⁸ Its bowers resembled the inner apartments of houses, with blossoms waving like flags over them, and strewn over with the white powdery dust of flowers, as they decorate floors with flowers and powders, and flowers hanging over them like over house windows.

¹⁹ There was the joint harmony of humming bees and buzzing beetles, twittering of chakoras and parrots, and cooing of kokilas in the thick canopy of the woods and issuing out of their holes like the music of songstresses coming out in unison from the hollows of windows.

²⁰ Birds of various kinds hovered about the coverings of woodland goddesses, as they were the only guests of their lonely retreats. ²¹ Bees were continually hummed over the powdery pistils of flowers. The sound of waterfalls constantly diffused from nearby high hills. ²² Here gentle soft warm breezes continually played with waving flowers and white clouds covered lofty trees, as they do the tops of mountains. ²³ The sturdy woods that resembled high hills were rubbed by the scabby cheeks of elephants and stood unmoved, though they were constantly dashed by their huge legs and feet.

²⁴ Birds of multi-colored feathers that dwelt in the hollows of the trees were like the various races of beings dwelling in the person of Vishnu. ²⁵ With the movements of their painted leaves, resembling the fingers of their palms, trees seemed to keep time with the dancing vines and point out the modes of their vibration. ²⁶ They danced in delight with their branching arms and clasping armlets of vines to think on the nourishment that every part of their bodies affords to all kinds of living beings.

²⁷ Thinking how they are the support of thousands of creeping plants which entwine round them as their consorts, the trees sang their joyous chime with the buzzing of bees about them. ²⁸ Kind aerial masters who dropped flowers from the trees were hailed by the bees and cuckoos with their joyous notes and tunes.

²⁹ The blooming blossoms of the kadamba tree made it seem to be laughing in derision at the five woody trees on the forest edge which were not bearing their flowers. ³⁰ With its uplifted head reaching to the sky and flights of birds flying over it like hairs on its head, the kadamba tree seemed to defy the parijata tree of Indra's heaven. ³¹ A swarm of bees thronging all about the kadamba tree gave it the appearance of thousand eyed Indra, with whom it competed with its greater number of eyes.

³² The tree had a tuft of flowers on some part of its head, appearing like the hood of a snake decorated with gems, as if the infernal serpent had mounted its top with his crowned head in order to survey the wonders of heaven. ³³ Smeared with the pollen of its flowers, the tree appeared like the god Shiva anointed with his powdered ashes, while its shady dwelling overhung with luscious fruits refreshing passing travelers with rest and repast.

³⁴ The kadamba tree was like the Nandana garden of paradise, having alcoves under its thickening branches and caves formed by the flowery vines below it, while the birds of heaven hovered about it like its perpetual inhabitants.

Chapter 50 — Dasura's Survey of the Heavens

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Dasura remained in this flowery tree as if he lived on a hill of flowers. In his mind he felt the delight which flowery spring and its fruit could infuse in the heart.² He mounted and sat over the high and airy treetop and looked on all sides like the god Vishnu surveying the worlds.³ There, sitting on a branch that reached to the sky, he engaged in his tapas (penance), devoid of fear and desire.

⁴ From this his leafy and easy couch of repose, he cast his curious eyes to see the wonders of nature on all sides.⁵ He saw a river at a distance, glittering like a necklace of gold. He saw the summits of distant hills rising like nipples on the breast of the earth.

The fair face of the sky appeared like the face of a fairy covered under the blue veil of a cloud.⁶ The green leaves of trees were like the green garb of this fairy, and clusters of flowers were like garlands on her head. Distant lakes appearing like water-pots were decorated by their aquatic plants and flowers.⁷ The fragrance of blooming lotuses seemed like the fairy's sweet breathing, and the gurgling of the waterfalls sounded like trinkets fastened to her feet.⁸ The trees touching the skies were like the hairs on her body, the thick forests resembled her thighs, and the orbs of the sun and moon were like earrings hanging from her ears.⁹ Fields of grain seemed like the dots of her sandal paste, and the rising hills were like her breasts covered by a cloudy cloak on their tops.

¹⁰ The seas with their shining waters were her mirrors that reflected the rays from the jewels on her starry frame.¹¹ The season's fruits and flowers were like embroidery on her bodice, and the rays of the sun and moon were like powders or sandalwood paste over her body.¹² Clouds covering the landscape were her garment, and trees and plants on the forest edges were as the fringes or the skirts of her dress.

In this manner he saw all ten sides of heaven full with the form of a fairy queen.

Chapter 51 — Dasura Begets a Son

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Dasura remained as an ascetic in his hermitage in that forest. He was known as Kadamba Dasura and he was a giant of austere penance.² Sitting on the leaves of the vine growing on the branch of that tree, he looked up to heaven. Then sitting himself in the lotus posture, he called his mind back to himself.

³ Unacquainted with spiritual adoration and unpracticed as to the ceremonial ritual, he started to perform his mental sacrifice with a desire of gaining its reward.⁴ Sitting on the leaves of the vines in his aerial seat, he employed his inner spirit and mind to discharge his sacrificial rites of the sacred fire and horse sacrifice.⁵ For the space of full ten years he continued there in his acts of satisfying the gods with his mental sacrifices of the bull, horse and human immolations; their rewards in his mind.

⁶ In process of time, his mind was purified and expanded and he gained the knowledge of the beatification of his soul.⁷ His ignorance being dispelled, his heart became purified of the dirt of worldly desires. He came to behold a woodland goddess standing beside his leafy and mossy seat.

⁸ She was a body of light and dressed in a robe of flowers. Her form and face were beautiful to behold, and her large bright eyes turned wistfully towards him.⁹ Her body breathed the fragrance of the blue lotus and her figure charmed his inner most soul. Then he spoke to the goddess standing before him, her eyes demurely looking down.¹⁰ “What are you, O tender lady who looks like a vine covered with flowers? You defy Kama, the god of love, with your beautiful form and eyes resembling lotus petals.¹¹ Why do you stand like a forest nymph, a goddess befriending flowering vines?”

Thus approached, the dame with deer-like eyes and protruding bosom replied to him.¹² She said to the hermit with a sweet and charming voice, “May you prosper in obtaining the objects of your wishes.¹³ Anything which is desirable and difficult to attain in this world is surely obtainable when sought after with proper effort by the great.¹⁴ I am, O brahmin, a woodland goddess of this forest, which is so full of creeping plants and decorated by beautiful kadamba trees.”

¹⁵ “I strayed here to see the festive joy of the woodland goddesses, which always takes place in this forest on this thirteenth day of the lunar month of Chaitra.¹⁶ Here I saw my companions enjoying their festival of love and felt myself sorry among them to think of my childlessness.¹⁷ Finding you accomplished in all qualifications, I have come here with my intent of begetting a son by you.¹⁸ Please sage, do procreate a son in me or else I will burn my body to get rid of my sorrow of childlessness.”

¹⁹ Hearing the woodland lady speaking in this manner, the hermit smiled at her, gave her a flower with his own hand, and spoke kindly to her.²⁰ “Leave, O lady! Commit yourself to the worship of Shiva for a whole month and then, like a tender vine, you shall give birth to a boy as beautiful as a bud by this time of the year.²¹ But that son, who you desired of me at the sacrifice of your life, will give himself over to austerities like mine and will become a seer like myself.”

²² So saying the sage dismissed the suppliant lady now gladdened in her face, and she promised to perform the necessary for her blessing’s sake.²³ Then the lotus-eyed lady left and went to her home.

The hermit passed his months, seasons and years in his holy meditation.

²⁴ After a long time the lotus-eyed lady returned to the sage with her boy, now grown up to the twelfth year of his age. ²⁵ She made her obeisance and sat before him with her boy of the moon-bright face. She uttered her words, sweet as the murmur of a humble bee to a stately amra tree. ²⁶ "This, sage, is the would be son (Bhavya) of both of us, whom I have trained in all the branches of learning. ²⁷ He is only untaught in the best knowledge, that which releases the soul from its return to this world of troubles. ²⁸ My lord, please instruct him in that knowledge, for who is there that should like to keep his own son in ignorance?"

²⁹ Being so asked by her, Dasura spoke to the tender mother and asked her to leave the child and leave. ³⁰ She being gone, the boy remained submissive to his father and dwelt by his side as his student, like Aruna waiting upon the Sun. ³¹ Accustomed in austerity, the boy continued to receive his best knowledge from his father's various lectures. He passed a long time with his father in that place as the sage's son.

³² The boy was taught with various narratives and tales, with many examples and visible illustrations, and also with historical accounts and the evidence of the Vedas and the Vedanta. ³³ The boy remained attendant on his father's lessons without feeling any anxiety. He formed his right notions of things by means of their instruction. ³⁴ Thus the magnanimous father instilled true knowledge into the mind of his son through the fourfold process of right reasoning and correct diction, rather than the elegance of expression, as the cloud by its hoarse sounds indicates approaching rain to the peacock.

Chapter 52 — The Allegory of Air-Born King Khottha (Mind) and His Grand City

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Once I passed by that way in my invisible body to bathe in the heavenly stream of Mandakini (Milky Way) in the ethereal regions.² After my departure from that region by the way of the Seven Rishis (variously the Pleiades or the Big Dipper), I arrived at the place where Dasura lived on his high kadamba tree.³ I heard a voice from the hollow of the tree in the forest, which was as charming as the buzzing of a bee fluttering about the bud of a lotus.

⁴ “Attend my intelligent son!” said Dasura, “to a story that I will tell you by way of a simile of worldly things. It is pleasant to hear.”

Dasura speaking:—

⁵ There is a very powerful king renowned in all the three worlds for his great prosperity. His name is Khottha or air-produced, and he is able to grasp the whole world.⁶ All the lords of the earth bend their heads lowly under his rule and bear the badge of their submission to him as a great honor, as poor men are proud to carry a bright gem on the head.⁷ He exulted in his valor and possession of all kinds of rarities. There was no one in the three worlds was able to conquer him.

⁸ His unnumbered acts and exploits are filled with successive pains and pleasures. They are as interminable as the continuous waves of the sea.⁹ No one has been able to check the prowess of that mighty brave king by force of fire or sword, as none has ever been able to press the wind in his hand.

¹⁰ Even the gods Indra, Vishnu and Shiva have fallen short of following his steps in his ambitious pursuits and in the splendid inventions of his imagination.

¹¹ With his triple form of satwika, rajasika and tamasika qualities (pure, active and passive), he encompasses the world and is able to accomplish all sorts of actions.¹² He is born in the extensive emptiness of the spirit of Brahman with his triple body like that of a bird (flesh, bones and feathers) and he remains in vacuum like air and sound.

¹³ He built a city in that unlimited space of the universe, having fourteen provinces (the planetary spheres) in its triple divisions of the earth and regions above and below it.¹⁴ It is beautified with forests and groves and pleasure-lawns and hills, and bounded by seven lakes of pearly waters on all sides.¹⁵ It is lit by two lamps of hot and cooling light (the sun and moon) which revolve above and below the city in their daily and nightly courses, as those of righteous and nefarious people.

¹⁶ The king peopled this great city of his with many self-moving bodies that move in their spheres quite ignorant of themselves.¹⁷ Some of these are appointed in higher and some in lower spheres, and others move in their middle course. Some are destined to live a longer time and others doomed to die in a day.¹⁸ Their bodies are covered with black skins and hairs and furnished with nine holes which are continually receiving air and carrying it out to keep them alive.¹⁹ They are supplied with five lights of sensation and perception. They are supported by three posts, two legs and a back bone, and a framework of white bones for the beams and bamboo rafters. It is plastered over with flesh like moistened clay and defended by two arms like latches on door way.

²⁰ The great king placed his yaksha of egoism as sentinel to guard this house. This guard is as

ferocious as a fierce bhairava manifestation of Shiva in the dark (ignorance), and as timid as a bhairava by day.²¹ The masters of these moving bodies play many pranks in them, like a bird plays and frolics in its own nest.

²² This triple-formed king is always fickle and never steady. He resides in many bodies and plays his games there guarded by his egoism sentinel. He leaves one body for another at will, like a bird alights from one branch to another.²³ This fickle minded prince is ever changeful in his will. He lives in one city and builds another for his future home.²⁴ Like one under the influence of a ghost, he stirs up from one place and runs to another, like a man builds, breaks and rebuilds his aerial castle as a hobby.²⁵ The mind sometimes wishes to destroy its former frame and move to another, and it effects its purpose at will.

²⁶ After it had subsided to rest, the mind is produced again as the wave of the sea. Slowly and gradually it pursues a different course in its renewed course of life.²⁷ In his new life, this king sometimes repents of his own conduct and acts, and then laments for his ignorance and miseries and knows not what to do.²⁸ Sometimes he is dejected by sorrow, and at other times elated by success, like the current of a river, now going down in the hot season, then overflowing its banks in the rains.

²⁹ This king is led by his hobbies like the waters of the sea by the winds. It puffs and swells, falls and rises, runs fast and ceases to flow at once as in a calm sea.

Chapter 53 — Explanation of the City

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Then the boy asked his holy father, who was sitting reclined on his sacred kadamba tree in the midst of the forest of great Asia in the gloom of night. ² The son said, “Tell me sage, who is this air-born king of supernatural form who you described just now? I do not fully comprehend its meaning, and I want it to be explained to me clearly. ³ Sage, you said that this king constructs a new home for himself while residing in his present body, and leaves for it after he leaves the old frame. This seems impossible to me, as the joining of one tense with another, the present with the future.”

⁴ Dasura replied:—

My son, hear me tell you the meaning of this parable, which will explain to you the nature of this revolving world in its true light.

⁵ First I told you that in the beginning, a non-entity sprang from the entity of God, and this non-entity being stretched out afterwards gave rise to this illusory world called the cosmos. ⁶ The empty spirit of the Supreme Deity gives rise to his formless will, which therefore is called air-born (or mind-born). It is born of itself in its formless state from the formless Spirit, and dissolves itself into the same, just like a wave rising from and falling in the bosom of the sea. ⁷ Will produces everything, and there is nothing produced except by the Will. The Will is the same as its object, which constitutes and exists in it, and it lives and dies along with its object.

⁸ Know the gods Brahma, Vishnu, Indra, Shiva and the Rudras are offspring of the willful Mind, just like branches are the offshoots of the main tree and summits are projections of the principal mountain.

⁹ This Mind, in its form of Virinchi, the first manifestation as Brahma, builds the city of the three worlds in the vacuum of Brahman by reason of it being endowed with intelligence from Omniscience.

¹⁰ This city is composed of fourteen worlds (planetary spheres) containing all their peoples, together with chains of their hills and forests and those of gardens and groves. ¹¹ It is furnished with the two lights of the sun and moon, and adorned with many mountains for human sport.

¹² Here pearly rivers flow in their winding courses and bear their swelling waves and rippling waves, shining like chains of pearls under sunbeams and moonlight. ¹³ The seven oceans appear like so many lakes of bright waters and, shining with their undersea fires, they resemble the lotus beds and mines of gems beneath the blue sky.

¹⁴ It is a distinguished place where gods, men and savages make their commerce with commodities leading either to heaven above or to hell below. ¹⁵ The self-willed king (the mind) has employed many persons to act their several parts before him for his pleasure. ¹⁶ Some are placed high above this stage to act as gods and deities. Others are set in lower pits of this earth and infernal regions to act their miserable parts as men and naaga serpents. ¹⁷ Their bodies are made of clay and their frame work is of white bones. Their plastering is the flesh under the skin like an air-powered machine.

¹⁸ Some of these bodies have to act their parts for a long while, while others make their exits in a short time. Some are covered with caps of black hair, and others with white and grey on their heads.

¹⁹ All these bodies are furnished with nine crevices, consisting of the two ear holes, two sockets of

the eyes, and two nostrils with the opening of the mouth, which are continually employed in inhaling and exhaling cold and hot air by their breathing.²⁰ The ear holes, nostrils and palate serve as windows to the abode of the body. The hands and feet are the gate ways, and the five inner organs are like the lights of these homes.

²¹ Then the mind creates of its own will the delusion of egoism, which like a yaksha demon takes possession of the whole body, but flies before the light of knowledge.²² The mind, accompanied by this delusive demon, takes great pleasure in diverting itself with unrealities.²³ Egoism resides in the body like a rat in a barn or a snake in hollow ground. Upon advance of the sunlight of reason, ego falls down like a dew drop from the blade of grass.²⁴ It rises and falls like the flame of a lamp in the home of the body. With all its desires, it is as noisy as the sea with its ceaseless waves.

²⁵ The mind constructs a new house for its future home by virtue of its interminable desires in its present house, and which are expected to be realized and enjoyed in its future state.²⁶ But no sooner does it cease to foster its desires than it ceases to exist and loses itself in that state of supreme bliss of which there can be no end.²⁷ But it is born and reborn by its repeated desires, just as a child sees a ghost by its constant fear of it.²⁸ Ego spreads the view of this miserable world before him. Absence of self knowledge blocks the sight of all objects from view, like a veil of thick darkness that hides all things from sight.²⁹ In this way, one's own attempt exposes himself to the miseries of the world, then he wails at his fate like a foolish monkey that brought on its own destruction by pulling out the peg from the chink in the timber.

³⁰ The mind remains in eager expectation of the enjoyment of its desired objects, like a stag standing with its mouth lifted waiting for a drop of honey to fall from a honeycomb hanging on high.³¹ The wistful mind now pursues its desired objects, then forsakes them in disgust. Now it longs for joy, then it grows sulky at its failure like a fretful child.

³² Now try diligently, my boy, to extricate your mind from all outward objects and fix your attention to the inner object of this meditation.³³ The willful mind takes at its pleasure its good, bad and moderate or sober forms, known under the names of sattva, rajas and tamas.³⁴ The bad or weakened form of the mind delights in worldliness and by debasing itself with all its greedy desires, reduces itself to the state of worms and insects in future births.

³⁵ The good disposition of the mind is inclined towards virtuous deeds and the acquisition of knowledge. By these means the mind advances both to its solitude and self enjoyment.³⁶ In its form of moderation, the mind observes the rules and laws of society and conducts itself in the world in the company of friends and members of the family.³⁷ After renunciation of all these three forms, sattva, rajas and tamas (purity, action and laziness) and abdication of egoism and desires, it reaches to the state of the absolute Supreme Being.

³⁸ Therefore shun the sight of what can be seen and repress your fleeting mind by your sober intellect. Diminish your desires for all internal as well as external goods.³⁹ For though you may practice your austerities for a thousand years and crush your body by falling from a precipice upon stones,⁴⁰ and although you burn your body alive on a flaming pyre or plunge yourself into the undersea fire, or if you fall in a deep and dark pit or well or rush upon the edge of a drawn and sharp sword,⁴¹ or if you

have Brahma himself or even Shiva for your teacher, or get a very kind and tender hearted ascetic for your religious guide,⁴² or whether you are situated in heaven or on earth or in the hell regions of Patala below, you have no way of liberation except by keeping your desires under control.

⁴³ Therefore, exert your courage and dominate your irresistible, violent desires and passions, which will secure your pure and transcendent joy of peace and holiness.

⁴⁴ All things are linked together under the bondage of desire. This bond being broken asunder makes desired objects vanish into nothing.⁴⁵ The real is unreal and the unreal is real, just as the mind may make it appear to be. All reality and unreality consists in our conception of them, and in nothing else.

⁴⁶ As the mind conceives a thing to be, so it perceives the same in actuality. Therefore, if you want to know the truth of it have no conception of anything.

⁴⁷ Act as the world goes, without liking or disliking anything. Thus, desires being at an end, consciousness will rise to the unfathomable beyond the knowledge of the mind.⁴⁸ The mind, having sprung from the Supreme Soul in the form of goodness, afterwards is inclined towards the unrealities of the world and surely alienates itself from the Supreme and exposes itself to all sorts of misery.

⁴⁹ We are born to the doom of death, but let us not die to be reborn to the miseries of life and death again. It is for the wise and learned to take themselves to that state which is free from these pains.

⁵⁰ First learn the truth and attain the true knowledge of your soul. Then abandon all your desires and dislikes of the world. Being thus prepared with a dead-like unconsciousness of your internal feelings, you will be able to come to the knowledge of that transcendental state which is full of perfect bliss and blessedness.

Chapter 54 — Dasura Explains: Desires Vanish when You Give Them No Thought

¹ The son asked, “What is this desire, father? How is it produced and grown? How is it destroyed at last?”

² Dasura replied:—

Desire or will is situated in the mind, which is the mental part of the one eternal, universal and spiritual substance of God. ³ Desire gets the form of a monad from a formless unit, then by its gradual expansion extends over the whole mind and fills it like a flimsy cloud soon covers the sky.

⁴ Remaining in Divine Consciousness, the mind thinks of what can be thought as if they were distinct from itself. Its longing after them is called its desire, which springs from it like a germ from its seed.

⁵ Desire is produced by desiring something, and it increases itself both in size and quantity only for our trouble, and not for any good or happiness at all.

⁶ The accumulation of our desires forms the world, just as the accumulation of waters makes the ocean. You have no trouble without your desire. Being free of desire, you are free from the miseries of the world. ⁷ It is by mere chance that we meet the objects of our desire, and an act of unavoidable chance makes us liable to lose them. They appear before us as secondary lights in the sky, then fly away like a mirage vanishes from view. ⁸ As a man who has jaundice from eating a certain fruit sees everything as yellow with his jaundiced eye, so the desire in the heart of man pictures the unreal as a reality before him.

⁹ Know this truth that you are an unreality yourself and you must become an unreality afterwards.

¹⁰ He who has learnt to disbelieve his own existence and that of all others, and who knows the vanity of his joy and grief, is not troubled by the gain or loss of anything. ¹¹ Knowing yourself as nothing, why do you think of your birth and your pleasures here? You are deluded in vain by the vanity of your desires. ¹² Do not entertain your desires or think of anything that is nothing. By living in this manner you may be wise and happy.

¹³ Try to relinquish your desire and you will evade all difficulties. Cease to think of anything and your desire for it will disappear of itself. ¹⁴ Even the crushing of a flower requires some effort, but it requires no effort to destroy your desire. It vanishes of itself when you lack it thought. ¹⁵ You have to open the palm of your hand to get a hold of a flower, but you have nothing to do to destroy your frail and false desire. ¹⁶ He who wants to destroy his desire can do it in a instant by forgetting the thought of his desired object.

¹⁷ Thoughts repressed from other objects and fixed in the Supreme Spirit will enable one to do what is impossible for others to effect. ¹⁸ Kill your desire by desiring nothing. Turn your mind from all things by fixing it in the Supreme, which you can easily do yourself. ¹⁹ Our desires being quieted, all worldly cares come to a standstill and all our troubles are put to a dead stop.

²⁰ Our wishes constitute our minds, hearts, lives, understandings and all our other faculties of desire. These are all only different names for the same thing without any difference in meaning. ²¹ There is no other business of our lives than to desire and to be doing, and when done to be desiring again. As this restless craving is rooted out of the mind, it sets it free from all anxiety.

²² The world below is as empty as the hollow sky above us. Both are empty nothings, except that our minds make something or other of them agreeably to its desire or fancy. ²³ All things are unsubstantial and unsubstantiated by the unsubstantial mind. The world being only a creation of our fancy, something essential desired, there is nothing substantial for you to think about.

²⁴ Our reliance on unrealities proving to be unreal leaves no room for our thinking about them. The suppression of their thoughts produces a perfection of detachment. There is nothing more desirable on earth. Therefore forget all that is unreal. ²⁵ The proper discernment of things will preserve you from the excess of joy and grief. The knowledge of the vanity of things will keep out your affection or reliance on any person or thing. ²⁶ The removal of reliance on the world removes our attachment to it and consequently prevents our joy or sorrow at the gain or loss of anything.

²⁷ The mind that becomes the living principle stretches out his city of the world by an act of its imagination, then turns it about as the present, past, and future worlds. ²⁸ The mind that is subject to the sensational, emotional and willful feelings loses the purity of its intellectual nature and plays many parts by its sensuousness. ²⁹ The living soul also forgets the nature of the Universal Soul from which it is derived and is transformed to a puny animalcule in the heart of man, where it plays its pranks like an ape in the woods.

³⁰ Its desires are as irrepressible like the waves of the ocean, rising and falling in expectation of having every object of the senses. ³¹ Our desire is like every piece of straw that is lit by fire, and it burns and blows out in its invisible form within the mind. ³² Our desires are as fickle as flashes of lightning. They proceed from the minds of the ignorant like lightning bolts from watery clouds. They are equally fleeting and misguided, and must be speedily avoided by the wise.

³³ Desire is undoubtedly a curable disease as long as it is a transient disease of the mind. But it becomes incurable when it takes a deep root in it. ³⁴ The knowledge of the unreality of the world quickly cures the disease of desire, but the certainty of worldly knowledge makes it as incurable as the impossibility of removing the blackness of coal. ³⁵ What fool will attempt to wash a coal white, or convert a materialist to a spiritualist, or turn a raven or black man to whiteness?

³⁶ The mind of a man is like a grain of rice covered under its husk, which is soon husked upon the threshing-floor. ³⁷ The worldliness of the wise is as soon removed like the husk of rice, and the blackness of a cooking kettle. ³⁸ The blemishes of a man are blotted out by his own efforts. Therefore you must try to exert yourself to action at all times.

³⁹ He who has not been able to master his vain desires and hobby whims in this world will find them vanish of themselves in course of time. Nothing false can last forever. ⁴⁰ The light of reason removes the false conception of the world, just like the light of a lamp dispels darkness from a room at sight and night vision removes the secondary moon.

⁴¹ The world is not yours, nor are you of this world. There is nobody or anything here related to you, nor are you related to any. Never think otherwise or take the false for true. ⁴² Never foster the false idea in your mind that you are master of large possessions and pleasant things. Know yourself and all pleasant things are for the delight of the Supreme Maker and Master of all.

Chapter 55 — Vasishta and Dasura Meet; Further Description of the Kadamba Forest

¹ Vasishta said:—

Hear me, Rama, who is the delight of Raghu's race and shines like the moon in the firmament of Raghu's family. After I heard the conversation between Dasura and his son,² I descended from the sky to the top of the kadamba tree, which was decorated with its green leaves and beautiful fruits and flowers. Then with my spiritual body, I sat myself slowly and silently on top of the tree, as a light cloud descends on the summit of a mountain.

³ I saw Dasura there, sitting like a giant by subduing the organs of his body and shining with the luster of his penance, like fire blazing with its flame.⁴ The light issuing from his body reflected purple gold on his seat and lit that spot like sunbeams emblazon the world.⁵ Seeing me present myself before him, Dasura spread a leafy seat for me to sit down and then honored me according to the rules of ceremonial law.⁶ Then I joined with the luminous Dasura to continue his discourse, which was meant for the edification of his son and salvation of mankind from the miseries of life.

⁷ With Dasura's permission, I looked into the hollow of the tree and saw herds of stags grazing fearlessly about it.⁸ It was as delightful as a dwelling overhung with vines where smiling flowers shed their light and breathed their fragrance to the winds.⁹ Fantail deer flapped their long, hairy and moon-bright tails against the herb-like tree, like flimsy white clouds sweep over the sky.¹⁰ The tree was adorned with fringes of pearly dewdrops and arrayed all over with the flowery garb of its blossoms.¹¹ Smeared with the dust of its flowers, it appeared to be anointed with sandal paste, while its reddish bark cloaked it in roseate red.¹² Decorated with flowers, the tree seemed to be standing in its bridal attire. It resembled a bridegroom embracing his twining brides.

¹³ The dwellings of shrubberies all around resembled the leafy huts of hermits which, covered with their blossoms, looked like a city flying flags in festivity.¹⁴ Shaken by the stags in the act of rubbing their bodies, the trees darted their flowers abundantly upon the ground. Outlying lands were as shattered as if they were broken by the horns of fighting bulls.¹⁵ Peacocks daubed with flower dust flying on the top of a nearby hill looked evening clouds gliding over it.

¹⁶ Here a goddess seemed to be playing on the lawns, red flowers in her hands and smiling sweetly with blooming blossoms. She reveled with the nectarine honey of flowers and shed her beauty on all sides.¹⁷ The closing buds, resembling her eyelids, were lulled to sleep by the forest breeze breathing constantly with the fragrance of the flowers. Clusters of flowers forming her breasts were hidden under the bodice of leaves.¹⁸ She sat at the window of her alcove, formed by twining creepers and vines, dressed in the purple garb of the flying powdery dust of flowers.¹⁹ She swung in her swinging cradle of bluish blossoms adorned with various floral ornaments from head to foot.²⁰ She moved about the flowers in the garb of a woodland goddess, looking on all sides with her azure eyes of fluttering blue-bees, and singing to them with the sweet notes of the black kokila nightingales in the trees.

²¹ The bees, tired with their labor of love, refreshed themselves by sipping the dewdrops trickling on the tops of flowers. Then taking their repast on the starch-like meal, they slept together with their mates in the cells of flower cups.²² The bee couples living in the flower cells, giddy from sipping the

honey of the flower cups, were humming their love tunes to each other.

²³ For a moment the sage remained attentive to the murmur proceeding from the village beyond the forest. Now he listened with pricked up ears to the busy buzz of blue bees and flies at a distance.

²⁴ Then the sages looked down and saw moonbeams spread like a sheet of fine linen over the blades of grass on the ground below. ²⁵ They saw beautiful antelopes sleeping in their leafy beds on the ground below the stretching branches of shady trees, as if they were the progeny of their native forest.

²⁶ They saw fearless birds chirping on the branches and others sleeping confidently in their nests. They saw the ground covered with living creatures feasting on the ripe fruits that had fallen. ²⁷ They saw long lines of black bees lying mute on the ground like strings of beads, blackening it with their dark bodies. ²⁸ The forest was smelling with fragrance and the sky was covered by a cloud of flowers. The dust of kadamba blossoms colored the ground with a perfumed grey, and kadamba fruit covered the face of the land.

²⁹ What more need be said other than there was no part of the tree which was not useful to living beings. ³⁰ Here deer were sleeping on fallen leaves and there others were resting on the bare ground. Birds sat on the banks and beaches of the streams all about that lofty tree.

³¹ As they were looking at the beauties of the forest in this manner, the night passed away as quickly as a night of festivity. ³² The son of the hermit kept talking with me on many subjects and derived many useful instructions from my teaching. ³³ As we conversed with each other on different subjects, the night passed away as quickly as that of a conjugal pair. ³⁴ Now it began to dawn and blushing flowers began to open their petals while the host of stars on high disappeared from their arena of the sky.

³⁵ I then took my leave and was followed by the hermit and his son for some distance from their kadamba tree, where I left them for my aerial course to the heavenly stream. ³⁶ There, having performed my holy ablution, I came down under the roof of heaven and then entered the celestial region of the sages, which is situated in the midway sky.

³⁷ Now I have related to you, Rama, this story of Dasura that you may learn from his example the unreality of the apparent world which is only a shadow of the ideal one. ³⁸ It was for this reason that I told you what Dasura had said by way of explanation of the phenomenal world as a shadow of the ideal world. ³⁹ Therefore, know the Spirit like Dasura, and imitate his example in the magnanimity of your soul. Forsake the unreal and pursue reality for your permanent delight.

⁴⁰ Rub out the dirt of desire from your mind and see the image of truth in it as in a mirror. Thus you will attain the highest state of knowledge and be honored in all worlds as a perfect being.

Chapter 56 — The Paradox of the Soul as Passive Cause; Spirit & Corporeality Do Not Mix

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Knowing the world to be a nothingness, you must cease to take any delight in it. For what reasonable being is there who would delight in its unreality? ² If you take the phenomenal world for a reality, you may continue to enslave yourself to the unreal material and lose the spiritual nature of your soul. ³ If you know it to be a temporary existence, why should you take any interest in what is so frail and unstable, rather than care for your immortal soul?

⁴ The world is no substantial existence, nor are you a being of its emptiness. The world is only a clear reflection of the Divine Mind extending over all infinity. ⁵ The world is neither an agent nor is it the act of any agent. It simply is the reflection of the ideal without any agency of its own.

⁶ Whether the world is with or without an agent, or has a maker or not, still you cannot determine whether it is a real substance except that it appears so to your mind. ⁷ The soul is devoid of all organs of action and with all its activity, it remains motionless and without action, as anything that is inactive and immovable. ⁸ The world is the production of a fortuitous chance, and none but children place any reliance on it. ⁹ The world is neither stable nor fragile, but it is mutable from one state to another. It is known to us by its repeated reproductions and visibility. ¹⁰ It is neither everlasting nor a momentous thing. Its constant mutability contradicts its firmness, and its nothingness is opposed to its temporariness.

¹¹ If the soul is the active power without its organs of action, it must be unfailing and entire because the continuance of its inorganic operations cannot weaken its powers. ¹² Therefore there is an irresistible destiny which is absolutely overruling. The soul is existence and nonexistence itself. It is sedate and continuous, and all visible disturbances are only false appearances.

¹³ The limit of a hundred years for human life is only a very small portion of unlimited duration. Therefore it is very astonishing that anyone should be concerned with this small portion of his existence (in disregard of his eternal life).

¹⁴ If we grant that worldly affairs are durable, yet still they are not deserving of your reliance, because what faith can you rely on the union of two opposites such as the mind and matter? ¹⁵ And if the state of worldly things is unsteady and uncertain, it can not be deserving of your confidence. Say, can you be sorry at the dissolving of the foam and froth on milk or water? Then why should you lament at the loss of the perishable?

¹⁶ Know, O strong armed Rama, that reliance on the world is the fetter of the soul to it. It does not behoove anybody to join the perishable and imperishable together like water and its froth.

¹⁷ Although the soul is the agent (or source) of all actions, yet it remains as no agent at all. It is unconnected with its actions, as the lamp with its light. ¹⁸ Doing all it does nothing, like the sun directing the business of the day without doing anything by itself. It moves like the sun without moving from its place, but retains its station in its own orbit.

¹⁹ There is some hidden cause guiding the course of the world other than the soul and body, just as there is an unknown cause of the course of the Aruna River in spite of its being blocked by stones.

²⁰ When you have known this for certain by your own proficiency, O Rama, and when you have well ascertained this truth by its clearest evidence,²¹ you ought no more place any reliance on material things, which are as false as an ambient flame, or a vision in dream, or as any falsehood whatever.

²² As a stranger is not to be taken into your friendship on his first appearance, so you must never trust or rely on anything of this world through your ignorance.²³ Never place your reliance on anything of this world with the fond desire of an over-heated man looking towards the moon, or a cold-stricken man towards the sun, or a parched man does towards water in a mirage.

²⁴ Look upon this ideal world (which is born of your brain) as you look upon a creature of your conception, a vision in your dream, an apparition, or the appearance of two moons in the sky by your visual deception.²⁵ Shun your reliance on the fair creation of your imagination and without minding what you are, conduct yourself cheerfully in your sphere.²⁶ Shun your desires and the thoughts of your agency, even when you are doing anything at all.

²⁷ It is a general law that the proximity of the cause causes the act, even without the will of the actor, just as the presence of a lamp enlightens the room without the will of the lamp.²⁸ Look at the kurchi tree blooming and blossoming under the influence of heavy clouds, and not of its own accord. So it is destined for the three worlds to appear to sight under the influence of the Supreme Being.²⁹ As the appearance of the sun in the sky employs all beings to their daily duties without his will or command, so the omnipresence of God causes the actions of all beings of their own spontaneity and without his will, act or fiat.³⁰ And as a bright gem reflects its light without any will on its part, so the mere existence of God causes the existence of all worlds.

³¹ Thus are causality and its lack both situated in your soul, which therefore is called the cause of your actions because of its presence in the body, but in no way its cause owing to its lack of will.³² The entity of the soul being beyond the perception of sense, it is neither the agent nor recipient of any action. But being confined in the conscious body, it is thought to be both an active and passive agent.

³³ Thus the properties of both causality and its lack reside in the soul. You may take it in any light you want for your purpose and rest content with your belief.³⁴ But firmly believing yourself to be situated in the body doing actions without thinking of yourself as their author will save you from the guilt of all your acts.

³⁵ The man who does not employ his mind to his actions becomes indifferent (*vairagya*) to the world. He is free from the world who is certain that he is no agent of his actions.³⁶ Whether a man is fond of his enjoyments or forsakes them in disgust, it is all the same to he who thinks himself to be no actor of them.

³⁷ But if you wish to remain Rama with your high ambition of doing everything in the world, that is also good, and you may try to do that.³⁸ But if I do not fall into such a great error as to have this high aspiration of yours, then I am never liable to the passions of anger, enmity, and other violent emotions in this world.

³⁹ The bodies that we bear are nourished by some and burned by others. Such being the state of our own being, we have no cause for our joy or sorrow in it.⁴⁰ Knowing ourselves to be the authors of our own happiness and misery, and knowing that we are the causes for the rise and dissolution of the

world in our view, we have no reason to be joyful or sorry about it.⁴¹ When we have that sweet composure which is a balm to all the diseases in our soul, then there is an end of the joys and sorrows of our own making.⁴² Fellow feeling for all living beings makes the best state of the mind. The soul that is so disposed is not subject to reincarnation.

⁴³ Rama, make this the best lesson for your conduct in life, that with all your activities you continue to think yourself as no actor at all.⁴⁴ Remain quiet and steady as you are by resigning all things to themselves. Never think that it is you who does or undoes anything.⁴⁵ But if you look to the different ways in which you do one thing or the other, then you can have no rest or quiet but must run in the way that leads to the trap of perpetual struggle and misery.

⁴⁶ The belief of a man's corporeality, that he is a destructible body and not a spiritual being, is only a bed of thorns to him. Therefore it must be avoided by all means in order to evade the danger of his imminent destruction.⁴⁷ Corporeality is to be shunned as a hell-hound feeding on dog meat. After the cloud of corporeality disappears from view, the light of spirituality will appear.⁴⁸ After the clouds of corporeal desires disperse, the pure light of spirituality presents the appearance of bright moonbeams of holiness. It is by the help of this light that the spiritual person is able to steer across the ocean of this world.

⁴⁹ Rama, remain in that best and blessed state in which the wisest, best and holiest of men have found their rest. It is the constant habit of thinking yourself as nothing and not doing anything, or that you are all things and are doing everything as the Supreme Soul knows itself to be, or that you are some person having a personality of your own, and yet nobody.

Chapter 57 — The Question of Duality again Deferred; First Avoid Desire

¹ Rama said, “Your words, O brahmin, are true and well spoken. I find the soul to be the inactive agent of actions, the impassive recipient of their effects, and the spiritual cause of the corporeal. ² I find the soul to be the sole lord of all and omnipresent in its course. It has the nature of consciousness and the form of transparency. It resides in all bodies, as the five elements compose the bodies of land and sea. ³ Now I come to understand the nature of Brahman. I am as pacified by your speech as the heated mountain is cooled by rainwater.”

⁴ “From its seclusion and unwillingness, the soul neither does nor receives anything, but its universal action of pervading makes it both the actor and sufferer. ⁵ But sage, there is a question too vivid and irritating in my mind. I pray you remove it by your enlightened speech, as moonbeams dispel the darkness of the night. ⁶ Tell me sage, where do these dualities come from? There is the reality of one and the unreality of the other, and that this is “I” and that is not me. If the soul is one and indivisible, how is this one thing and that another? ⁷ There being but one self-existent and self-evident soul from the beginning, how does it become subject to these opposites, like the bright disc of sun comes to be hidden under clouds?”

⁸ Vasishta answered:—

Rama, I will give the correct answer to this question of yours when I come to my conclusion. Then you will learn the cause of these dualities. ⁹ Rama, you will not be able to comprehend my answers to these questions until you become acquainted with my solution to the question of liberation.

¹⁰ Only an adult youth can appreciate the beauty of a love song. So it is that only a holy man can grasp the sense of what I say about these abstruse subjects. ¹¹ Sayings of such great importance are as fruitless with ignorant people as a work on erotic subjects is useless to children. ¹² There is a time and a season for every subject for men, just as autumn produces the harvest and not spring. ¹³ The preaching of a sermon is selectable for old men like fine colorings are suitable for clean canvas. So a spiritual discourse of deep sense suits one who has known the Spirit.

¹⁴ A little earlier I mentioned something which may serve to answer your question, although you have not fully comprehended its meaning. ¹⁵ When you come to know the Spirit in your own spirit, you will doubtlessly come to find the answer to your question by yourself. ¹⁶ I will fully expound on the subject of your question at the conclusion of my argument when you have arrived at a better knowledge of these things. ¹⁷ The spiritual man knows the spirit in his own spirit, and it is the good grace of the Supreme Spirit to manifest itself to the spirit of the spiritual man.

¹⁸ Rama, I have already described the argument concerning the agency and inertness of the soul, yet it is your ignorance of this doctrine that makes you foster doubts. ¹⁹ The man bound to his desires is a bondsman, and one freed from them is said to be set free from his slavery. Cast away your desires and you will have no cause to seek freedom. ²⁰ First forsake your foul desires, then be free from your desire of worldly possessions. Then foster your better wishes, and at last incline to your pure and holy leanings. ²¹ After having conducted yourself with pure desires, get rid of even these at the end. Then being freed from all desires, be inclined towards and united with your intellect. ²² Then renounce your intellectual propensity, together with your mental and conscious inclinations, and

finally having reached the state of settled tranquility, get rid of your mind also in order to set yourself free from all other desires.

²³ Be an intellectual being and continue to breathe your vital breath. But keep your imagination under control and take no account of the course of time or the revolution of days and nights. ²⁴ Forsake your desire for the objects of sense and root out your sense of individual ego which is the root of desire. Let your understanding be calm and quiet and you will be honored by all. ²⁵ Drive away all feelings and thoughts from your heart and mind, for he who is free from anxieties is superior to all.

²⁶ Let a man practice his samadhi trance or other sorts of intense meditation or not, he is reckoned to have obtained his liberation whose elevated mind has lost its reliance on worldly things. ²⁷ The man devoid of desires has no need to observe or avoid pious acts. The freedom of his mind from dependence on anything is sufficient for his liberation.

²⁸ A man may have well studied the scriptures, and discussed about them in conversation, yet he is far from perfection without perfect renunciation and silence. ²⁹ There are men who have examined everything and wandered in all parts of the world, but there are few who have known the truth. ³⁰ Of all things observed in the world, there is nothing that may be truly desirable and is sought after by the wise. ³¹ All this excitement of the world and all the pursuits of men tend only towards the support of the animal body. There is nothing in the world that leads to the edification of the rational soul.

³² Search all over this earth, in heaven above and in the infernal regions below, and you will find only few people who have known what is worth knowing. ³³ It is rare to find a wise man whose mind is devoid of its firm reliance on the vanities of the world, whose mind is freed from its desire or disgust of something or another as agreeable or disagreeable.

³⁴ A man may be lord of the world or he may pierce through the clouds and search heaven (by yoga), yet he cannot enjoy the solace of his soul without his knowledge of it. ³⁵ I admire those high minded men who have bravely subdued their senses. It is from them that we have the remedy to remove the curse of our repeated births. ³⁶ I see every place filled by the five elements, and a sixth is not to be seen anywhere in the world. Such being the case everywhere, what else can I expect to find in earth or heaven or in the regions below?

³⁷ A wise man, relying on his own reason and judgment, steps out from the abyss of this world as easily as he leaps over a ditch. But he who has cast aside his reason finds the world as wide as the broad ocean. ³⁸ The man of enlightened understanding looks upon this globe of the earth like the bulb of a kadamba flower, round as an apple or a ball. He neither gives nor receives nor wants anything in this world. ³⁹ Shame on the foolish who fight for this tiny piece of earth and wage warfare destroying millions of their fellow creatures.

⁴⁰ How can anyone live and enjoy the blessings of this world for a whole kalpa when he can not escape the sorrow consequent on the loss of all his friends during that period? ⁴¹ He who has known the self has no craving for heavenly bliss within himself because he knows his gain of all the three worlds can never lead to the strengthening of his soul. ⁴² But the avaricious are not content with all they have and like the body of this earth, is not full with all its hills and mountains and surrounding seas. ⁴³ There is nothing in this earth or in the upper and lower worlds which is of any use to the sage

acquainted with spiritual knowledge.

⁴⁴ The mind of the self-knowing sage is one vast expanse like the spacious sky. It is tranquil and sedate and unconscious of itself. ⁴⁵ It views the body as a network of veins and arteries, pale and white as frost and all cellular within. ⁴⁶ It sees the mountains floating like foam on the surface of the transparent ocean of Brahman. It looks upon consciousness as blazing brightly like the sun over the mirage of existence. ⁴⁷ It finds the nature of the soul to be as extensive as the ocean containing creation as its waves. It considers the all-pervasive soul to be like a big cloud raining down in showers of scriptures and knowledge. ⁴⁸ Fire, moon and sun, as every opaque atom in nature, appear as fuel in a furnace that needs to be lit by the blaze of the intellect.

⁴⁹ All embodied souls of men, gods and demigods rove in the wilderness of the world, feeding upon their fodder of food like deer grazing in their pasture. ⁵⁰ The world is a prison house in which everyone is a prisoner with his wearisome body. The bones are the latches of this dungeon, the head its roof, the skin its leather, and the blood and flesh of the body are like the drink and food of the imprisoned. ⁵¹ Men are like dolls covered with skin for the amusement of children. They are continually wandering in quest of food, like cattle running towards their pasture grounds.

⁵² But the high-minded man is not of this kind. He is not moved by worldly temptations, just as a mountain is not shaken by a gentle breeze. ⁵³ The truly great and wise man rests in that highest state of eminence in which the stations of the sun and moon are seen as the lower regions. ⁵⁴ It is by the light of the Supreme Spirit that all the worlds are lit and the minds of all are enlightened. But the ignorant are immersed in the ocean of ignorance and nourish only their bodies in disregard of their souls.

⁵⁵ No worldly good can allure the heart of the wise who have tested the vanity of temporal things. No earthly evil can obscure their souls which are as bright as the clear sky which no cloud can darken.

⁵⁶ No worldly pleasure can gladden the soul of the wise man, just as the dance of monkeys can give no joy to the heart of Shiva which delights in the dancing of Parvati. ⁵⁷ No earthly delight can have its seat in the heart of the wise, as sunlight is never reflected in a gem hidden under a bushel.

⁵⁸ The material world appears to be a solid rock to the unmoved ignorant, but it seems like a fleeting wave to the wise. The ignorant take great pleasure in the transitory enjoyments of the world, but the wise take them to no account, as a swan despises to look upon the moss of a lake.

Chapter 58 — The Song of Kacha

¹ Vasishta said:—

Regarding this subject, Rama, I will tell you the holy song sung of old by Kacha, the son of Brihaspati, the teacher of the gods.

² This son of the divine tutor lived in a grove in some part of Mount Meru where by means of his holy meditation he found the tranquility of his spirit in the Supreme Soul. ³ His mind being filled with the ambrosial nectar of divine knowledge, he derived no satisfaction at the sight of the visible world composed of the five elements. ⁴ Being rapt in his mind with the vision of the Holy Spirit, he saw nothing else beside him. Then he fervently uttered to himself the following joyful song.

⁵ “What is there for me to do, refuse, receive or reject, and what place is there for me to go or refrain from going when this whole is filled by Divine Spirit like the water of the great deluge? ⁶ I find pleasure and pain inherent in the soul and the sky and all its sides contained in the magnitude of the soul. Thus knowing all things to be full of the Holy Spirit, I forget and sink all my pains in my spirit.

⁷ The Spirit is inside and outside of all bodies. It is above and below and on all sides of all. Here, there and everywhere is the same Spirit. There is no place where it is not. ⁸ The Spirit abides everywhere and all things abide in the Spirit. All things are the same with the Spirit and I am situated in the same Spirit. ⁹ There is nothing intelligent or unconscious which is not the Spirit. All is Spirit and so am I also. Spirit fills the whole space and is situated in every place. ¹⁰ I am as full of that Spirit and its indescribable bliss as the all encompassing water of the great deluge.”

This was how Kacha was thinking in the dwelling of the golden mountain. ¹¹ He uttered the sound Om, and it rang on all sides like the ringing of a bell. First he first uttered the vowel “O” and then the nasal “m” which tops it like a tuft of hair. He remained meditating on the spirit in his mind, not as situated in or without it.

¹² Rama, thus did Kacha continue to think in himself and chant his holy hymn, being freed from the foulness of flesh and rarefied in his spirit like the breath of the wind. His soul was as clear as the sky in autumn after the dark clouds of the rainy season are dispersed.

Chapter 59 — How Brahma Creates and Sustains

¹ Vasishta continued:—

There is nothing in this world except the gratification of carnal desires and the pleasure of eating, drinking and lust with the vulgar. But the good and great desire the lasting good of men.

² Crooked and creeping beings and things, beasts and wicked men, and ignorant people are gratified only with carnal pleasures. They are all fond of everything that is conducive to their bodily enjoyments. ³ They are human asses who dote on the beauty of female bodies which are no better than lumps of flesh, blood and bones. ⁴ This may be desirable to dogs and devouring animals, but not to man. All animals have fleshy bodies, just as trees have trunks of wood and minerals their forms of earth.

⁵ There is the earth below and the sky above and nothing that is extraordinary before us. The senses pursue sensible objects, but human reason finds no delight in them. ⁶ Men's consciousness only leads them to error. True happiness, which is desired by all, is situated beyond all sensible objects and gratifications. ⁷ The result of worldly pleasure is sorrow and misery, just as the product of a flame is soot and blackness. The functions of the mind and senses are all fleeting and have their rise and fall by turns. All enjoyments are short lived owing to the fleeting nature of objects and the decay of our powers of enjoyment. ⁸ Prosperity fades away like a plant encircled by a poisonous snake. Our consorts die away as soon as anything born of blood and flesh. ⁹ The delusion of love and lust makes one body embrace another, both of which are composed of impure flesh and blood. Such are the acts, O Rama, that delight the ignorant.

¹⁰ Wise men take no delight in this unreal and unstable world which is more poisonous than poison itself and is able to infect even those who have not tasted the bitter affliction of grief. ¹¹ Because the thought of your materiality has taken possession of your mind, forsake your desire of enjoyment and seek to be united with your spiritual essence.

¹² Whenever the thought of making the unreal world arises in the mind of Brahma the Creator, he takes an unreal body upon himself of his own will. ¹³ It becomes as bright as gold by his own light, then he is called Virinchi on account of his will, and he is also called Brahma because he is born of Brahma.

¹⁴ Rama asked, "How does the world become a solid substance from having been a visionary form in the spirit or mind of God?"

¹⁵ Vasishta replied:—

When the lotus-born Brahma rose from his cradle of the embryo of Brahma, he uttered the name of Brahman, which is why he was called Brahma. ¹⁶ He then had the conception of the world in his own imagination, and that conception assumed a visible and solid form by the power of his will. It is called the conceptional or ideal world.

¹⁷ At first he conceived a luminous idea of light which, having assumed a visible form, spread on all sides like a creeping plant in autumn is stretched all about. ¹⁸ The rays of this light pierced all sides like threads of gold. They shone and spread themselves both above and below. ¹⁹ Concealed in this light, the lotus-born cosmic egg (*hiranyagarbha*) conceived in his mind a figure like his luminous

form and produced it as the four-faced Brahma.²⁰ Then the sun sprung forth from that light and shone like a globe of gold amidst his world-encircling beams.²¹ He held the locks of his flaming hair on his head, which flashed like fire all around him and filled the sphere of heaven with heat and light.

²² Afterwards the most intelligent Brahma produced some other luminous forms (*marichis*) from portions of that light which proceeded from it like waves of the ocean.²³ These most potent and competent beings were possessed of their own concepts and will, and in a moment they produced figures as they thought of and willed.²⁴ They conceived the forms of various other beings which they produced one after the other as they desired and willed.

²⁵ Then Brahma remembered the eternal Vedas and the many ceremonial rites which he established as laws in his house of this world.²⁶ Having taken the gigantic body of Brahma and the extensive form of the mind, he produced the visible world as his own offspring.²⁷ He stretched seas and mountains, and made trees and upper worlds. He raised Mount Meru on the surface of the earth and all the forests and groves upon it.²⁸ It was he who ordained happiness and misery, birth and death, and disease and decay. He created the passions and feelings of living beings under their threefold divisions of sattva, rajas and tamas.

²⁹ Whatever has been created by the hands (faculties) of the mind of Brahma, the same continues to be perceived by our deluded vision.³⁰ He gave the mind and laws to all beings and he makes the worlds again as they are situated in his mind.

³¹ Therefore it is error that has given rise to the false conception of the eternity of the world. It is the conception of the mind alone that creates the ideal forms.³² The acts of all things in the world are produced by their conception and wishes. It is the concept or thought that binds even the gods to their destiny.

³³ The great Brahma that was the source of the creation of the world sits in a meditative mood contemplating on everything that he has made.³⁴ It was by a motion of the mind that the wonderful form of the living principle was formed, and it was this that gave rise to the whole world with all its changing phenomena.³⁵ A motion of the mind made the gods Indra, Upendra and Mahendra and others, as it did the hills and seas in all the worlds above and below us, and in the ten sides of the heaven above.

³⁶ Then Brahma thought in himself, "I have thus stretched out at large the network of my desire. I will now cease from extending the objects of my desire any further."³⁷ Being so determined, he ceased from the toil of his creation and reflected on the eternal Spirit within his own spirit.³⁸ By knowing the Spirit, his mind was melted down by its brightness and reclined on it with the same ease as one finds in his soft sleep after long labor.³⁹ Being freed from his selfishness and egoism, he felt that perfect tranquility which the soul receives by resting in itself and which is like the calm sea after it subsides in itself.

⁴⁰ The Lord sometimes leaves off his meditation, like the reservoirs of water sometimes overflow their banks and boundaries.⁴¹ He beholds the world as a valley of misery with very little of happiness in it and where the soul is tightly bound to its alternating passions and is led by its changing hopes and fears.⁴² He takes pity on the miserable condition of man, and with a view towards their

welfare and for their guidance, he promulgates sacred scriptures and rites which are full of meaning.
⁴³ He propounds the Vedas and their branches, the Vedangas, which are filled with spiritual knowledge and the teachings of wisdom. He revealed the Puranas and other scriptures for the salvation of mankind.

⁴⁴ Again the spirit of Brahma reclined on the Supreme Spirit and was relieved from its toil. He remained as tranquil as the calmed ocean after it was churned by Mandara Mountain.⁴⁵ Brahma having observed the efforts of mankind on earth, and having prescribed to them the rules of their conduct, returned to himself where he sat reclined on his lotus seat.

⁴⁶ Sometimes he remains entirely devoid of all his desires. At other times, from his great kindness, he takes his cares for mankind upon himself.

⁴⁷ He is neither simple in his nature nor does he assume or reject his form in the states of his creation and cessation. He is nothing other than consciousness which is neither present nor absent in any place.

⁴⁸ He is conversant with all states and properties of things, and is as full as the ocean without intermixture of any crude matter in him.⁴⁹ Sometimes he is quite devoid of all attributes and desires and is only awakened from his inertness by his own desire of doing good to his creatures.

⁵⁰ I have thus expounded to you about the existence of Brahma and his real states of sattwika, madhyanika and suranika creation.⁵¹ The intellectual sattwika creation is what rises of itself in the Spirit of Brahma, and the mental is the result of his mind and will. The first is the direct inspiration of Brahma into the Spirit of Brahma.

⁵² After creation of the material world by the rajas (active) nature of Brahma, there rises the visible madhyanika creation in the air by the will of the creator.⁵³ In the next step of animal creation, some were born as gods and others as yaksha demigods, and this is called suranika because the suras or gods were created in it.

⁵⁴ Every creature is born in the shape of its inherent nature, then it is either elevated or degraded according to the nature of its associations. It also lays the foundation of its future state of bondage to birth or liberation by its acts commenced in the present life.

⁵⁵ In this manner, O Rama, the world has come to existence. Its creation is evidently a work of labor, as it is brought into being by various acts of motion and exertion of the body and mind. All these products of the god's will are sustained by continuous force and effort on his part.

Chapter 60 — Production of Sattvic and Rajas-Sattvic Beings

¹ Vasishta continued:—

O strong armed Rama, after the great father of creation took himself to his activity, he formed and supported the worlds by his energy and might.² All living and departed souls are tied like buckets to the rope of their desire and made to rise and fall in this old well of the world by the law of their predetermined destiny.

³ All beings proceeding from Brahma and entering the prison house of the world have to be concentrated into the body of the air-born Brahma, just as all the waters of the sea have to be whirled into the whirlpool in the sea.⁴ Others are continually springing from the mind of Brahma, like sparks of fire struck out of a red-hot iron, while many are flying into it as their common center.

⁵ Rama, all lives are like waves in the ocean of the everlasting spirit of Brahma. They rise and fall in him according to his will.⁶ They enter into the atmospheric air like smoke rising and entering the clouds, at last mixed together by the wind in the spirit of Brahma.⁷ Then they are overtaken by the elementary atoms flying in the air which lay hold on them in a few days just as demons seize the host of gods with violence.⁸ Then the air breathes the vital breath in these bodies which infuses life and vigor in them.⁹ Thus living beings manifest themselves on earth, while others are flying as living spirits in the form of ethereal smoke.

¹⁰ Some appear in their subtle elemental forms in their airy cells in the sky and shine as bright as the beams of the luminous moon.¹¹ Then they fall upon the earth like pale moonbeams falling on the Milky Ocean.¹² They land like birds in the groves and forests and become stiffened by sipping the juice of fruits and flowers.¹³ Then losing their aerial and bright forms of moonbeams, they settle on those fruits and flowers and suck their juice like infants hanging upon their mothers' breasts.¹⁴ The protozoa are strengthened by drinking the juice of fruit ripened by the light and heat of the sun, then they remain in a state of unconsciousness until they enter the animal body.

¹⁵ The animated microscopic organisms remain in the womb with their undeveloped desires in the same manner as unopened leaves are contained in the seed of a fig tree.¹⁶ All lives are situated in the Great God like fire is inherent in wood and a clay pot resides in the earth. After many processes they have their full development.

¹⁷ One that has received no bodily form and moves without manifesting itself is said to be a *satya* (truth) or spiritual being and has a large scope of action.¹⁸ He who gets his liberation in or after his lifetime is said to have a pure (*sattvika*) birth, but whoever is obliged to be reborn by his acts is said to belong to the active-pure (*rajas-sattvika*) class.¹⁹ Anyone of this class who is born to rule over others becomes giddy with pride (*tamas*, passive) is said to be of the nature of ignorance (*tamasika*). I will now speak of this class of beings.

²⁰ Those originally born with pure (*sattvika*) nature are pure in their conduct and have never to be born again.²¹ Men of active-pure (*rajas-sattvika*) temperament have to be reborn on earth, but being elevated by their reasoning powers, they have no more to be born in this lower world.²² Those who have directly proceeded from the Supreme Spirit (without any mixture of these natures) are men filled with every quality and are very rare on earth.

²³ The various classes of tamasic (idle, lazy) creatures of ignorance are both unconscious and speechless. They are of the nature of immovable plants and minerals and need no description.

²⁴ How many among gods and men have been reborn to the cares of the world owing to the demerit of their past action! I myself, though filled with knowledge and reason, am obliged to lead a life of the rajas-sattvika kind (owing to my interference in society).

²⁵ It is by your ignorance of the Supreme that you behold the vast extent of the world, but by considering it rightly, you will soon find all this to be only the one unity.

Chapter 61 — Rajas and Sattva Qualities to Be Desired

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Those who are born with the nature of rajas-sattva remain highly pleased in the world and are as happy on their faces as the face of the sky with the serene light of moonbeams.² Their faces are not darkened by melancholy but are as bright as the face of heaven. They are never exposed to troubles, like lotus flowers are exposed to night frost.³ They never deviate from their even nature, but remain unmoved like immovable bodies. They persist in their course of beneficence, like trees yielding their fruit to all.

⁴ Rama, the rajas and sattva nated man gets his liberation in the same manner as the disc of the moon receives its ambrosial beams.⁵ He never forsakes his mildness, even when he is in trouble. He remains as cool as the moon even in her eclipse. He shines with the lovely virtue of fellow-feeling to all.

⁶ Blessed are the righteous who are always even tempered, gentle and as handsome as forest trees beset by vines with clusters of blossoms.⁷ They keep in their bounds, just as the sea remains within its boundaries, and they are meek with their even tempers, like yourself. Hence they never desire or wish for anything in the world.

⁸ You must always walk in the way of the godly and not run to the sea of dangers. You should go in life this way without pain or sorrow.⁹ Your soul will be as elevated in the rajasic and sattvic states by avoiding the ways of the ungodly and considering well the teachings of the scriptures.¹⁰ Consider well in your mind the frail acts that are attended with various evils. Do those acts which are good for the three worlds, both in their beginning and end and forever to eternity.

¹¹ The intelligent, because they are free from narrow views, think that false mental images, the offspring of ignorance, are dangerous to them and not otherwise.¹² For the enlightenment of your understanding, you should always remember and say, “O Lord! What am I, and where does this multiplicity of worlds come from?”¹³ By diligently considering these subjects in the society of the wise and righteous, you must neither be engaged in your ceremonial acts nor continue in your unnecessary practices of rituals.¹⁴ You must look at the disconnectedness of all things in the world from you and seek to associate with the righteous, like peacock yearning for rainy clouds.

¹⁵ Our inner egoism, outer body, and the external world are the three seas surrounding us one after the other. Only right reasoning provides the raft to cross over them and bring us under the light of truth.

¹⁶ By refraining to think of the beauty and firmness of your exterior form, you will come to perceive the internal light of your consciousness hidden under your egoism, like the thin, connecting thread concealed under a string of pearls.¹⁷ That eternally existent and infinitely extended blessed thread connects and stretches through all beings. Like pearls strung with a thread, all things are linked together by the latent spirit of God.

¹⁸ The empty space of Divine Consciousness contains the whole universe just like the emptiness of air contains the glorious sun, and like the hollow of the earth contains an ant.¹⁹ The same air fills the cavity of every pot on earth, so it is the one and the same consciousness and spirit of God which fills, enlivens and sustains all bodies in every place.²⁰ As the ideas of sweet and sour are the same in all

men, so the consciousness of the Intellect is alike in all mankind.²¹ There being only one real substance in existence, it is a tangible error for ignorant folks to say, "This one exists and the other perishes or vanishes away."

²² There is no such thing at anytime, Rama, which being once produced is resolved into nothing. All these are neither realities nor unrealities, only representations or reflections of the Real One.

²³ Whatever is visible and of temporary existence is without any perceptible substantiality of its own. It is only an object of our fallacy, beyond which it has no existence.

²⁴ Why, O Rama! should anybody suffer himself to be deluded by these unrealities? All these accompaniments here are no better than causes of our delusion.²⁵ The accompaniment of unrealities tends only to our delusion here. If they are taken for realities, to what good do they tend other than to delude us the more?

Chapter 62 — Vasishta Exhorts Rama How to Conduct Himself

Vasishta speaking:—

¹ The diligent and rational inquirer after truth has a natural tendency to rely on the company of the wise and the well matured guru, and discusses matters of the scriptures by the rules of the scriptures he has learned before, and not talk randomly. ² In this way, by discussing the abstract science of yoga with the good and great and un-avaricious learned, he can attain true wisdom.

³ The man who is so acquainted with the true sense of the scriptures and qualified by his habit of dispassion in the society of holy men shines as the model of intelligence, like yourself. ⁴ Your liberal mindedness and self-reliance, combined with your cool headedness and all other virtues, have set you above the reach of misery and all mental affliction, and also has freed you from future reincarnation by your attainment of liberation in this life. ⁵ Truly have you become like the autumn sky cleared of its gloomy clouds. You are freed from worldly cares and you are filled with the best and highest wisdom.

⁶ He is truly liberated whose mind is freed from the fluctuations of its thoughts and from the flights and fumes of its thickening fancies and ever crowding particulars. ⁷ Henceforward all men on earth will try to imitate the noble disposition of the equanimity of your mind, which is devoid of its passions of love and hatred, as also of affection and enmity.

⁸ Those who conform to the customs of their country and conduct themselves in the ordinary course of men in their outward demeanor, and cherish their inner sentiments in the close recesses of their bosoms, are reckoned as truly wise and are sure to get over the ocean of the world on the floating raft of their wisdom. ⁹ The meek man who has a spirit of universal toleration like yours is worthy of receiving the light of knowledge and of understanding the significance of what I say.

¹⁰ Live as long as you have to live in this frail body of yours and keep your passions and feelings under the sway of your reason. Act according to the rules of society and keep your desires under subjection. ¹¹ Enjoy the perfect peace and tranquility of the righteous and wise, and avoid both the cunning of fox-like deceivers of others and the silly foolishness of children.

¹² Men who imitate the purity of manners and conduct of those who are born with the property of goodness also acquire the purity of their lives in process of time. ¹³ The man who is habituated in the practice of manners and the modes of life of another person is soon changed to that mode of life, though he be of a different nature or of another species of being.

¹⁴ The practices of past lives accompany all mankind in their succeeding births as their preordained destiny. Only by our vigorous efforts are we able to avert our fates, like kings using their greater might to overcome a hostile force. ¹⁵ Only through patience does one redeem his good sense. Only by patient effort may one advance to a higher birth from his low and mean condition. ¹⁶ The good have attained better births in life because of their good understanding. Therefore, O Rama, employ yourself polishing your understanding. ¹⁷ A God-fearing man is possessed of every good and exerts his efforts to attain Godliness. Only by manly efforts do men obtain the most precious blessings.

¹⁸ Those of the best kind on earth long for their liberation in future, which also requires the exertion of

tapas and meditation for its attainment.¹⁹ There is nothing in this earth or below or in the heaven of the celestials above which is unattainable to a concerned man through his self-efforts.²⁰ It is impossible for you to obtain the object of your desire without the exercise of your patience and dispassion, and through the exertion of your prowess and austerities of celibacy (*brahmacharya*, a chaste student). Nor is it possible to succeed in anything without the right use of reason.²¹ Try to know yourself and do good to all creatures by your courage. Employ your good understanding to drive away all your cares and sorrows. In this way you will be liberated from all pain and sorrow.

²² O Rama who is filled with all admirable qualities and endued with the high power of reason, keep yourself steady in acts of goodness and never may the false cares of this world overtake you in your future life.

BOOK V
On Dissolution, Becoming Quiet
(*Upasama Khanda*)

The previous section on firm abidance set out the goal of abiding in the atman. The upasanti prakarana gives instruction on the ways and means for attaining that goal.

The chief obstacle to Self realization is the false identification of the atman with the body (dehatmabodha). This false identification is the result of ahamkara or the ego sense. This section gives practical guidance to eliminate ones identification with the ego and describes a number of methods and yogic processes for this purpose. The major ones are inquiry into the true nature of the Self (vichara), seeing all creation equally as varied manifestations of the one brahman or God (samadarsana), considering oneself as pure consciousness (chit) in all conditions of life and at all times, and performing ones allotted duties in life without any attachment. When as a result of these practices a person becomes perfectly unattached to the fruits of actions (asanga), all attachments, aversions and fears disappear and the person becomes qualified for attaining the samadhi stage.

Chapter 1 — The Midday Ritual

¹ Vasishta said:—

Rama, now hear me propose to you the subject of quietude or rest, which follows that of existence and sustenance of the universe. This knowledge will lead you to nirvana, final extinction.

² Valmiki says:—

As Vasishta was delivering his holy words, the assembly of the princes remained as still as the stars in the clear sky of an autumn night.³ Listening princes, looking with muted gaze at the venerable sage amidst the assembly, resembled the unmoving lotuses looking at the bright sun from their breathless beds.⁴ Harem princesses forgot their joy at hearing the sermon of the sage. Their minds became as cool and quiet as in the long absence of their consorts.⁵ Ladies fanning with fans in their hands remained as still as a flock of flapping geese resting on a lotus bed, and the jingling of gems and jewels on their arms ceased like the chirping of birds on the trees at night.⁶ The princes who heard these doctrines sat reflecting on their hidden meanings, their index fingers to the tips of their noses in thoughtfulness. Others pondered on their deep sense by laying fingers on their lips.

⁷ Rama's face flushed like the blushing lotus in the morning and it brightened by casting away its melancholy, as the sun shines by dispelling the darkness of night.⁸ King of kings Dasharata felt as delighted hearing the lectures of Vasishta as a peacock is gladdened by the roar of rain clouds.

⁹ Sarana, the king's minister, removed his unstable monkey mind from his state affairs and applied it intensely to attend to the teachings of the sage.¹⁰ Lakshman, who was well versed in all learning, shone as a digit (one-twelfth phase) of the bright crescent moon with the internal light of Vasishta's instructions, and the radiance of his spiritual knowledge.¹¹ Satrughna, the subduer of his enemies, was so full of delight in his heart at the teaching of the sage that his face glowed with joy, like the full moon with all her digits.¹² The other good ministers, whose minds were absorbed in the cares of state affairs, were set at ease by the friendly admonition of the sage. They glowed in their hearts like lotus buds expanded by sunbeams.¹³ All the other chiefs and sages present in that assembly had the gems of their hearts cleansed of their impurity by Vasishta's preaching. Their minds glowed with fervor from his impressive speech.

¹⁴ At this instant the loud sound of conch shells arose resembling the full swell of the sounding ocean and the deep and deafening roar of summer clouds. The conch sound filled the roof of the sky and announced the time of midday service.¹⁵ The loud uproar of the shells drowned out the sage's feeble voice, just as the high sounding roar of rain clouds puts down the notes of the sweet cuckoo.¹⁶ The muni stopped his breath and stopped speaking because it is vain to speak where it is not heeded or heard.

¹⁷ Hearing the midday shout, the sage stopped for a moment. After the noisy confusion was over he addressed Rama and said:—

¹⁸ Rama, thus far I have delivered to you my daily lecture for this day. I will resume it next morning and tell you all that I have to say on the subject.¹⁹ It is ordained for the twice born classes (*dvijas*, the three upper castes) to attend to their religious duties at midday. The lecture does not require us to

swerve from discharging our noonday services at this time.²⁰ Rise therefore, O fortunate Rama, and perform your sacred ablutions and divine services with which you are well acquainted and give your alms and charities also as they are ordained by law.

²¹ Saying so, the sage rose from his seat with the king and his courtiers. He resembled the sun or moon rising from the eastern mountain with their retinue of stars.²² Their rising made the whole assembly rise after them, like a gentle breeze moving a bed of lotuses with the black eyes of black bees sitting upon them.²³ The assembled princes rose up with their crowned heads and marched with their long and massive arms like a body of big elephants from the Vindhyan Hills with their clumsy legs.²⁴ As they pushed up and down in their hurry, the jewels on their bodies rubbed against each other and displayed with a blaze like that of reddened clouds at the setting sun.²⁵ The jingling of gems on crowns resembled the humming of bees and the flashing reflections from crowns spread various colors of the rainbow around.

²⁶ The beauties in the court hall, resembling tender vines and holding fans like clusters of blossoms in their leaf-like palms, formed a forest of beauties about the elephantine forms of the brave princes.

²⁷ The hall reflected the glints of blazing bracelets and looked as if it was strewn with the dust of mandara flowers blown away by the winds.²⁸ There were crystal tanks of pure water mixed with ice and powdered camphor. The landscape around was whitened by kusa grass and the flowers of autumn.²⁹ Gems hanging from princes' head-dresses cast a reddish color over the hollow dome of the hall, making it appear like the evening twilight that precedes the shade of night which puts an end to the daily works of men.³⁰ The fair faces of fairy ladies were like lotuses floating on the watery luster of the strings of pearls hanging upon them. They resembled lines of bees fluttering about lotuses. The anklets at their feet emitted a ringing sound like the humming of bees.

³¹ The large assemblage of princes arose amid the assembled crowds of men and presented a scene never seen before by the admiring people.³² The rulers of the earth bowed down lowly before their sovereign and departed from his presence and the royal palace in large bodies, like waves of the sea, glistening like rainbows by the light of their shining ornaments.

³³ The chief minister Sumantra and others who were best acquainted with royal etiquette prostrated themselves before their king and the holy sage, then took their way towards the holy stream to perform their sacred ablutions.³⁴ The rishis Vamadeva, Vishwamitra and others stood in the presence of Vasishta and waited for his leave to make their departure.³⁵ King Dasharata honored the sages one by one, and then left them to attend to his own business.³⁶ Citizens returned to the city, and foresters retired to their forests. The aerial beings flew in the air, and all went to their respective homes in anticipation of rejoining the assembly the next morning.

³⁷ The venerable Vishwamitra, being invited by the king and Vasishta, stayed and passed the night at Vasishta's home.³⁸ Vasishta was honored by all the princes, sages and great brahmins, and adored by Rama and the other princes of King Dasharata's royal family.³⁹ Then Vasishta proceeded to his hermitage, with the obeisance of the assembled crowd on all sides, and followed by a large retinue just as the god Brahma is accompanied by bodies of celestials.⁴⁰ He then gave leave to Rama and his brother princes, and to all his companions and followers, to return to their homes from his hermitage in the woods.⁴¹ He bade farewell to the aerial, earthly and underground beings that kept him company

with their formal praise of his merits. Then entering his house, he performed his brahmin rites with a dutiful disposition.

Chapter 2 — That Night Rama Ponders Vasishta's Lectures

¹ Valmiki continued relating the story to Bharadwaja, saying:—

After the moon-bright princes returned to their residence, they performed their daily services according to the daily ritual.² Vasishta and the other saints, sages, and brahmins, even the king and princes, were all engaged in their holy services at their own houses.³ They bathed in sacred streams and fountains filled with floating lotuses and other aquatic plants, their edges frequented by reddish geese, cranes and storks.⁴ After they had performed their ablutions, they made donations of lands, cattle, seats and beddings, sesame grains, gold and gems, and food and clothing to the holy brahmins.⁵ Then in their own houses, they worshipped the gods Vishnu and Shiva in their temples and made offerings to the sun and the rulers of the skies with offerings of the gold and gems that are sacred to the particular gods and planets.

⁶ After their offerings were over, they joined with their sons and grandsons, friends and relatives and their guests also in partaking of their lawful food.⁷ Shortly after this, daylight faded away at the eighth watch of the day and the charming city scene began to disappear from sight.⁸ People employed themselves with their proper duties at the end of the day and took to their evening service with the failing beams of the setting sun.⁹ They recited their evening hymn, repeated their *japa* mantras, and uttered their prayer for the forgiveness of sins. They read aloud their hymns and sang their evening songs of praise.

¹⁰ Then rose the shade of night to allay the sorrow of lovelorn ladies, as the moon arose from the Milky Ocean of the east to cool the heat of the setting sun.¹¹ Then the princes of Raghu's race reclined on their downy and flowery beds sprinkled with handfuls of camphor powder and appearing like a sheet of spreading moonlight.¹² The eyes of all men were folded in sleep and they passed the long night as if it were only a short interval.

But Rama kept awake in his bed, meditating on all things he had heard from the sage.¹³ He continued to reflect on Vasishta's lectures which appeared as charming to him like the cry of a parent elephant brings joy to its tender young.

Rama's thoughts:—

¹⁴ What does this wandering of ours in this world mean? Why are all these men and other animals bound to make their entrances and exits in this fleeting theatre?¹⁵ What is the form of our mind and how is it to be governed? What is this illusion (*maya*) of the world? From where did it rise and how is it to be avoided?¹⁶ What is the good or evil of getting rid of this illusion, and how does it cover and overpower the soul? Can it be made to leave by any means in our power?¹⁷ What did the muni say with regard to the means and effect of curbing the desires of the mind? What did he say regarding restraining of our organs? And what about the tranquility of the soul?

¹⁸ Our hearts and minds, our living souls and their delusion tend to stretch out the phenomenal world before us. Our own souls make a reality of unreal existence.¹⁹ All these things are linked together in our minds and are weakened only by the weakening of our mental desires. But how are these to be avoided in order to get rid of our misery?²⁰ The slender light of reason is over-shadowed, like a single crane in the air, by the dark cloud of passions and desires. Then how am I to distinguish right

from wrong, like a goose separates milk from water?

²¹ It is as hard to shun our desires and it is impossible to avoid our troubles here without the utter annihilation of our desire. Here is difficulty in either of two ways. ²² On the one hand, the mind leads us to spiritual knowledge. On the other, the mind seduces us to worldliness. We know not which way to be led by it. The difficulty is as great as a man climbing a mountain or a child escaping from his fear of a yaksha spirit.

²³ All worldly turmoil ends upon attainment of true joy, just as the anxieties of a maiden are over after she has obtained a husband. ²⁴ When will my anxieties become still and when will my cares come to an end? When will my soul have its holiness and my mind find its rest from acts of merit and demerit?

²⁵ When shall I rest in that state of bliss which is as cooling and complete in itself as the full moon with all her digits? When shall I wander about the earth at large, free from worldly cares and ties?

²⁶ When will my fancy stop from its flight and concentrate on the inner soul? When will my mind be absorbed in the Supreme Soul, like a turbulent wave existing in the breast of the quiet sea? ²⁷ When shall I get over this wide ocean of the world, which is disturbed by the turbulent waves of our desires and is full of the hungry crocodiles of our greedy greed? When will I rid myself of this feverish passion? ²⁸ When shall I rest in that state of complete, unemotional stillness of mind which is the goal of those who seek liberation and of the all-tolerant and indifferent philosopher?

²⁹ Ah, when will this continuous fever of my worldliness decrease? It has irritated my whole body by its inward heat and has deranged my humors out of their order! ³⁰ When will this heart of mine cease to throb from its cares, like the light of a lamp ceasing to flutter without wind? When will my understanding gain its light after dispersing the gloom of my ignorance? ³¹ When will these organs and body parts gain their respite from their constant functions? When will this parched frame of mine get over the sea of greed, like a garuda crossing oceans with ease? ³² When will the light of reason, like the clear atmosphere of the autumn sky, dispel this dark cloud of my ignorance that envelopes my heavenly essence under the veil of this sorry and miserable form?

³³ Our minds are filled with the weeds of mandara plants of the Nandana pleasure-garden of paradise. But my soul yearns for its restitution in the Supreme Spirit. ³⁴ The dispassionate man is said to be set in the pure light of reason. Therefore, I long to attain that passionless state of my mind. ³⁵ But my restless mind has made me a prey to the python snake of grief, and I cry out in my sorrow, "O my father and mother! Help me to get out of this difficulty!"

³⁶ I also exclaim, "O my sister understanding! Consent to comply with the request of your poor brother, and consider well the words of the wise sage for our deliverance from misery. ³⁷ I also call you also to my aid, O my good sense, and beg of you, O progeny of your virtuous mother, to remain firm by my side as I struggle to break the bonds of the world."

³⁸ Let me first reflect on what the sage said about renunciation (*vairagya*), then on the conduct of one who longs for his liberation, and next about the creation of the world. ³⁹ Afterwards let me remember all that he said on the existence of the universe, together with his beautiful illustrations, all of which are filled with sound wisdom and deep philosophy. ⁴⁰ Although a lesson may be repeated a hundred times over, it proves to be of no effect unless it is considered with good understanding and the right

sense of its meaning. Otherwise, it is like the empty sound of autumn clouds without a drop of rain.

Chapter 3 — Description of the Royal Assembly

¹ Valmiki continued:—

In this manner, Rama passed the long night with his lengthy series of reflections, eagerly awaiting dawn, like a lotus longing for the rising sun at daybreak.² Gradually the stars faded away at the appearance of the rising morning light in the east. The face of the sky became dimly pale before it was washed over with the white of twilight.³ The beating of morning drums and the alarm of trumpets roused Rama from his thoughts. He rose with his moonlike face blooming like a full blown lotus in its leafy bed.⁴ He performed his morning ablution and devotion, then joined his brothers and a few attendants to go to the hermitage of sage Vasishta.

⁵ Having arrived there, they found the sage entranced in his meditation in his lonely solitude. From a respectful distance, they lowly bent down their heads before him.⁶ After making their obeisance, they waited on him in the compound until the twilight of morning brought daylight over the face of the sky.

⁷ The hermitage thronged with princes and chiefs, saints, sages and brahmins as if the celestials were gathered for a meeting in the highest heaven of Brahma.⁸ The abode of Vasishta was full of people and the crowds of cars, horses and elephants waiting outside made it equal in grandeur to a royal palace.

⁹ After a while the sage rose from his deep meditation and gave suitable reception to the assembled throng that bowed down before him.¹⁰ Then Vasishta, accompanied by Vishwamitra and followed by a long parade of munis and other men, came out of the hermitage and got into a carriage, sitting down in the manner of the lotus-born Brahma sitting on his lotus seat.¹¹ He arrived at Dasharata's palace which was surrounded by a large army. There he got down from his car, as when Brahma descends from his highest heaven to the city of Indra attended by the entire host of celestials.

¹² He entered the grand court hall of the king and was saluted by courtiers lowly bending down before him, just as when a stately gander enters a bed of lotuses amid a body of aquatic birds (all staring at him).¹³ The king also got up and descended from his high throne, then advanced three paces barefoot to receive the venerable sage.¹⁴ Then entered a large collection of chiefs and princes, with groups of saints, sages, brahmins and *hotri* (reciter) and *potri* (corrector) priests.

¹⁵ Next came the minister Sumantra and others, with the learned pundits Somya and others. Rama and his brothers followed with the sons of royal ministers.¹⁶ Next came the ministerial officers, the ministerial priests, and the principal citizens, with bodies of the Malava wrestlers and servants of all orders, and townsmen of different professions.¹⁷ All these took their respective seats and sat in the proper order of their ranks. They kept looking intently on sage Vasishta with uplifted heads and eyes.

¹⁸ The murmur of the assembly was hushed and the eulogists' recitations stopped. Greetings and conferences were at an end and there ensued a still silence in the assembly.

¹⁹ Winds blew sweet fragrance upward from the cups of full blown lotuses and scattered the sweet dust of their filaments in the spacious hall.²⁰ Clusters of flowers hung about the hall, diffusing their scents all around. The entire court hall seemed to be sprinkled with perfumes of all sorts.

²¹ Queens and princesses sat at the windows to see the assembly in the outer hall. They sat upon their couches in the inner apartment which was spread over with flowers.²² They saw everything by the

light of the sun which shining through the lattice work of the windows. They also saw by the radiance of the gems sparkling on their delicate bodies. Attendant women remained silent, without waving their fans or chowries.

²³ The earth was sown with orient pearls by dawning sunbeams, and the ground was covered with flowers glistening at the sunlight. Light locusts did not descend upon them, thinking them to be sparks of fire, but kept hovering in the midway sky as if the body of a dark and moving cloud.

²⁴ Respectable people sat in mute wonder to hear the holy lectures of Vasishta, because agreeable advice derived from the society of the good is beyond all estimation. ²⁵ Spiritual masters, vidyadharas, saints, brahmins and respectable men gathered from all sides of the sky and forests and from all cities and towns. They gathered around about Vasishta and saluted him in silence, because deep veneration is naturally mute and lacking in words.

²⁶ The sky was covered with golden dust carried by fluttering bees from the cups of the starch-like lotuses where they had been enclosed at night. Soft airs blew the tinkling sound of ringing bells hanging on strings in the door ways of houses. ²⁷ The morning breeze was now blowing with the fragrance of various flowers, mixing with the perfume of sandal paste, and making bees fly and flutter on all sides with their sweet humming music.

Chapter 4 — Dasharata's Praise; Rama Asks Vasishta to Continue

¹ Valmiki continued:—

Then King Dasharata made this speech to the chief of sages, speaking in a voice that sounded like a deep cloud and in words equally graceful as they were worthy of confidence.

Dasharata speaking:—

² Venerable sage, your speech of yesterday speaks of your intellectual light. It reveals that you have overcome all afflictions by your extremely emaciating austerities. ³ Yesterday's words have delighted us by their discernment and gracefulness, as if by a shower of enlivening ambrosia. ⁴ The pure words of the wise are as cooling and edifying to the inner soul as clear and nectar-like moonbeams. They both serve to cool and dispel the gloom of the earth. ⁵ The good sayings of the great give the highest joy resulting from imparting a knowledge of the Supreme and by immediately dispelling the gloom of ignorance. ⁶ The knowledge of the inestimable gem of our soul is the best light that we can have in this world. The learned man is like a tree covered by the vines of reason and good sense. ⁷ The sayings of the wise serve to purge our improper desires and doings, as moonbeams dispel the thick gloom of night.

⁸ Your sayings, O sage, serve to lessen our desires and greed which chain us to this world, just as autumn winds diminish the black clouds in the sky. ⁹ Your lectures have made us perceive the pure soul in its clear light, as the eye-salve of antimony makes a man born blind see pure gold with his eyes. ¹⁰ The mist of worldly desires that has covered the atmosphere of our minds is now beginning to disperse by the autumn breeze of your sayings. ¹¹ Your sayings of sound wisdom, O great sage, have poured a flood of pure delight into our souls, just as the breezy waves of nectar-like water or the breath of mandara flowers infuse into the heart.

¹² O my Rama! Those days spent attending on the wise are truly cheerful. Otherwise, the rest of the days of one's lifetime are indeed dark and dismal. ¹³ O my lotus-eyed Rama, ask now what more you need to know about the imperishable soul, as the sage is favorably disposed to tell you everything.

Valmiki speaking:—

¹⁴ After the king had ended his speech, the venerable and high minded sage Vasishta, who was seated before Rama, addressed him.

¹⁵ Vasishta said:—

O Rama, the moon of your race, do you remember all that I have told you so far? Have you reflected on the meaning of my sayings from first to last? ¹⁶ Do you recollect, O victor of your enemies, the subject of creation and its division into the triple nature of goodness and all, and their subdivision into various kinds? ¹⁷ Do you remember what I said regarding the one in all, and not as the all, and the one Reality ever appearing as unreality? Do you retain in your mind the nature and form of the Supreme Spirit that I have expounded to you? ¹⁸ Do you, O righteous Rama who is deserving of every praise, bear in your mind how this world came to appear from the Lord God of all? ¹⁹ Do you fully retain in your memory the nature of illusion, and how it is destroyed by the efforts of the understanding, and how the Infinite and Eternal appears as finite and temporal in space and time?

²⁰ Do you, O blessed Rama, keep in your mind that man is no other than his mind, as I have explained to you by proper definition and arguments? ²¹ Have you, Rama, considered well the meanings of my words, and did you reflect in your mind at night yesterday's reasoning?

²² It is by repeated reflection in the mind and learning by heart what you have learnt that you derive the benefit of your learning, and not by negligently laying it aside. ²³ You are a proper receptacle for learning only when you retain a rational discourse and a holy sermon like brilliant pearls in the chest of your capacious and reasoning breast.

²⁴ Valmiki said:—

Rama being thus addressed by the sage, the valiant progeny of the lotus-seated Brahma found his time to answer him in the following manner.

²⁵ Rama replied:—

O sage who is acquainted with all scriptures and creeds, you have expounded sacred truths to me. I have, O noble sage, fully comprehended their meaning. ²⁶ I have deposited everything that you said verbatim in the casket of my heart. I have well considered the meaning of your words during the stillness of my sleepless night. ²⁷ Your words like sunbeams dispel the darkness of the world. Your radiant words of yesterday delighted me like the rays of the rising sun.

²⁸ O great sage, I have carefully preserved the substance of all your past lectures in my mind, as one preserves the most valuable and brilliant gems in a safe. ²⁹ What accomplished man is there who will not bear on his head the blessings of admonitions so very pure and holy, and so very charming and delightful at the same time? ³⁰ We have shaken off the dark veil of the ignorance of this world and have become as enlightened by your favor as autumn days after rain clouds disperse. ³¹ First your instructions are sweet and graceful, then they are enlightening in the middle, then at the end they are sacred by the holiness they confer. ³² Your flowery speech is always delightful to us by the quality of its blooming and unfading beauty, and by virtue of it conferring our lasting good on us.

³³ O sage who is learned in all scriptures, who is the channel of the holy waters of divine knowledge, and who is firm in your protracted vows of purity, cleanse us of the impurity of our many sins through your purifying lectures.

Chapter 5 — Lecture on Tranquility of the Soul and Mind

¹ Vasishta said:—

Now listen with attention to the subject of tranquility for your own good. In it you will find the best answers.

² Rama, know that this world is a continuous illusion upheld by men of active (*rajas*) and passive (*tamas*) natures. The properties of action and passions (*rajas*) and ignorance (*tamas*) support this illusory fabric, like pillars supporting a building.³ Men born with the *sattvic* nature of goodness, like yourself, easily lay aside this deep-rooted illusion like a snake sluffing off its time-worn skin.⁴ But wise men of good (*sattvic*) dispositions, and those of the mixed natures of goodness and action (*rajas-sattva*) always think about the structure of the world and its prior and future states.

⁵ The understanding of the sinless, enlightened by the light of the scriptures or improved in the society of men or by good conduct, become as far sighted as the blazing light of a torch.⁶ By one's own analysis one should try to know the soul in himself. He who does not know the knowable soul in himself is no way intelligent.⁷ Intelligent, polite, wise and noble men are said to have a mixed nature of goodness and action (*rajas-sattva*) in them. The best example of such a nature is found, O Rama, in your admirable disposition.

⁸ Let the intelligent look into the phenomena of the work, and by observing what is true and untrue in it, attach themselves only to the truth.⁹ That which was not before and will not be at the end is no reality at all. But what continues in being both at first and last is true existence and nothing else.¹⁰ He whose mind is attached to what is not truth, what is unreal both at first and at last, is either an infatuated fool or a brute animal that can never be brought to reason.

¹¹ The mind makes and stretches out the world in its imagination. Upon a closer investigation, the mind is in nothingness.

¹² Rama said, "I am fully persuaded to believe, sage, that the mind is the active agent in this world and is subject to decay and death.¹³ But tell me sage, what are the surest means of guarding the mind from illusion, because only you are the sun to remove the darkness of Raghu's race."

¹⁴ Vasishta replied:—

The best way to guard the mind from delusion is first the knowledge of the scriptures. Next is the exercise of dispassion, then the company of the good, all of which lead the mind towards its purity.

¹⁵ The mind filled with humility and holiness should have recourse to teachers who are learned in philosophy.¹⁶ The instruction of such teachers makes a man practice first his rituals, then leads the mind gradually to abstract meditation of the most holy.¹⁷ When the mind comes to perceive by its own thoughts the presence of the Supreme Spirit in itself, it sees the universe spread before it like cooling moonbeams.

¹⁸ A man is tossed about like straw floating on the wide ocean of the world, until he finds his rest in the still waters under the coast of reason.¹⁹ Human understanding comes to know the truth when it puts down all its difficulties by means of its reasoning, just as pure water passes over its sandy bed.

²⁰ The reasonable man distinguishes truth from untruth like a goldsmith separating gold from ashes.

But the unreasonable are like the ignorant, incapable of distinguishing one from the other.

²¹ The Divine Spirit is imperishable once it is known to the human soul. Error can have no access to the soul as long as it is enlightened by the light of the Divine Spirit. ²² The mind ignorant of truth is ever liable to error, but when acquainted with truth, it becomes free from its doubts and is set beyond the reach of error.

²³ O you men who are not acquainted with the Divine Spirit, you bear your souls only for your own misery, but knowing the spirit, you become entitled to eternal happiness and tranquility. ²⁴ How you are lost to your souls by blending with your bodies! Expand the soul from under the earthly frame and you will be quite at rest with yourselves.

²⁵ Your immortal soul has no relation to your mortal bodies, just as pure gold bears no relation to the earthen crucible in which it is contained. ²⁶ The Divine Spirit is distinct from the living soul, just as the lotus flower is separate from the water which upholds it, and like a drop of water is unattached to the lotus leaf on which it rests. My living soul is crying to that Spirit with my arms uplifted, but it pays no heed to my cries.

²⁷ The mind is of a gross nature and resides in the shell of the body like a tortoise dwelling in its hole. It is illogically intent upon its sensual enjoyments and is quite neglectful about the welfare of the soul.

²⁸ It is so shrouded by the impenetrable darkness of the world that neither the light of reason nor the flame of fire, nor the beams of the moon, nor the gleams of a dozen of zodiacal suns have the power to penetrate into it. ²⁹ But the mind being awakened from its dormancy begins to reflect on its own state. Then the mist of its ignorance flies off like the darkness of the night at sunrise. ³⁰ As the mind reclines itself constantly on the downy bed of its meditation for the sake of its enlightenment, its eye perceives this world to be only a valley of misery.

³¹ Rama, know that the soul is not stained by its outer covering of the body, just like the sky is unsoiled by the clouds of dust that hide its face, and like the petals of the lotus are untainted by the dew-drops falling upon them at night. ³² As dirt and clay cling to the outside of a gold ornament but cannot pierce inside, so the gross material body is attached outside the soul without touching its inside.

³³ Men commonly attribute pleasure and pain to the soul, but they are as separate from it as raindrops and flying dust in the sky are different from each other. ³⁴ Neither the body nor the soul is subject to pain or pleasure, all of which relate to the ignorance of the mind. This ignorance being removed, it will be found that they belong to neither.

³⁵ O Rama, do not take pain or pleasure to your mind, but view them in an equal light, as you view things in the tranquility of your soul. ³⁶ All the outspreading phenomena of the world that are seen all about us are like the waves of the boundless ocean of Divine Spirit, or like the gaudy tail of the peacock displayed in the sphere of our own souls. ³⁷ The bright substance of our soul presents the picture of creation to us, just as a bright gem casts its glare to no purpose but by its own nature.

³⁸ The spirit and the material world are not the same thing. The spirit is the true reality, and the duality of the world is only a representation or counterpart of the Spirit. ³⁹ But Brahman is the whole totality of existence, and know that the universe is the expansion of the Universal Soul. Therefore, O Rama,

give up your error of distinguishing one thing from another.

⁴⁰ Rama, there can be no distinction in the everlasting and all extensive fullness of Brahman, just as there is no difference in the water of the wide extended ocean. ⁴¹ All things being one and alike in the identical substratum of the Supreme Soul, you cannot conceive of there being any other thing in it, just as you cannot imagine a particle of frost to abide in fire. ⁴² By meditating on the Supreme Soul in yourself and by contemplation of the intelligent Spirit in your own intellect, you will find the glory of the Supreme Spirit shining brightly in your pure spirit.

⁴³ Therefore ease your mind, O Rama, and know that there is no mistake or error in believing the all as one and that there is no new birth or new born being. All is ever existent in the Supreme. ⁴⁴ Ease yourself, O Rama, by knowing that there is no duality and that there is no opposite of things, except their oneness in the Divine unity. Then knowing yourself as a spiritual being situated in the purity of Divine essence, you shall have no need of meditation or adoration. Knowing that you are not separated from God, forsake all your sorrow.

⁴⁵ Be tolerant, composed and even-minded. Remain tranquil, silent and meek in your mind. Be as a rich jewel, shining with your internal light. Thus you will be freed from the feverish vexations of this worldly life. ⁴⁶ Be rational, dispassionate and calm in your desire. Remain sober minded and free from ardent expectations. Rest satisfied with what you get of your own lot in order to be free from the feverish heat of worldliness. ⁴⁷ Be unimpassioned and unperturbed with earthly cares. If you will be free from the fever heat of this world, be pure and sinless, and neither be stingy nor extravagant. ⁴⁸ Be free from all anxiety, O Rama, by obtaining that good which the world cannot give, and which satisfies all our earthly wants. Have this super-mundane bliss, O Rama, and be as full as the ocean and free from the feverish cares of this world.

⁴⁹ Be loosened from the net of your loose desires and wipe off the ointment of delusive affections from your eyes. Let your soul rest satisfied with yourself and be free from the feverish anxieties of the world. ⁵⁰ With your spiritual body reaching beyond unbounded space and rising above the height of the highest mountain, be free from the feverish and petty cares of life. ⁵¹ You must be free from the fever of life by enjoying what you get and asking nothing of anybody anywhere, and by your charity rather than your lack and asking. ⁵² Enjoy the fullness of your soul in yourself like the sea, and contain the fullness of your joy in your own soul like the full moon. Be self-sufficient with the fullness of your knowledge and inner bliss.

⁵³ Knowing this world as unreal as an optical illusion, no wise man is misled to rely on its untruthful scenes. So you Rama, who is knowing and not deluded and is sane, sound headed and of enlightened understanding, must always be charming with your perfect ease from sorrow and care.

⁵⁴ Now Rama, rule over this unrivalled kingdom as directed by your sovereign father and manage well everything under your own inspection. This kingdom is filled with every blessing and the rulers are all loyal to their king. Therefore you must not omit doing what is your duty or be elated with your happy lot of royalty.

Chapter 6 — Doing One's Duty; Merit Accrues through Lifetimes

¹ Vasishta continued:—

In my opinion, a man is liberated who does his works from a sense of his duty and without any desire of his own or sense of his own agency.

² Whoever having obtained a human form is engaged in acts out of his own choice and with a sense of his own agency, is subject to ascent and descent to heaven and hell by turns. ³ Some people who are inclined to undutiful acts by neglecting the performance of their destined duties are doomed to descend into deeper hells and to fall into greater fears and torments from their former states. ⁴ Some men who are tightly bound to the chain of their desires and have to feel the consequences of their acts are made to descend from their brutal life to the state of vegetables, or to rise from it to animal life again.

⁵ Some who are blessed with the knowledge of the Spirit from their investigation of abstruse philosophy, break through the chains of desire and rise to the state of single aloneness in divine unity (*kaivalya*). ⁶ There are some men who, after ascending gradually in the scale of their creation in former births, have obtained liberation in the present life of active goodness (*rajas-sattva*). ⁷ Such men, being born again on earth, assume their bright qualities like the crescent moon and are united with all prosperity like a kurchi plant covered with blossoms in its flowering time of the rainy season.

⁸ The merit of prior acts follows one in his next state and the learning of past life meets a man in his next birth, like a pearl born in a reed. ⁹ The qualities of respectability and pleasantness, of affability and friendliness, and of compassion and intelligence attend upon these people like their servants at home. ¹⁰ Happy is the man who is steady in the discharge of his duties and is not overjoyed or depressed at the fruition or failure of their results. ¹¹ The defects of the dutiful, and their pain and pleasure in the performance of duties, are all lost under the sense of their duty, just as the darkness of night is dispelled by the light of the day and the clouds of rainy season are dispersed in autumn. ¹² The man of a submissive and sweet disposition is liked by everybody, just as the sweet music of reeds in the forest attracts the ears of wild antelope. ¹³ The qualities of the past life accompany a man in his next birth, like swallows in rainy weather.

¹⁴ Thus being qualified by his prior virtues, a good man has recourse to an instructor for the development of his understanding, who thereupon puts him in the way to truth. ¹⁵ A man with the qualities of reason and resignation of his mind beholds the Lord as one and of the same form as the imperishable soul within himself. ¹⁶ The spiritual guide awakens the dull and sleeping mind by his right reasoning, then instills into it the words of truth with a calm face and mind.

¹⁷ They are the best qualified in later births who learn first to awaken their worthless and dormant minds, just as they rouse a sleeping male deer in the forest. ¹⁸ First by diligent attendance on good and meritorious gurus, then by cleansing the gem of their minds with the help of reasoning, pure hearted men come to the light of truth and perceive the divine light shining in their souls.

Chapter 7 — Two Ways to Attain Self Realization: Effort & Intuition

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Rama, I have told you how mankind generally attains knowledge. Now I will tell you of another different method.

² Rama, we have two ways that are best calculated for the salvation of souls born in human bodies on earth. The one is through attainment of heavenly bliss and the other by their final blessing of bliss.

³ There are two methods of gaining these objects. One is the observance of the teacher's instructions which gradually leads one to his perfection in the course of one or many births. ⁴ The second is the attainment of knowledge by intuition (self-inquiry), the self culture of a partly intelligent being. This is like obtaining fruit falling from heaven.

⁵ Hear now about the attainment of intuitive knowledge, which is like getting fruit fallen from the sky, from an old tale which I will now relate. ⁶ Hear the happy and holy story which removes the chains of our good and evil deeds, and which the last born men (now living) must taste with a zest for their enlightenment, as others taste a fruit fallen from heaven for their entertainment.

Chapter 8 — Janaka Hears the Songs of the Holy Masters (*Siddhas*)

¹ Vasishta continued:—

There lives the mighty King of Videha, Janaka by name, who is blessed with all prosperity and unbounded understanding.² He is like the ever fruitful wish-fulfilling tree to the host of his suitors, and like the vivifying sun to his lotus-like friends. He is like the genial spring to the small flowers of his relatives, and like Kama the god of love to females.³ Like the changing moon, he gives delight to the twice born brahmins, as that luminary makes lilies bloom. Like the bright sun he destroys the darkness of his gloomy enemies. He is an ocean of gems of goodness to all and the support of his kingdom, like Vishnu the supporter of the world.

⁴ One spring evening Janaka happened to wander about a forest abounding in young vines with bunches of crimson blossoms on them, resonant with the melody of sweet sounding kokila nightingales warbling their tuneful choirs.⁵ He walked among flowery pleasure gardens resembling graceful beauties with ornaments upon them, and sported in their covered shelter as the god Indra sports in his Nandana pleasure garden.⁶ Leaving his attendants behind him, he stepped into a grove standing on the plain of a hill in the midst of that romantic forest, which was smelling with the fragrance of flowers borne all about by playful winds.

⁷ In one place within a covered shelter of tamara trees, he heard a mingled voice like that of some invisible aerial spirit masters (*siddhas*).⁸ I will now recite to you, O lotus-eyed Rama, the songs of the spiritual masters (*siddhas*) living in the retired solitudes of mountainous regions and dwelling in the caverns of hills. The songs relate principally to their spiritual meditations.

⁹ The masters sang, “We adore that Being which is neither the subjective nor objective, and which in our belief is the positive joy that rises in our souls and has no fluctuation in it.”

¹⁰ Others chanted, “We adore that Being which is beyond the triple states of the subject, its attribute and its object. It is the spiritual light of the soul which exists from before the light of vision, and which is derived from the light of the sun.”

¹¹ Others chanted, “We adore that Being which is in the midst of all that is and what is not.”

¹² Some sang, “We adore that real Existence which is all, who owns all things, by whom all is made, from whom all has sprung, for whom they exist, in whom they exist, to whom do all returns, and into which they are all absorbed.”

¹³ Some sang, “We adore that Spirit which begins with the letter ‘a’ and ends in ‘h’ with the dot ‘m’ and which we continually inspire and respire in our breathings (*aham hansah*, “I am He.”).”

¹⁴ Others said, “Those who forsake the Lord situated within the cavity of their hearts and resort to others outside are truly in search of trifles by ignoring the wish-fulfilling gem (*kaustabha*) they have in their hands.”

¹⁵ Others again declared, “By forsaking all other desires, one obtains this object of his wish. This being had, the poisonous plants of all other desires are entirely uprooted from the heart.”

¹⁶ Some of them pronounced saying, “The foolish man who knows the tastelessness of all worldly things, but still attaches his mind to earthly objects, is an ass and not any human being.”

¹⁷ Others said, “The sensual desires that constantly rise like snakes from the cavities of the body are to be killed by the cudgel of reason, as Indra broke the hills by his thunderbolts.”

¹⁸ At last they said, “Let men try to secure the pure happiness of stillness which serves to give tranquility to the minds of the righteous. The sober-minded who are situated in their real and natural temperament have their best rest in the lap of undisturbed and everlasting tranquility.”

Chapter 9 — Janaka's Reflections

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Upon hearing these compositions of the spiritual masters, King Janaka was dejected in his mind, like a coward at the noise of a conflict.² He returned towards home and traveled there in silence, like a stream gliding in its silent course under trees on the shore towards the bed of the distant ocean.

³ He left behind all his domestics in their respective rooms below, and ascended alone to the highest balcony, like the sun mounting the top of a mountain.⁴ There he saw flights of birds randomly flying in different directions. He thought how men hurried about in the same manner and mourned their deplorable conditions.

Janaka thinking to himself:—

⁵ Ah how miserable that I have to move about in the pitiable state of the restless mob that rolls about like a rolling stone, pushed backward and forward by another.⁶ I have a short span of endless duration allotted to my share of lifetime, yet I am a senseless fool to place my trust in the hope of its durability.⁷ The duration of my royal rule is short also as it is limited to my lifetime. How can I be secure of its continuance, like a thoughtless man?

⁸ I have an immortal soul lasting from before and to continue even after my present existence. The present life is destructible, yet I am a fool to rely upon it like a boy believing a painted moon to be real.⁹ Ah, what sorcerer has bewitched me by his magic wand to make me believe that I am not spell-bound at all!¹⁰ What faith can I rely upon in this world which has nothing substantial or pleasant and nothing grand or real in it? Yet I do not know why the world deludes my mind.

¹¹ What is far from me appears to be near by my sensation of the same, and that which is nearest to me appears to be farthest away. Knowing this I must abandon outer objects in order to see the inner soul.

¹² This hurry of men in their pursuits is as impetuous and transient as the torrent of a whirlpool. It drops them in the depths of their dangers. It is not worth the pain it gives to the spirit.¹³ Years, months, days and minutes revolve with the succession of our pains and pleasures. But these are all swallowed up by the repeated retinues of our misery.

¹⁴ I have well considered everything and found them all perishable and nothing durable or lasting. There is nothing to be found here worthy to be relied upon by the wise.¹⁵ Those standing at the head of great men today are reduced low in the course of a few days. What worth is there in giddy and thoughtless greatness that is deserving of our respect?

¹⁶ I am bound to earth without a rope. I am soiled without any outward dirt. I am fallen though sitting in this building. O my soul, how you are destroyed while living!¹⁷ From where has this causeless ignorance overpowered my intelligent soul? From where has this shadow covered my soul's brightness like a dark cloud obscuring the sun?¹⁸ Of what value are rich possessions and numerous relations to me when my soul is in despair, like children under the fear of ghosts and evil spirits?

¹⁹ How shall I place any reliance upon my sensual enjoyments which foreshadow death and disease? What dependence is there on my possessions which are filled only with anxieties and cares?

²⁰ It matters not whether these friends, the feeders on my fortune, may last or leave me at once. My

prosperity is only a bubble and a false appearance before me.²¹ Men of greatest opulence, many good and great men and our best friends and kindest relatives, have gone by and now live in only our memory.²² Where are the riches of the earth's monarchs and where are Brahma's former creations? The past has given way to the present and these are to be followed by the future. Therefore there is no reliance upon anything.²³ Many Indras have been swallowed up like bubbles in the ocean of eternity. Therefore expectation of longevity is ridiculous to the wise.²⁴ Millions of Brahmans have passed away and their productions have disappeared under endless successions. Kings of earth have fled like their ashes, reduced to dust. Then what is the confidence in my life and stability?

²⁵ The world is only a dream by night. The body with its sense organs is only a misconception of the mind. If I place any credence in them, I am really to be blamed.²⁶ My conception of myself and perception of other things are false imaginations of my mind. My egoism has laid hold of me, like a demon seizing an idiot.²⁷ Fool that I am, seeing that I do not see how the span of my life is measured every moment by imperceptible instants of time, leaving only a small portion behind.²⁸ I see the juggler of time seizing Brahmans, Vishnus and Shivas and making playthings of them on his playground of the world, flinging them all about like balls.

²⁹ I see days and nights constantly passing away without presenting me an opportunity to behold the true imperishable one.³⁰ The objects of sensual enjoyment lurk in the minds of men like cranes chattering in lakes. There is no likelihood of the true and best object in anyone's mind.

³¹ We meet with one hardship after another and buffet in waves of endless miseries in this earth. Yet we are so shameless that we do not feel disgusted with them.³² We see all the desirable objects to which we attach our thoughts are frail and perishing, yet we do not seek the imperishable one and our everlasting good in the equanimity of the soul.

³³ Whatever we see as pleasant in the beginning, or in the middle, or in the end, and at all times are all unholy and subject to decay.³⁴ Whatever objects are dear to the hearts of men are all found to be subject to the changes of their rise and fall.³⁵ Ignorant people are everywhere inclined to evil acts. They grow day by day more hardened in their wicked practices. They repent every day for their sins, but never reprove themselves for the better.³⁶ Senseless men, being devoid of sense in their boyhood and heated by their passions in youth, are never the better for anything. In their latter days they are oppressed with the care of their families. In the end they are overcome by sorrow and remorse.

³⁷ Here entrance and exit are both accompanied by pain and sorrow. Here every state of life is contaminated by its opposite. Everything is unsubstantial in this seemingly substantial world, yet the ignorant rely on its unreal substantiality.

³⁸ The real good here, derived by means of painful austerities, are the arduous sacrifices for the consecration of a king (*rajasuya*), the one-year horse-wandering ceremony (*asvamedha*), and others for the attainment of heaven. Yet even heaven has no reality and lasts for only a small portion of a kalpa as compared with eternity.³⁹ What is this heaven and where is it situated, whether below or above us or in this nether world, where its residents are not overtaken by multitudes of locust-like evils?

⁴⁰ We have serpents creeping in the cells of our hearts and we have bodies filled with the brambles of

diseases and dangers, and we do not know how to destroy them.⁴¹ I see good mixed with evil and pain abiding with pleasure. There is sorrow seated on top of joy. I do not know where to go for help.

⁴² I see the earth full of common people constantly being born and dying in multitudes, but I find few honest and righteous men in it.

⁴³ These beautiful forms of women, their eyes like lotuses, the gracefulness of their allurements, and their charming smiles, are soon made to fade and die away.⁴⁴ Of what value am I among these mighty beings who, at the twinkling of their eyes, have created and destroyed the world, yet have succumbed to death at last?

⁴⁵ You are constantly in search of what is more pleasant and lasting than others, but never seek after that highest prosperity which is beyond all your earthly cares.⁴⁶ What is this great prosperity in which you take so much delight? It is only a mere vexation of your spirit which proves this vanity to be only your calamity.⁴⁷ Again, what are these adversities which you fear so much? They may be the source of your true prosperity by setting you free from earthly disturbances and leading you to future joy.

⁴⁸ The mind is broken to pieces by its fears, like fragments of the moon floating on the waves of this ocean of the world. Its selfishness has tossed it to and fro, and when this world is rid, it is set at perfect ease.

⁴⁹ There is an unavoidable fate activating our worldly affairs and accidents. Therefore it is impudent to welcome some as good and to avoid others as evil.⁵⁰ We are prone to things that are pleasant to sight, but they have a mortal flame in them that consumes us like poor moths in flames; bright to see but fatal to feel.⁵¹ It is better to roll in the continuous flames of hellfire to which one is accustomed than to rise and fall repeatedly in the furnace of this world, like from the frying pan into the fire.

⁵² The wise say this world is a boundless ocean of grief. Then how can anybody who has fallen here expect any happiness here?⁵³ Those who have fallen and not been altogether drowned in sorrow think their lesser sorrows are light and delight, like one condemned to be beheaded is glad to escape with a light punishment.

The world appears to have been created by accident, even as a coconut might appear to have fallen because a crow coincidentally happens to land on the tree that same moment.

⁵⁴ I have become the vilest of the vile and resemble a block of wood or stone. There is no difference between me and an ignorant clown who never has had a thought of eternal concern in his head.⁵⁵ The great tree of the world, with its many branches, twigs and fruit, has sprung from the mind and is rooted in it.⁵⁶ It is the conception of the world in my mind that causes its existence and presents its appearance before me.

Now I will try to efface this conception from my mind and forget this world altogether.⁵⁷ I will no longer allow myself to be deluded like monkeys with the forms of things that I know are not real, only changing and fleeting ideas.⁵⁸ I have woven and stretched out the web of my desires and gathered only sorrows and sorrows. I fell into and fled from the snare of my own making, and I am now resolved to take my rest in the soul.⁵⁹ I have wailed and bitterly wept a great deal thinking of the depravity and loss of my soul. Henceforth I will cease to lament, thinking that I am not utterly lost.

⁶⁰ I am now awakened, and I am happy to learn who is robbing my soul. It is my own mind, and this I am determined to kill because it has for so long deprived me of the inestimable treasure of my soul.

⁶¹ For so long my mind was at large like a loose and unstrung pearl. Now will I pierce it with the needle of reason and string it with the virtues of self control and subjection to wisdom. ⁶² The cold icicle of my mind will melt from the solar heat of reason. My mind will be confined in the endless meditation of its Eternal Maker.

⁶³ I am now awakened to my spiritual knowledge, like these holy masters, saints and sages. I will now pursue my spiritual inquiries for the contentment of my soul. ⁶⁴ Having now found my long lost soul, I will continue to look upon its pure light with joy in my lonely retirement. I will remain quiet and still in contemplation of my soul, like a motionless cloud in autumn. ⁶⁵ Having cast away the false belief of my corporeality and that these possessions and properties are mine, and having subdued my mighty enemy the mind by my force, I will attain the tranquility of my soul with the help of my reason.

Chapter 10 — Silent and Solitary Reflections on Janaka

¹ Vasishta related:—

While Janaka was musing in this way, his chamberlain entered and came before him, like Aruna standing before the chariot of the sun.

² The chamberlain said, “O sire, your kingdom is safe under your protecting arms. Now rise to attend to the daily rites, as it becomes your majesty.”

³ “The maidservants are waiting with their water pots for your bath, filled with water perfumed with flowers, camphor and saffron. They present themselves before you like river nymphs. ⁴ The temples are hung with fine muslin as white as the fibers of lotus stalks, and they are decorated with lotuses and other flowers with bees fluttering upon them. ⁵ Men with feather-fans, chariots, elephants, horses and umbrellas stand ready to serve you at the time of your bath.”

⁶ “The altars are filled with heaps of flowers, aromatic incense and rice, and adorned with every decoration in a princely style. ⁷ The brahmins are waiting there for your majesty’s presence. After making their sacred ablution and purifications, and offering their prayers for the remission of sins, they expect to get worthy gifts from you. ⁸ The handmaids are attending to their duties, graced with fans in their hands. The feasting ground is cleansed with sandal paste and water.”

⁹ “Therefore arise from your seat and perform your prescribed duties, because it does not become the best of men to be late in the discharge of their duties.”

¹⁰ Though asked in this way by the head chamberlain, yet the king remained in his meditative mood, thinking on the wonderful phenomena of nature.

¹¹ Janaka thought to himself:—

This royalty and these duties of mine are for a very short time. I do not require these things that are so transitory in their nature. ¹² I must leave these things that at best are only waters of a mirage. I must remain close to myself in my lonely seclusion, like a calm and solitary lake. ¹³ The pleasures of this world displayed around us are entirely useless to me. I will promptly leave them and remain in my happy retirement.

¹⁴ O my heart, to avoid the snares of disease and death, abandon your shrewdness in pursuing the objects of your desire. ¹⁵ Whatever state or condition of life the heart hankers for its delight, it is sure to meet with some difficulty, distress or disappointment coming out of the same. ¹⁶ Whether your heart is engaged or disengaged with the objects of sense, you will never find any object, either in act or thought, that is conducive to the true happiness of your soul. ¹⁷ Therefore forsake thoughts of the vile pleasure of your senses and concentrate on those thoughts that are filled with the true happiness of the soul.

Vasishta speaking:—

¹⁸ Thinking in this manner, Janaka remained in mute silence. His restless mind became as still and made him sit down like a picture in painting or like a statue. ¹⁹ The chamberlain uttered not a word more. He stood silent in mute respect and fear of his master, and from his knowledge of the

dispositions of kings.

²⁰ Janaka, in his state of silent meditation, reflected again on the vanity of human life, with cool calmness of his mind, and thought.

Janaka thinking to himself:—

²¹ Now must I be diligent to find the best and most precious treasure in the world, and know what is that imperishable thing to which I must bind my soul as its surest anchor.

²² What is the good of doing or not doing my acts? Nothing is produced of anything which is not perishable in its nature. ²³ It matters not whether the body is active or inactive because all the body's actions end in utter inaction as all force is reduced to rest. It is the pure consciousness within me that always remains the same and it loses nothing from the loss of the body or from lack of physical action. ²⁴ I do not wish to have what I have not, or dare leave what I already have. I am content with myself. So let me have what is mine and what I have.

²⁵ I get no real good by my acts here, nor do I lose anything by refraining from them. What I get by my acts or lack of action is all zero and void of vanities, and nothing to my purpose or liking. ²⁶ Whether I am doing or not doing, and whether my acts are proper or improper, I have nothing to desire here, nor anything desirable that I have to expect from them. ²⁷ I have got what was due according to my past actions. This body is the result of my former acts. It may continue its motion and actions or it may become still and fade away. It is all the same to me.

²⁸ The mind being set at ease by lack of its action or passion, the actions of the body and its members are similarly at ease by not doing. ²⁹ The acts of men which happen to take place as the results of their destiny or previous actions, are reckoned as no acts of theirs. ³⁰ The impression which the inner soul bears of its past actions and passions give its color to the later nature and character of men's actions. Now that my soul has obtained its imperishable state of spirituality, I am free from the frequent changes of transmigrations of my body and mind.

Chapter 11 — Subjection of the Mind

¹ Vasishta related:—

Thinking this way, Janaka rose up to perform his daily rites as usual and without any sense of his agency. He did his duty in the way as the sun rises every day to bring the morning: without his consciousness of it.² He discharged his duties as they presented themselves to him and without any concern or expectation of their rewards. He did them awake as if he were sleeping.

³ Having discharged his duties of the day and honored the gods and the priests, he passed the night absorbed in meditation.⁴ His mind being set at ease and his wandering thoughts repressed from their objects, he pondered in his mind in the dead of night.

Janaka thought:—

⁵ O my mind that is wandering all about with the revolving world, know that your restlessness is not agreeable to the peace of my soul. Therefore rest quietly from your wanderings abroad.⁶ It is your business to imagine many things at your pleasure because you think you have a world of thoughts present before you every moment.⁷ You shoot forth in innumerable sorrows by the desire of endless enjoyments, like a tree shoots out into a hundred branches from being watered at the roots.⁸ Our births and lives and worldly affairs are all productions of our yearning thoughts. Therefore I pray that you, O my mind, rest quietly by abandoning your earthly desires.

⁹ O my friendly mind, weigh well this transient world in your thoughts. Should you find anything of substance in it, depend upon it.¹⁰ Forsake your fond reliance on these visible phenomena. Leave these things and wander about at your free will without caring for anything.¹¹ Whether this unreal scene appears or disappears from your sight, in either case you should not suffer by being affected by it.¹² You can have no concern with visible objects. What concern can one have with any earthly thing that is nonexistent of itself, like an unsubstantial shadow?

¹³ The world is an unreality like yourself. Therefore there can be no true relation between two unrealities. It is only a dispute over words to maintain the relation of two negatives to one another.

¹⁴ Even if we assume that you are a reality and the world is unreal, still there can be no agreement between you, as there is none between the living and the dead, or between positive and negative ideas.¹⁵ Should both mind and world be realities and co-exist for ever, then there can be no reason for the joy or sorrow of the one at the gain or loss of the other.

¹⁶ Therefore avoid the great malady of worldliness and enjoy the silent joy in yourself, like one sitting in the undisturbed depth of the ocean with the rolling tide and waves above his head.¹⁷ Do not be consumed by the fiery remorse of worldliness, like a puppet by fireworks. Do not be burnt down to the darkness of despair in this gloomy scene of the world.

¹⁸ O wicked mind, there is nothing here so good and great that you can attain your high perfection through it — except to forsake all mental fluctuations and depend with full resignation on the unchangeable One.

Chapter 12 — On the Greatness of Reasoning (Self Inquiry)

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Janaka, having earnestly reasoned with his mind in this manner, then attended to the affairs of state without shrinking from them, yet mentally detached.² He was not pleased by the happy tasks and tidings but was indifferent to them, his fixed attention serving as if he were in slumber and not the actor.

³ From then on, he was not intense doing his duties nor did he forsake them altogether. He simply and unconcernedly attended to the business that presented itself to him.⁴ His constant habit of reasoning allowed him to understand the eternal truth and preserved his consciousness from blunders, like the sky untouched by flying dust.⁵ By his cultivation of reasoning, his mind was enlightened and filled with all knowledge.⁶ Unaccustomed to duality, his mind learned to know only the sole unity, and his intelligent soul shone within him like the fully bright sun in the sky.

⁷ He became acquainted with the Soul that is inherent in all bodies. He saw all things abiding in the omnipotence of Consciousness and identical with the infinite.⁸ He was never too joyful or exceedingly sad, but preserved his equanimity amidst the conflicts of his soul and sensible objects.⁹ Since that time, the venerable Janaka became liberated in his living state and is renowned as a veteran sage among mankind.

¹⁰ He continues to rule the land of the Videha people without being subject to feelings of joy or sorrow, not even for a moment.¹¹ Knowing the causes of good and evil, he is neither elated nor dejected at any favorable or unfavorable circumstance of his life, nor does he feel glad or sad at any good or bad accident relating the state.¹² He completes his duties without setting his mind to them. His mind is wholly employed in his intellectual speculations.¹³ Remaining thus in his trance state of sound sleep (abstraction, samadhi), his thoughts are quite withdrawn from all objects about him.¹⁴ He is unmindful of the past and heedless about the future. He enjoys only the present moment with a happy heart and a cheerful mind.

¹⁵ Janaka obtained the obtainable and what is worthy to be obtained by his own reasoned analysis and not, O lotus-eyed Rama, by any other desire.¹⁶ Therefore we should reason and reflect in our minds until we succeed and arrive at the conclusion of the subject.¹⁷ The presence of the Holy Light is not to be had by a teacher's lectures or the teaching of scriptures. It is not the result of good acts or the company of holy men. It is the result of your own reasoning.

¹⁸ A good understanding assisted by the power of good perception leads to the knowledge of that highest state which acts of piety cannot do.¹⁹ He who has the keen light of the lamp of his perception always before him is able to see both the past and future. No shadow of ignorance intercepts his vision.²⁰ Through keen perception one is able to cross the sea of dangers, like a passenger using a boat to cross a river.

²¹ A man without foresight is overtaken even by small mishaps, like a light straw is blown away by the slightest breeze.²² One who is endowed with foresight passes over the eventful ocean of the world without need of the assistance of friends or the guidance of scriptures.²³ The man with

foreknowledge sees the result of his actions beforehand, but one without foresight is at a loss to judge imminent events.

²⁴ Good company and learning strengthen understanding, just as watering a plant helps it grow and bear fruit. ²⁵ Infant understanding, like a tender shoot, takes a deep root in time and having grown up like a tree, it bears sweet fruit in its season, like cooling moonbeams at night. ²⁶ Whatever efforts men make to acquire external property, they would be better served to devote those efforts to improve their understanding. ²⁷ First dullness of understanding must be destroyed for it is the source of all evils, the storehouse of misery, and the root of the tree of worldliness.

²⁸ Great minded men understand whatever good they may expect to find on this earth, in heaven above, and in the world below. ²⁹ Only through good understanding can a man cross the ocean of the world, and not by his charities, pilgrimages or religious austerities. ³⁰ The sweet fruit of tree of knowledge is the divine blessing for each mortal man on earth. ³¹ Wisdom uses its sharp nails to scratch and nip the heads of the elephantine bonds of giddiness with as much ease as a strong lion kills a deer or a weak jackal.

³² An ordinary man, by knowing more than others, is often seen to become the ruler of men. The wise and discreet are entitled to glory in both worlds. ³³ (Simple) reason overcomes all its adversaries who indulge in diverse (convoluted) forms of reasoning, just as a disciplined warrior is able to overcome a host of unrestrained savages. ³⁴ Reasoning is the philosopher's stone that converts base metals to gold. Rational souls safeguard reasoning as the greatest treasure. It yields the desired fruits of men like the wish-fulfilling kalpa tree of paradise does with a thought.

³⁵ He who reasons rightly crosses the wide ocean of the world with his reasoning, while the unreasonable rabble are born away by its waves, just as a skillful boatman cuts across the current while the unskilled boatman is tossed about by waves. ³⁶ A well directed understanding leads to the success of an undertaking, but misguided intellect goes to rack and ruin. The one sails to the shore before the wind, but the other is tossed in his wrecked vessel over the wide gulf of the world. ³⁷ The keen sighted and unbiased wise man is never overcome by evils arising from his desires, just as an enemy's arrows do not pierce the body of a soldier in armor.

³⁸ A man's wisdom gives him an insight into everything in the world. The all knowing man is not subject to dangers or the reverses of his fortune. ³⁹ The breath of intelligence drives away the dark and wide-stretching cloud of blind egoism that hides the sunlight of the Supreme Spirit within us.

⁴⁰ Improvement of understanding is the first necessity towards knowledge of the Supreme Soul, just as cultivation of the ground is of primary importance to the farmer who desires reaping a rich harvest.

Chapter 13 — Government of the Mind: Consciousness Is Real, Mind (Imagination and Will) Is Not

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Now Rama, like King Janaka and without any difficulty or failing, reflect on the Supreme Spirit in your own spirit and know what the wise meditate upon.

² The wise men of the active-pure (*rajasa-satvika*) variety, like Janaka and other holy sages, obtain their desired objects by themselves. ³ As long as you continue to restrain your organs of sense from their objects, Divine Soul will grace your inner soul with its presence. ⁴ When the Lord God and Supreme Soul is gracious to you, you will see a halo of light cast over all things dispersing all grief from your sight. ⁵ The sight of the Supreme Spirit will remove the plentiful seeds of bias from your mind, and it will drive away the sorrowful sights of misery pouring upon your view in copious showers.

⁶ Continue like Janaka in the willful discharge of your duties, and prosper by placing your intellectual sight on the divine light shining in your inner spirit. ⁷ It was by reflecting inwards that Janaka found the impermanence of the world. By placing his faith in the unchangeable Spirit, in time he found its grace. ⁸ Hence the pious acts of men, their riches and their friends are of no use for their salvation from the miseries of life. Only their own efforts are of use for the enlightenment of their soul. ⁹ They who place their reliance upon faith in gods and depend upon them to fulfill their desires and future rewards are perverted in their understanding and cannot be heirs to immortality. ¹⁰ He is saved from misery in this ocean of the world by reliance on his own reasoning and resignation, and by his spiritual vision of the Supreme Spirit.

¹¹ Attaining this blessed knowledge of intuition which removes our ignorance is what they call getting fruit fallen from heaven.

¹² The intelligence which looks into itself, as Janaka did, finds the soul developing of itself inside, just as the lotus bud opens of itself in the morning. ¹³ The firm conviction of the material world melts into nothing under the light of perception, just as thick and hard ice dissolves to liquid under the sun's heat. ¹⁴ The consciousness that "this is I" is like the shade of night, and it is dispelled at the rise of the sun of intellect when the omnipresent light appears vividly to sight. ¹⁵ As soon as one loses his self-consciousness that "this is me", the all-pervading Soul opens fully to his view.

¹⁶ As Janaka abandoned consciousness of his personality together with his desire, so you, O intelligent Rama, forsake them by your acute understanding and the discernment of your mind. ¹⁷ After the cloud of egoism is dispersed and the sphere is cleared all around, the divine light shall shine as brightly as a second sun. ¹⁸ It is the greatest ignorance to think of one's own personality. When this thought is relaxed by the sense of our nothingness, we give room to the manifestation of holy light in the soul. ¹⁹ Do not think of the entity or non-entity of yourself or others, but preserve the tranquility of your mind from thoughts of both positive and negative existences in order to get rid of your sense of distinction between producer and the produced.

²⁰ Again, fostering a fondness for something as good and a hatred for others as bad is only a disease of your mind that serves only to make you uneasy. ²¹ Do not be fond of what you think to be beautiful

or be disgusted at what appears hateful to you. Get rid of these opposite feelings and be even minded by fixing it on the One before whom all things are alike and equally good.²² They who view the desirable and the detestable in the same light are neither fond of the one nor adverse to the other.²³ Until the fancy of the desirability of one thing and the dislike of the other is effaced from the mind, it is as hard to have the good grace of equanimity, just as it is difficult for moonlight to pierce a cloudy sky.

²⁴ The mind that considers one thing to be appropriate and another as inappropriate is deprived of the blessing of detachment, just as the sakota plant is despised because it has no flowers or fruit.

²⁵ Where there is a craving for the desirable and an aversion to what is unseemly, and when there is a cry for gain and an outcry at one's loss, it is impossible for even mindedness, dispassion or tranquility to abide in the mind.

²⁶ There being only the essence of one pure Brahman diffused throughout the universe, it is very improper to take the one as many, and among them something as good or bad.²⁷ Our desires and dislikes are the two apes living on the tree of our hearts. While they continue shaking and swinging that tree with their jogging and jolting, there can be no rest.

²⁸ Freedom from fear and desire, from exertions and action, together with wisdom and equanimity are the inseparable accompaniments of ease and rest.²⁹ The qualities of forbearance and feeling for our fellows, accompanied with contentment and good understanding, and joined with a mild disposition and gentle speech, are the indispensable companions of a wise man who rid himself of desires and his feelings of liking or dislike.

³⁰ The mind running to meanness is to be repressed by restraining passions and desires, just like the current of water is stopped by its valve.³¹ Shun the sight of external things. They are the roots of error and fallacy. Always consider their internal properties, both when you are awake and asleep, and also when you are walking about or sitting down.³² Greedy men are caught like greedy fish in the hidden net of desires that are incapable of being satisfied. That net is woven with the threads of worldly cares, and it is under the waters of worldly affairs.

³³ Now Rama, cut the meshes of this net with the knife of your good understanding and throw it in the water, like a tempest tearing thick clouds apart and scattering them in the air.³⁴ Try, O gentle Rama, to uproot the root of worldliness that sprouts forth in the weeds of vice. Use the hatchet of your perseverance and the eliminating shovel of your penetration.³⁵ Employ your mind to cut down the cravings of your mind, like using an axe to cut down a tree, then you will rest quietly as you arrive at the state of holiness.

³⁶ Having destroyed the former state of your mind by its present state, try to forget them both in future by your heedless mind and manage yourself unmindful of the world.³⁷ Your utter oblivion of the world will prevent the revival of your mind and stop the reappearance of ignorance which accompanies the mind.³⁸ Whether you are waking or sleeping or in any other state of your life, you must remember the nothingness of the world and give up your reliance on it.³⁹ Leave off your selfishness, O Rama, and rely upon the detachment of your soul.

Lay hold of what ever offers itself to you and without seeking for it.⁴⁰ As the Lord God does

everything and yet is aloof from everything, so must you do all acts outwardly without you mixing in anything.⁴¹ Knowing the knowable, one finds himself like the uncreated soul and a great lord of all. But being apart from that soul, he sees only the material world spread before him.⁴² He who has the sight of the inner spirit is free from thoughts of the external world and is not subjected to joy or grief or sorrow or any other evil of his life.

⁴³ He is called a yogi who is free from passions and hatred, and looks on gold and rubbish in the same light. He is joined with his joy in his yoga and disjoined from all worldly desires.⁴⁴ He enjoys the fruit of his own acts and minds not what he wastes or gives away. He has the evenness of his mind in every condition and is unaltered by pain or pleasure.

⁴⁵ He is not plunged into any difficulty who receives what he gets and is employed with whatever offers of itself to him without considering the good or evil that he is to gain by it.⁴⁶ He who is certain of the truth of the spiritual essence of the world, yearns not for its physical enjoyments but remains even-minded at all times.

⁴⁷ The dull mind follows the active intellect in accomplishing its objects, just as the carnivorous cat or fox follows a lion in search of meat scraps.⁴⁸ As the servile band feeds on the flesh acquired by the lion's prowess, so the mind dwells upon visible and sensible objects which it perceives by power of the intellect.⁴⁹ Thus the unsubstantial mind lives upon the outer world with the help of the intellect. But as it comes to remember its origin from consciousness, it recoils back to its original state.

⁵⁰ The mind, moved and lit by the heat and light of the lamp of consciousness, becomes extinct without its physical force and grows as motionless as a dead body.⁵¹ The nature of consciousness is known to exclude the idea of motion or pulsation from it. The scriptures call the power that has vibration reasoning or the mind.⁵² The breathing (or vibration) of the mind, like the hissing of a snake, is called its imagination, but by knowing consciousness as the self, the mind comes to the true knowledge of the inner soul.⁵³ Consciousness free from thoughts is the ever lasting Brahman, but being joined with thought, it is called the imaginative principle or the mind.⁵⁴ This power of imagination, having assumed a definite form, is called the mind. The mind with its will and its choices is situated in the heart of living beings.

⁵⁵ With its two distinct powers of imagination and will, the mind is employed in the acts of discriminating and choosing the agreeable from what is disagreeable to it.⁵⁶ Consciousness, being seated in the heart with its thoughts and wills, forgets its spiritual nature and remains as a dull material substance.⁵⁷ The intellect being this confined in the hearts of all animals in this world, continues in utter oblivion of its nature until it is awakened of itself, either by its intuition or the instruction of teachers or otherwise.

⁵⁸ Intellect is awakened by instruction from the scriptures and teachers, by the practice of dispassion, and by subjugation of the organs of sense and action.⁵⁹ When the minds of living beings are awakened by learning and self-control, they tend towards the knowledge of the great Brahman, or else they wander at random about the wide world.⁶⁰ We must therefore awaken our minds that are dormant to divine knowledge, rolling in the pit of worldliness from intoxication of the wine of error.⁶¹ As long as the mind is not awakened, it is unconscious of everything. Though it perceives what can be

perceived, yet this perception is as false as the sight of a city in our fancy.⁶² But when the mind is awakened by divine knowledge to the sight of the Supreme Being, it presents everything in itself, just as the inner fragrance of flowers also pervades the outer petals.

⁶³ Though consciousness has the quality of knowing everything contained in all the three worlds, yet it has only little knowledge of them because of its insufficient desire to know them.⁶⁴ The mind without intellect is a dull block of stone, but it is opened by divine light, like the lotus bud opening under sunlight.⁶⁵ The mind that imagines is as devoid of understanding as a statue made of marble is unable to move about by itself.⁶⁶ How can regiments drawn in a painting wage a war? How can moonbeams make the medicinal plants emit their light?⁶⁷ Who has seen dead bodies smeared with blood running about on the ground? Who has witnessed stone fragments singing musical choruses in the woods?⁶⁸ Where does the stone idol of the sun dispel the darkness of the night? Where does an imaginary forest of the sky spread its shade on the ground?

⁶⁹ Of what good are the efforts of men who are as ignorant as blocks of stones and who are led by their error in many ways, other than to endanger themselves by the mirage of their minds?

⁷⁰ Imagination displays the non-existent as existent in the soul, just as sunbeams show clear oceans in desert sands.

⁷¹ The learned sages call the moving principle in the body the mind. They know it as a mere force of the winds, like the vital breath of living beings.⁷² Those whose self-consciousness is not disturbed by the currents of their passions and desires have their spiritual souls like an unperturbed stream.⁷³ But when this pure consciousness is fouled by false fancies of this and that, and that "this is I" and "that is mine", then the soul and the vital principle are both taken together to form a living being.

⁷⁴ The mind, the living soul and understanding are all only fictitious names of an unreality according to the conceptions of false thinkers, and not of them who know the true spirit.⁷⁵ In reality there is no mind, no understanding, no thinking principle, and no body. There is only the reality of the one Universal Spirit which is ever existent everywhere.⁷⁶ The one Universal Spirit is the soul which is all this world. It is time and all its fluctuations. It is more transparent than the atmosphere, and it is clear because it is nothing at all.⁷⁷ It is not always apparent, owing to its transparency, yet it is ever existent because of our consciousness of it. The spirit is beyond all things and is perceived by our inner perception.

⁷⁸ The mind vanishes into nothing before our consciousness of the Supreme Soul, just as darkness is dispelled from where the sun shines.⁷⁹ When the transparent and self-conscious soul raises other figures of its own will, then the presence of the soul is forgotten and lays hidden under the grosser creations of the mind.⁸⁰ The faculty of the Supreme Spirit that wills is labeled the mind. It is detachment and lack of our own will that produces our liberation.

⁸¹ Such is the origin of the mind which is the root of creation. Will is a faculty of our consciousness, otherwise called the soul.⁸² The intellectual essence, after falling from its state of detachment and being defiled by its desires, becomes the principle of production or producing desired objects.⁸³ The mind becomes extinct through loss of vital power, just as the shadow of a thing disappears by removing the substance.

⁸⁴ The living body perceives in its heart the notion of a distant place that exists in the mind. This proves the identity of the vital breath and the thinking mind. ⁸⁵ Therefore, by repressing the mind the vital breath is also repressed, which produces longevity and health.

⁸⁶ Stone has the capability of mobility, and fuel of inflammability, but vital breath and mind do not have powers of vibration or thinking (without the force of the intellect and the spirit). ⁸⁷ The breath of life by itself is inert, and its pulsation is the effect and composed of the surrounding air. So the action of the mind is due to the force of consciousness whose transparency pervades all nature.

⁸⁸ The mind is the union of intellectual and vibrating powers. Its production is as false as the falsity of its knowledge. ⁸⁹ Mental power is called error and also illusion, and these in ignorance of the Supreme Brahman produce the knowledge of this poisonous world.

⁹⁰ The powers of the intellect and vibration, combined with those of imagination and will which constitute the mind, produce all worldly evils unless they are weakened and kept under restraint.

⁹¹ When intellect thinks or has perception by the pulsation caused by the air, the wind of breath gives pulsation to the intellect and causes its power of reasoning. This intellectual power gives rise to all the thoughts and desires of the mind.

⁹² The vibrating intellect extending over the undivided sphere of the universe is truly thinking power. The mind is a false imagination like the ghost of infants. ⁹³ The intellect is the power of reasoning, which cannot be thwarted anywhere by anything else, like the mind, just as there is no power to contest the almighty Indra. ⁹⁴ Thus, as there no relation between reasoning and the mind, it is wrong to attribute the mind with the power of thinking. The two are unrelated.

⁹⁵ How can this union of consciousness with only its vibration be called the mind with its multifarious functions? The commander alone, without the component parts of cavalry, elephants and others, cannot be called an army. ⁹⁶ Therefore there is no such thing as a good or bad mind in any of the three worlds. The bias of its existence will be utterly removed by full knowledge of spirituality.

⁹⁷ It is in vain and to no purpose that people imagine the existence of the mind. It is proved to be an unreality and has no substantiality of its own. ⁹⁸ Therefore, O magnanimous Rama, never give rise to false imaginations of any kind, and particularly that of the mind which never exists anywhere.

⁹⁹ False fantasies arise like a mirage from the lack of full knowledge of things. They spring in the heart, which is as barren as a desert, for want of the rain of full knowledge. ¹⁰⁰ The mind is a dead thing owing to its lack of form or action, and yet, as it is idolized in the circles of common people, it is a wonder. ¹⁰¹ It is a wonder that the mind, having no soul or essence, no body or size or support of its own, should spread its net over all ignorant minds.

¹⁰² One who falls victim to his unarmed and impotent mind is like a man who says his body has been injured by a lotus flower falling upon it. ¹⁰³ The man who is undone by his inert, dumb and blinded mind is like one who complains of being burned by the cool beams of the full moon. ¹⁰⁴ People are truly killed by an antagonist who is present before them, but it is a wonder that the ignorant are foiled by the non-existent mind of their own making. ¹⁰⁵ What is the power of that which is a creation of mere fancy, an unreal presentation of ignorance, and which being sought after is nowhere to be found?

¹⁰⁶ It is a great wonder that men should be overcome by their impotent minds that deal only in delusions. ¹⁰⁷ Ignorance is ever exposed to dangers and the ignorant are always the victims of error. Know the unreal world is the creation of only ignorance and of the ignorant. ¹⁰⁸ O, the misery of miseries that the ignorant make this creation of ignorance for themselves, and that they fabricate a living soul for the sole purpose of their sufferings.

¹⁰⁹ I know this frail world is a creation of the false imagination of the ignorant, and that this earth is as fragile as to be broken and carried away by the waves of the ocean. ¹¹⁰ It is like black eye-liner that is broken down by surrounding waters or seas serving as its grinding mill. Yet men are maddened with it, like those struck by moonbeams. ¹¹¹ The visible world disappears at the sight of reason, just as a man flies from the sight of his foe. The mind's streams of imaginary creations flee like hosts of demons defeated by the gods. ¹¹² Thus this world, which is a false creation of fancy and exists nowhere except in the idle brains of the ignorant, is lost into nothing at the sight of reason.

¹¹³ He who is not able to govern his mind and efface the thoughts of this false world that only arise in the minds of the ignorant, is not worthy of being advised in the abstruse doctrines of spirituality.

¹¹⁴ Those who are confirmed and self-sufficient in their belief of what can be perceived by the physical senses are unable to grasp the subtle science of abstract philosophy, and therefore are unfit to receive spiritual instruction. ¹¹⁵ Men accustomed to the loud beatings of drum are as unconscious to the soft tunes of the lute as they are startled at seeing the face of a sleeping friend. ¹¹⁶ They who fly with fear away from the loud preaching of false preachers cannot have the patience to listen to the silent lesson of their inner guide. They who are deluded by their own minds can hardly be reclaimed by any other. ¹¹⁷ Those who are tempted to taste the bitterness of worldly pleasures as being sweet, are so subdued by its effects on their understanding that they altogether lose the power of discerning the truth. Therefore it is useless to reason with them.

Chapter 14 — Impossibility of Curing the World; the Parade of Prey; the Thinking Principle

¹ Vasishta said:—

Multitudes of men are carried away by the torrents and waves of the sea of worldly pursuits. They are deaf and dumb to the admonitions of their spiritual instructors.² They are not fit to derive the benefit of the spiritual knowledge which I have propounded in this yoga scripture by my rational discourses.

³ They who are born blind and can see nothing are not to be shown a painting of a garden by an intelligent artist, portrayed with blooming blossoms and beautiful flowers.⁴ There is no fool who would present fragrant odors to one whose nostrils are snorting under some nasal disease, and there is no dolt so great who would consult an ignorant man on spiritual matters.

⁵ What fool is there who would refer a question on law or religious subjects to one of ungoverned passions and organs of sense, or whose eyeballs are rolling with the intoxication of wine?⁶ Who asks of the dead the way he should go, or one in the grave about where to walk in the city? What witless man seeks the help of an idiot to clear his doubts?⁷ Of what good is it to advise a person with little wit, whose serpentine mind is coiled and creeping in the cave of his heart? Though it lies there in silence and sightless, is yet ungovernably wild.

⁸ Know there is no such a thing as a well governed mind. Though you may fling it away from you, yet it is never lost or annihilated.⁹ The simpleton who does not control his false and delusive mind is tormented to death by its venomous smart, as if stung by a deadly reptile.¹⁰ The learned understand the vital powers. They know the operations of the organs of action and they depend on the action and force of the soul. Say then, O Rama, what is that thing which they call the mind?

¹¹ The vital breath gives force for bodily actions and the soul produces the power of knowledge. The organs act by their own force and the Supreme Spirit is the main source of all.¹² All forces are only parts of the omnipotence of the Supreme Spirit. Their different names are only inventions of men.

¹³ What is it that they call the individual living soul which has blindfolded the world? What do they label as the mind? It is really an unreality without any power of its own.

¹⁴ Rama, I have seen the continued misery arising from their false conception of the unreal mind. My pity for them has caused my constant sorrow.¹⁵ But why should I feel sorrow for the ignorant rabble who bring their sorrow by their own error? The common herd is born to their misery like beasts and brutes.¹⁶ The ignorant rabble are born in their dull material bodies only for their destruction. They are born to die away constantly, like the waves of the ocean.

¹⁷ What pity shall I take for those who are seen every day perishing under the jaws of death, like numbers of animals immolated in the shambles?¹⁸ For whom shall I sorrow when I see billions and trillions of gnats and moths destroyed daily by gusts of wind?¹⁹ For whom shall I sorrow when every day throughout hills and forests I see hunters and sportsmen killing millions of deer and other game?

²⁰ For whom shall I feel when I find innumerable schools of small fish in the waters eaten every day by bigger ones?

²¹ I see an infinite number of microscopic organisms eaten by flies and fleas, which in their turn are eaten by hungry spiders and scorpions.²² The frog feeds on flies and in turn is eaten by snakes. Birds

of prey swallow the snake and the weasel preys upon snakes.²³ The weasel is killed by the cat, which is killed by the dog. The bear destroys the dog and is at last destroyed by the tiger.²⁴ The lion overcomes the tiger, and is overcome on its turn by the sharabha. The sharabha is overthrown by its fall on rocky steeps in its attempt to jump over gathering clouds.

²⁵ The clouds are worsted by tempests, and these again are obstructed by rising rocks and mountains. The mountains are split by thunderbolts, and the thunderbolts of heaven are broken by the thundering Indra.²⁶ This Indra is defeated by Vishnu, his younger brother, and Vishnu is made to undergo his incarnations in the shapes of men and beasts. He is subjected to the changing fortunes of pain and pleasure and to the conditions of disease, decay and death.

²⁷ Big animals are fed upon by leeches and fleas that stick to their bodies and suck their blood. Men filled with knowledge and armed with weapons are infested by bloodsucking bugs and gnats.²⁸ Thus hosts of living bodies are continually exposed to feed upon and to be fed upon by one another with remorseless hunger.²⁹ There is a constant growth of leeches, fleas, ants, other small insects and worms on the one hand, and a continued dissolution of both big and puny bodies in every place on earth.

³⁰ The womb of the waters bears breeds of fish, whales, hippopotamus and other aquatic animals, and the bowels of the earth produce multitudes of worms and reptiles to infinity.³¹ The air teems with broods of birds of various kinds and the woods abound with wild beasts, lions and tigers, fleet deer and other brutes.³² There are inborn worms growing in the intestines and upon the skin of animal bodies. Parasitical insects and microscopic organisms feed upon the bark and leaves of trees.³³ Insects are seen born in the crusts of stones, such as frogs, worms and others. Many kinds of worms and insects are found growing and feeding upon the feces and excrements of animals.

³⁴ In this manner an endless number of living beings are being born and perishing for ever and ever. It is of no use to them whether kind hearted men are joyous or sorrowful at their births and deaths.

³⁵ The wise can have no cause for joy or grief in this continued course of constant births and deaths of the living world.³⁶ Such is the nature of all the different species of animal beings. They constantly grow to fall off like the leaves of trees.

³⁷ The kind hearted man who wishes to remove the sorrows of the ignorant by his advice, attempts an impossibility as great as that of shrouding the all pervasive sunshine by means of his umbrella.³⁸ It is useless to give advice to the ignorant who are no better than beasts in their understandings, just as it is fruitless to talk to a rock or a block of wood or a stone in the wilderness.³⁹ The dull headed ignorant, who are no better than beasts, are dragged by their willful minds like cattle by their halters.⁴⁰ To see the ignorant plunged in the skin of their perverted minds, employed in acts and rites for their own ruin, would make even stones melt into tears.

⁴¹ Men of ungoverned minds are always exposed to dangers and difficulties, but the purified minds of the wise are free from the evils and mishaps of life.

⁴² Now Rama, consider well the miseries of ungoverned minds and take yourself to the knowledge of the knowable one.⁴³ Never entertain the vain hobgoblin of a mind in your imagination. The mind has no real existence of its own. Beware of this false belief, which may betray you like the imagined

ghosts of children.⁴⁴ As long as you are forgetful of the soul, you must remain in utter ignorance and remain tortured by the serpent residing in the recess of your heart.

⁴⁵ Now you know the whole truth, as I have explained it to you. It is only your imagination that presents you with the idea of your mind, and you must get rid of that idea forever.⁴⁶ If you rely upon what can be perceived, you are subject to the delusion of your mind. No sooner do you shun your reliance on phenomena than you are liberated from your illusion of it.

⁴⁷ The visible world is a combination of the three qualities of purity, action and passivity (*sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*). It is presented before you by your illusion (*maya*), like a trap to capture beasts.

⁴⁸ Think of the nonexistence both of the subjective-self and the objective world. Remain as firm as a fixed rock on earth, and behold the Lord only in the form of infinite space in your heart.

⁴⁹ Rama, shun the false thoughts of your self-existence and those of the visible world. Forsake your belief in duality in order to settle yourself in infinite unity.⁵⁰ Continue to meditate on the soul, as it is situated between the subjective viewer and the objective view of this world, and as it exists in your vision which lies between the two.⁵¹ Forsake your ideas about the subjects and objects of your taste, and think about their intermediate state of taste as being one with the soul.⁵² Rama, place yourself in the position of your power of thinking which lies between the thinker and what can be thought of. Support your soul on the support-less soul of all, and remain steady in your meditation.

⁵³ Forsake the cares of the world and be exempt from thoughts of existence and non-existence. Meditate on the Universal Soul and be settled with your soul in that Soul.⁵⁴ When you have learned to think on the thinkable One by renouncing the thought of your own existence, then you shall arrive to that state of unconsciousness which is free from misery.

⁵⁵ Know your thoughts to be your chains and your self-consciousness to be your binding chain. Therefore, O Rama, loosen the lion of your soul from the prison house of your mind.⁵⁶ By departing from the state of the Supreme Soul and falling into the thoughts of the mind, you will be crowded by your imaginations and you will see all about you only the objects of your thoughts.

⁵⁷ The knowledge that reasoning or the power of thought is distinct from the soul introduces the existence of the unhappy mind. For the sake of true happiness, you must get rid of that separation.

⁵⁸ When you become conscious of the Supreme Soul in you and permeated throughout all nature, then you will find the thinker and his thinking, the thinkables and their thoughts, all vanish into nothing.

⁵⁹ The thought that "I have a soul and a living soul also" brings all the miseries to which we are exposed throughout all eternity.⁶⁰ The consciousness that "I am the one soul and not a distinct living being" is called tranquility of the spirit and its true joy.

⁶¹ O Rama, when you are certain that the world is the Universal Soul itself, you will find the false distinctions of your mind and individual living soul to be nothing in reality.⁶² When you perceive that all this is your very self, then your mind will melt away into the soul, as darkness dissolves in sunlight and shadows disappear in the air.⁶³ As long as you cherish the snake of your mind within yourself, you are in danger of catching its poison. But when the mind is removed through your yoga meditation, you escape the danger immediately.

⁶⁴ Be bold, O Rama, and destroy the mighty demon of the deep rooted error of your mind by the power

of the mantras of your perfect knowledge.⁶⁵ Upon disappearance of the demon of the mind from the dwelling of your body, as when a demon yaksha disappears in the air, you will be free from every disease, danger, care and fear.⁶⁶ Dispassion and detachment joined with the knowledge of unity melt down the substance of the mind and confer the best and highest state of joy and rest in the Supreme Spirit, bringing on that state of tranquility which is the main aim of everybody. May all these blessings attend upon you.

Chapter 15 — On Greed

¹ Vasishta continued:—

The soul by following the unholy essence of the mind, which is the source of the world, is led to fall into the trap laid by the mind for all living beings.² The soul then loses the brightness of its spiritual form and takes the gross shape of the senses. It waits upon the guidance of the mind and indulges in its impure imaginations.³ It falls into greed which, like a poisonous plant, makes it senseless and spreads a fearful anesthesia over it.⁴ Greed like a dark night hides the soul under the gloom of oblivion and produces endless pains to the soul.

⁵ The god Shiva withstood the flame of the kalpa conflagration, but nobody can withstand the fierce fire of greed.⁶ It bears a form as formidable as that of a long, sharp and black dagger, cold in appearance but very injurious in its effects.

⁷ Greed is an evergreen plant bearing bunches of plentiful fruit on high which, when obtained and tasted, prove to be bitter and gall.⁸ Greed is a hungry wolf prowling in the recess of the heart, feeding unseen on the flesh, blood and bones of its sheltering body.⁹ Greed is like a rainy stream full of foul and muddy water overflowing and breaking down its banks, then leaving its dirty bed empty.¹⁰ The man stricken with greed remains stingy and broken hearted at all times. His spirits are damped and his sordid soul is debased before mankind. He is dejected, weeps and lays himself down in despair.

¹¹ He who does not have this black adder of greed burrowing in the recess of his heart has the free play of his vital breath, which is otherwise poisoned by the breath of the viper rankling in his breast.

¹² The heart that is not darkened by the gloomy night of greed feels the rays of humanity sparkling in it, like the play of bright moonbeams.¹³ The heart that is not eaten up by the corroding cares of greed is like a tree without cankers blooming with its blossoms of piety.

¹⁴ The current of greed is ever running amidst the wilderness of human desires with ceaseless torrents and waves, and hideous whirlpools and vortices around.¹⁵ The thread of greed, like the long line of a flying kite, whirls and furls and pulls mankind as its toys and playthings.¹⁶ Rude, rough and hard-hearted greed, like a remorseless axe, breaks and cuts down the tender roots of virtues.¹⁷ Foolish men led by greed fall into the pit of hell, like ignorant deer enticed by grass scattered over its cover fall into the black hole of a trap.

¹⁸ Men are not so much blinded by their aged and decayed eyesight as they are blinded by the invisible greed seated in their hearts.¹⁹ The heart which is nestled by the ominous owl of greed is as pitiful as the god Vishnu who became a dwarf because he begged for a bit of ground from Bali.

²⁰ A divine power has implanted this greed which cannot be satisfied in the heart of man. This greed whirls him about as if tied by a rope, like the sun revolving around its center in the sky.²¹ Fly from this greed which is as heinous as a venomous snake. It is the source of all evils, even of death in this mortal world.

²² Greed blows on men like the wind. Greed makes men sit still like stones. Greed makes some as calm as the earth, and greed ransacks the three worlds in its rapid course.²³ This entire parade of men is impelled back and forth by greed, as if pulled by ropes. It is easy to break ropes, but not the bond

of greed.

²⁴ Rama, get rid of greed by forsaking your desires. Because the wise have determined that the mind dies away from lack of its desires. ²⁵ Never observe the distinctions of “my”, “yours” and “his” in any of your wishes, but wish for the good of all alike. Never foster any bad desire. ²⁶ The thought of self in what is not the self is the parent of all our grief. When you cease to think the not-self as the self you are then reckoned among the wise.

²⁷ Cut off your egoism, O gentle Rama, and dwell in your unearthly self by forgetting yourself, and by dispelling your fear from all created beings.

Chapter 16 — Two Ways to Abandon Greed: Reason and Insight

¹ Rama said, “Sage, what you are saying, about me abandoning my egoism and greed, is too deep for me to understand. ² Sage, how is it possible to give up my ego without giving up this body and everything that is related to it? ³ Egoism is the chief support of the body, like a post supports a thatched house. ⁴ The body will surely perish without its egoism. Its durability will be cut short, like a tree is felled by sawing on its trunk. ⁵ Now tell me, O most eloquent sage, how can I live by giving up my egoism (which is myself)? Answer me according to your right judgment.

⁶ Vasishta replied:—

O lotus-eyed and respectful Rama, the wise, who are well acquainted with the subject, say there are two ways to abandon desires. One is called the knowable (based on knowledge or direct realization) and the other they call the thinkable (based on contemplation, reasoning).

⁷ There is a knowledge that I am the life of my body and its powers, and these are the supports of my life, and that I am something. ⁸ But weighing this internal conviction by the light of reason proves that I am not related to the external body and the body does not bear any relation to my internal soul.

⁹ Therefore, one performs one’s duties with calmness and coolness of understanding without any desire for results. This is called abandonment of desire through reasoning.

¹⁰ The understanding that views things in an equal light and, by forsaking its desires, relinquishes the body without taking any concern for it, is called the knowing abandonment of desires.

¹¹ He who foregoes with ease the desires arising from his egoism is called the thinking renouncer of his desires and is liberated in his lifetime. ¹² He who is calm and even-minded by his abandonment of vain and imaginary desires is a knowing deserter of his desires and is also liberated in this world.

¹³ Those who abandon the desires in their thoughts and remain with listless indifference to everything are like those who are liberated in their lifetime. ¹⁴ They are also called liberated who have their composure (detachment) after abandonment of their desires and who rest in the Supreme Spirit with their souls disentangled from their bodies. ¹⁵ Both these sorts of renunciation are equally entitled to liberation. Both are extricated from pain and both lead liberated souls to the state of Brahma.

¹⁶ The mind, whether engaged in acts or disengaged from them, rests in the pure spirit of God by forsaking its desires. ¹⁷ The former kind of yogi is liberated in his embodied state and free from pain throughout his lifetime. But the latter who has obtained his liberation in his bodiless state after his death, remains quite unconscious of his desires.

¹⁸ He who feels no joy or sorrow at the good or evil which befalls him in his lifetime, as it is the course of nature, is called the living liberated man. ¹⁹ He who neither desires nor dreads the casualties of good or evil that are incidental to human life, but remains quiet regardless of them as in his dead sleep, is known as the truly liberated man. ²⁰ He whose mind is free from thoughts of what is desirable or undesirable to him, and free from differentiation of “mine,” “yours” and “his” is called the truly liberated. ²¹ He whose mind is not subject to excess joy or grief, hope or fear, anger, boasting or miserliness, is said to have his liberation. ²² He whose feelings are all dulled within himself as in his sleep, and whose mind enjoys its joy like the beams of the full moon, is said to be a liberated man in this world.

²³ Valmiki says:—

After the sage had said so far, the day departed to its evening service with the setting sun. The assembled audience retired to their evening ceremonial washings, and with the rising sun on the next day, returned to the assembly.

Chapter 17 — Describing Liberation while Living and Brahman beyond Words

¹ Vasishta said:—

It is difficult, O Rama, to describe in words the inexplicable nature of the liberation of disembodied souls. But let me tell you more about the liberation of living beings.

² The desire of doing one's duties without expectation of reward is also called living liberation, and those who do their duties in this way are said to be the living liberated. ³ The wise sages describe dependence of beings on their desires and their strong attachment to external objects as their bondage and chains in this world. ⁴ But the desire to conduct oneself according to the course of events without any expectation of results also constitutes the liberation of the living as one's duties are performed with the body only. ⁵ The desire to enjoy external objects is truly the bondage of the soul. Indifference to worldly enjoyments constitutes one's freedom in his living state. ⁶ Lack of greed and anxiety in anticipation of some gain, and absence of joy and change in one's disposition afterwards make true freedom of men.

⁷ O high-minded Rama, know that desire, which is eager expectation to possess anything, is the greatest bondage of men. ⁸ He who is devoid of desire for anything, whether existent or nonexistent in the world, is the truly great man with the greatest magnanimity of his soul. ⁹ Therefore Rama, forsake the thoughts both of your bondage and liberation, and also of your happiness and misery. Get rid of your desire for the real and unreal and remain as calm as the undisturbed ocean. ¹⁰ Think yourself, O most intelligent Rama, to be devoid of death and decay. Do not stain your mind with fears of disease or death. ¹¹ These substances are nothing, nor are you any of these things that you see. There is something beyond these, and know that you are that very thing (which is the soul).

¹² The phenomenon of the world is an unreality and everything here that appears real in your sight is unreal. Knowing yourself to be beyond all these, what earthly thing is there that you can crave? ¹³ All reasoning men, O Rama, consider themselves in one of four different lights in their minds. I shall now explain these to you in brief.

¹⁴ He who considers his whole body as the offspring of his parents (devoid of his spiritual part) is surely born to bondage of the world. ¹⁵ But they who are certain of their immaterial soul, which is finer than the point of a hair, are another class of men who are called wise and are born for their liberation. ¹⁶ There is a third class of men who consider themselves as same with the Universal Soul of the world. Such men, O support of Raghu's race, are also entitled to their liberation. ¹⁷ Then there is a fourth class who consider themselves and the whole world to be as insubstantial as the empty air. These surely partake in liberation.

¹⁸ Of these four kinds of beliefs, the first leads to bondage and the other three, growing from purity of thought, lead to the path of liberation. ¹⁹ Among these, the first is subject to the bondage of greed, but the other three, proceeding from pure desire, are crowned with liberation. ²⁰ In my opinion, those of the third kind, who consider themselves one with the Universal Soul, are never subject to sorrow or pain. ²¹ The magnitude of the Supreme Spirit extends over and below and all about existence. Therefore the belief that "All in one" or "One in all" never holds a man in bondage.

²² The fourth kind, those who believe in emptiness and maintain the principles of nature or illusion,

are in ignorance of the divine knowledge that represents God as Shiva, Lord, He, and eternal Soul.²³ He is all and everlasting without a second or another like him. He is pervaded by his omniscience, and not by the ignorance called illusion (*maya*).²⁴ The spirit of God fills the universe like the water of the ocean fills the deep. The spirit of God stretches from the highest heaven to the lowest abyss of the infernal regions.²⁵ Therefore only His reality is ever existent. No unreal world exists at anytime. Liquid water fills the sea, and not the swelling wave that rises in it.

²⁶ As the bracelets and armlets are nothing other than gold, so the varieties of trees and herbs are not distinct from the Universal Spirit.²⁷ It is the one and same omnipotence of Supreme Spirit that displays different forms in its works of the creation.

²⁸ Never be joyful or sorry for anything belonging to you or another. Do not feel delighted or dejected at any gain or loss that may happen to occur to you.²⁹ Be of an even disposition, and rely on your essence as one with the Supreme Soul. Attend to your many duties. Be observant of unity in your spiritual concerns and dualities in your worldly affairs.

³⁰ Beware of falling into the hidden holes of this world in your pursuit of varieties of objects. Do not be like an elephant falling into a hidden pit in the forest.³¹ O Rama of great soul, there cannot be a duality as it is thought in the mind. O Rama of enlightened soul, there cannot be any unity or duality of the soul. The true essence is ever existent without unity or duality. It is called the all and nothing particular, and as itself (*swarupa*).³² There is no ego or your subjective-self, nor are there any objective worlds that you see. All this is the manifestation of the eternal and imperishable Omniscience. Know this world to be neither an entity nor non-entity by itself.

³³ Know the Supreme Being to be without beginning and end, the enlightener of all lights, the un-decaying, unborn and incomprehensible one. He is without part and without any change in him. He is beyond imagination and beyond all the imaginary objects about us.³⁴ Know for certain in your mind that the Lord is always present in the full light of your consciousness. He is the root of your consciousness. He is of the nature of your inner soul. He is conceivable in the intellect. He is the Brahman, the all and everlasting, the all-pervading, the subjective “I” and the objective “you” and this world.

Chapter 18 — Living Liberation or True Joy of Man; Everything Is Connected

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Rama, I will now describe the nature of those great men who conduct themselves in this world with their desires under their control and whose minds are not blemished by evil inclinations.

² The sage whose mind is freed in his lifetime conducts himself unconcerned in this world. He smiles secure at its occurrences and is regardless of the first, last and middle stages of his life. ³ He is attentive to his present business and unmindful of every other object about him. He is devoid of cares and desires and his thought is only of his internal reflections. ⁴ He is free from anxiety in all places who tolerates whatever he happens to meet. He sees the light of reason in his soul and walks in the romantic gardens of his thoughts. ⁵ He who is neither elated nor depressed in any state of his life, who does not fall down under any circumstance, rests in transcendental bliss with prospects as bright as the cooling beams of the full moon.

⁶ Whose generosity and courage do not forsake him, even when he is troubled by his bitterest enemies, and who is observant of his duties to his superiors, such a man is not dejected in this world. ⁷ Who neither rejoices nor laments at his lot, who neither envies nor yearns after the fortune of another, but pursues his own business in quiet silence, is the man that is never downcast in this world. ⁸ Who, when asked, says what he is doing, but unasked remains like a dead block, and who is free from desire and disgust, he is never depressed in his heart and mind.

⁹ He speaks agreeably to every one and gently utters what he is required to say. He who understands the intentions of others is never put out. ¹⁰ He sees the right and wrong dealings of men and the acts of the depraved desires of their minds. Knowing all human affairs as clearly as looking in a mirror in his hand, he holds his peace with every one. ¹¹ Standing on his firm footing (detachment) and knowing the frailty of worldly things, he smiles at the changing fortunes of nature with the cold frigidity of his heart.

¹² Rama, such is the nature of the great souls who have subdued their minds and know the course of nature, as I have described to you. ¹³ I am unable to describe the fond beliefs of the minds of the ignorant populace who are plunged in the mud of their sensual enjoyments.

¹⁴ Women, devoid of understanding and graced with their personal charms, are the idols of these people who are fond of their golden forms without knowing them to be the flames of hellfire.

¹⁵ Wealth, the fond object of foolish people, is filled with every ill and evil desire. Its pleasure is poison and produces misery. Prosperity is full with danger. ¹⁶ Use of wealth to do meritorious deeds and various acts of piety is also filled with a great many evils, which I do not have the power to recount.

¹⁷ Therefore Rama, keep your sight on the full view of your spirit by retracting it from external phenomena and internal thoughts. Conduct yourself in this world as one liberated in his lifetime.

¹⁸ Being free from all your inner passions and feelings of affection. Having given up all your desires and expectations, continue performing your outward duties in this world. ¹⁹ Follow all your duties in life with a noble flexibility of your disposition, but preserve the philosophic renunciation of everything in your mind and conduct yourself accordingly in this world.

²⁰ Think well on the fleeting states of all earthly things and fix your mind upon the lasting nature of your soul. Thus conduct yourself in this transitory stage with thoughts of eternity in your mind.

²¹ Rama, conduct yourself with inner detachment and lack of all desire, but show your outward desire for whatever is good and great. Be detached within yourself but full of effort in your external behavior. ²² O Rama, conduct yourself among men with a pretended activity in your outward appearance, but with real inaction in your mind. Show yourself as the doer of your deeds, but know in your mind that you are no actor at all.

²³ O Rama, conduct yourself with full knowledge of this world as if you are acquainted with the natures of all beings. Go wherever you please with your intimate acquaintance of everything here.

²⁴ Behave yourself with mankind with a pretended appearance of joy and grief, and of condolence and congratulation with others, and an assumed shape of activity and action among mankind. ²⁵ Manage yourself, O Rama, with full possession of your mind, unaffected by pride or vanity, as if it were as clear as the spotless sky. ²⁶ Go through your life unshackled by the bonds of desire. Join in all the outward acts of life with an unaltered evenness of mind under every circumstance.

²⁷ Do not give room to thoughts of your bondage or liberation in this world, or of the embodiment or release of your soul here. Think the revolving worlds to be a magic scene and preserve perfect tranquility of your mind. ²⁸ Know all this as an illusion. Only ignorance presents the false appearance of the world to sight. Yet we take them for true, as you see water in the burning sunbeams in a desert.

²⁹ The unobstructed, uniform and all pervading soul can have no restriction or bondage. What is unrestricted in itself cannot have its release. ³⁰ Lack of true knowledge presents the false view of the world before us. Knowledge of truth disperses the view, just as the knowledge of the rope dispels the false appearance of the snake in it.

³¹ You have known the true essence of your being by your right discernment. Thereby you are free from the sense of your personality and are set free as the subtle air. ³² You have known the truth and must give up your knowledge of untruth, together with the thoughts of your friends and relatives, all which are unreal in their natures. ³³ Such being the case, you must consider your soul as something other than those, and that you have received your soul from the supreme source of all. ³⁴ This soul bears no relation to your friends or possession, to your good or evil actions, or to anything whatsoever in this world. ³⁵ When you are convinced that this very soul constitutes your essence, you have nothing to fear from the false appearance of the world which is no more than a misconception.

³⁶ You can have no concern for the well-being or grief of a friend or foe who is not born so to you. For every one being born for himself, you have no cause for joy or grief for anybody. ³⁷ If you know that you had been before (creation) and that you shall be so forever afterwards (to eternity), you are truly wise. ³⁸ If you are troubled so much with concern for friends in this life, then why not mourn those who are dead and gone in your present and past lives? ³⁹ If you were something other than what you are now, and if you have to be something different in the future, why then should you sorrow for what does not have its self-identity?

⁴⁰ If you are to be born no more, after your past and present births, then you have no cause for sorrow, being extinct yourself in the Supreme Spirit. ⁴¹ Therefore there is no cause for sorrow in anything that

occurs according to the course of nature. Instead be joyful pursuing the duties of your present life.

⁴² But do not indulge the excess of your joy or grief, but preserve your equanimity everywhere by knowing the Supreme Spirit pervades all. ⁴³ Know yourself to be the form of infinite spirit stretching wide like the extended vacuum, and that you are the pure eternal light, the focus of full brightness.

⁴⁴ Know your eternal and invisible soul is distinct from all worldly substances, a particle of that Universal Soul which dwells in and stretches through the hearts of all bodies, like the unseen thread running through the holes and connecting the links of a necklace.

⁴⁵ You learn from the unlearned that the continuation of the world is caused by the reproduction of what has been before; not so from the learned (who know the world to be nothing). Know this and not that, and be happy in this life.

⁴⁶ The course of the world and this life is ever tending to decay and disease. Ignorance represents them to be progressing to perfection. But you who are intelligent know their real natures (of frailty and unreality). ⁴⁷ What else can be the nature of error but falsehood, and what may the state of sleep be except dream and drowsiness? ⁴⁸ Who do you call your good friend, and who do you say is your great enemy? They all belong to the sole One and proceed alike from the Divine Will.

⁴⁹ Everything is frail and unsteady and has its rise and fall from and into the Supreme Spirit. It is like the wave of the sea, rising and falling from and into the same water. ⁵⁰ Worlds are rolling upward and going down again, like the axis and spokes of a wheel. ⁵¹ The celestials sometimes fall into hell, and the denizens of hell are sometimes raised to heaven. Animals of one kind are regenerated in another form, and the people of one continent and island are reborn on another. ⁵² The wealthy are reduced to poverty, and the poor are raised to wealth. All beings are seen to be rising and falling in a hundred ways.

⁵³ Who has seen the wheel of fortune move slowly in one straight forward course forever, not tumbling in its ups and downs or turning to this side and that in its winding and uneven route? Fixedness of fortune is a fiction, like finding frost in fire. ⁵⁴ Those who are called wealthy, with all fortune, position, friends and relations, are seen flying away in a few days of this transient life.

⁵⁵ The thought of something as one's own or another's, and of this and that as mine, yours, his or someone else's, are as false as the appearance of double suns and moons in the sky. ⁵⁶ That this is a friend and this other a foe, and that this is myself and that one is another, are all only false ego conceptions of your mind and must be wiped away.

⁵⁷ However, make it your pleasure to mix with the blinded populace and those who are lost to reason. Deal with them in your usual unaltered way. ⁵⁸ In your journey through this world, conduct yourself in such a manner that you do not sink under the burden of your cares of it. ⁵⁹ When you come to your reason, lay down your earthly cares and desires. Then shall you have that composure of mind that will exonerate you from all your duties and dealings in life.

⁶⁰ It is the part of low-minded men to reckon one as a friend and another as no friend. Noble minded men do not observe such distinctions between man and man. ⁶¹ There is nothing where I am not and nothing which is not mine. ⁶² The intellects of the wise are as clear as the spacious sky. There is no rising or setting of their intellectual light which views everything as serenely as in the serenity of the

atmosphere and as plainly as the plain surface of the earth.

⁶³ Know Rama that all created beings are friendly and useful to you, and there is no person or thing in the world with which you are not related in some way. ⁶⁴ It is false to look anyone as a friend or foe among the various orders of created beings in the universe. In reality, each may be of help to you, however unfriendly they may appear at first.

Chapter 19 — On Family Relationships: the Story of Punya and Pavana

¹ Vasishta continued:—

I will now give you an example on the subject, the story of two brothers born of a sage on the banks of Ganges where it flows in three directions.² I have been talking about friends and enemies, so this wonderful tale from the past occurs to my mind. Hear this holy story.

³ On this continent of Asia, there a mountainous region surrounded by gardens and forests with the high Mount Mahendra rising above the rest.⁴ It touched the sky with its lofty peaks, and its wish-fulfilling kalpa tree spread its shadow over the hermits and kinnaras that took shelter beneath it.⁵ The place resounded with the sound of sages chanting the Sama Veda hymns as they passed from its caves and peaks to the region of Indra.

⁶ Fleecy clouds constantly drizzled rainwater from its thousand peaks, washing plants and flowers below. They appeared like tufts of hair hanging down from heaven to earth.⁷ The mountain echoed with the loud roars of impetuous eight-legged sharabhas, and with the thunder from the hollow mouths of its dark and deep clouds, like the world-destroying kalpa clouds.⁸ The thundering noise of its cascades falling from precipice to precipice into its caverns would make the loud crashing of ocean waves blush by comparison.

⁹ There, on a tableland upon the craggy top of the mountain, flowed the sacred stream of the heavenly Ganges for the ablution and drink of the hermits.¹⁰ There, on the banks of the triple path river Ganges, was a shining mountain, sparkling like bright gold and decorated with blossoming trees.

¹¹ There lived a sage named Dirghatapa who was a personification of meditation and a man of enlightened understanding. He had a noble mind and was accustomed to the austerities of tapas.

¹² This sage was blessed with two children as beautiful as the full moon. They were named Punya (Meritorious) and Pavana (Holy) and they were as intelligent as the sons of Brihaspati who are known as the two Kachas.¹³ Dirghatapa lived with his wife and their two sons on the bank of the river amid a grove of fruit trees.

¹⁴ In course of time, the two children arrived at the age of discretion. Punya, the elder of the two, was superior to the other in all his merits.¹⁵ The younger boy, Pavana, was half awakened in his intellect, like the half blown lotus at the dawn of the day. His lack of intelligence kept him from knowing the truth and the certainty of his faith.

¹⁶ In the course of all destroying time, the sage came to complete a hundred years, and age and infirmity reduced the strength of his tall body and long life.¹⁷ His vitality decrepit, he bade farewell to his desires in this world, so frail and full of a hundred fearful accidents to human life.¹⁸ At last the old devotee Dirghatapa left his mortal frame in a cave of that mountain, like a bird quitting its old nest forever, or a water-bearer laying down the burden from his shoulders.¹⁹ His spirit fled like the fragrance of a flower to that empty space which is ever tranquil, free from attributes and thought, and of the nature of pure consciousness.

²⁰ The sage's wife, finding his lifeless body lying on the ground, fell down upon it and remained motionless like a lotus flower plucked from its stalk.²¹ She also was long accustomed to the practice

of yoga, according to her husband's instruction, so she also left her un-decayed body, like a bee flits from an un-faded flower into empty air.²² Unseen by men, her soul followed her husband's as the light of the stars disappears in the sky at the dawn of the day.

²³ Seeing the death of both parents, the elder son Punya was busily employed in performing their funeral services, but the younger Pavana was deeply absorbed in grief at their loss.²⁴ Being overwhelmed by the sorrow in his mind, he wandered about in the woods. Not having the firmness of his elder brother, he continued to wail in his mourning.²⁵ The magnanimous Punya performed the funeral ceremonies of his parents, then went in search of his brother mourning in the woods.

²⁶ Punya said:—

My boy, why is your soul overcast by the cloud of your grief? Why do you shed tears from your lotus-eyes as profusely as rain showers, only to render you blind?²⁷ Know, my intelligent boy, that both your father and mother have gone to their ultimate blissful state in the Supreme Spirit, called the state of salvation or liberation.²⁸ That is the last resort of all living beings and that is the blessed state of all self subdued souls. Then why mourn for them who have returned and are reunited with their own proper nature?

²⁹ You vainly indulge yourself in false and fruitless grief. You are mourning for what is not to be mourned at all.³⁰ Neither is she your mother nor he your father. You are not the only son of them who have had numerous children in their repeated births.³¹ You also have had thousands of fathers and mothers in your bygone births, in as much as there are many streams of running waters in every forest.

³² You are not the only son of they who have had innumerable sons before you. Generations of men have passed away like the currents of a running stream.³³ Our parents also had numberless children in their past lives, and the branches of human generation are as numerous as the innumerable flowers and fruit on trees.³⁴ The numbers of our friends and relatives in our repeated lives in this world have been as great as the innumerable flowers and fruit of a large tree in all its many seasons.³⁵ If we are to lament over the loss of our parents and children who are dead and gone, then why not also lament those we have lost and left behind in all our past lives?

³⁶ It is all only a delusion, O my fortunate boy, that is presented before us in this illusive world. In truth, O my conscious child, we have nobody who we may call to be our real friends or positive enemies in this world.³⁷ In a true sense, there is no loss of anybody or anything in the world. It is only that they appear to exist and disappear, like the appearance of water in the dry desert.

³⁸ The royal dignity that you may see, adorned with a stately umbrella and flapping fans, is only a dream that lasts a few days.³⁹ Consider these phenomena in their true light and, my boy, you will find that none of these nor ourselves nor anyone of us is to last forever. Therefore shun your error of the passing world from your mind forever.

⁴⁰ That these are dead and gone and these others exist before us are only errors of our minds and creatures of our false notions and fond desires. There is no reality in them.⁴¹ Our notions and desires paint and present these various changes before our sight, like sunshine presenting water in a mirage. So our fancies, working in the field of our ignorance, produce the false conceptions that roll on like currents in the eventful ocean of the world, bringing the waves of favorable and unfavorable events to

us.

Chapter 20 — Punya Reasons with Pavana

¹ Punya said:—

Who is our father and who our mother? Who are our friends and relatives, except our notion of them as such? Friends and relatives are like dust raised by the gusts of our airy fancy.² The conceptions of friends and enemies and our sons and relatives are the products of our affection and hatred of them. These being the effects of our ignorance are soon made to disappear into airy nothing upon enlightenment of understanding.

³ The thought of one as a friend makes him a friend. Thinking one as an enemy makes him an enemy. The knowledge of a thing as honey and of another as poison is owing to our opinions of them.⁴ There being only one Universal Soul equally pervading the whole, there can be no reason to conceive of one as a friend and another as an enemy.

⁵ My boy, of what you are? What makes your identity when your body is only a composition of bones, ribs, flesh and blood, and not yourself?⁶ Being viewed in its true light, there is nothing as "myself" or "yourself." A fallacy of our understanding makes me think of me as Punya and you as Pavana.⁷ Who is your father and who is the son? Who is your mother and who your friend? One Supreme Self pervades all infinity. Who do you call the self and who the not self?

⁸ If you are a spiritual substance and have undergone many births, then you have had many friends and properties in your past lives. Why do you not think of them also?⁹ You had many friends in flowery fields where you pastured in your former form of a stag. Why do you not think of those deer who were once your dear companions?¹⁰ Why do you not lament for your lost swan companions in the pleasant pool of lotuses where you did dive and swim about in the form of a gander?¹¹ Why not lament your fellow trees in the forest where you once stood as a stately tree?¹² You had lion comrades on the rugged mountain crags. Why do you not lament them also?¹³ You had many mates among the fish in clear lakes decked with lotuses. Why not lament your separation from them?

¹⁴ You were a monkey in the grey and green woods of the country of Dasarna. You were a prince in land of frost and a raven in the woods of Pundra.¹⁵ You were an elephant in the land of Haihayas and an ass in that of Trigarta. You became a dog in the country of Salya and a bird in the woods of sarala trees.¹⁶ You have been a pipal tree in the Vindhyan Mountains and a wood insect in a large oak tree. You were a cock on Mandara Mountain, then born as a brahmin in one of its caves.¹⁷ You were a brahmin in Kosala and a partridge in Bengal. You were a horse in the snowy land and a beast in the sacred ground of Brahma at Pushkara.¹⁸ You were an insect in the trunk of a palm tree, a gnat in a big tree, and a crane in the woods of Vindhya. Now you are my younger brother.

¹⁹ You have been an ant for six months and lain within the thin bark of a bhugpetera tree in a glen of the Himalayan hills. Now you are born as my younger brother.²⁰ You have been a centipede in a dunghill at a distant village where you lived for a year and half. Now you have become my younger brother.²¹ Once you were the child of a Pulinda tribal woman and you lived on her breasts like the honey sucking bee on the core of a lotus. That same person is now my younger brother.²² In this manner, my boy, you were born in many other shapes and had to wander all about Asia for numberless of years. And now are you my younger brother.

²³ Thus I see the past states of your existence caused by the prior desires of your soul. I see all this by my clear discernment and all-viewing sight. ²⁴ I also remember several births that I had to undergo in my state of ignorance, which I see clearly before my enlightened sight.

²⁵ I was a parrot in the land of Trigarta and a frog at the beach of a river. I became a small bird in a forest and was then born in these woods. ²⁶ Having been a Pulinda hunter in Vindhya, then a tree in Bengal, and afterwards a camel in the Vindhya range. I am at last born in this forest. ²⁷ I, who have been a chataka cuckoo in the Himalayas and a prince in Paundra province, then a mighty tiger in the forests of Sahya Hill, am now become your elder brother. ²⁸ He who had been a vulture for ten years, a shark for five months, and a lion for a full century is now your elder brother in this place. ²⁹ I was a chakora wood in the village of Andhara, a ruler in the snowy regions, then a proud son of a priest named Sailacharya in a hilly region.

³⁰ I remember the various customs and pursuits of different peoples on earth that I had to observe and follow in my repeated reincarnations among them. ³¹ In those different lives, I had many fathers and mothers and many more brothers and sisters, and also friends and relatives numbering hundreds and thousands. ³² For whom shall I lament and which shall I forget among this number? Shall I wail only for those I lose in this life? But these also are to be buried in oblivion like the rest, and such is the course of the world. ³³ Numberless fathers have gone by, and unnumbered mothers also have passed away and died. Innumerable generations of men have perished and disappeared, like withered leaves falling off.

³⁴ There are no bounds, my boy, to our pleasures and pains in this terrestrial world. Lay them all aside and let us remain unmindful of all existence. ³⁵ Forsake your thoughts of false appearances, relinquish your firm conviction of your own ego, and look to that ultimate course which has led the learned to their final blessing. ³⁶ For what is this commotion of people except a struggle to rise and fall? Therefore strive for neither, but live regardless of both like an indifferent sage. ³⁷ Live free from your cares of existence and nonexistence. Then you shall be free from your fears of decay and death. Remember calmly your self alone. Do not be like the ignorant. Do not allow anything or any accident to move you from your self possession.

³⁸ Know that you have no birth nor death, no fortune or sorrow of any kind, no father or mother, and no friend or foe anywhere. You are only your pure spirit. You have nothing of an unspiritual nature.

³⁹ The world is a stage that presents many acts and scenes. Only those play their parts well who are excited neither by its passions and feelings. ⁴⁰ Those who are indifferent in their views have their quietude amidst all the occurrences of life. Those who have known the true One remain only to witness the course of nature. ⁴¹ Those who know God do their acts without thinking themselves their actors, just as the lamps of night witness the objects around without their consciousness of them. ⁴² The wise witness the objects as they are reflected in the mirror of their minds, just as a mirror and gems receive the images of things.

⁴³ Now my boy, rub out all your wishes and visible signs of memories from your mind and see the image of the serene spirit of God in your innermost soul. Learn to live like the great sages, with the sight of your spiritual light and by effacing all false impressions from your mind.

Chapter 21 — Suppression of Desires by Suppression of Thoughts

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Pavana, having been lectured by Punya in this manner, became as enlightened in his intellect as the landscape at daybreak.² After, they continued living in that forest with the perfection of their spiritual knowledge. They wandered about in the woods to their hearts content.³ After a long time, they both attained nirvana and rested in their disembodied state of nirvana, like a lamp without oil wasting away of itself.

⁴ Thus is the end of men's great boasts of having large crowds of followers and numberless friends in their embodied states of lifetime. Alas, they carry nothing with them to their afterlife, nor do they leave anything behind which they can properly call theirs.

⁵ The best means of release from the many objects of our desires is the utter suppression of our desires, rather than fostering them.⁶ Yearning after objects increases our desire, just as our thinking of something increases our thoughts about it. Fire that burns bright from its fuel soon dies out without it.

⁷ Now rise, O Rama, and remain aloft as in your aerial car by losing your worldly desires. Look from above with pity upon the miseries of groveling mortals.⁸ This is the divine state known as the position of Brahma, which looks from above with unconcerned serenity upon all. By gaining this state, the ignorant are also freed from misery.

⁹ One walking with reason as his companion, and having good understanding for his consort, is not liable to fall into the dangerous traps that lie hidden in his way throughout life.¹⁰ Being deprived of all properties and destitute of friends, one has no other help to lift him up in his adversity except his own patience and reliance upon God.¹¹ Let men elevate their minds with learning, dispassion, and the virtues of self-dignity and valor in order to rise above the difficulties of the world.

¹² There is no greater good to be derived by any means than by the greatness of mind. It gives security which no wealth or earthly treasure can confer on men.¹³ It is only men of weak and crazy minds who are made to swing to and fro, rising and sinking in the tempestuous ocean of the world.¹⁴ The mind filled with knowledge and full with the light of truth finds the world filled with ambrosial water, and moves over it as easily as a man walking on dry shoes, or on a ground covered with leather.

¹⁵ Lack of desire fills the mind much more than the fulfillment of its desires. Dry up the channels of desires like autumn heat parches a pool.¹⁶ Otherwise, desires empty the heart and lay open its gaps to be filled by air. The hearts of the greedy are as dry as the bed of the dead sea that was drained by Agasti (son of Agastya).

¹⁷ The spacious garden of the human heart flourishes with the fruit of humanity and greatness only as long as the restless ape of greed does not infest its fair trees.¹⁸ The mind devoid of greed views the triple world with the twinkling of an eye. The comprehensive mind sees all space and time as infinitesimally small compared to its conception of the infinite Brahman with itself.

¹⁹ The coolness in the mind of a man who is not greedy is not found in the watery luminary of the moon, or in the icy caverns of the snow-capped Himalayas. Neither the coldness of plantain juice nor

sandalwood paste is comparable with the cool headedness of one without desire.²⁰ The mind that does not desire shines more brightly than the full moon and more brilliantly than the bright face of Lakshmi, the goddess of prosperity.

²¹ The urchin of appetite darkens the mind like a cloud obscures the moon, and like black ink obliterates a fair picture.²² The tree of desire stretches its branches far and wide on every side, darkening the mind with their gloomy shadows.²³ When the branching tree of desire is cut down at its roots, the plant of patience which was stunted under it shoots forth in a hundred branches.²⁴ When the unfading tree of patience takes the place of the uprooted desires, it produces the tree of paradise that yields the fruit of immortality.

²⁵ O well-intentioned Rama, if you do not allow the sprouts of mental desires to germinate in your bosom, then you have nothing to fear in this world.²⁶ When you become sober-minded after moderating your heart's desires, you will have the plant of liberation growing in its full luxuriance in your heart.²⁷ When the grasping owl of desire nestles in your mind, it is sure you will be invaded by every evil which the foreboding bird brings on its home.

²⁸ Thinking is the power of the mind and thoughts dwell upon the objects of desire. Therefore abandon your thoughts and their objects and be happy with your thoughtlessness of everything.²⁹ Anything that depends on any faculty is lost upon inaction of that faculty. Therefore by suppression of your thoughts you can put down your desires and thereby have rest and peace of mind.

³⁰ Be free minded, O Rama, by tearing off all your mind's worldly ties. Become a great soul by suppressing your mean desires of earthly frailties. For who is not set free by being loosened from the chains of desire that bind his mind to this earth?

Chapter 22 — The Story of Mahabali, the Benevolent King of Demons, and His Father Virochana

¹ Vasishta said:—

O Rama who is the bright moon of Raghu's race, you should also follow the example of Bali in acquiring wisdom by self-discernment.

² Rama said, “Venerable sage who is acquainted with all natures, it is by your favor that I have gained all that is worth gaining in my heart, and that is our final rest in the purest state of infinite bliss.³ O sage, it is by your favor that my mind is freed from the great delusion of my many desires, just as the autumn sky is cleared of the rainy season clouds.⁴ My soul is at rest and as cold as a stone. It is filled with the ambrosial nectar of divine knowledge and its holy light. I find myself resting in perfect bliss and as illumined as the queen of the stars rising in her full light in the evening.

⁵ O you dispeller of my doubts who resembles the clear autumn sky that clears the clouds of the rainy season, I am never full or satisfied with all your holy teachings.⁶ For the advancement of my knowledge, tell me how Bali came to know transcendental truth. Explain it fully unto me, as holy saints reserve nothing from their humble students.

⁷ Vasishta replied:—

O Rama, pay attention to the interesting story of Bali. Your attention to it will give you knowledge of the endless, everlasting and unvarying truth.

⁸ In a particular part in the womb below this earth there is a place called the infernal region.⁹ It is peopled by milk-white goddesses born in the sweet water of the Milky Ocean. They are of the race of demons and they filled every gap and chasm of this place with their offspring.¹⁰ In some places it was peopled by huge serpents with a hundred and thousand heads that hissed loudly with their parted and forked tongues and long fangs.¹¹ In other places there were mountainous bodies of demons walking in lofty strides, seemingly able to fling worlds like candy and devour them.¹² In another place there were big elephants holding up the earth on their raised trunks and supporting islands on their strong, long tusks.¹³ In other places there were ghosts and devils making hideous shrieks and noise. There were groups of hellish bodies and putrid carcasses of ghostly shapes.

¹⁴ Concealed in the dark womb of the nether world depths were rich mines of gems and metals reaching to the seventh and lowest layer the infernal regions.

¹⁵ Another part of this place was sanctified by the dust of the lotus-like feet of the divine sage Kapila who was adored by gods and demigods who prostrated their exalted heads at his holy feet.¹⁶ Another part of it was presided by the god Shiva in his form of a golden Shivalinga which was worshipped by lady demons with abundant offerings and merry revelries.

¹⁷ Bali, the son of Virochana, ruled in this place as the king of demons. He supported the burden of his kingdom on the pillars of the demons' mighty arms.¹⁸ He forced the gods, the supernatural vidyadharas, the serpents, and even the king of the gods to serve at his feet like his vassal retinue, and they were glad to serve him as their lord.¹⁹ He was protected by Vishnu who contains the shining worlds in the treasure of his belly (*brahmada*), and who is the preserver of all embodied beings,

and the support of the sovereigns of the earth.

²⁰ The name Bali struck terror in the heart of Airavata, the elephant that bears Indra, making his cheeks fade with fear, just as the sound of a peacock petrifies the insides of serpents. ²¹ The intense heat of his valor dried up the waters of the sevenfold oceans of the earth and turned them into seven dry beds, as under the fire of the universal conflagration. ²² But the smoke of his sacrificial fire was like a charm supplying people with water. It caused the rains to fall as profusely from above as the seas below contain waters from above. ²³ His frown made the high heads of mountains stoop low to the ground and caused the lofty skies to lower with water, like the high branches of trees when overloaded with fruit.

²⁴ This mighty monarch, after he had made an easy conquest of all the treasures and luxuries of the world, ruled over the demons for myriads of years. ²⁵ Thus he lived for many ages that glided on like the course of a river rolling about in whirlpools. He witnessed the constant flux and reflux of generations of gods, demons and men in the three worlds.

⁶ At last, the king of the demons felt a distaste for all the enjoyments of life that he had tasted to excess. He also felt an uneasiness amidst the variety of his pleasures. ²⁷ He retired to the farthest polar mount of Meru. There, sitting on a ledge of one of its shining heights, he reflected on the state of this world and the vanity of mortal life.

Bali thinking to himself:—

²⁸ How much longer shall I have to rule over this world with my untiring labor? How much more must I remain to roam about the triple world in my successive reincarnations? ²⁹ Of what use is it to me to have this unrivaled sovereignty, which is a wonder in the three worlds. Of what good is it for me to enjoy this abundant luxury, so charming to the senses? ³⁰ Of what permanent delight are all these pleasures to me? They are pleasant only for the present short time and within a moment they are sure to lose all their taste and my zest for them.

³¹ There is the same rotation of days and nights in unvarying succession, and the same acts repeated day after day. To continue in the same unvaried course of life for a great length of time is rather shameful and in no way pleasant to anyone. ³² The same embraces of our beloved and eating the same food day by day are amusements fit only for playful children. They are disgraceful and disgusting to great minds.

³³ What man of taste will not be disgusted to taste the same sweets that he has tasted over and over again and which have become vapid and tasteless today? What sensible man can continue in the same course without feelings of shame and remorse? ³⁴ The revolving days and nights bring the same revolution of duties. I imagine this constant repetition of the same acts is as ridiculous to the wise as chewing ground meat. ³⁵ The actions of men are like those of waves that rise to fall, then rise again to subside in the waters. ³⁶ Repetition of the same act is the occupation of mad men. A wise man would be laughed at if he kept repeating the same sound, like children conjugating a verb in all its moods, tenses and inflexions.

³⁷ What action is there that once completed does not reoccur, but crowns its actor with his full success all at once? ³⁸ Or if this bustle of the world were for a short duration only, yet what is the good that

we can derive from engaging in this commotion? ³⁹ The course of actions is as interminable as the ceaseless repetition of boyish sports. It is hollow harping on the same string. The more the string is played, the more it reverberates its hollow sound.

⁴⁰ I see no such gain from any of our actions. I see nothing that being once gained may prevent our further efforts. ⁴¹ What can our actions bring beside the objects of sense gratification? They cannot bring about anything that is imperishable.

Vasishta speaking:—

Saying so, Bali fell into a trance (samadhi) of his profound meditation. ⁴² Then, coming to himself, he thought, “Ah! I remember now what I had heard from my father.” So thinking he stretched his eyebrows and gave expression to what he thought in his mind.

Bali thinking to himself:—

⁴³ I had asked my father Virochana, who was versed in spiritual knowledge and acquainted with the manners of the people of former and later ages, ⁴⁴ “What is that ultimate state of being where all our pains and pleasures cease to exist, and after its attainment we have no more to wander about the world or pass through repeated reincarnations? ⁴⁵ What is that final state towards which all our endeavors are directed, where our minds are freed from their error, and where, after all our wanderings and reincarnations, we obtain our full rest? ⁴⁶ What is that best of gains which gives full satisfaction to the cravings of the soul? What is that glorious object whose sight transcends all other objects of vision?”

⁴⁷ “All those various luxuries and superfluities of the world are in no way conducive to our real happiness because they mislead the mind to error and corrupt the souls of even the wisest of men.

⁴⁸ Therefore, O father, show me that state of imperishable joy whereby I may attain everlasting repose and tranquility.”

⁴⁹ I remember my father was sitting under the shade of the wish-fulfilling kalpa tree of paradise, whose flowers were fairer far than the bright moonbeams covered the ground all around. He spoke to me in his sweet mellifluous accents the following speech, for the purpose of removing my error.

Chapter 23 — Virochana's Story about the Ruler's (Soul's) Undefeatable Minister (the Mind)

¹ Virochana (Bali's father) said:—

My son, somewhere in this universe there is an extensive country with a spacious sky whose ample space is able to hold thousands of worlds and many more spheres in it.² It is without the wide oceans and seas and high mountains that are here on this earth. It has no forest, river or lake or any holy pilgrimage place as you see here below.³ There is no land or sky. There is no heavenly body in its sky, nor are there these suns and moons, or the rulers of the spheres, or their inhabitants of gods and demons.⁴ There are no races of yakshas and rakshas, or those tribes of plants and trees, woods or grass, or the moving and immovable beings as you see upon the earth.⁵ There is no water, no land, no fire and no air. There are no sides of the compass, nor regions you call above and below. There is no light or shadow, nor are there any peoples, or the gods Vishnu, Indra and Shiva, nor any of the lesser gods or demigods there.

⁶ There is a great sovereign of that place who is full of indefinable light. He is the creator of all and pervades all, and is all in all, but quite quiescent in all places and things.⁷ He elected a minister who was clever in administration, brought about what was impossible to be done, and prevented all mishaps from coming to pass.⁸ The minister neither ate nor drank, nor did he know anything besides minding and doing his master's commands. In all other respects he was as inactive as a block of stone.⁹ He conducted every business for his master who remained quite retired from all business, enjoying his rest and ease in his seclusion and leaving all his concerns to be managed by his minister.

¹⁰ Bali said, "Tell me sage, what place is that which is devoid of all population and free from all disease and difficulty? Who knows that place and how can anyone reach it?¹¹ Who is that ruler of sovereign power and who is that minister of so great might? Who, being quite apart from the world, is inseparably connected with it and is invincible by our almighty demonic power?¹² Tell me, O terror of the gods, this marvelous story of the great might of that minister in order to remove the cloud of doubt from my mind. Why he is unconquerable by us?"

¹³ Virochana replied:—

Know my son, this mighty minister cannot be overcome even by a gigantic force of asura giants, even if they were aided by millions of demons fighting on their side.¹⁴ He is invincible, my son, by the god of a thousand eyes (Indra), and also by the gods of riches (Kubera) and death (Yama) who conquer all. Neither immortals nor giants can ever overpower him by their might.

¹⁵ All weapons are defeated in their attempt to hurt him. Swords, mallets, spears, bolts, discs and cudgels hurled against him are broken to pieces as if striking against solid rock.¹⁶ He is unapproachable by missiles, invulnerable to arms and weapons, and cannot be taken by the dexterity of warriors. It is by his resistless might that he has brought gods and demigods under his subjection.

¹⁷ It was he who defeated our forefathers, the mighty Hiranyakashipu and Hiranyaksha, before they were destroyed by the great Vishnu who felled the giant asuras like a storm breaks down sturdy and rock-like oaks.¹⁸ The gods Narayana and others (who had been the instructors of men) were all defeated by him and confined in their cells in the wombs of their mothers (by a curse of sage Bhrigu who denounced them to become incarnate in human forms).¹⁹ It is by his favor that Kama, the god

with his flower bow and five arrows, has been enabled to subdue and overcome the three worlds and boasts of being their sole emperor.²⁰ The gods and demigods, the intelligent and the foolish, the deformed and the irascible are all moved by his influence.²¹ The repeated wars between the gods and demons are the sports of this minister.

²² This minister is only manageable by its lord, the silent soul, or else it is as dull as an immovable rock or restless as the wind.²³ For the soul's advancement in spiritual knowledge, it feels a desire to subdue its minister who otherwise is uncontrollable through lenient measures.

²⁴ You are said to be valiant if you can conquer this greatest of the giants in the three worlds who has been worrying all people out of their breath.²⁵ After the rising of consciousness, the world appears as a flower-garden, like a lake of blooming lotuses at sunrise. The setting of consciousness covers the world in darkness like at sunset.²⁶ It is only by the aid of your intellect and by removal of your ignorance that you can subdue this minister and be famed for your wisdom.

²⁷ By subduing this minister, you become the conqueror of the world, though you are no victor of it. By not subjugating this minister, you can have no subjection over the world, though you may be the master of it.²⁸ Therefore to effect your perfect consummation and to secure your everlasting happiness, be diligent to overcome this minister by your best and most ardent exertions.

²⁹ It is easy for he who has been able to subdue this minister by his superior might to overcome the triple world and keep all its beings of gods and demons, the bodies of naagas and men, the races of yakshas and rakshas, and the tribes of serpents and kinnaras.

Chapter 24 — Virochana on Mind Control: Hiring Teachers and Practicing Reason & Detachment; and Realization

¹ Bali said, “Sage, tell me plainly. Who is this minister that is so mighty? How can such a mighty being be defeated and brought under subjection?”

² Virochana replied:—

Though that minister is invincible and stands above all in his great might, yet I will tell you way in which he may be overcome by you or anyone else.

³ Son, if you employ the proper means, it is easy to bring him under subjection. Otherwise, he will have the upper hand over you like a snake’s poison that is not timely repelled by efficacious mantras and incantations. ⁴ The ministerial mind, if it is brought up like a boy in the right way, leads a man to the presence of the sovereign soul, like royal service advancing the civil servant before his king.

⁵ The appearance of the master makes the minister disappear from sight, just as the disappearance of the minister brings one to the full view of his king. ⁶ As long as one does not approach the presence of his king, he cannot fail to serve the minister, and as long as he is employed in service of the minister, he cannot come in sight of his king. ⁷ The king being kept out of sight, the minister is seen to exercise his might, but the minister kept out of view, the king alone appears in full view.

⁸ Therefore must we begin with the practice of both these exercises at once, namely, approaching by degrees to the sight of the king, and gradually slighting the authority of the minister. ⁹ You must use courageous and diligent effort for both these practices in order to arrive at the state of your well-being. ¹⁰ When you are successful in your practice, you are sure to reach that blissful country. Though you are a prince of the demons, nothing can prevent your entrance to it. ¹¹ That is a place where the blessed live whose desires are at rest and whose doubts are dissipated, and whose hearts are filled with perpetual joy and calmness.

¹² Now my son, hear me explain what that place is which I called a country. It is the seat of liberation and where there is an end of all our pains. ¹³ The king of that place is the soul of divine essence which transcends all other substances. It is the soul that appoints the mind as its wise minister.

¹⁴ The mind contains the ideal world in its bosom and exhibits its conscious form to the senses, just as a clay mold for a pot is a model of the pot, and as smoke has the pattern of a cloud in its essence and represents its shadowy forms in the sky. ¹⁵ Therefore, when the mind is conquered, everything is subdued and brought under subjection. But without adopting the proper means for its subjugation, the mind is invincible.

¹⁶ Bali asked, “Sage, how are we to quell the mind? Tell me plainly so that I may use that method to conquer this invincible barrier to bliss.”

¹⁷ Virochana answered:—

The means for subduing the mind are the lack of reliance or confidence in all external and sensible things, and the absence of all desire for temporal possessions.

¹⁸ This is the best method to remove the great delusion of this world and to subdue the big elephant of the mind. ¹⁹ This method is both very easy and practicable on one hand, as it is arduous and

impracticable on the other. A constant habit of thinking so makes it easy, but lacking the habit renders it difficult.

²⁰ A gradual habit of renouncing our fondness for temporal objects shows itself in time in our resignation of the world, just as continuous watering the roots of plants makes them grow into large trees. ²¹ It is difficult to master anything, even by the most cunning, without proper cultivation over time, just as it is impossible to reap a harvest from an unsown and uncultivated field.

²² All embodied souls are destined to wander about the wilderness of the world as long as their hearts do not surrender their attachments to the objects of sense in nature. ²³ Without the habit of apathy, it is impossible to have a distaste for sensible objects, just as it is impossible for an able bodied man to travel abroad by sitting motionless at home. ²⁴ The firm determination to abandon the entanglements of life and a habitual aversion to pleasures and enjoyments make a man advance to purity, just as a plant grows in open air to its full height.

²⁵ There is no good to be derived on earth without the exertion of one's courage. Man must give up his pleasure and the vexation of his spirit in order to reap the fruit of his actions. ²⁶ People speak of destiny as if it were a power, yet destiny has no shape or form. It means whatever comes to pass, and it is also called our lot or fate. ²⁷ The word destiny is also used by men to describe an accident over which they have no control and to which they submit with passive obedience. ²⁸ They use the word destiny to repress our joy and grief. But destiny, however fixed as fate, is overcome and set aside by means of courageous efforts.

²⁹ As the delusion of a mirage is dispelled by the light of its true nature, so courageous effort upsets destiny by effecting whatever it wishes to bring about. ³⁰ If we want to know what causes the good or bad results of our actions, we must learn that they turn as the mind wishes to mold them to being.

³¹ Whatever the mind desires and decrees, the same becomes destiny. There is nothing destined in the ordinary sense of the word. ³² It is the mind that does all this. The mind is the employer of destiny. The mind destines the destined acts of destiny.

³³ Life, the living soul, is spread out in the hollow sphere of the world like air in vacuum. The psychic fluid circulates through all space. ³⁴ Destiny is no reality, only a label invented to express the property of fixity, as the word rock is used to denote stability. Hence, as long as the mind retains its free will and activity, there is no fixed fate or destiny.

³⁵ After the mind is set at rest, there remains the principle of the living soul (*jiva*). This is called the embodied spirit (*purusha*) which is the source of the energies of the body and mind. ³⁶ Whatever the living soul intends to do by means of its spiritual force, the same comes to take place and nothing else. ³⁷ Reliance on this spiritual power will uproot your dependence on bodily food.

There is no hope for spiritual happiness until there is a distaste towards temporal enjoyments. ³⁸ It is hard to attain the dignity of the all conquering self-sufficiency as long as one has the dastardly spirit of his earthly cravings. ³⁹ As long as one is swinging in the cradle of worldly affairs, it is hard to find rest in the covered shelter of peaceful tranquility. ⁴⁰ It is hard to get rid of your serpentine desires without continued practice of detachment and unconcern with worldly affairs.

⁴¹ Bali replied, "Tell me, O lord of demons, how does indifference to worldly enjoyments take deep

root in the human heart and produce the fruit of longevity of the embodied spirit on earth?"

⁴² Virochana replied:—

The sight of the inner spirit produces indifference to worldly things, just as the growth of vines produces grapes in autumn.⁴³ The sight of the inner spirit produces our internal unconcern with the world, just as the glance of the rising sun infuses its brightness in the cup of the lotus.⁴⁴ Therefore sharpen your intellect with the whetstone of right reasoning. See the Supreme Spirit by withdrawing your mind from worldly enjoyments.

⁴⁵ There are two modes of intellectual enjoyment for those who are imperfect in their knowledge. One consists of book learning. The other is paying attention to the teacher's lectures.⁴⁶ Those who are a little advanced in learning have the double advantage of their mental enjoyment, namely, reflecting on book learning and consultation with wise teachers on practical points.⁴⁷ Those who are accomplished in learning also have two parts to their duties, namely, the profession of teaching the scriptures to others and the practice of detachment for themselves.

⁴⁸ The soul being purified, a man is fit for spiritual learning, as only clean linen is fit to receive every good color.⁴⁹ Like a boy on the path of learning, the mind is to be restrained by degrees by means of persuasion and good lectures, and then by teaching scriptures, and lastly by discussion of their doctrines.⁵⁰ After its perfection in learning and the dispersion of all difficulties and doubts, the mind shines like a piece of pure crystal and emits its brightness like cooling moonbeams.⁵¹ Then, by its complete knowledge and clear understanding, it sees in both its God, the Spirit, and its body as the seat of its enjoyments on earth.⁵² It constantly sees Spirit before it by means of its understanding and reason, which also help it relinquish its desire for worldly objects and enjoyments.

⁵³ The sight of the Spirit eliminates desires, and the absence of desires brings the light of Spirit to sight. Therefore they are related to each other like wick and oil produce lamplight to dispel the night's darkness.⁵⁴ After one loses his taste for worldly enjoyments, and after sight of the Supreme Spirit, the soul finds its perpetual rest in the essence of the Supreme Brahman.⁵⁵ The living souls who place their happiness in worldly objects can never taste true joy unless they rely completely on the Supreme Spirit.⁵⁶ It may be possible to derive some delight from acts of charity, sacrifices and holy pilgrimage, but none of these can give the everlasting rest of the Spirit.

⁵⁷ No one feels a distaste for pleasure unless he examines its nature and effects in himself. Nothing can teach the way of seeing the soul unless the soul reflects on itself.⁵⁸ My boy, that which requires no effort to attain is of no good whatsoever. There is no true happiness without the surrender of earthly enjoyments.

⁵⁹ The supreme joy of resting in the state of Brahman cannot be found anywhere in creation, whether in this mundane sphere or anywhere else beyond these spheres.⁶⁰ Therefore always expect that your soul will find its rest in the Divine Spirit. Rely on the exertion of your courage and leave aside your dependence on the eventualities of destiny.⁶¹ A wise man detests all worldly enjoyments as if they are the strong bolts locking the door of bliss. It is the settled aversion to earthly pleasures that brings a man to his right reason.

⁶² As the increasing gloom of rain clouds is followed by the serenity of autumn skies, so clear

reasoning comes after detestation of enjoyments that flee with the advance of reason.⁶³ As seas and the clouds of heaven help one another by lending each other their waters, so right reasoning and apathy to pleasures tend to produce each other by turns.⁶⁴ Disbelief in destiny and courageous efforts follow each another, as helping one another follows friendship.

⁶⁵ You must grit your teeth to create a distaste even for those things you acquired legally according to the customs of your country.⁶⁶ First you must acquire your wealth through courageous effort, then get good and clever men in your company by means of your wealth.⁶⁷ Association with the wise, by exciting the reasoning power, produces an aversion to the sensual enjoyments of life which in turn produces an increase of knowledge and learning.⁶⁸ These lead gradually to the utter renunciation of worldly objects.⁶⁹ Then, by means of your reasoning, you attain that supreme state of perfect rest and holiness of your soul.⁷⁰ You will no longer fall into the mud of your misconceptions, but as a pure essence, you will no depend upon anything and you will become as the venerable Shiva.

⁷¹ Thus the steps to attain perfection are first, the acquisition of wealth according to the custom of the caste and country, then its employment in the service of wise and learned men. Next follows your abandonment of the world, which is succeeded by your attainment of Spiritual Knowledge by the cultivation of your reasoning powers.

Chapter 25 — Bali Reflects on What His Father Virochana Had Taught

¹ Bali thought to himself:—

In this manner did my wise father advised me on this subject. Fortunately I remember this now for the enlightenment of my understanding. ² It is now that I feel my aversion to the enjoyments of life. Now by my good luck I come to perceive the bliss of tranquility, like the clear and cooling ambrosial drink of heavenly bliss. ³ I am tired of all my possessions. I am weary of my continued accumulation of wealth to satisfy my endless desires. The life-long care of family has also grown tiresome to me.

⁴ But how charming is this peace and tranquility of my soul, which is quite even and all cool within itself. Here all our pleasures and pains meet upon the same level of equality and detachment. ⁵ I am quite unconcerned with anything and I am highly delighted with my indifference to all things. I am gladdened within myself as by the beams of the full moon. I feel the orb of the full moon rising within myself.

⁶ O, the trouble of acquiring riches! It is attended by the loud bustle of the world, agitation of the mind, burning of the heart, and fatigue of the body. It is accompanied by constant anxiety and affliction of the heart. ⁷ The limbs and flesh of the body are smashed by labor. All the physical exercises that once pleased me now seem like the long and lost labors of my former ignorance.

⁸ I have seen the sights of whatever was worth seeing. I have enjoyed enjoyments without limit. I have overcome all beings. But what is the good of all this? ⁹ There is only a reiteration of the very same things that I had there, here and elsewhere. Nowhere do I find anything new, anything that I had not seen or known before.

¹⁰ By resigning everything and its thought from my mind, I am now sitting here in full possession of myself. I find nothing whatever, not even any thought forms any component part of me.

¹¹ The best things in heaven above, on the earth, and in this infernal region are reckoned to be women and wealth, but the cruel hand of time destroys or wastes all these sooner or later. ¹² All this time I have acted foolishly by waging a continuous struggle with the gods for the sake of trifling worldly possessions. ¹³ What is this phantom of the world? It is only a creation of the brain. Great souls take no delight in it whatsoever. Then what is the harm of forsaking it forever?

¹⁴ Alas! I have spent such a large portion of my lifetime pursuing trifles in the ignorant giddiness of my mind. ¹⁵ My unsteady and fluctuating desires have led me to do many foolish acts in this world of odds and trifles, which now fill me with remorse and regret. ¹⁶ But it is vain to be overwhelmed by the sad thoughts of the past when I should use my courageous efforts to improve the present. ¹⁷ By reflecting on the eternal cause of the endless infinity of souls in the Soul one can attain his perfect joy, just as the gods got ambrosia from the Milky Ocean.

¹⁸ To expel my ignorance in these matters, I most consult my teacher Shukra concerning the ego, the soul, spiritual vision, and the Soul of souls. ¹⁹ I must refer these questions to the most venerable Shukra, who is always uncritical of his favorites. By his advice, I possibly shall settle in the highest perfection of seeing the Supreme Spirit in my spirit. Because the words of the wise are always filled with full meaning and are fruitful of the desired object.

Chapter 26 — Shukra Teaches Bali that All Is Consciousness

¹ Vasishta said:—

So saying the mighty Bali closed his eyes and thought upon the lotus-eyed Shukra living in his heavenly abode. ² Shukra, who was sitting intently meditating on the all-pervading spirit of God, came to know in his mind that he was remembered by his disciple Bali in his city. ³ Then Shukra, the son of Bhrigu whose soul was united with the all-pervading infinite and omniscient Spirit, descended with his heavenly body to the shining window of Bali.

⁴ Bali knew the body of his teacher by its brightness, just as the lotus flower perceives the rising sun by his dawning beams. ⁵ He honored his guru by adoring his feet on a seat decked with gems, and garlanding his guide with mandara flowers. ⁶ As Shukra sat and took his rest from the labor of his journey, his body was strewn with offerings of gems and his head covered with heaps of mandara flowers.

Bali addressed Shukra, ⁷ “Venerable sage, your illustrious presence emboldens me to address you, as the morning sunbeams send all mankind to their daily work. ⁸ Sage, I have come to feel an aversion towards all kinds of worldly enjoyments that produce the delusion of our souls. I want to know the truth about it so I can dispel my ignorance of myself. ⁹ In short, sage, tell me what are these enjoyments good for? How long do they extend? What in reality am I, you, or these other people?”

¹⁰ Shukra answered:—

I can not tell you in length about it as I soon have to return to my place in the sky. Hear me, O monarch of demons, briefly say this much for now.

¹¹ There is truly only consciousness in reality. All other existence is truly consciousness and full of consciousness. The mind is consciousness, and I, you, and these people are collectively the same consciousness. ¹² If you are wise, know you derive everything from this universal Consciousness. Otherwise, all gifts of fortune are as useless to you as offerings of butter on (ordinary) ashes.

¹³ The trap of the mind is to see consciousness as something thinkable, an object of thought. What confers liberation to the soul is the belief that consciousness is free and incomprehensible.

¹⁴ Knowing this for certain, look on everything in the same way. See the Spirit in your spirit in order to arrive at the state of Infinite Spirit.

¹⁵ I must immediately return to the sky where the Seven Rishis (*saptarshis*) are assembled and where I must continue performing my divine service.

¹⁶ I tell you, O king, that as long as you are in your body, you must not abstain from your duties, though your mind may be free from everything.

Vasishta speaking:—

¹⁷ So saying, Shukra flew like a bee smeared with the powdery gold dust of the lotus to the golden roof of heaven. He passed through the watery path of waving clouds to where the revolving planets were ready to receive him.

Chapter 27 — Bali's Detachment

¹ Vasishta said:—

After Shukra, the son of Bhrigu and senior in the assembly of gods and demigods, made his departure, Bali, the best among the intelligent, reflected in this way.

Bali thinking to himself:—

² Truly the seer said that Consciousness composes the three worlds, that I am this Consciousness, and Consciousness fills all the quarters and shows itself in all our actions. ³ It is Consciousness which pervades the inside and outside of everything. There is nothing anywhere which is without Consciousness. ⁴ It is Consciousness that perceives sunbeams and moonlight, or else, had not there been this intellectual perception, there would be no distinction between them and darkness.

⁵ If there were no intellectual perception as this earth is land, then there would be no distinction between earth and water, nor would the word earth apply to land. ⁶ If consciousness could not understand vast space as the quarters of the sky, and the mountains as vast bulges on earth, then who could call the sides of space and mountains by those names? ⁷ If the world were not known as the world and the vacuum as emptiness, then who could distinguish them by the names that are in common use? ⁸ If this big body was not perceived by consciousness, how could we properly call the bodies of embodied beings by their names?

⁹ Consciousness resides in every organ of sense. It dwells in the body, mind and all its desires. Consciousness is in the internal and external parts of the body. Consciousness is all that is in existence and non-existence. ¹⁰ Consciousness forms my whole self by its feeling and knowing everything that I feel and know. Otherwise, without guidance of consciousness, I cannot perceive or conceive or do anything with my body.

¹¹ Of what value is my body which is inert and unconscious as a block of wood? Consciousness makes my self and the intelligent spirit is the Universal Soul. ¹² I am the intellect which resides in the sun and in the sky. I am the consciousness which dwells in the bodies of all beings. I am the same intellect which guides the gods and demigods, and dwells alike in bodies that move and don't move.

¹³ Consciousness being the sole existence, it is in vain to suppose anything besides. There being nothing otherwise, there can be no difference between friend or foe to us. ¹⁴ What if I, Bali, strike off a person's head from his body? I can not injure the soul which is everywhere and fills all space.

¹⁵ Feelings of love and hatred are properties of consciousness (Soul). These feelings are not separated from the soul by its separation from the body. Hence passions and feelings are inseparable from Consciousness or soul.

¹⁶ There is nothing to be thought of beside Consciousness. There is nothing to be obtained anywhere, except from the spacious womb of Consciousness which comprehends all the three worlds. ¹⁷ But passions and feelings, the mind and its powers, are mere attributes and not properties of Consciousness. Consciousness, being altogether a simple and pure essence, is free from every attribute.

¹⁸ Consciousness (*chit*) is the Ego, the omnipresent, the all pervasive and ever blissful soul. It is

beyond all other attributes, and without duality or parts.¹⁹ The term Consciousness (*chit*) as applied to the nameless power of reasoning (*chiti*) is only a verbal symbol signifying the omniscient Intelligence manifest in all places.²⁰ The Intellect (*chit*) is the Supreme Lord that is ever awake and sees all things without manifesting any appearance of himself. He is purely transparent and beyond all visible appearances.

²¹ All its attributes are lame, partial and imperfect. Even time, which has its phases and parts, is not a proper attribute for it. It is only a glimpse of its light that rises before us, but the eternal and infinite light is beyond our comprehension.²² I must think of Consciousness only in the form of light within my own self. I must know it apart from all other phenomena and thoughts, quite aloof from all shades and colors.

²³ I salute His identical form of Consciousness and the power of Reasoning, unaccompanied by the intelligible and employed in its proper sphere.²⁴ I salute that light of His in me, which represents everything to me, which is beyond all thought, and which is of the form of Consciousness going everywhere and filling all space.²⁵ It is the quiet consciousness of all beings, the real Intellect and the Great. Consciousness (*chit*) is as infinite as space, yet more minute than an atom and spreading in all alike.

²⁶ I am not subject to the states of pleasure and pain. I am conscious of my self and of no other existence beside myself. I am Consciousness without the phenomena spread out before me.²⁷ No worldly entity or non-entity can work any change in me, for the possession of worldly objects would destroy me at once (by their separating my soul from God).

²⁸ In my opinion, there can be nothing that is distinct from me when we know all things are produced from the same source.²⁹ What one gets or loses is no gain or loss to any, because the same Ego always abides in all and is the maker of all pervading everywhere.³⁰ Whether I am any thought object or not, it matters little for me to know because Consciousness is always a single thing, though its phenomena are endless.

³¹ As long as my soul is not united with the Divine Spirit, I am in sorrow.

Vasishta speaking:—

So reasoning, the most discerning Bali fell to a deep meditation.³² He reflected on the half mantra of Om, a symbol of Infinite God. He sat quietly with all his desires and fancies lying dormant in him.

³³ He sat undismayed by suppressing his thoughts and his thinking powers within him. He remained with his subdued desires, after having lost consciousness of his meditation, of being the person meditating, and of the object of meditation (*i.e.*, nirvikalpa samadhi).

³⁴ While Bali was entranced in this manner, at the window decorated with gems, he became illumined in his mind like a lamp flame unshaken by the wind. He remained long in his steady posture, like a statue carved of a stone.³⁵ He sat with his mind as clear as the autumn sky after having cast off all his desires and mental anxieties, filled within himself with his spiritual light.

Chapter 28 — Bali's Meditation, Shukra's Advice to the Demons

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Bali's attendant servant demons ascended hastily to his high crystal palace and stood at the door of his chamber. ² There were his ministers Dimbha and others among them, and his generals Kumuda and others also. There were likewise the princes Sura and others in the number, and his champions Vritta and the rest. ³ There were Hayagriva and the other captains of his armies, with his friends Akraja and others. His associates Laduka and some more joined the retinue, with his servants Valluka and many more. ⁴ There were also the gods Kubera, Yama and Indra who paid him their tribute, and the yakshas, vidyadharas and naagas who rendered him their services. ⁵ There were the heavenly nymphs Rambha and Tilottama in the number, with the fanning and flapping women of his court. The deputies of different provinces and of hilly and maritime districts were also in attendance. ⁶ These, accompanied by the spiritual masters inhabiting different parts of the three worlds, all waited at that place to render their services to Bali.

⁷ They look at Bali reverently, their heads bending down with the crowns upon them, their arms hanging loosely with bracelets upon them. ⁸ The great asuras made their obeisance to him in due form, and were stupefied with sorrow and fear, struck with alternating wonder and joy at his sad condition. ⁹ The ministers kept pondering about what was the matter with him, and the demons sought their all knowing teacher Shukra to explaining the situation.

¹⁰ Quick as thought, they saw the shining figure of Shukra standing before them, as if they saw the phantom of their imagination appearing tangibly to view. ¹¹ Shukra, being honored by the demons, took his seat on a sofa. In his silent meditation he saw the state of the mind of the king of demons. ¹² He remained for a while to behold with delight how the mind of Bali was freed from errors by the exercise of its reasoning powers. ¹³ The illustrious teacher, whose personal brightness put to shame the brightness of the Milky Ocean, then said smiling to the listening throng of the demons.

¹⁴ “Know you demons, this Bali has become an adept in his spiritual knowledge. He has fixed his seat in holy light by the working of his intellect. ¹⁵ Leave him alone, you good demons. Let him remain in his reverie in this position, resting in himself and beholding the imperishable one within himself. ¹⁶ Lo! here the weary pilgrim has got his rest. His mind is freed from the errors of this false world. Do not disturb him with your talking, who is now as cold as ice. ¹⁷ He has received that light of knowledge amidst the gloom of ignorance, like a waking man beholds the full blaze of the sun when he awakes at dawn after the darkness is dispersed.”

¹⁸ “In time he will wake from his samadhi and rise like the germ of a seed sprouting from the seed vessel in its proper season. ¹⁹ You leaders of demons, go from here and perform the duties that your master has assigned to you, for it will take a thousand years for Bali to wake from his samadhi.”

²⁰ After Shukra, the guru and guide of the demons, had spoken in this manner, they were filled with alternate joy and grief in their hearts, and cast aside their anxiety about him, as a tree casts its withered leaves away. ²¹ The asuras then left their King Bali resting in his palace and returned to their respective offices, as they had been employed heretofore.

²² It now became night and all men retired to their earthly abodes, the serpents entered into their

holes, the stars appeared in the skies, and the gods reposed in their celestial domes. The rulers of all sides and mountainous tracts went to their own quarters, and the beasts of the forest and birds of the air fled and flew to their own dens and nests.

Chapter 29 — Bali Returns to Ordinary Consciousness

¹ Vasishta related:—

After a thousand years passed in Bali's unconsciousness, he was roused to consciousness by the gods beating heavenly drums above.² Bali being awake, his city (Mavalipuram) was renovated with fresh beauty, as the lotus-bed is revivified by the rising sun in the eastern horizon.³ Bali, not seeing any demons before him, fell into reflecting upon the dreams he had seen in his state of samadhi.

⁴ He thought, “O how charming was that cooling bliss of spiritual delight in which my soul had been enraptured for a short time.⁵ O how I long to resume that state of joy! These outward enjoyments which I have tasted to my fill cease to please me anymore.⁶ Not even the delights of the full moon can compare to the waves of bliss I felt in my soul during my entranced state of unconsciousness.”

⁷ Bali was attempting to resume his state of samadhi when he was interrupted by attendant demons, as the moon is intercepted by clouds.⁸ He glanced at them and was going to close his eyes in meditation after making his prostration on the ground, but was interrupted by their gigantic statures standing around him.⁹ He then reflected, “The intellect being devoid of its option, there is nothing for me to desire. Only the mind that is fond of pleasures vainly pursues them.¹⁰ Why should I desire my freedom when I am not confined or attached to anything here? It is childish to seek liberation when I am not bound to anything below.”

¹¹ “I have no desire for liberation or fear of bondage since the disappearance of my ignorance. What need do I have of meditation? What good is meditation to me?¹² Meditation and lack of meditation are both mistakes of the mind. We must depend on our courage and hail all that comes to pass on us without rejoicing or shrinking.¹³ I require neither thoughtfulness nor thoughtlessness, neither enjoyments nor their privation, but must remain unmoved and firm as one sane and sound.¹⁴ I have no longing for the spiritual or craving for temporal things. I do not have to remain in a meditative mood or in the state of giddy worldliness.”

¹⁵ “I am not dead (because my soul is immortal) and I cannot be living (because the soul is not connected with life). I am neither a reality (as the body) nor an unreality (composed of spiritual essence only). I am not a material or aerial body (being neither this body nor vital air). I am not of this world or any other, but identical with the great Conscious Void.”

¹⁶ “When I am in this world, I will remain here quietly. When I am not here, I will abide calmly in the solace of my soul.¹⁷ What shall I do with my meditation and what shall I do with all my royalty? Let anything come to pass as it may, I am nothing for this or that, nor is anything mine.¹⁸ Though I have nothing to do (because I am not a free agent, nor master of my actions), yet I must do the duties belonging to my station in society.”

¹⁹ After reaching this determination in his mind, Bali, the wisest of the wise, looked upon the demons with detachment, like the sun looking upon lotuses.²⁰ With the nods and glances of his eyes, he received their homage, like passing winds bear the fragrances of flowers.²¹ Then Bali, ceasing to think on the object of his meditation, approached them concerning their respective duties under him.²² He honored the gods and his gurus with due respect and saluted his friends and officers with his

best regards.²³ He honored all his servants and suitors with his largesse, and he pleased attendant maidens with various persons.

²⁴ So he continued to prosper in every department of his government, until he made up his mind to perform a great sacrifice.²⁵ He satisfied all beings with his great gifts and gratified the great gods and sages with due honor and veneration. Then he commenced the ceremony of the sacrifice under the guidance of Shukra and the chief gurus and priests.

²⁶ Then Vishnu, the lord of Lakshmi, came to know that Bali had no desire of earthly reward. Vishnu appeared at the sacrifice to crown Bali with the success of his undertaking and confer upon him his desired blessing.²⁷ He cunningly persuaded Bali to make a gift of the world to Indra his elder brother, who was insatiably fond of all kinds of enjoyment.²⁸ Having used his artifices to deceive Bali dispossess him of the three worlds, Vishnu shut him in the nether world, just as they confine a monkey in a cave under the ground.

²⁹ Thus Bali continues to remain in his confinement to this day with his mind fixed in meditation for the purpose of again attaining the rule of Indra in a future state of life.³⁰ The living liberated Bali, being thus restrained in the infernal cave, looks upon his former prosperity and his present adversity in the same light.³¹ There is no rising or setting of his consciousness in the states of his pleasure or pain. His intelligence remains one and the same in its full brightness, like the disc of the sun in a painting.

³² He saw the repeated ebb and flow of worldly enjoyments and settled his mind in utter indifference to them.³³ He overcame multitudes of changing fortunes for multitudes of years in all his reincarnations in the three worlds, and at last found his rest in utter disregard of all mortal things.

³⁴ He felt thousands of comforts and disquiets and hundreds of pleasures and privations of life. After his long experience of these, he found his rest in his perfect quiescence.³⁵ Bali, having forsaken his desire of enjoyments, enjoyed the fullness of his mind in the absence of his desires. He rejoiced in the self-sufficiency of his soul and in the loneliness of his underground cave.

³⁶ After a course of many years, Bali regained his sovereignty of the world and governed it for a long time to his heart's content.³⁷ But he was neither elated by his elevation to the dignity of Indra, the lord of gods, nor was he depressed at this subjugation to prosperity.³⁸ He was one and the same person in every state of his life, and enjoyed the equanimity of his soul, resembling the serenity of the ethereal sphere.

³⁹ O Rama, I have related to you the whole story of Bali's attainment of true wisdom. I advise you now to imitate his example for your elevation to the same state of perfection.⁴⁰ Learn, as Bali did by his own discernment, to think of yourself as the immortal and everlasting soul. Try to reach the state of your oneness with the Supreme Unity by your courageous self-control and self-resignation.

⁴¹ Bali, the lord of demons, exercised full authority over the three worlds for more than a millennium, but at last he came to feel an utter distaste for all the enjoyments of life.⁴² Therefore, O victorious Rama, forego the enjoyments of life, which are sure to be attended with a distaste and nausea at the end. Take yourself to that state of true joy which never grows tasteless.⁴³ These visible sights, O Rama, are as numerous as they are temptations to the soul. They appear as even and charming as a

distant mountain, but proves to be rough and rugged as you approach it.

⁴⁴ Restrain your mind in the cavity of your heart from its pursuit of perishable objects of enjoyment, either in this life or in the next, which are so alluring to all men of ordinary sense. ⁴⁵ Know yourself to be identical with consciousness which shines like the sun throughout the universe and illuminates every object in nature without distinction or partiality. ⁴⁶ Know yourself, O mighty Rama, to be infinite spirit and the transcendent soul of all bodies that has manifested itself in manifold forms that are like the bodies of the internal intellect.

⁴⁷ Know your soul to be like a thread passing through and interwoven with everything in existence, like a string connecting all the links of creation, like so many gems of a necklace or the beads of a rosary. ⁴⁸ Know yourself as the unborn and embodied soul of Viraj, the resplendent Brahma, which is never born and never dies. Never fall into the mistake of thinking pure consciousness is subject to birth or death.

⁴⁹ Know your desires are the causes of your birth, life, death and diseases. Therefore shun your desire of enjoyments and enjoy all things in the manner of the all witnessing consciousness. ⁵⁰ If you remain in the everlasting light of the sun of your consciousness, you will come to find the phenomenal world to be only a phantom of your dream. ⁵¹ Never regret or sorrow for anything. Do not think of pleasures or pains which do not affect your soul. You are pure consciousness and the all pervading soul which manifests itself in everything. ⁵² Know that what is desirable are your evils and the undesirable (abstinence) is for your good. Therefore shun the former by your continued practice of the latter.

⁵³ By forsaking your ideas of desirable and undesirable, you will develop a habit of mentally ceasing desires. When the habit takes a deep root in your heart, you no longer have to be reborn in the world.

⁵⁴ Retract your mind from everything to which it runs like a boy after vain bright trinkets. Settle your mind in yourself for your own good. ⁵⁵ Thus by using your best efforts to restrain your mind, and also by your habit of self-control, you will subdue the rampant elephant of your mind and ultimately reach your highest bliss.

⁵⁶ Do not become like ignorant fools who believe their bodies are their chief good and who are infatuated by false reasoning and infidelity, deluded by impostors to gratify their sensual desires.

⁵⁷ What man is more ignorant in this world and more subject to its evils than one who derives his spiritual knowledge from one who smatters in theology and relies on the dogmas of pretenders and false philosophers? ⁵⁸ Dispel the cloud of false reasoning from the atmosphere of your mind by the hurricane of right reasoning which drives all darkness before it.

⁵⁹ You can not be said to have right reasoning until you come to the light and sight of the soul, both by your own efforts and by grace of the Supreme Spirit. ⁶⁰ Neither the Vedas nor Vedanta, nor the science of logic or any other scripture can give you any light of the soul unless it appears of itself within you. ⁶¹ It is by cultivating yourself, aided by my instruction and divine grace, that you have gained your perfect knowledge and appear to rest yourself in the Supreme Spirit.

⁶² There are three ways in which you come to spiritual light. First, a lack of knowledge of duality, then the brightness of your intellectual light (the soul) by the grace of God, and third the wide extent of your knowledge derived from my instructions. ⁶³ You are now free of your mental maladies. You have

become sound by abandonment of your desires, by removal of your doubts and errors, and by forsaking the mist of your fondness for external objects.

⁶⁴ O Rama, as you get rid of the errors of your understanding, so you advance by degrees in gaining your knowledge, in cherishing your resignation, in destroying your defects, in imbibing the bliss of ecstasy, in wandering with exultation, and in elevating your soul to the sixth sphere. But all this is not enough unless you attain Brahma itself.

Chapter 30 — The Story of Prahlada: Narasimha Destroys Hiranyakashipu and the Age of Demons

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Rama, listen to the instructive story of Prahlada, the lord of demons who became a spiritual adept by his own intuition.

² There was a mighty demon in the infernal regions named Hiranyakashipu who was as valiant as Vishnu himself and had expelled the gods and demigods from their abodes. ³ He mastered all the treasures of the world and wrested its possession from the hands of Vishnu, just like a swan encroaching upon a bee on the large leaves of a lotus. ⁴ Hiranyakashipu defeated the deva gods and the asura demons and ruled over the whole earth, like an elephant masters a lotus-bed by chasing the swans away.

⁵ The lord of the asuras, having usurped the monarchy of the three worlds, had many sons in course of time, as spring brings forth the shoots of trees. ⁶ These children grew up to manhood in time, with the display of their courageous prowess. Like so many brilliant suns, they stretched their thousand rays on all sides of the earth and skies. ⁷ The eldest, Prahlada, became the regent, just as Vishnu's Kaustubha diamond is pre-eminent among all precious gems. ⁸ Hiranyakashipu delighted exceedingly in his fortunate son Prahlada like the year rejoices in its flowering time of spring.

⁹ Supported by his son on one hand and possessed of his force and treasures on the other, Hiranyakashipu became puffed up with his pride, like a swollen elephant emitting foam from his triangular mouth. ¹⁰ Shining with his luster and elated by his pride, he dried and drew up the moisture of the earth by his unbearable taxation, like the all-destroying suns of universal dissolution parch the world by their rays. ¹¹ His conduct annoyed the gods, the sun and the moon, just as the behavior of a haughty boy becomes unbearable to his fellow comrades.

¹² They all applied to Brahma to destroy the arch demon, because the repeated misbehaviors of the wicked are unbearable to the good and great. ¹³ It was then that lion-like Narasimha clattered his nails resembling the tusks of an elephant and thundered loudly like the rumbling noise of the regent elephants of all the quarters of heaven fills concave world on its last doomsday. ¹⁴ Narasimha's tusk-like nails and teeth glittered like lightning flashing in the sky. The radiance of his earrings filled the hollow sphere of heaven with curling flames of living fire.

¹⁵ The sides and caves of mountains presented a fearful aspect. Huge trees were shaken by a tremendous tempest that rent the skies and tore the roof of heaven. ¹⁶ He emitted gusts of wind from his mouth and entrails which drove the mountains before them. His eyeballs flashed with the living fire of his rage which was about to consume the world. ¹⁷ His shining mane shook with the glare of sunbeams. The pores of the hairs on his body emitted sparks of fire like the craters of a volcano.

¹⁸ Mountains everywhere shook with a tremendous shaking, and the whole body of Narasimha shot forth a variety of arms in every direction.

¹⁹ Vishnu in his Narasimha form of half man and half lion killed the gigantic demon by goring him with his tusks, like an elephant goring the body of a horse with a grating sound. ²⁰ The population of the demon hell city was burnt down by gushing fire from his eyeballs which burned like the all

devouring conflagration of the last doomsday.²¹ The breath of his nostrils drove everything before it like a hurricane. The clapping of his arms sounded like great waves crashing on hollow shores.²² Demons fled before him like moths from burning fire. They became extinct as extinguished lamps at the blazing light of the day.

²³ After the burning of the demon hell city and the expulsion of the demons, the infernal regions presented a void waste like at the last devastation of the world.²⁴ After the lord Narasimha had expelled the demonic race at the end of the demon age, he disappeared from view with the grateful greetings of the council of gods.

²⁵ The surviving sons of the demon, who had fled from the burning of their city, were afterwards led back to it by Prahlada, just as migrating fowls are made to return to the dry lake bed by a rain shower.

²⁶ There they mourned the dead bodies of demons, lamented at the loss of their possessions, and performed funeral ceremonies for their departed friends and relatives.²⁷ After burning the dead bodies of their friends, they invited the few demons who had fled to safety to return to their deserted homes.

²⁸ The demons and their leaders continued to mourn with gloomy minds and disfigured bodies, like lotuses beaten down by the frost. They made no effort or attempt, like figures in a painting. They had no hope of resuscitation, like a tree struck by lightning.

Chapter 31 — Prahlada Bemoans the Demon's Loss and Praises Vishnu

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Prahlada remained unhappy in his underground region, brooding over sad thoughts of the destruction of the Danava demons and their homes.

Prahlada thinking to himself:—

² Ah, what is to become of us when this Vishnu is bent to destroy the best amongst us, like a monkey pulling out shoots and sprouts of trees? ³ Nowhere on earth or in the infernal regions do I see any Daitya demons left to enjoy their properties. They are all stunted in their growth like lotuses growing on mountain tops. ⁴ They rise only to fall like the loud beating of a drum. Their rising and falling are like the waves of the sea. ⁵ Sorrow to us who are so miserable in both our inner and outer circumstances. Happy are our enemies of light, the gods who have overcome us. O the terrors of darkness!

⁶ Our friends of the dark infernal regions are all darkened in their souls with loss of courage. Their fortune is as transitory as the expansion of the lotus leaf by day and its contraction at night. ⁷ We see the gods, who were mean servants at the feet of our father, have usurped his kingdom in the way timid deer usurp the sovereignty of the lion in the forest. ⁸ We find our friends all disfigured and effortless, sitting melancholy and dejected in their hopelessness like lotuses with their withered leaves and petals. ⁹ We see the houses of our gigantic demons filled with clouds of dust and frost, blown by gusts of wind by day and night, and resembling the fumes of fire which burnt them down. ¹⁰ The inner apartments are laid open without doors or enclosures, overgrown with the sprouts of barley shooting out as blades of sapphires from underneath the ground.

¹¹ Ah, there is nothing impossible to irresistible fate that has so reduced the mighty demons who used to pluck flowers from the mountain tops of Meru like big elephants. Now we have come to this sad condition of the wandering gods of the past. ¹² Our ladies cringe like frightened deer at the rustling of the breeze amidst the leaves of trees. They fear enemy arrows whistling and hurling through the open air. ¹³ O, the shining guluncha blossoms that decorated our women's ears are now shorn, torn and left desolate by the hands of Vishnu, like the lonesome plains of the desert. ¹⁴ They have robbed us of the all-producing wish-fulfilling kalpa trees and planted them in their Nandana pleasure gardens now teeming with their shooting gems and green leaflets in the ethereal sphere. ¹⁵ The eyes of haughty demons that formerly looked with pity on the faces of their captured gods are now indignantly looked upon by victorious gods who have made captives of them.

¹⁶ It is known that the fluids pouring from the mouths of spouting elephants of heaven on the tops of the mountains fall down in the form of cascades and gives rise to rivers on earth. ¹⁷ But the foam flowing from the faces of our elephant-like giants is as dry as dust at the sights of the gods, just like a channel is sucked up in the dry and dreary desert of sand. ¹⁸ Ah, where have those Daitya demons fled whose bodies were once as big as the peaks of Mount Meru and were fanned by fragrant breezes breathing with the scented dust of mandara flowers?

¹⁹ The beautiful ladies of the gods and gandharvas, once kept as captives in the inner apartments of demons, are now snatched from us and placed on Meru as if they were transplanted to grow there as

heavenly plants.²⁰ O how painful is it to think that the fading graces of our captured girls are now mocked by heavenly apsara nymphs in their disdainful dance over their defeat and disgrace.²¹ O it is painful to think that the lady attendants who fanned my father are now waiting upon the thousand-eyed Indra in their servile toil.

²² O, the greatest of our grief is our sad and distressing fall at the hands of a single Vishnu who has reduced us to this state of helpless impotency.²³ The gods resting under the thick and cooling shades of trees are as cool as the rocks of the icy Himalayas. They do not burn with rage or complain in grief like we.²⁴ The gods protected by the power of Vishnu are raised to the height of prosperity. They mock and restrain us in these caves, as apes on trees do dogs below.²⁵ The faces of our fairies, though decked with ornaments, are now bedewed with drops of their tears, like lotus leaves with the cold dew of night.²⁶ The old stage of this aged world, which was defeated and about to be pulled down by our might, is now supported upon the blue arms of Vishnu, like the roof of heaven standing upon the blue arches of the blue sky.²⁷ Vishnu has become the support of the celestial host when it was about to be hurled into the depth of hell. Vishnu supports in the same manner as the great tortoise supported Mount Mandara as it churned and sank in the Milky Ocean.

²⁸ Our great father and these mighty demons under him have been laid down to dust like the lofty hills that were leveled to the ground by the blasts of heaven at the end of the kalpa age.²⁹ The leader of the celestial forces, the peerless destroyer of Vishnu, is able to destroy all and everything by the fire in his hands.³⁰ His elder brother Indra, by the force of the thunderbolts held by his mightier arms, baffles battle-axes in the hands of the mighty demons, like big male monkeys killing their male offspring.³¹ The lightning weapons of the lotus-eyed Vishnu are invincible, and there is no weapon which can foil the force of Indra's thunder.

³² This Vishnu is invincible in warfare. He defeated our forefathers in previous battles in which they uprooted and flung great rocks at him and waged many dreadful campaigns.³³ He who stood victorious in those long, dreadful and destructive wars of times past cannot be expected to be afraid of us.

³⁴ I have thought of only one way to oppose the rage of Vishnu, besides which I find no other way for our safety.³⁵ Therefore with all possible speed, let us go to him for help, with full contriteness of our souls and understanding, because that god is the true refuge of the pious and the only resort of everybody.³⁶ There is no one greater than he in all the three worlds. I have come to know that only Vishnu is the cause of the creation, preservation and destruction or reproduction of the world.

³⁷ From this moment therefore, I will think only of that unborn Narayana for ever more. I must rely on that Narayana, who is present in all places and is full in myself and filling all space.³⁸ Worship of Narayana forms my faith and profession for my success in all undertakings. May this faith of mine ever abide in my heart, as the wind has its place in the midst of empty air.

³⁹ Vishnu is to be known to fill all sides of space and vacuum, and every part of this earth, and all these worlds. My ego is the immeasurable Spirit of Vishnu. My inborn soul is full of Vishnu.⁴⁰ He who is not full with Vishnu in himself does not benefit by his adoration of Vishnu, but he who worships Vishnu by thinking himself as such finds himself assimilated with his god and becomes one

with him.⁴¹ He who knows Vishnu to be the same with Prahlada, and not different from him, finds Vishnu to fill his inward soul with his spirit.

⁴² Vishnu's garuda eagle flies through the infinite space of the sky as the presence of Vishnu fills all infinity. His golden light of his body is the seat of my Vishnu also.⁴³ The claws of this bird serve as Vishnu's weapons. The flash of his nails is the flash of Vishnu's weapons.⁴⁴ Vishnu has four arms wearing armlets representing the four shining heights of Mount Mandara with which Vishnu churned the Milky Ocean.

⁴⁵ This moonlike figure with the flapper fan in her hand and rising from the depth of the Milky Ocean is the goddess of prosperity (Lakshmi), the consort of Vishnu.⁴⁶ She is Vishnu's brilliant glory which he easily acquires. She is ever attendant on his person with undiminished luster. She illuminates the three worlds like a radiant medicinal tree (*mahaushadhi*).

⁴⁷ Vishnu's other companion is called Illusion (*Maya*) which is ever busy in the creation of worlds upon worlds, and in stretching a magical enchantment all about them.⁴⁸ The goddess Victory (*Jaya*) is an easily earned attendant for Vishnu. She shines as a shoot of the wish-fulfilling kalpa tree, extending to the three worlds as an all-pervading plant.⁴⁹ These two warming and cooling luminaries of the sun and moon serve to manifest all the worlds to view. They are the two eyes situated on the forehead of my Vishnu.

⁵⁰ This azure sky is the blue color of the body of my Vishnu, which is as dark as a mass of watery cloud and darkens the sphere of heaven with its sky blue radiance. The meaning of the word Vishnu was afterward changed to the residing divinity in all things from the root *vish* (white).⁵¹ Here is the whitish conch in the hand of my Vishnu which blows its fivefold notes (*panchajanya*) and is as bright as the vacuum, the receptacle of sound, and as white as the Milky Ocean of heavens.⁵² Here I see the lotus in the hand of Vishnu, representing the lotus of his navel, the seat of Brahma, who rose from and sat upon it like a bee to form his hive of the world.

⁵³ I see the club of my Vishnu's hand, studded with gems, in the lofty peak of Mount Sumeru beset by its shining stones and hurling down demons from its precipice.⁵⁴ I see here the discus of my Vishnu in the rising luminary of the sun which fills all sides of the infinite space with the radiant beams that emanate from it.⁵⁵ I see there in the flaming fire the flashing sword of Vishnu, which like an axe has cut down the gigantic bodies of daitya demons like trees, giving great joy to the gods.⁵⁶ I also see Vishnu's great bow in the variegated rainbow of Indra, and also the quiver of his arrows in the *pushkara* and *avarta* clouds pouring down their rains from above like piercing arrows.

⁵⁷ Vishnu's big belly is the vast emptiness of the sky which contains all worlds and all past, present, and future creations in its spacious womb.⁵⁸ I see the earth as the footstool of Brahma and the high sky as the canopy on his head. His body is the stupendous fabric of the universe and his sides are the sides of the compass.⁵⁹ I see the great Vishnu visibly manifest shining under the blue dome of heaven, mounted on his mountain-like eagle and holding his conch shell, discus, cudgel and the lotus in his hands.

⁶⁰ I see wicked and evil minded demons flying from me like straw blown and carried away by the winds.⁶¹ This dark deity with his blue sapphire color and yellow covering, holding the club and

mounted on the garuda eagle and accompanied by Lakshmi, is nothing other than the identical Imperishable One.⁶² What adverse spirit can dare approach this all-devouring flame without being burnt to death, like a flight of moths falling on a great fire?⁶³ None of these hosts of gods or demigods that I see before me is able to withstand the irresistible course of the determination of Vishnu. All attempts to oppose it will be as vain as for our weak-sighted eyes to shut out the light of the sun.

⁶⁴ I know the gods Brahma, Indra, Shiva and Agni (the god of fire) praise Vishnu as their Lord in endless verses and many tongues.⁶⁵ This Lord is ever resplendent with his dignity and is invincible in his might. He is the Lord beyond all doubt, dispute and duality, and is joined with transcendent majesty.⁶⁶ I bow down to that person who stands like a firm rock amidst the forest of the world and is a defense from all fears and dangers. Vishnu is a stupendous body having all the worlds situated in its womb and forming the essence and substance of every distinct object of vision.

Chapter 32 — Prahlada and the Daitya Demons Worship Vishnu; the Gods Complain

¹ Vasishta continued:—

After Prahlada had meditated on Vishnu in this manner, he made an image of him as Narayana and thought about worshipping that enemy of the asura demon race.² To make the figure a form of Vishnu himself, he invoked the spirit of Vishnu to settle in this his outer figure also.³ It was seated on the back of the heavenly bird garuda, arrayed with the quadruple attributes (will, intelligence, action and mercy) and armed with the four arms holding the conch shell, discus, club and lotus.⁴ His two eyeballs flashed like the orbs of the sun and moon in their outstretched sockets. His palms were as red as lotuses, and his bow Saranga and the sword Nandaka hung on his two shoulders and sides.

⁵ “I will worship this image,” thought Prahlada, “with all my adherents and dependants, with an abundance of grateful offerings agreeable to my taste.⁶ I will worship this great god always with all kinds of offering of precious gems and jewels, and all sorts of articles for bodily use and enjoyment.”

⁷ Having thus made up his mind, Prahlada collected an abundance of various things and made offerings of them in his mind for his worship of Vishnu, the lord of Lakshmi.⁸ He offered rich gems and jewels in plates of many kinds, and presented sandal pastes in several pots. He burned incense and lit lamps in rows, and placed many valuables and ornaments in sacred vessels.⁹ He presented wreaths of mandara flowers and chains of lotuses made of gold, together with garlands of leaves and flowers of kalpa plants, and bouquets and nosegays studded with gems and pearls.¹⁰ He hung hangings of leaves and leaflets of heavenly trees, and chaplets and trimmings of various kinds of flowers, as vakas and kundas, kinkiratas and white, blue and red lotuses.¹¹ There were wreaths of kahlara, kunda, kasa and kinsuka flowers, and clusters of asoka, madana, bela and kanikara blossoms likewise.¹² There were small flowers of the kadamba, vakala, nimba, sindhuvara and yuthikas also, and likewise heaps of paribhadra, gugguli and venduka flowers.¹³ There were strings of priyangu, patala, pata and patala flowers, and also blossoms of amra, amrataka and gavyas, and the bulbs of haritaki and vibhitaki myrabolans.¹⁴ Flowers of sala and tamara trees were strung together with their leaves, and tender buds of sahakaras were fastened together with their starch-like pistils.¹⁵ There were ketakas and kamala flowers and the shoots of ela cardamums together with everything beautiful to sight and the tender of one’s soul likewise.

¹⁶ Thus did Prahlada worship his lord Vishnu in the inner apartment of his house, with offerings of all the richest things in the world, joined with true faith and earnestness of his mind and spirit.¹⁷ Thus did the monarch of Danava demons worship his lord Vishnu externally in his holy temple, furnished with all kind of valuable things on earth.¹⁸ The Danava sovereign became the more and more gratified in his spirit in proportion as he adored his god with more and more of his valuable outer offerings.¹⁹ Henceforward Prahlada continued to worship his lord god day after day with earnestness of his soul and the same sort of rich offerings everyday.

²⁰ It came to pass that the Daityas, after the example of their king, one and all turned Vaishnavas and worshipped Vishnu in their city and temples without intermission.²¹ This information reached heaven and to the abode of the gods, that the Daityas having renounced their hatred to Vishnu, had completely turned into his faithful believers and worshippers.²² The gods were all astonished to learn that the

Daityas had accepted the Vaishnava faith. Even Indra and the thirty-three Rudras about him marveled how the Daityas came to be so.²³ The astonished gods left their celestial abode to go to the warlike Vishnu resting on his serpent couch in the Milky Ocean.²⁴ They related to him the whole story of the Daitya demons. They asked what was the cause of their conversion, and they were very much astonished.

²⁵ The gods said, "How is it Lord that the demons who had always been adverse to you have now come to embrace your faith? It appears to us as an act of magic or hypocrisy.²⁶ How different is their present transformation to the Vaishnava faith, which is acquired only after many reincarnations of the soul, from their former spirit of rebellion in which they broke down the rocks and mountains."

²⁷ "The rumor that a clown has become a learned man is as amusing as it is doubtful, just as the news of blossoms budding out of season.²⁸ Nothing is graceful without its proper place. A rich jewel loses its value when it set with worthless pebbles.²⁹ All animals have their dispositions conforming to their own natures. Then how can the pure faith of Vishnu agree with the dog-like natures of the Daityas?³⁰ Our bodies pierced by thorns and needles do not grieve us as much as seeing things of opposite natures set in conjunction with one another.³¹ Whatever is naturally adapted to its time and place, the same seems to suit it then and there. Therefore the lotus has its grace in water and not upon the land."

³² "Where are the vile Daityas, prone to their misdeeds at all times? How far can the Vaishnava faith reach for those who can never appreciate its merit?³³ O lord, as we are never glad to learn of a lotus bed left to parch in the desert soil, so we can never rejoice at the thought that the race of demons will place their faith in Vishnu, the lord of gods."

Chapter 33 — Vishnu Explains Prahlada to the Gods; Appears to Prahlada

¹ Vasishta said:—

The lord of Lakshmi, seeing the gods clamoring in their accusation of the demons, gave his words to them in sounds as sonorous as those of rainy clouds responding to the loud noise of screaming and thirst-stricken peacocks. ² The Lord Vishnu said, “You gods, do not marvel at Prahlada’s faith in me as it is because of his virtuous acts in past lives that this pious prince is entitled to his final liberation in this his present life. ³ He shall not have to be born again in the womb of a woman, or be reproduced in any form on earth, but must remain aloof from regeneration, like a fried pea which does not germinate anymore.”

⁴ “A virtuous man turning impious becomes the source of evil, but an unworthy man becoming meritorious is doubtless a step towards his better being and blessedness. ⁵ You good gods who are quite happy in your blessed seats in heaven must not let the good deserts of Prahlada be any cause for your uneasiness.”

⁶ Vasishta resumed:—

The lord having thus spoken to the gods became invisible to them, like a feather floating on the surface of waves. ⁷ The assembly of immortals then returned to their heavenly abodes after taking their leave of the god, just as the particles of seawater are carried to the sky by the soft warm breezes, or by the agitation of Mandara Mountain. ⁸ Henceforth the gods were pacified towards Prahlada, because the mind is never suspicious of one who has the credit of his superiors.

⁹ Prahlada also continued his daily adoration of his god with the contriteness of his heart and in the formulas of his spiritual, oral and bodily services. ¹⁰ It was in the course of his divine service in this manner that he attained the joy proceeding from his right discrimination, self-resignation and other virtues with which he was crowned. ¹¹ He took no delight in any object of enjoyment, nor felt any pleasure in the society of his consorts, all which he shunned as a male deer shuns a withered tree and the company of human beings.

¹² He did not walk in the ways of the ungodly or spend his time in anything but religious discourses. His mind did not dwell on visible objects, like the lotus that never grows on dry land. ¹³ His mind did not delight in pleasures, which were all linked with pain, but longed for its liberation, which is as entire of itself and unconnected with anything as a single grain of unperfected pearl.

¹⁴ His mind was abstracted from his enjoyments, but not yet settled in its samadhi of ultimate rest. He was wavering between the two states, like a cradle swinging both ways. ¹⁵ The god Vishnu, who knew all things by his all-knowing intelligence, saw the unsettled state of Prahlada’s mind from his seat in the Milky Ocean. ¹⁶ Pleased at Prahlada’s firm belief, he proceeded by an underground route to the place of his worship and manifested before him at the holy altar. ¹⁷ Seeing his god manifest to his view, the lord of the demons worshipped him with two-fold veneration, and made many respectful offerings to his lotus-eyed deity, more than his usual practice. ¹⁸ He then gladly glorified his god with many prayers in gratitude for appearing before him in his house of worship.

¹⁹ Prahlada said, “I adore you, O my lord Vishnu, who is unborn and without decay, who is the

blessed receptacle of three worlds, who dispels all darkness by the light of your body, and who is the refuge of the helpless and friendless.²⁰ I adore my Vishnu in his complexion of blue lotus leaves and the color of autumn. I worship him whose body is of the color of the dark bhramara bee and who holds the lotus, discus, club and conch-shell in his arms.”

²¹ “I worship the god who dwells in the lotus-like hearts of his devotees with his appearance of a swarm of dark bees, who holds a conch-shell as white as the bud of a lotus or lily, with earrings ringing in his ears with the music of humming bees.²² I resort to Vishnu’s sky-blue shade, shining with the starry light of his long stretching nails, his face shining like the full moon with his smiling beams, and his breast waving like the surface of Ganges with sparkling gems hanging upon it.²³ I rely on that deity who slept on the leaf of a fig tree, who contains the universe in himself in his stupendous form of Viraj, who is neither born nor grown but is always the whole by himself, and who is possessed of endless attributes of his own nature.”

²⁴ “I take my refuge in Vishnu whose bosom is daubed with the red dust of the new-blown lotus, and whose left side is adorned by the blushing beauty of Lakshmi whose body is covered by a red colored cloth and smeared with red sandal paste like liquid gold.²⁵ I take my refuge under that Vishnu who is the destructive frost to the lotus-bed of demons, who is the rising sun to the opening buds of the lotus-bed of the deities, who is the source of the lotus-born Brahma, and who is the receptacle of the lotus petal seat of our understanding.²⁶ My hope is in Vishnu, the blooming lotus of the bed of the triple world, and the only light amidst the darkness of the universe, who is the principle of consciousness (*chit*) amidst the gross material world, and who is the only remedy for all the evils and troubles of this transient life.”

²⁷ Vasishta continued:—

Vishnu the destroyer of demons, who is graced on his side by the goddess of prosperity, being praised with many such graceful speeches of the demon lord, answered him as lovingly in his blue lotus-like form as when the deep clouds respond to the peacocks’ screams.

Chapter 34 — Prahlada's Discrimination Leads to Self Realization

¹ The Lord said, “O you rich jewel on the crown of the Daitya race! Receive your desired reward of me to alleviate your worldly afflictions.”

² Prahlada replied, “What better blessing can I ask of you, my Lord, than to instruct me in what you think is your best gift above all other treasures of the world, and which is able to benefit and reward all our wants in this miserable life.”

³ The Lord answered, “May you have a sinless boy, and may your right discrimination of things lead you to your rest in God and the attainment of your supreme joy, after the dispersion of your earthly cares and the errors of this world.”

⁴ Vasishta continued:—

Being thus bid by his god, the lord of demons fell into a profound meditation, his nostrils snoring loudly like the gurgling waters of the deep.⁵ As Lord Vishnu departed from his sight, the chief of the demons made his oblations after him, consisting of handfuls of flowers and rich gems and jewels of various kinds.⁶ Then seated in lotus posture (*padmasana*), legs folded over one another upon his elevated and elegant seat, he chanted his holy hymn and reflected within himself.

Prahlada's contemplation:—

⁷ My deliverer from this sinful world has asked me to have my discrimination. Therefore I must discriminate between what is true and false.⁸ I must know that I am in this dark world and I must seek the light of my soul and the principle that makes me speak, walk and take pains to exert myself.⁹ I perceive that I am nothing of this external world, like any of its green trees or hills. External bodies are all of a gross nature, but my ego is quite a simple and pure essence.¹⁰ I am not this unconscious body, which is both dull and dumb and is made to move for a moment by means of the vital airs. The body is an unreal appearance of a transitory existence.

¹¹ I am not the unconscious sound, which is an empty substance produced in emptiness. It is perceptible through the ear hole and is as fleeting and insubstantial as empty air.¹² Nor am I the unconscious organ of touch or the momentary feeling of touch. I find myself to be an inner principle with the faculty of reasoning and the capacity of knowing the nature of the soul.

¹³ I am not even my taste, which is confined to the tasting of certain objects and to the organ of the tongue, which is a trifling and ever restless thing, sticking to and moving in the cavity of the mouth.

¹⁴ I am not my sight, which is employed in seeing only what is visible. It is weak and decaying and never lasting in its power, nor capable of viewing the invisible Spirit.¹⁵ I am not the power of my smell, which belongs only to my nasal organ and is conversant with scented substances for a short moment only.

¹⁶ I am pure consciousness and not any of the sensations of my five external organs of sense. I am neither my mental faculty, which is ever frail and unsteady, nor is there anything belonging to me or participating of my true essence. I am the soul and an indivisible whole.¹⁷ I am pure consciousness without the objects of reasoning. My pure consciousness pervades internally and externally over all things and manifests them to view. I am the whole without its parts, pure without foulness and

everlasting.

¹⁸ It is my reasoning that manifests this pot and that painting to me and brings all other objects to my knowledge by its pure light, just like the sun and a lamp show everything to sight. ¹⁹ Ah! Now I remember the whole truth: that I am the immutable and all pervading Spirit, shining in the form of consciousness. ²⁰ This essence evolves itself into the various faculties of sense, just as the inner fire unfolds itself into the forms of its flash and flame and its sparks and visible light. ²¹ This principle also unfolds itself into the forms of the different organs of sense, just as the all-diffusive heat of the hot season shows itself in the shape of mirage in sandy deserts.

²² Likewise this element, the spirit, constitutes the substance of all objects, just as it is the light of the lamp which causes various colors of things, as the whiteness or other color of a piece of cloth or any other thing. ²³ The spirit is the source of the perception of all living and waking beings, and of everything else in existence. Just as a mirror reflects all outward appearances, so the soul is the reflective organ of all its internal and external phenomena.

²⁴ It is only through this immutable intellectual light that we perceive the heat of the sun, the coldness of the moon, the solidity of a rock, and the fluidity of water. ²⁵ This is the prime cause of every object of our continuous perceptions in this world. This is the first cause of all things, without having any prior cause of its own. ²⁶ This produces our notions of the continuity of objects that are spread all around us. They all take the name of objects from their objectivity of the soul. ²⁷ It is this formless cause which is the prime cause of all malleable and secondary causes (such as Brahma the creative agent and others). It is from this that the world has its production, as coldness is the product of cold and the like.

²⁸ The gods Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva and Indra, who are causes of the existence of the world, all owe their origin to this prime cause who has no cause of Himself. ²⁹ I hail that Supreme Soul which is impressed in me and is apart from every object of thought of the intellect, and which is self manifest in all things and at all times. ³⁰ All beings stand in relation to the modes and modalities of this Supreme Being. They are immersed as properties in that intellectual Spirit. ³¹ Whatever this internal and intelligent Soul wills to do, the same is done everywhere. Nothing other than the Soul exists in reality anywhere.

³² Whatever is intended to be done by this intellectual power, the same receives a form of its own. Whatever is thought to be undone by the intellect, the same is dissolved into nothing from its substantiality. ³³ These numberless series of worldly objects are like shadows cast on the immense mirror of emptiness. ³⁴ All these objects increase and decrease in size under the light of the soul, like the shadows of things enlarging and diminishing themselves in sunshine.

³⁵ This internal Soul is invisible to all beings except those whose minds are melted down in piety. It is seen by the righteous in the form of the clear sky. ³⁶ This great Cause, like a large tree, gives rise to all visible phenomena like its germ and sprouts. The movements of living beings are like the flittering of bees about this tree. ³⁷ It is this that gives rise to the whole creation both in its ideal and real and mobile or quiescent forms, just as a huge rock gives growth to a large forest with its various kinds of big trees and small shrubs.

³⁸ It is not separate from anything existing in the womb of this triple world, but resides alike in the highest gods as in the lowest grass below. It manifests them all to our view. ³⁹ This is one with the ego and the all-pervading soul. It is situated as the moving spirit and the unmoving dullness of the whole.

⁴⁰ The Universal Soul is beyond the distinction, of "my", "your" or "his" individual spirit. It is above the limits of time and place, of number and manner, of form or figure or shape or size. ⁴¹ The one intelligent soul, by its own intelligence, is the eye and witness of all visible things. It is represented as having a thousand eyes and hands and as many feet. ⁴² This is that supreme ego of myself that wanders about the sky in the body of the shining sun, and also wanders in other forms, as those of air in the current winds.

⁴³ The sky is the azure body of my Vishnu with its accompaniments of the conch shell, discus, club and the lotus in the clouds, all of which are tokens of prosperity in this world by their blissful rains. ⁴⁴ I find myself identical with this god while I am sitting in my lotus posture in this state of samadhi, and when I have attained my perfection in stillness. ⁴⁵ I am the same with Shiva, the god with his three eyes, his eyeballs rolling like bees on the lotus face of Gauri. I am in the form of the god Brahma and I contain the whole creation in me, like a tortoise contracting its limbs in itself. ⁴⁶ I rule over the world in the form of Indra. As a monk I command the monastery which has come down to me. I am an Indra when I rule over my domain, and a poor monk when I dwell in my humble cell.

⁴⁷ I am both male and female, and I am both boy and girl. I am old as regards my soul, and I am young with regard to my body, which is born and ever renewed.

⁴⁸ The ego is the grass and all kinds of plants on earth. It is also the moisture which grows them, like its thoughts in the ground of consciousness. In the same manner as herbs grow in holes and wells have their moisture, the ego or soul is the core and foundation of all substance. ⁴⁹ It is for pleasure that this ego stretched out the world, like a clever boy who makes dolls of clay in his play. ⁵⁰ This ego is me who gives existence to all being, and it is I in whom they live and move about. Being at last forsaken by me, the whole existence dwindles into nothing.

⁵¹ Whatever image is impressed in the clear mirror of my intellect, that and nothing else is in real existence because there is nothing that exists apart from myself. ⁵² I am the fragrance of flowers and the color of their leaves. I am the figure of all forms and the perception of everything that can be perceived. ⁵³ Whatever movable or immovable thing is visible in this world, I am its inmost heart without having any of its desires in my heart.

⁵⁴ As the primary element of moisture is diffused in nature in the form of water, so my spirit is spread over plants and all other things at large in the form of vacuum. ⁵⁵ I enter inside everything in the form of consciousness, and I extend in the manner of various sensations at my own will. ⁵⁶ As butter is contained in milk and moisture is inherent in water, so the power of consciousness is spread in all beings, and so ego is situated inside all things. ⁵⁷ The world at all times, whether present, past or future ages, exists in consciousness. The objects of intelligence are all inert and devoid of motion, like the mineral and vegetable productions of earth.

⁵⁸ I am the all-grasping and all-powerful form of Brahman which fills infinite space and is free from

any diminution or decrease in shape or size. I am this all-pervading and all-productive power known as the Universal Form (*virat murti*).⁵⁹ I have gained my boundless empire over all worlds without seeking or asking for it, and without subduing it like Indra of old or crushing the gods with my arms.

⁶⁰ O the extensive spirit of God! I bow down to that spirit in my spirit and find myself lost in it, as in the vast ocean of the universal deluge.⁶¹ I find no limit to this spirit as long as I am seated in the enjoyment of my spiritual bliss. I appear to move about like a minute mollusk in the fathomless expanse of the Milky Ocean.⁶² This temple of the cosmic egg is too small and constricted for the huge body of my soul. It is impossible for me to be contained in it, just as it is impossible for an elephant to enter into the eye of a needle.⁶³ My body stretches beyond the region of Brahma, my attributes extend beyond the categories of the various schools of philosophy, and there is no definite limitation given of them to this day.

⁶⁴ The attributes of a name and body to the unsupported soul are falsehoods, and it is false to compress the unlimited soul within the narrow bounds of the body.⁶⁵ To say this is I and this is another are altogether wrong. What is this body or my want of it, or the state of living or death to me?

⁶⁶ How foolish and short-witted were my forefathers, who having forsaken this spiritual domain, wandered as mortal beings in this frail and miserable world.⁶⁷ How great is this grand sight of the immensity of Brahman. How mean are these creeping mortals with their high aims and ambition and all their splendors of royalty.

⁶⁸ My pure intellectual sight, filled with endless joy and accompanied by ineffable tranquility, surpasses all other sights in the whole world.⁶⁹ I bow down to the Self situated in all beings, which is the intelligent and intellectual soul, and quite apart from whatever is the object of reasoning or thought.⁷⁰ I who am the unborn and uncreated soul rule triumphant over this perishing world by my attainment to the state of the great Universal Spirit, which is the chief object of gain, the supreme good of mortal beings, and which I live to enjoy.

⁷¹ I take no delight in my unpleasant earthly dominion which is full of painful greatness. I would not like to lose my everlasting kingdom of good understanding, which is free from trouble and full of perpetual delight.⁷² Cursed be the wicked demons who are so sadly ignorant of their souls and resort to their strongholds of woods and hills and ditches for the safety of their bodies, like the insects of those places.

⁷³ Ignorance of the soul leads to serving the dull ignorant body with articles of food and clothing. This was how our ignorant elders pampered their bodies for no lasting good.⁷⁴ What good did my father Hiranyakasipu reap from his prosperity of a few years in this world? What did he acquire worthy of his descent in the line of the great sage Kasyapa?⁷⁵ He who has not tasted the blissfulness of his soul has enjoyed no true blessing during his long rule of a hundred years in this world.

⁷⁶ He who has gained the ambrosial delight of his spiritual bliss, and nothing of the temporary blessings of life, has gained something which is ever full in itself and of which there is no end to the end of the world.⁷⁷ It is the fool and not the wise who forsakes this infinite joy for the temporary delights of this world. Such a fool resembles the foolish camel which foregoes his fodder of soft leaves in order to browse the prickly thorns of the desert.⁷⁸ What man of sense would turn his eyes

from such a romantic sight and like to roam in a city burnt down to the ground? What wise man is there that would forsake the sweet juice of sugarcane in order to taste the bitterness of nimba?⁷⁹ I reckon all my forefathers as very great fools for leaving this happy prospect in order to wander in the dangerous paths of their earthly dominion.

⁸⁰ Ah, how delightful is the view of flowering gardens and how unpleasant is the sight of the burning deserts of sand. How very quiet are these intellectual reveries and how very boisterous are the cravings of our hearts!⁸¹ There is no happiness to be had in this earth that would make us wish for our sovereignty in it. All happiness consists in the peace of the mind, which always concerns us to seek.⁸² It is the calm, quiet and unaltered state of the mind that gives us true happiness in all conditions of life and the true kingdom of things in all places and at all times, and under every circumstance in life.

⁸³ The virtue of sunlight is to enlighten all objects, and that of moonlight to fill us with its ambrosial nectar. But the light of Brahman transcends them both by filling the three worlds with its spiritual glory which is brighter than sunbeams and cooler than moonlight.⁸⁴ The power of Shiva stretches over the fullness of knowledge, and that of Vishnu over victory and prosperity.

Fleetness is the character of the mental powers and force is the property of the wind.⁸⁵ Inflammation is the property of fire and moisture is that of water. Silence is the quality of devotees for success in their tapas and eloquence is the qualification of learning.⁸⁶ It is the nature of aerials to move about in the air and of rocks to remain fixed on the ground. The nature of water is to set deep and run downwards and that of mountains to stand and rise upwards.⁸⁷ Equanimity is the nature of Buddhists and drunken merry making is the liking of wine-drinkers. Spring delights in its flowering and the rainy season exults in the roaring of its clouds.⁸⁸ Yaksha demons are full of delusiveness, celestials are familiar with cold and frost, and those of the torrid zone are habituated to its heat.⁸⁹ Thus many other beings are suited to their respective climates and seasons and are habituated to the very many modes of life and varieties of habits to which they have been accustomed in the past and present times.⁹⁰ It is the one uniform and Unchanging Consciousness, according to its changeable will and velocity, that ordains these many forms and changing modifications of powers and things.

⁹¹ The same unchanging Consciousness presents these hundreds of changing scenes to us, just as the same and unchanging light of the sun shows a thousand varying forms and color to the sight.⁹² The same Consciousness sees at a glance all these great multitudes of objects that fill the infinite space on all sides, in all the three times of the present, past and future.⁹³ The identical pure Consciousness knows at once the various states of all things presented in this vast phenomenal world, in all the three times that are existent, gone by and are to come hereafter.⁹⁴ At one and the same time, this pure Consciousness reflects all things existent in the present, past and future times. It is full with the forms of all things existing in the infinite space of the universe.⁹⁵ Knowing the events of the three times, and seeing the endless phenomena of all worlds present before it, Divine Consciousness continues full and perfect in itself and at all times.

⁹⁶ Understanding ever continues the same and unaltered in spite of the great variety of its perceptions of innumerable objects of sense and thought, such as the different tastes of sweet and sour in honey and nimba fruit at the same time.⁹⁷ Consciousness, by abandonment of mental desires and knowing the natures of all things by reducing their dualities into unity, is in its state of acuteness.⁹⁸ It views them

alike with an equal eye and at the same time in spite of the varieties of objects and their great difference from one another.

⁹⁹ By viewing all existence as non-existence, you get rid of your existing pains and troubles. By seeing all existence in the light of nothingness, you avoid the suffering of existing evils.¹⁰⁰ The intellect being withdrawn from its view of the events of the three tenses, and being freed from the chains of its fleeting thoughts, there remains only a calm tranquility.¹⁰¹ The soul being inexpressible in words proves to be described only in negative terms. There ensues a state of one's perpetual unconsciousness of his soul or self existence.¹⁰² In this state of the soul it is equal to Brahman, which is either nothing at all or the all of itself. Its absorption in perfect tranquility is called its liberation from all feelings.

¹⁰³ The intellect weakened by its will does not see the soul in a clear light, as the deceived eye has only a dim and hazy sight of the world.¹⁰⁴ The intellect weakened by the dirt of its desire and dislike is impeded in its heavenly flight, like a bird caught in a snare.¹⁰⁵ They who have fallen into the snare of delusion by their ignorant choice of this or that are like blind birds falling into the net in search of their prey.¹⁰⁶ Entangled in the meshes of desire and confined in the pit of worldliness, our fathers were barred from this unimpeded sight of spiritual light and endless delight.¹⁰⁷ In vain did our forefathers flourish for a few days on the surface of this earth only to be swept away by a gust of wind like fluttering flies and gnats into the ditch.¹⁰⁸ If these foolish pursuers of painful worldly pleasures had known the path of truth, they would never have fallen into the dark pit of unsubstantial pursuits.

¹⁰⁹ Foolish folks are subject to repeated pains and pleasures by their various choice of things. They follow the fate of short-lived worms born to move and die in their own ditches and ponds.¹¹⁰ He is said to be really alive who lives true to nature and who, by the rising cloud of his knowledge of truth, suppresses his mirage of desires and aversions.¹¹¹ The hot and foul fumes of fancy fly far away from the pure light of reason, just as the hazy mist of night is dispersed by the bright beams of moonlight.

¹¹² I hail that soul which dwells as the inseparable consciousness in me. At last I come to know my God that resides like a rich gem enlightening all the worlds in myself.¹¹³ I have long thought upon and sought after you, and at last I have found you rising in myself. I have chosen you from all others. Whatever you are, I hail you, my Lord, as you appear in me.¹¹⁴ I hail you in me, O lord of gods, in your form of infinity within myself and in the shape of bliss within my soul of bliss. I hail you, O Supreme Spirit, who is superior to and master of all.

¹¹⁵ I bow down to that cloudless light shining like the full moon within me, and to that identical form which is free from all predicates and attributes. It is the self risen as light in myself. The Soul (*atman*) is identical to that blissful soul which I find in myself.

Chapter 35 — Prahlada in Praise of Self Realization

¹ Prahlada continued:—

Om is the proper form of the One devoid of all modifications. That Om is this all that is contained in this world.² It is intelligence devoid of flesh, fat, blood and bones. It abides in all things and is the enlightener of the sun and all other luminous bodies.³ It warms the fire and moistens the water. It gives sensation to the senses and enjoys all things in the manner of a king.⁴ It rests without sitting. It goes without walking. It is active in its inactivity. It acts all without coming in contact with anything.

⁵ It is the past and gone, and also the present and even now. It is both the next moment and remote future also. It is all that is fit and proper, and likewise whatever is unfit and improper.⁶ Undaunted, it produces all productions and spreads the worlds over one another. It continues to turn the worlds around, from the sphere of Brahma to the lower grounds of grass.⁷ Though unmoving and immutable, yet it is as fleeting and changeable as the flying winds. It is inert as the solid rock and more transparent than the subtle ether.

⁸ It moves the minds of men like winds shaking the leaves of trees. It directs the organs of sense like a charioteer manages his horses.⁹ Consciousness sits as the lord of this bodily house, carried about like a chariot by the equestrians of the senses. Sitting at its own ease as sole monarch, it enjoys the fruitions of the bodily actions.

¹⁰ It is to be diligently sought after and meditated upon and praised at all times, because only this way can one have his salvation from the pains of his age and death and the evils of ignorance.¹¹ It is easily to be found and as easy to be known as a friend. It dwells like the humble bee in the recess of everyone's lotus-like heart.¹² Uncalled and not invoked, it appears of itself from within the body. At a slight call it appears manifest to view.

¹³ Constant service and attendance on this all-opulent Lord never make him proud or haughty, as they do any other rich master by his humble attendants.¹⁴ This Lord is as closely situated in everybody as fragrance and fluidity are inherent in flowers and sesame seeds, and as flavor is inseparably connected with liquid substances.

¹⁵ Our lack of reason makes us ignorant of Consciousness that is situated in ourselves. Our reasoning power serves to manifest it to our sight as our most intimate friend.¹⁶ As we come to know by our reasoning that this Supreme Lord situated in us, we come to feel an indescribable delight like the sight of a beloved and loving friend.¹⁷ As this dearest friend appears to view, his benign influence shedding full bliss about us, we come to see such glorious prospects as to immediately forget all our earthly enjoyments.¹⁸ All a person's chains are broken and fall off, and all his enemies are put to an end whose mind is not perforated by his cravings, like houses dug by injurious mice.

¹⁹ When this One in all is seen in us, the whole world is seen in Him. He being heard, everything is heard in Him. He being felt, all things are felt in Him. He being present, the whole world is present before us.²⁰ He wakes over the sleeping world and destroys the darkness of the ignorant. He removes the dangers of the distressed and bestows His blessings upon the holy.²¹ He moves about as the living soul of all, and rejoices as the animal soul in all objects of enjoyment. It is He who glows in all visible objects in their various colors.²² He sees himself in himself. He is quietly situated in all

things, like pungency resides in peppers, sweetness in sugar, and the like.

²³ He is situated as intelligence and sensations in the inner and outward parts of living beings. He forms the essence and existence of all objects in the entire universe. ²⁴ He forms the emptiness of the sky and the velocity of the winds. He is the light of fiery bodies and the moisture of aqueous substances. ²⁵ He is the firmness of the earth and the warmth of fire. He is the coldness of the moon and the entity of everything in the world. ²⁶ He is blackness in inky substances and coldness in the particles of snow. As fragrance resides in flowers, so he resides in all bodies.

²⁷ His essence fills all space just as the essence of time fills all duration. His omnipotence is the fountain of all forces, just as His omnipresence supports everything everywhere. ²⁸ As the Lord unfolds everything to light by the external organ of sight and the internal organ of thinking, so the great God enlightens gods by his own light.

²⁹ I am that I am, without attributes in me. I am like the clear air, not stained by particles of flying dust. I am like lotus leaves untouched by their supporting and surrounding waters. ³⁰ As a rolling stone gathers no moss, so there is nothing that touches or bears any relation to my airy mind. The pain and pleasure which affect the body cannot affect my form of the inner soul.

³¹ The soul, like a gourd fruit, is not injured by showers of rain falling on the outer body which resembles its hard crust. Consciousness, like lamp flame, is not to be held fast by a rope. ³² So this ego of mine which transcends everything is not to be tied down by anything to the earth, nor does it bear any relation to the objects of sense or my mental desires, or anything existing or not in existence in this world.

³³ Who has the power to grasp emptiness or confine the mind? You may cut the body into a thousand pieces, but you cannot divide the invisible and the indivisible empty Spirit rising in me. ³⁴ A pot may be broken or bored or removed from its place, but there is no loss sustained by the air that it contains. In the same way, the body may be destroyed, but there is no damage done to the unconnected soul. The mind is as false a name as that of a demon pisacha. ³⁵ The destruction of the gross body does not injure the immaterial soul.

What is the mind but the perceptive power of my desires and gross pleasures and pains? ³⁶ I had such a perceiving mind before, but now I have found my rest in quiescence. I find the mind is another thing beside myself because it perceives and partakes of the enjoyments of life and is exposed to the dangers that take the body. ³⁷ There is another one in me which beholds the actions of the other as a theatric act and witnesses the exposure of the body to peril as its last sad catastrophe. ³⁸ The mind is the wicked spirit caught in ignorance, but the pure spirit has nothing to suffer.

I feel neither the wish to continue worldly enjoyments nor a desire to forsake them altogether. ³⁹ Let what may come to pass on me, and whatever may happen to pass away from me. I have neither the expectation of pleasures nor an aversion to suffering pain. ⁴⁰ Let pleasure or pain take or forsake me as it may without my being concerned or taking heed of either because I know fluctuating desires are constantly rising and setting in the sphere of my mind. ⁴¹ Let these desires depart from me for I have nothing to do with them, nor have they any concern with me. Alas! How all this time ignorance, my greatest enemy, has misled me to these desires!

⁴² It is by favor of Vishnu and by virtue of my pure Vaishnava faith rising in me of itself that my ignorance is now wholly dispelled from me and the knowledge of the True One is revealed to me.

⁴³ My knowledge of truth has now driven away egoism from my mind, just as they drive a spirit from its hiding place in the hollow of a tree. ⁴⁴ I am now purified by admonition (*mantra*) of divine knowledge. The tree of my body is now set free from egoism which sat like a demon yaksha in it.

⁴⁵ My body has become like a sacred tree, blooming with heavenly flowers and freed from the evils of ignorance, poverty and vain wishes which previously infested it. ⁴⁶ Loaded with the treasure of sacred knowledge, I find myself sitting here as one supremely rich. Knowing all that is to be known, I see sights that are invisible to others.

⁴⁷ Now I have that in which nothing can be wanting and in which there is no want. It is by my good fortune that I am freed from all evils and the venomous serpents of worldly cares. ⁴⁸ My chill and frigid ignorance is melted down by the light of knowledge. The hot mirage of my desires is now quenched and cooled by my quietude. I see the clear sky on all sides without any mist or dust. I rest under the cooling shade of the tranquility of my soul.

⁴⁹ It is by my glorification of God, my thanksgivings to Vishnu, my holy rites, and my divine knowledge and quietism that I have obtained, by grace of my God, a spacious room and elevated position in spirituality. ⁵⁰ I have that God in my spirit. I have seen and known him in his spiritual form. He is beyond my own ego and I remember him always in this manner.

⁵¹ I remember Vishnu as the great Spirit, the eternal Brahman in his nature, while my selfish ego is confined like a snake in the holes of my organic frame, which is wholly the land of death. ⁵² It is entangled in the bushes of its pricking desires resembling prickly karanja ferns amidst the tumults of raging passions and a thousand other disturbances of this world. ⁵³ It is placed amidst the conflagration of disasters, encircled by the flames of smart pain at all times. It is subject to continual ups and downs of fortune, and repeated risings and fallings in its journey in this world. ⁵⁴ It has its repeated births and deaths owing to its interminable desires. Thus I am always deceived by this great enemy, my own egoism.

⁵⁵ The animal soul is powerless at night, as if caught in the clutches of a demon in the forest. So while I am in this state of meditation, I feel deprived of its power and action. ⁵⁶ By grace of Vishnu the light of my understanding is roused. I see my God by means of this light and I lose sight of my demonic egoism. ⁵⁷ The sight of demonic egoism dwelling in the cavity of my mind disappears from my view in the same way as the shadow of darkness flies from the light of a lamp, and as the shade of night is dispersed by daylight. ⁵⁸ After a lighted lamp is extinguished, you do not know where its flame has fled. In the same way, when we see God before us, we do know where our lordly egoism is hidden.

⁵⁹ My rich egoism flies at the approach of reason, just like a heavily loaded robber flies before the advance of daylight. Our false egoism vanishes like a demon at the rising of the true Ego of God.

⁶⁰ My egoism being gone, I am set at ease like a tree freed from a poisonous snake rankling in its hollow cavity. When I am awakened to my spiritual light, I am at rest in my unconsciousness in this world.

⁶¹ I have escaped from the hand of my captor and gained my permanent ascendancy over others. I have

my internal equanimity and I have allayed the mirage of my thirst after vain glory.⁶² I have bathed in the cold bath of rainwater and I am pacified like a rock after the cooling of its conflagration. I am cleansed of my egoism by my knowledge of the true meaning of the term.

⁶³ What is ignorance and what are our pains and affliction? What are our evil desires and what are our diseases and dangers? All these with the ideas of heaven and liberation, together with the hope of heaven and the fear of hell, are only false conceptions proceeding from our egoism or selfishness.

⁶⁴ As a picture is drawn on a canvas and not in empty air, so our thoughts depend upon our selfish principle and its want. As clear linen receives the yellow color of saffron, so the pure soul receives the image of God. Egoism weakens the soul with the irritable passions of the heart, like the inborn color of a dirty cloth makes a good dye defective.⁶⁵ Purity of the inner soul is like the clarity of the autumn sky. It is devoid of the cloudiness of egoism and the drizzling drops of desires.

⁶⁶ I bow down to you, O my innermost soul inmost that is a stream of bliss to me, with pure clear waters amidst and without the dirt of egoism about you.⁶⁷ I hail you, O my soul that is an ocean of joy to me, not infested by the sharks of sensual desires and undisturbed by the undersea fire of the latent mind.⁶⁸ I prostrate myself before you, O my living soul that is a mountain of delight to me, without the hovering clouds of egoistic passions or the wild fires of gross desires and desires.⁶⁹ I bow to you, O soul in me that is the heavenly Lake Manasa to me, with blooming lotuses of delight and without the waves of cares and anxieties.

⁷⁰ I greet you, my internal spirit floating in the shape of a swan on the lake of the mind of every individual, and residing in the cavity of the lotus crown chakra (*brahmarandhra*) with your outstretched wings of consciousness and standing.⁷¹ All hail to you, O full and perfect spirit that is the undivided and immortal soul which in your several parts of the mind and senses is like the full moon containing all its digits in its entire self.

⁷² Obeisance to the sun of my consciousness is always in its ascendancy and dispels the darkness of my heart. My consciousness pervades everywhere, yet it is invisible or dimly seen by us.⁷³ I bow to my intellectual light which is an oil-less and wick-less lamp of benign brightness that burns in full blaze within me. It is the enlightener of nature and quite still in its nature.

⁷⁴ Whenever my mind is heated by Kama Deva's fire, I cool it by the coolness of my cold and detached intellect coolness, just as they temper red hot iron with a cold, hard hammer.⁷⁵ I am gaining my victory over all things by killing my egoism by the Great Ego, and by making my senses and mind destroy themselves.⁷⁶ I bow to you, O all subduing faith that crushes our ignorant doubt by your wisdom, that dispels unrealities by your knowledge of the reality, and that removes our cravings by your contentedness.⁷⁷ I exist solely as the transparent spirit by killing my mind by the great Mind, by removing my egoism by the sole Ego, and by driving the unrealities by the true Reality.

⁷⁸ I place my body's reliance only upon the moving principle of my soul, without consciousness of my individual existence, my egoism, or my mind and all its efforts and actions.⁷⁹ At last I have obtained, of its own accord and by the infinite grace of the Lord of all, the highest blessing of cold heartedness and detachment in myself.⁸⁰ By subsiding the demon of my ignorance and from disappearance of the demon of my egoism, I am now freed from the heat of my feverish passions.

⁸¹ My false egoism has fled from the cage of my body by breaking its string of desires to which its feet were fast bound. I do not know where it has fled. ⁸² I do not know where the bird of my egotism has flown from its nest in the tree of my body, after blowing away its thick ignorance as dust. ⁸³ Ah, where is my egoism fled, with its body smeared with the dust and dirt of worldliness, and battered by the rocks of its desires that can never be satisfied? It is bitten by the deadly serpents of fears and dangers, and pierced in its heart by repeated disappointments and despair. ⁸⁴ O, wonder to think what I had been all this time when I was bound fast by my egoism in the strong chain of my personality.

⁸⁵ I think I am a new born being today, and to have become high-minded also, by being removed from the thick cloud of egoism which had shrouded me all this time. ⁸⁶ I have seen and known and obtained this treasure of my soul, as it is presented to my understanding by the verbal testimonies of the scriptures, and by the light of inspiration in my hour of samadhi meditation. ⁸⁷ My mind is set at rest and released from the cares of the world, like a fire that is extinguished. It is released from all other thoughts and desires and the error of egoism. I am now set free from my affections and passions and all delights of the world, and also my craving after them.

⁸⁸ I have passed over the impassable ocean of dangers and difficulties and the intolerable evils of reincarnation by the disappearance of my internal darkness and the sight of the one great God in my consciousness.

Chapter 36 — Prahlada's Hymn to the Soul

¹ Prahlada continued:—

I thank you, O lord and great spirit who is beyond all things and is found in myself by my good fortune. ² Except you, O my Lord, I have no other friend in the three worlds who embraces and looks upon me when I pray to you. ³ It is you who preserves and destroys all and who gives all things to everybody. It is you who makes us move and work and praise your holy name. Now you are found and seen by me, and now you go away from me.

⁴ You fill all beings in the world with your essence. You are present in all places, but where have you fled and gone from me? ⁵ Great is the distance between us, even as the distance of the places of our birth. It is my good fortune, O friend, that has brought you near me today and presented you to my sight.

⁶ I hail you, O blissful One who is my maker and preserver. I think that you are the stalk of this fruit of the world, and you are the eternal and pure soul of all. ⁷ I thank the holder of the lotus and discus, and you also who bears the crescent half moon on your forehead, great Shiva. I thank the lord of gods, Indra, and also Brahma, who is born of the lotus.

⁸ Use of words makes a distinction between you and ourselves. But this is a false impression, like that between waves and their element water. ⁹ You show yourself in the shapes of the endless varieties of beings. Existence and extinction are your two states from all eternity. ¹⁰ I thank you who is the creator and beholder of all and who manifests innumerable forms. I thank you who is the whole nature yourself.

¹¹ I have undergone many tribulations in the long course of past lives. By your will I became deprived of my strength and at last was burnt away. ¹² I have seen luminous worlds and observed many visible and invisible things, but you are not to be found in them, so I gained nothing. ¹³ All things composed of earth, stone and wood are formations of water. There is nothing here that is permanent, O God, beside yourself. You being obtained there is nothing else to desire.

¹⁴ I thank you Lord who is obtained, seen and known by me this day, and who shall be preserved by me and never obliterated from my mind. ¹⁵ Your bright form, interwoven by the rays of light, is visible to us by inverting our sight into the innermost recesses of our heart. ¹⁶ As the feeling of heat and cold is perceived by touch, and as the fragrance of the flower is felt in the oil with which it is mixed, so I feel your presence by your coming in contact with my heart. ¹⁷ As the sound of music enters into the heart through the ears and makes the heart strings thrill and the hairs of the body stand on end, so is your presence perceived in our hearts also. ¹⁸ As the objects of taste are felt by the tip of the tongue which conveys their taste to the mind, so is your presence felt by my heart when you touch it with your love.

¹⁹ A man takes up a sweet scenting flower, perceptible only by the sense of smell, and decorates his outer body with it. How can one slight to look and lay hold of his inner soul which shoots through every sense of his body? ²⁰ How can we in any way forget the Supreme Spirit which is well known to us by means of the teachings of the Vedas, Vedanta, Sidhantas and the Puranas, as also by the logic of schools and the hymns of the Vedas? ²¹ These things which are pleasant to the bodily senses do not

gladden my heart when it is filled by your translucent presence.

²² By your effulgent light the sun shines so brightly. By your benign luster the moon dispenses her cooling beams. ²³ You have made these bulky rocks and upheld the heavenly bodies. You have supported the stable earth and lifted the spacious firmament. ²⁴ Fortunately you have become myself and I have become one with yourself. I am identical with you and you with me, and there is no difference between us.

²⁵ I thank the great spirit that is expressed by turns by the words “myself” and “yourself” and “mine” and “yours.” ²⁶ I thank the infinite God who dwells in my mind without personal ego. I thank the formless Lord who dwells in my tranquil soul. ²⁷ O Lord, you dwell in my formless, tranquil, transparent and conscious soul, just as you reside in your own spirit which is unbounded by the limitations of time and space.

²⁸ By you the mind has its action, the senses have their sensations, the body has all its powers, and the vital and respiration breaths have their inflations and deflations. ²⁹ The organs of the body are led by the rope of desire to their various actions. Being united with flesh, blood and bones, the body’s organs are driven like the wheels of a car by the charioteer of the mind. ³⁰ I am the consciousness of my body. I am not the body itself or my egoism of it. Therefore let it rise or fall. It is of no advantage or disadvantage to me.

³¹ I was born at the same time as my ego. It was long afterwards that I had knowledge of my soul. Last of all I had my unconsciousness in the manner of the world approaching its dissolution at the end.

³² Long have I travelled in the lengthy journey of the world. I am weary with fatigue and now rest in quiet, like the cooling fire of the last doomsday conflagration.

³³ I thank the Lord who is all and yet without all and everything. I thank you, my soul that likewise is me. I thank you above those scriptures and teachers that teach the subjective ego and the objective you. ³⁴ I hail the all the witnessing power of that providential spirit that has made these ample and endless provisions for others, without touching or enjoying them itself. ³⁵ You are the spirit that dwells in all bodies in the form of the fragrance of flowers, like breath in bellows and oil residing in sesame seeds.

³⁶ How wonderful is this magic scene of yours that you appear in everything and preserve and destroy it in the end without having any personality of your own. ³⁷ At times you make my soul rejoice by manifesting all things before it, like a lighted lamp. You also make my soul joyful when it is extinguished like a lamp after its enjoyment of phenomena. ³⁸ This universal frame is situated in an atom of yourself, just like a big banyan tree is contained in the embryo of a grain of its fig. ³⁹ You are seen, O Lord, in a thousand forms that glide under our sight, like the various forms of elephants, horses, carts and other things are seen in clouds passing in the sky. ⁴⁰ You are both the existence and absence of all things that are either present or lost to our view. Yet you are quite apart from all worldly existences. You are aloof from all entities and non-entities in the world.

⁴¹ O my soul, forsake the pride and anger of your mind and all the foulness and slyness of your heart, because the high-minded never fall into the faults and errors of common people. ⁴² Think over and over upon the actions of your past life and the long series of your wicked acts. Then with a sigh blush

to think upon what you have been before and cease to do such acts anymore.⁴³ The bustle of your life is past. Gone are your bad days when you were wrapped in the net of your tangled thoughts on all sides.⁴⁴ Now you are a monarch in the city of your body. You have the desire of your mind presented before you. You are set beyond the reach of pleasure and pain and you are as free as the air which nobody can grasp.⁴⁵ Now you have subdued the difficult to manage horses of your bodily organs. You have mastered the incapable of being subdued elephant of your mind. You have crushed your enemy of worldly enjoyment. So now rule as the sole sovereign over the empire of your body and mind.

⁴⁶ You are now become like the glorious sun shining within and without us day by day. You traverse the unlimited fields of air by your continued rising and setting at every place in our meditation of you.

⁴⁷ O Lord, you are ever asleep, and by your own power, you rise also. Then you look on the luxuriant world as a lover looks on his beloved.⁴⁸ These luxuries, like honey, are brought from great distances by the bees of the bodily organs. The spirit tastes the sweets by looking upon them through the windows of its eyes.⁴⁹ The seat of the intellectual world in the head is always dark. There is a path in it made by the breathings of inspiration and respiration which leads the soul to the sight of Brahma.

⁵⁰ O Lord, you are the scent of your flower-like body. You are the nectar juice of your moonlike frame, the moisture of this bodily tree, and the coolness of its cold humors.⁵¹ You are the juice, milk and butter that support the body. You being gone, the body is dried up and becomes fuel to feed the fire.⁵² You are the flavor of fruits and the light of all luminous bodies. It is you who perceives and knows all things and gives light to the visual organ of sight.⁵³ You are the vibration of the wind and the force of our elephantine minds. You are the acuteness of the flame of our intelligence.⁵⁴ You give us the gift of speech, stop our breath, and make it break forth again on occasion.

⁵⁵ All these various series of worldly productions bear the same relation to you as the varieties of jewelry relate to the gold of which they are made.⁵⁶ You are called by the words "I", "you", "he", and the like. It is you yourself who calls yourself such as it pleases yourself.⁵⁷ You are seen in the appearances of all the productions of nature, just as we see the forms of men, horses and elephants in the clouds when they glide softly on the wings of the gentle winds.⁵⁸ You invariably show yourself in all your creatures on earth, just as a blazing fire presents the figures of horses and elephants in its bright flames.⁵⁹ You are the unbroken thread by which the orbs of worlds are strung together like a chain of pearls. You are the field that grows the harvest of creation by the moisture of your intellect.

⁶⁰ Things that were nonexistent and unproduced before creation have come to light from their hidden state of reality by your agency, just as the flavor of meat becomes evident by the process of cooking.

⁶¹ The beauties of existences are imperceptible without the soul, just as the graces of a beauty are not apparent to one devoid of his eyesight.⁶² All substances are nothing whatever without your inherence in them, just as the reflection of the face in the mirror is to no purpose without the real face or figure of the person.⁶³ Without you the body is a lifeless mass, like a block of wood or stone. The body is imperceptible without the soul, like the shadow of a tree without sunlight.

⁶⁴ The succession of pain and pleasure ceases to be felt by one who feels you within himself, just as the shades of darkness, the twinkling of stars, and the coldness of frost cease to exist in bright sunlight.⁶⁵ It is by a glance of your eye that the feelings of pain and pleasure rise in the mind, just as

the rising sunbeams tinges the sky with its variegated colors.⁶⁶ Living beings perish in a moment at the deprivation of your presence, just as a burning lamp is extinguished in darkness at the extinction of its light.⁶⁷ The gloom of darkness is conspicuous with the lack of light but coming in contact with light, it vanishes from view.⁶⁸ So the appearances of pain and pleasure present themselves before the mind during your absence from it and vanish into nothing at the advance of your light.

⁶⁹ The temporary feelings of pleasure and pain can find no room in the fullness of heavenly joy, just as a minute moment of time is of no account in the abyss of eternity.⁷⁰ The thoughts of pleasure and pain are like the short lived fancies of a fairyland or castles in air. They appear by turns at your pleasure, but they disappear altogether as soon as your form is seen in the mind.⁷¹ By your light in our visual organs, things appear to sight at the moment of our waking. You reproduce them into being. It is also by your light poured into our minds that they are seen in our dream, as if they are all asleep in death.

⁷² What good can we derive from these false and transient appearances in nature? No one can string together the seeming lotuses that are formed by the foaming froth of the waves.⁷³ No substantial good can come to us from transitory mortal things, just as nobody can string together the transient flashes of lightning into a necklace.⁷⁴ Should the rationalist take the false ideas of pain and pleasure for sober realities, then what distinction can there be between them and the irrational realists?⁷⁵ Should you, like the nominalist (who believes there is nothing general except names), take everything which bears a name to be a real entity, then I will tell you no more than you are too fond to will to give fictitious names to imaginary things.⁷⁶ But the soul is indivisible without desire or egoism. We know nothing whether it is a real substance or not, yet its agency is acknowledged on all hands in our bodily actions.

⁷⁷ All joys that are boundless in your spiritual body be yours who is ever disposed to tranquility, who is beyond the knowledge of the Vedas, and who is yet the theme of all scriptures.⁷⁸ All joy to you who is both born and unborn with the body, who is decaying and without decay in your nature, who is the unsubstantial substance of all qualities, and who is known and unknown to everybody.⁷⁹ I exult now and am calm again. I move and am still afterwards. I am victorious and live to win my liberation by your grace. Therefore I hail you who is myself.

⁸⁰ When you are situated in me, my soul is free from all troubles and feelings and passions. It is placed in perfect rest. There is no more fear of danger or difficulty or of life and death, nor any craving for prosperity when I am absorbed in everlasting bliss with you.

Chapter 37 — Prahlada Meditates for Thousands of Years; the Asura Kingdom in Chaos

¹ Vasishta said:—

Prahlada the victor over hostile hosts, was sitting in divine meditation, absorbed in his entranced bliss for a long time. ² The soul reposing in its original state of unalterable ecstasy made his body as still as a rock in painting or a figure carved in relief on stone. ³ In this manner, sitting in his house in a posture as unshaken as the firm Mount Meru is fixed upon the earth, a long time passed in his meditation.

⁴ The great asura demons of his palace tried to rouse him in vain because his deadened mind remained deaf to their calls like a solid rock. He was impassive as a parched grain to the showers of rain. ⁵ For thousands of years he remained intent upon his God, his gaze fixed and firm, as unmoved as the carved sun upon a sundial. ⁶ Having thus attained the state of supreme bliss, the sight of unhappiness disappeared from his view as it is unknown to the supremely blissful being.

⁷ During this time the whole extent of his kingdom was overtaken by spreading anarchy and oppression, as if ruling over the poor fishes. ⁸ Because after Hiranyakashipu was killed and his son became an ascetic, there was nobody left to rule over the kingdoms of the asura race. ⁹ As Prahlada was not to be roused from his meditation slumber by the solicitations of the Daitya demon chiefs or the cries of his oppressed people, ¹⁰ the enemies of the gods were as sorry not to have their graceful lord among them as the bees are aggrieved for lack of the blooming lotus at night. ¹¹ They found him absorbed in his meditation, like when the world is drowned in deep sleep after the sun departs below the horizon. ¹² The sorrowful Daityas left his presence and went away wherever they liked. They roved about at random, as they do in an ungoverned state.

¹³ In time the infernal regions became the seat of anarchy and oppression. Good and honest dealings bade farewell all at once. ¹⁴ The houses of the weak were robbed by the strong and the restraints of laws were set at nothing. People oppressed one another and robbed women of their clothes. ¹⁵ There were crying and wailing of people on all sides and houses were pulled down in the city. Houses and gardens were robbed and spoiled and outlawry and rapacity spread all over the land.

¹⁶ The asuras were in deep sorrow. Their families were starving without food or fruit. There were disturbances and riots rising everywhere and the face of the sky was darkened on all sides. ¹⁷ They were derided by the youths of the gods and invaded by vile robbers and envious animals. Houses were robbed of their properties and laid waste and empty. ¹⁸ The asura kingdom became a scene of horror with lawless fighting for wives and properties of others, and the wailings of those who were robbed of their wealth and wives. It made the scene seem like the rule of the dark Kali age when atrocious marauders are let loose to spread devastation all over the earth.

Chapter 38 — Vishnu Decides to Restore Order and Awaken Prahlada

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Now Vishnu, who slept on his couch of the snake in his watery house of the Milky Ocean and whose delight was to preserve the order of all groups of worlds,² after he rose from his sleep at the end of the rainy season, looked into the course of world in his own mind for achieving the objects of the gods.³ At a glance of his thought, he surveyed the state of the triple world composed of heaven, earth and the regions below. Then he directed his attention to the affairs of the infernal regions of the demons.

⁴ There he saw Prahlada sitting in his intense meditation samadhi. Then Vishnu looked into the increasing prosperity of Indra's palace.⁵ Sitting as he was, on his serpentine couch in the Milky Ocean with his arms holding conch-shell, discus, club and lotus in his four hands and⁶ in his lotus posture, Vishnu thought in his brilliant mind about the states of the three worlds, like fluttering bee inspecting a lotus.⁷ He saw Prahlada immersed in his meditation and the infernal regions left without a leader. He saw that the world was about to be devoid of the Daitya race.

Vishnu thinking to himself:—

⁸ This lack of demons is likely to cool the military ardor of the gods, as the lack of clouds dries up the waters on earth.⁹ Liberation obtained by deprivation of dualism and egoism brings a man to a state of asceticism, just as the lack of moisture dries up and kills a promising plant.

¹⁰ If the gods are at rest and contented in themselves, there would be no need of sacrifices and offerings to please and appease them. Eventually this will lead to the extinction of the gods (because they rely upon being fed with butter and fat from the sacrifices).¹¹ The end of religious and sacrificial rites among mankind will bring on the destruction of human race (owing to their impiety), which will cause the desolation of the earth (by wild beasts).¹² With it, the impressions (*samsara*) of worldly existence ceases. My creation after the Deluge melts away at the improper time like snow by the heat of the sun.

¹³ What is the good of my benevolent guidance if I were to allow this fruitful earth to go to ruin by my neglect?¹⁴ What would I have to do in this empty void of the world after the extinction of these created beings into nothing? I would have to change my active nature to a state of cold inactivity and lose myself into the samadhi of final liberation.¹⁵ I see no good in the untimely dissolution of the order of the world. Therefore, I would have the Daityas live to its end.

¹⁶ It is owing to the struggles of the demons that the gods are worshipped with sacrifices and other religious rites for their preservation of the earth. Therefore the demons are necessary for the continuation of these practices.¹⁷ Therefore I shall have to visit the nether world and restore it to its right order. I shall appoint the lord of the demons to observe his proper duties, like the return of spring fructifies trees.

¹⁸ If I raise any other Daitya as chief of the demons and leave Prahlada in his meditation, surely Prahlada will disturb the gods instead of being obedient to them. Because no demon can get rid of his demonic nature like Prahlada.¹⁹ Prahlada is to live to old age in his sacred body until the end of the

kalpa age.²⁰ So it is determined by Destiny, the divine and overruling goddess, that Prahlada will continue to rule to the end of the kalpa in this very body of his.

²¹ Therefore I must go and awaken the Daitya chief from his samadhi, like roaring cloud rousing sleepy peacocks on the tops of hills and the banks of rivers.²² Let that sleeping prince who has rid himself of his ego rule unconcerned over the Daitya race, just as the unconscious pearl reflects the colors of its adjacent objects.²³ In this way, both gods and demigods will be preserved on the face of the earth, and their contention for superiority over each other will furnish occasion for the display of my prowess.

²⁴ Though I am indifferent to the creation and destruction of the world, yet its continuation in the primordial order is of much concern to others, if not to my insusceptible self.²⁵ Whatever is alike in its existence and nonexistence is the same in both its gain and loss (to the indifferent soul). Any effort for having anything is mere foolishness since addition and subtraction presuppose one another.

²⁶ Therefore I shall hasten to the infernal region and awaken the Daitya prince to his sense of duty. Then I will resume my calmness and not play about on the stage of the world like the ignorant.²⁷ I will proceed to the city of the demons amidst their tumultuous violence and rouse the Daitya prince like sunshine raising a drooping lotus. I shall bring the people to order and union like the rainy season collects fleeting clouds on the summits of mountains.

Chapter 39 — Vishnu's Awakens Prahlada & Exhorts Him to Live Out His Life

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Thinking thus within himself, Vishnu started from his abode in the Milky Ocean with his companions and moved like the immovable Mandara Mountain with all its accompaniments.² He entered the city of Prahlada, which resembled Indra's city, by an underground passage lying under the waters of the deep.

³ There he found the prince of the asura demons, sitting under a golden dome in his hypnotic samadhi, like Brahma sitting in his meditative mood in a cave of Sumeru Mountain.⁴ The Daityas, their bodies changed by the bright rays of Vishnu's presence, fled far away from him, like a flock of owls from the bright beams of the rising sun.⁵ Then Vishnu, accompanied by two or three Daitya chiefs, entered Prahlada's apartment like the bright moon entering the pavilion of the sky at evening accompanied by two or three stars.

⁶ There, seated on his eagle, fanned with the fan of Lakshmi, armed with his weapons, and beset by the saints hymning his praise,⁷ Vishnu said, "O great soul! Rise from your samadhi!" Then Vishnu blew his five-note conch shell, its sound reaching heaven's dome.⁸ The loud sound of the conch blown by the breath of Vishnu immediately roared with redoubled force like the clouds of the sky or the waves of the great flood.⁹ Terrified at the sound, the Daityas fell flat and fainting on the ground like flocks of swans and geese stunned by the thundering noise of clouds.¹⁰ But the party of Vaishnavas rejoiced at the sound without the least fear. They flushed with joy like kurchi flowers blooming at the sound of the clouds.

¹¹ The lord of the Danava demons was slowly roused from his meditative sleep, just as kadamba flowers open by degrees during intervals of rain.¹² By an act of exhaling he brought down his vital breath which was confined in the vertical membrane of the cranium, like the Ganges River gushes out from high hills and mixes and flows with the whole body of waters into the ocean.¹³ In a moment vital breath circulated throughout Prahlada's whole body, like sunbeams spreading over the whole world at sunrise.

¹⁴ As vital breath entered into the cells of the nine organs of sense, his mind became susceptible of sensations received through the organs of the body like reflections in a mirror.¹⁵ The intellect desiring to know the objects and relying in the reflections of the senses, takes the name of the mind, just as the reflection of a face in the mirror refracts itself again to the visual organ.¹⁶ The mind having opened or developed itself, his eyelids were about to open of themselves, like the petals of the blue lotus opening by degrees in the morning.¹⁷ Then breathing, by conveying the sensations to the body through the veins and arteries, gave it the power of motion, just as the current breeze moves the lotuses.¹⁸ The same vital breath strengthened the powers of his mind in a short time, like waves of a river become more powerful when it is full of water.¹⁹ At last his eyes being opened, his body shone forth with life by its mental and vital powers, like a lake blushing with blooming lotuses when the sun rises above the horizon.

²⁰ At this instant, Lord Vishnu bade him to awake instantly at his word, and Prahlada rose like a peacock awakened at the roar of a cloud.²¹ Finding Prahlada's eyes shining with light and his mind

strong with its past memories, the lord of the three worlds spoke to him in the same manner as he had formerly addressed the lotus-born Brahma himself.

Vishnu speaking:—

²² O holy youth! Remember your large dominions and bring your youthful form and figure to your mind. Then think and ponder why you are transforming yourself into this torpid state without cause.

²³ You have no good to desire and no evil to shun. You look on want and plenty in the same light. You must know that what is destined by God is all for your good. ²⁴ You shall have this body until the end of the kalpa. So I tell you, rule over this kingdom as a liberated soul having no ups and downs of the mind.

²⁵ You shall have to live here for a kalpa period in the living liberated state of your mind and in full possession of your dominions. You shall have to pass your time with this body of yours and without any anxiety or earthly trouble whatever. ²⁶ The body being decayed by this time, you still shall have to abide with your greatness of soul to the end until the body is broken down like an earthen vessel and the vital life, like air contained in a pot, comes to mix with the common air of emptiness. ²⁷ Your body, liberated in its lifetime, is to endure in its purity to the end of the kalpa and will witness generations passing before it without any diminution of itself. ²⁸ It is still a long time until the doomsday at the end of the kalpa, when the twelve suns will shine together, rocks will melt away, and the world will be burnt down to ashes. Why then do you waste away your body even now?

²⁹ Now the winds are not raging with fury, nor is the world grey with age and covered with ashes. The marks on the foreheads of the gods are still fresh. Then why waste your body before its time? ³⁰ The lightning of flood clouds are not flashing or falling like asoka flowers. Then why do you vainly waste your precious body so prematurely? ³¹ The skies do not pour out their showers of rainwater on earth to flood mountain tops, nor do they burst out in fire and burn them down to ashes. Why then do you waste away your body in vain? ³² The old world is not yet dissolved into vapor or fused to fumes and smoke. The gods are not extinct leaving Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva to survive them. Why then do you waste yourself in vain? ³³ The earth on all sides is not submerged under water leaving only the sight of high mountains, so why waste away your body in vain? ³⁴ The sun is not yet shooting his fiery rays in the sky with such fury as to split mountains with hideous cracks, nor do doomsday clouds of world flood rattle and crackle in the midway sky.

³⁵ I wander everywhere on my vehicle of Garuda and take care of all animal beings lest they die before their time. Therefore I do not like your negligence of yourself. ³⁶ Here we are and there are the hills. These are other beings and that is yourself. This is the earth and that the sky. All these are separate entities and must last of themselves. Then why should you neglect your body and not live like the living?

³⁷ A man whose mind is deluded by gross ignorance and one who is the object of afflictions are truly led to hail their deaths. ³⁸ Death is welcome to he who is too weak, too poor, grossly ignorant, and always troubled by such and similar thoughts in his mind. ³⁹ Death is welcomed by him whose mind is chained in the trap of greedy desires and thrills between its hopes and fears, and who is hurried and carried about in quest of greed and is always restless within himself. ⁴⁰ He whose heart is parched by the thirst of greed and whose better thoughts are choked by it, like grain sprouts are destroyed by

worms, is the person who welcomes death at all times.⁴¹ He who lets the creeping passions of his heart grow as big as palm trees to overshadow the forest of his mind and bear the fruits of continued pain and pleasure is the man who hails his death at all times.⁴² He whose mind is irritated by the weeds of cares growing as strong as the hair on his body, and who is subject to the constant evils of life, is the man who welcomes death for his relief.⁴³ He whose body is burning under the fire of diseases and whose limbs are slackened by age and weakness is the man to whom death is a remedy and who resorts to its aid for relief.⁴⁴ He who is tormented by his ardent desires and raging anger, like the poison of a snake bite, is like a withered tree and invites instant death for his release.

⁴⁵ The soul quitting the body is called death, and this is unknown to the spiritually minded person who is quite indifferent about the entity and nonentity of the body.⁴⁶ Life is a blessing to him whose thoughts do not wander beyond the confines of himself, and also to the wise man who knows and investigates the true nature of things.⁴⁷ Life is also a blessing to he who is not given to his egotism, whose understanding is not darkened by untruth, and who preserves his evenness in all conditions of life.⁴⁸ His life is a blessing to he who has the inner satisfaction and coolness of his understanding, who is free from passions and hatred, who looks on the world as a mere witness, and who has his concern with nothing.⁴⁹ He is blessed in his life who has the knowledge of whatever is desirable or detestable to him and lives aloof from both with all his thoughts and feelings confined within himself.

⁵⁰ His life is blessed who views all gross things in the light of nothing and whose heart and mind are absorbed in his silent and conscious soul.⁵¹ Blessed is his life who having his sight represses it from viewing the affairs of the world, as if they are entirely unworthy of him.⁵² His life is blessed who neither rejoices nor grieves at what is desirable or disadvantageous to him, but has his contentment in every state of life whether favorable or not.⁵³ He who is pure in his life and keeps company with pure minded men, who spreads the purity of his conduct all about and shuns the society of the impure, is as graceful to behold as the white swan with its snow white wings in the company of the fair fowls of the silvery lake.⁵⁴ Blessed is his life whose sight and memory and the mention of whose name give delight to all persons.

⁵⁵ Know the life of that man, O lord of demons, to be truly happy whose lotus-like appearance is as delightful to the bee-like eyes of men as the sight of the full moon is delightful to the world.

Chapter 40 — Vishnu Further Explains Living Liberation to Prahlada

¹ The Lord continued:—

Soundness of the body is what men call life, and quitting the present body for a future one is what they call death. ² You are released from both these states, O high minded youth, and you have nothing to do with your life or death anymore. ³ I will tell you about the components of life and death. If you know this, you will not have to live or die like other living beings on earth.

⁴ Though situated in the body, yet you are as un-embodied as a disembodied spirit. Though embosomed in emptiness, yet are you as free and fleet as the wind because you are unattached to emptiness. ⁵ Your ability to perceive the touch of objects proves that you are an embodied being. Your soul is said to be the cause of that perception, as open air is said to be the cause of the growth of trees by putting no hindrance to their height. But neither is the soul the cause of perception nor is air the cause of trees' growth.

⁶ To the monistic immaterialist, the perception of outward things is no proof of their materiality or of the corporeality of the soul that perceives, just as the sight of things in a dream is no proof of their substantiality. ⁷ All things are comprehended in yourself by the light of your consciousness. Your knowledge of the one in all comprehends everything in it. Then how can you have a body either to take as yourself or to reject it from you?

⁸ Whether the season of spring appears or not, or a hurricane happens to blow or subside, it is nothing to the pure soul which is clear of all connection whatever. ⁹ Whether the hills fall headlong to the ground, or the flames of destruction devour all things, or rapid gales rend the skies, it is no matter to the soul which rests secure in itself. ¹⁰ Whether creation exists or not, or whether all things perish or grow, it is nothing to the soul which exists of itself. ¹¹ The Lord of this body does not waste by the waste of its frame, nor is he strengthened by strength of the body. He does not move by any bodily movement or sleep when the body and its senses are absorbed in sleep.

¹² From where do you get this false thought in your mind that you belong to the body, that you are an embodied being, and that you come to take, retain and quit this mortal frame at different times?

¹³ Forsake the thought that you will do so and so after doing this and that. They who know the truth have given up such desires and vain expectations.

¹⁴ All waking and living persons have something to do in this world, and thereby they have to reap the results of their actions. But he who does nothing does not take the name of an active agent and has nothing to expect. ¹⁵ He who is not the agent of an action has nothing to do with its consequence, for he who does not sow the grains does not reap the harvest. ¹⁶ Ending of action and its fruition brings on a quiescence which, when it has become habitual and firm, receives the name of liberation.

¹⁷ All intellectual beings and enlightened men and those who lead pure and holy lives have all things under their comprehension. Therefore there is nothing left for them to learn anew or reject what they have learnt. ¹⁸ It is for limited understandings and limited powers of the body and mind to grasp or leave out some thing. But to men of unbounded capacities, there is nothing to be received or left out.

¹⁹ When a man is set at ease after he ceases having any relationship to being a possessor or

possessing any external object, and when this sense of his not having any relationship becomes a permanent feeling in him, then he is said to be liberated in his lifetime.²⁰ Great men like you, being placed in this state of perpetual unconcern and rest, discharge their duties with as much ease as if sleeping.²¹ When one's desires are drowned in his reliance on God, he views the existing world shining in his spiritual light.²² He takes no delight in the pleasing objects about him, nor does he regret others' afflictions. All his pleasures are within his own soul.²³ With his wakeful mind, he meets all his affairs with his spiritual unconcern, like a mirror receiving the reflections of objects without being tainted by them.²⁴ In his waking he rests in himself, and in his sleep he reclines amidst the drowsy world. In his actions he turns about like frolicking children and his desires lie dormant in his soul.

²⁵ O you, great soul, continue to enjoy your supreme bliss for the period of a kalpa by placing your mind's reliance upon victorious Vishnu. Enjoy the prosperity of your dominions by exercising your virtues and good qualities.

Chapter 41 — Installation of Prahlada in His Kingdom

¹ Vasishta said:—

After Vishnu, the receptacle of the three worlds and observer of everything that passes in them, had spoken in this way with his lucid speech, shedding the coolness of moonbeams,² Prahlada became full blown in his body. His eyes shone forth like blooming lotuses. Then he spoke out with full possession of his mental powers.

³ Prahlada said:—

Lord! I was greatly tired from my very many state affairs, and from thinking about the welfare and sorrow of my people. Now I have found a little rest from my labor.⁴ By your grace, my lord, I am settled in myself. Whether I am in my meditation or waking state, I enjoy the tranquility of my mind at all times.⁵ I always see you with the clear vision of my mind seated in my heart. By my good luck, now I have you now in my presence outside of it.

⁶ All this time I have been sitting without any thought in me. I was mixed up in my mind's internal vision of you like air in air.⁷ I was not affected by grief or dullness, or infatuated by my zeal of asceticism or a wish to renounce my body.⁸ The one All being present in the mind, there is no room for any grief at the loss of anything. No care for the world or caution of the body or life or any fear of any kind abides in His presence.⁹ I had been situated in my holy, saint-like state simply by pure desire of holiness rising spontaneously within me.

¹⁰ Yes my Lord, I am disgusted with this world and long to resign its cares, together with all the mutations of joy and grief that alternately rise in the minds of the unenlightened.¹¹ Yet I do not think that our embodied state is subject to misery. I do not think that being freed from the bonds of the body is the cause of our release. Worldliness is a venomous snake in the bosom. It torments only the ignorant, not the sage.

¹² It is the ignorant and not the learned whose minds fluctuate with the thoughts that this is pleasure and the other is pain, and that I have this and am in want of another.¹³ The ignorant man thinks himself to be a person distinct from another. So all living beings are devoid of the knowledge of truth and entertain and exult in their egoistic thoughts.¹⁴ The false idea that such things are acceptable to me and others are not so serves only to delude the ignorant, not the wise.

¹⁵ All things being contained and situated in my all-pervading spirit, how can we accept one and reject another thing, as distinct from and undesirable to the identical one?¹⁶ The whole universe, whether real or unreal, is a manifestation of omniscience. We know not what is desirable or detestable in it to be accepted or rejected by us.¹⁷ It is only by discrimination of the nature of the viewer and the view, and by reflecting on the Supreme Soul in one's self, that the mind receives its rest and tranquility.

¹⁸ During my samadhi I was freed from the consciousness of my being or not being, and of whatever is desirable or detestable to anyone. I continue in the same state of my mind even after I am awakened.

¹⁹ This state being familiar to me, I see everything in the spirit within myself and I act according as it pleases you.

²⁰ O lotus-eyed Vishnu, you are adored in all the three worlds! Therefore it benefits you to receive my adoration also, offered in the proper form.

Vasishta speaking:—

²¹ Saying so, the lord of Danava demons presented a platter of presents before the god, like the lord of hills making offerings to the full moon. ²² First he worshipped Vishnu, together with his weapons and his vehicle Garuda. Then he adored the bands of the gods and apsara nymphs who accompanied him and the three worlds contained in him.

²³ After he had done worshipping the lord of the worlds, with the worlds situated within and without him, the Lord of Lakshmi spoke to him saying, ²⁴ “Rise, O lord of Danavas, and sit upon your throne and I shall perform your inauguration this very moment.” ²⁵ Vishnu then blew his five-note conch shell summoning the five races of gods, spiritual masters, true disciples, men and Daitya demons to attend the ceremony.

²⁶ After this the lotus-eyed god placed Prahlada on the throne which he deserved, causing him to sit like cloud rests on a mountain summit. ²⁷ Then Vishnu caused him to make a sacred ablution with the waters that were presented before him from the milky and other oceans, and those of the Ganges and other holy rivers. ²⁸ The assembly of brahmins and rishis and all groups of spiritual masters and vidyadharas, together with the rulers of the quarters (*lokapalas*) attended and assisted at the ceremony. ²⁹ Then Vishnu, the immeasurable Spirit, anointed the great asura demon in the kingdom of the Daityas. The Maruta winds sang his praises, as they do the hymns of Vishnu in heaven. ³⁰ Then blessed by the gods and praised by asuras, Prahlada greeted them all in turn and in the end was addressed by Vishnu, the slayer of Madhu.

³¹ The Lord said:—

Rule here as sole monarch as long as Mount Meru stands on the earth and the sun and moon shine in the sky. Be filled with all praiseworthy virtues of your own. ³² Govern your kingdom without any interested motive of your own and without showing any symptom of anger or fear on your part. Preserve your moderation and a tolerant spirit in all your affairs. ³³ May you never have any disquiet in this kingdom of excellent soil and plenteous provisions. Do not create any disturbance to the gods in heaven or to men on earth below. ³⁴ Conduct yourself in your proper course at all events which may occur to you at anytime or place. Never allow yourself to be led astray by the sudden whims of your mind or the freaks of fancy. ³⁵ Keep your spiritual being in mind and abandon your egoism and selfish views altogether. Then by managing your affairs in one even tenor, both in your want and prosperity, you will evade all the changing ways of fortune. ³⁶ You have seen both the ways and dealings of this world, and measured also the immeasurable depth of spiritual knowledge. You know the state of everything in every place and require no one’s advice.

³⁷ As you are now perfectly devoid of anger, passions and fears, there is no more any chance of further conflict between the gods and asuras under your rule over them in future. ³⁸ No more will the tears of asura women wash the decorations on their faces, nor will the currents of rivers rise as high as lofty trees with floods of tears from their weeping eyes. ³⁹ From this day on, the cessation of hostilities between the gods and demons will render the earth as quiet as the calm ocean after its

churning by Mandara Mountain.⁴⁰ No more will the wives of gods and demigods be led away in captivity by one another. In the future they will rest fearless under the marital roofs of their husbands.

⁴¹ Now let your expectations rise from their dormancy in many long nights of dismal darkness. Be crowned with success and prosperity. O descendant of Danu, enjoy your unconquerable royal fortune, as in the company of your charming consort.

Chapter 42 — God Realization in the Form One Worships God

¹ Vasishta continued:—

The lotus-eyed Vishnu, having said all this to Prahlada, left the abode of the asura with the whole concourse of assembled gods, kinnaras and men.² Prahlada and his associates threw handfuls of flowers on the departing god as he was mounted on the back of Garuda, the king of birds.

³ The god crossed the heavenly Ganges and reached the Milky Ocean, where he took his serpent couch like a black bee sitting on a lotus leaf.⁴ The god Vishnu sat on his serpent seat with as much ease as Indra sits in heaven in the assembly of the gods, and as the lord of the demons was made to sit in the infernal region wholly devoid of all his cares.

⁵ Rama, now I have told you the whole story of Prahlada coming to his sense from the samadhi state of unconsciousness. This story is as charming to the holy listener as cooling moonbeams are refreshing to a tired traveler.⁶ The man who ponders in his mind the manner of Prahlada awakening to life is regenerated in that blissful state from the sinfulness of his former condition.⁷ A simple repetition of this story wipes off the sins of men. The deep consideration of its spiritual meaning leads one to his eternal salvation.⁸ The ignorant are released from their ignorance, and the deep thinker is released from his sins. Therefore, do not neglect to ponder well on it for the remission of all your sins.⁹ The man who considers well the manner of Prahlada attaining liberation gets a remission of all his sins committed in his repeated previous states of life.

¹⁰ Rama said, “Tell me sage, how did the sound of the five-note conch shell rouse the mind of devout Prahlada from its immersion in holy meditation?”

¹¹ Vasishta replied:—

Rama, know there are two states of liberation attending sinless persons. One is the emancipation in his embodied state in this life and the other is after his departure from here.¹² Embodied liberation means one continues in his living body, but with a state of mind freed from its attachment to worldly things and liberated from the desire of fruition and reward of all his meritorious acts.¹³ Disembodied liberation is obtained after the soul is released from the body and is settled in the Supreme Spirit. It is freedom from the recurrence of future life and birth in this mortal world.

¹⁴ The living liberated man is like a fried grain whose germinating power is parched within itself and the desire of whose heart is purified from every expectation of future reward or regeneration.¹⁵ He who resigns himself solely to the meditation of the great soul remains in the pure, holy and magnanimous state of his mind. He continues as if he were asleep in his living and waking states.

¹⁶ Being thus entranced in his inner meditation, he continues in a samadhi state for a thousand years and wakes again to his senses if he is allowed to live after that period.¹⁷ Prahlada remained thus with his holy thoughts suppressed within himself until he was roused from his samadhi by the shrill sound of the conch shell.

¹⁸ Vishnu is the soul of all beings, and he who assimilates himself to that god in his thought becomes identified with the Supreme Soul, which is the cause of all.¹⁹ No sooner the god thought that Prahlada should come to his sense than his sensation came immediately to him at the Divine Will.

²⁰ The world has no other cause but the Divine Spirit which with the assistance of the causal elements takes different forms upon itself at the time of creation. Therefore it is the spirit of Vishnu that constitutes the world. ²¹ Worship of God (as Vishnu) in spirit presents Vishnu to the spiritual sight. Worship of Vishnu in his outward form represents the figure to the soul and the inner mind. ²² O Rama, put all visible sights out from your view and look at the innermost soul within yourself. When you are accustomed to such spiritual meditation, soon you will have the sight of your God.

²³ The world presents a scene of gloomy rainy weather with showers of grief falling on all sides. It is likely to freeze us in ignorance unless we look to the sun of our reason. ²⁴ By grace of God we can avoid the delusions of the world, just as we can escape a demon by means of a spell. ²⁵ The thick darkness of the mind is dispersed and cleared off in time through the will of the spirit. The world is a network of delusion which is scattered like smoke by the breeze of reason.

Chapter 43 — Worship of the Formless Versus the Forms of God

¹ Rama said, "Sage, your knowledge of all truths and the light of your holy discourses have gratified me as much as cooling moonbeams gratify medicinal plants. ² Your gentle and purifying words are as gratifying to my ears as beautiful and sweet flowers delight the external senses. ³ Sage, if the efforts of men, as you said, are the causes of their success, how did Prahlada attain enlightenment without his effort or attempt?"

⁴ Vasishta replied:—

Yes Rama, it was by his courageous efforts that the high-minded Prahlada acquired his divine knowledge. There was no other cause.

⁵ The soul of man is the same as the spirit of Narayana. There is no difference between them, just as there is none between oil and sesame seed, or cloth and its whiteness, and as the flower and its fragrance are not distinct things. ⁶ Vishnu is the same as his spirit and the soul of man, and the human soul is the same with Vishnu. Vishnu and soul are synonymous terms, like plant and vegetable.

⁷ First Prahlada came to know the soul by himself. Afterwards, through his intellectual power he was led to his devotions to Vishnu, and he made many converts after his own example. ⁸ By his own efforts Prahlada obtained his grace and blessing from Vishnu. By the exercise of his own reasoning he came to the knowledge of the Eternal Mind.

⁹ Sometimes the soul is awakened of itself by one's own intuition. At other times the soul is roused by the grace of the personal god Vishnu owing to one's faith in his person. ¹⁰ And though this god may be pleased with a devotee's prolonged service and devout worship, yet the god is unable to confer spiritual knowledge to one devoid of his reasoning faculty. ¹¹ Hence the primary cause of spiritual light is a man's intelligence, which is only gained by exertion of his mental powers. The secondary causes may be the blessing and grace of a god, but I wish that you prefer the former method for your salvation, your own intuition.

¹² Therefore, first exert your personal efforts to keep the fivefold organs of sense under proper control. Regularly and diligently practice cultivating your understanding and the power of reasoning.

¹³ For know that whatever gain anyone makes at anytime is only due to his own efforts and not by any other means whatever. ¹⁴ Only by relying upon your personal powers can you surmount the insuperable barriers of your sensual desires. Then by crossing over the ocean of this world, you reach the other shore of supreme joy.

¹⁵ It requires no personal effort to see an idol of Vishnu, but the mere sight of the idol is not enough to save you, or else the birds and beasts would all be saved by looking at it. ¹⁶ If a spiritual guide had the power to save his foolish followers by his preaching, it would also be possible for the spiritual guides of camels and cattle to save their herds in their future lives. ¹⁷ It is only in the power of the mind to acquire anything good for one's self. The favor of Vishnu or Shiva or the influence of money is not able to effect anything. ¹⁸ It is by constant practice accompanied by self-resignation and self-control that one is able to effect anything. Whatever he is unable to do by these means is impossible for anyone in the three worlds.

¹⁹ Look to the spirit in the spirit and adore the spirit in your own soul. Behold the Supreme Soul in yourself, have the Universal Soul in your own soul, and thus remain with it.

²⁰ Fools who flee from studying the scriptures or practicing self-devotion and reason have adopted the Vaishnava faith as a path leading to their better being. ²¹ Practice and diligence are said to be steps to self-enlightenment, and rites and ceremonies are represented as secondary courses resorted to when people are unable to practice the former! ²² The senses being unmanageable, what is the good of ceremonial observances? The senses being under control, it is useless to observe the ritual.

²³ Without rationality and dispassion of his spirit, it is hard to have Vishnu. When there is cool and calm reasoning of the mind, it is as useless to have the idol of Vishnu as placing a lotus in the hand of the dead and liberated. ²⁴ When you have the qualities of abstraction and composure in your mind, think you have everything in yourself. These being in your possession, you become an adept. Otherwise, you are an ass in a forest.

²⁵ Men are eager to find favor in the sight of the gods, but they do not seek the favor of their hearts and minds. ²⁶ Vishnu, the indwelling spirit of the body, is situated in the innermost soul of every individual. Only the ignorant fool forsakes the innermost Vishnu and seeks the outer form to lead him to the other. ²⁷ The consciousness dwelling in the cavity of the heart is the true body of the everlasting spirit. The outward form of Vishnu, holding the conch shell, club, lotus and the discus, is only a false representation. ²⁸ He who forsakes the real form to follow the fictitious one lets ambrosia pass from his hand in order to pursue some promised sweet delicacy.

²⁹ He who is not settled in the charming scenery of his spiritual meditation lets his frantic mind rove at large after every object that presents itself before him. ³⁰ He who does not have the abstract knowledge of the soul in himself is governed by his infatuated mind and worships the image bearing the conch, discus, club, and lotus in its hands as the supreme lord and god. ³¹ By practice of continued austerity and a prolonged worship of this deity, the devotee's mind becomes purified in process of time and gets rid of its turbulent passions at last. ³² The daily practice of self-control and abstract meditation gives the mind purity and, like the mango fruit, the mind gets its accompanying virtues one by one.

³³ The soul is said to obtain the virtues of peace, contentment and rest through the external adoration of Vishnu. This is why the practice of idol worship is prescribed in the scriptures. ³⁴ He who obtains his blessing from the all powerful god gets it as a reward for the merit of his long practice, like the fruit of a tree. ³⁵ Mental labor is the foundation of every improvement and of all lasting good in life, just as a well cultivated soil is the cause of a good harvest. ³⁶ Even digging the ground and shaping a hill produces no good without application of the mind.

³⁷ Men may undergo a thousand reincarnations and wander about the earth in various births and shapes, and yet they find no rest or composure of their minds. ³⁸ They may worship Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva forever, and gain their favor also, and yet can have no salvation owing to the perturbed state of their minds.

³⁹ Leave off worshipping the visible form of Vishnu, either internally or externally in your mind or before your sight. Put an end to your reincarnation by meditating only upon your consciousness.

⁴⁰ Behold the unstained form of the one infinite God in your conscious self by forsaking whatever it is conscious of. Taste the sweet essence of the one real entity, and go over the ocean of repeated births in the mortal world.

Chapter 44 — The Story of Gadhi: His Tapas, Vishnu's Boon, and His Death

¹ Vasishta said:—

Rama, only government of the restless mind is able to destroy the delusion which causes the interminable reincarnations in this mortal world. There is no other means to this end.² Listen attentively, O sinless Rama, to this story which I am going to relate to you in order to show you the intricacies of understanding the nature of worldly delusions.

³ In this land there is the large district of Kosala which is full of forests and fruitful trees, like gardens of wish-fulfilling kalpa trees, and abounding with minerals like Sumeru Mountain.⁴ There lived a learned brahmin named Gadhi who was intelligent and versed in the Vedas and an image of virtue.

⁵ From his youth he continued with the calmness of his mind, abstracted from and indifferent to worldly affairs. He was a pure and unstained soul like the clear sky above.

⁶ Intent on some fixed purpose of his mind, he left the company of his friends and went to a forest to perform austere tapas.⁷ There he found a lake filled with full blown lotuses, the moon shining in the sky with scattered stars about her, all shedding their brightness like showers of rain.⁸ He went down into the lake and stood in the waters up to his neck. His body was below water and his head floated over it like a lotus. He stood upon his tapas, intent with a view to have the sight of Vishnu present before him.

⁹ Thus he passed full eight months, his body immersed in the water of the lake. His face was shriveled and wan, like the lotuses of his lake for lack of sunshine.¹⁰ When he was emaciated by his austerities, his god Vishnu appeared before him like a dark cloud of rainy weather appearing over the parched earth of the hot season.¹¹ The Lord said, “Rise O brahmin from the water and receive your desired blessing of me. The tree of your tapas vow is now flowering with its expected fruit.”

¹² The brahmin replied, “I bow to you, O my lord Vishnu! You are the receptacle of the three worlds and the reservoir of innumerable starry worlds which rise like lotuses in the lake of your heart, whereon you sit like a black bee.¹³ My Lord, I want to see the spiritual delusion which you have ordained to blindfold this world and which is known as Vishnu Maya.”

¹⁴ Vasishta said:—

To this the god replied, “You shall truly behold this delusion, and get rid of it afterwards by virtue of your devotion in tapas.” Saying so, the god disappeared from his sight like a castle in the sky.

¹⁵ Vishnu being gone, the good brahmin got up from his watery bed like the fair and humid moon rises from the cool and white Milky Ocean.¹⁶ He was glad in his soul at the sight of the lord of world. His heart was full blown with joy, like kumuda lotuses unfolding at the sight of the moon.¹⁷ Then he passed some days in that forest, overjoyed in his mind by the sight of Vishnu, and employed himself in discharging his brahmin duties.

¹⁸ Once when he had been bathing in the lake covered with full-blown lotuses, he thought upon the words of Vishnu, like great sages reflecting upon the meanings of the Vedas.¹⁹ Then, while discharging his priestly functions in the sacred water, he made his mental prayer to purge his sins.

²⁰ As he was performing this act in the water, he chanced to forget his sacred prayers, became

confused, and was drowned in deep water.

²¹ He thought that his body had fallen down like a mountain tree in the valley below by a blast of wind, and that his dead corpse was taken up and mourned over by his friends. ²² He thought that his vital breath had fled from his being and the limbs of his body were as motionless as sugar cane flattened by a hurricane. ²³ He thought his face had faded away and grown as pale as the withered leaf of a tree, and that his body had turned to a carcass and was lying on the ground like a lotus bud torn from its stalk.

²⁴ His eyeballs were as dull and dim as the stars are shorn of their beams with the morning. The ground seemed to be as dry to him, filled with flying dust everywhere, as if there was a drought. ²⁵ He believed his dead body was beset all about by his kind friends, weeping upon it with sad and sorrowful faces, loudly lamenting and crying over it like birds upon trees. ²⁶ He thought his faithful wife was sitting at his feet like a handsome lotus flower, weeping profusely with showers of tears from her lotus-like eyes like waters rushing through a broken embankment.

²⁷ His sorrowing mother, with her loud wailing and mournful crying, was buzzing like a humming bee and holding her chin, newly overgrown with whiskers, in her tender hand. ²⁸ His friends were sitting by his side with dejected looks, trickling tears dropping down their faces and cheeks. These washed his dead body like melting dew on withered leaves moisten the parent tree.

²⁹ His body members ceased to befriend him, like strangers who decline to become friends for fear of future separation, or turning unfriendly ever afterwards in life. ³⁰ The open lips leaving the teeth bare seemed to deride the vanity of human life, as the white and bony toothed ascetics and cynics do at unsteadiness of worldly events. ³¹ His mouth was speechless, like that of a devotee in meditation. His body was motionless, as if made of mud and clay. It slept to wake no more, like a sage absorbed in his meditation. ³² It remained quiet with lifted ears, as if to listen to the cries and wailings of the mourning friends in order to judge the degrees of their affection and grief for him.

³³ Then the relatives raised their loud lamentations with sobbing and beating of breasts, swooning and rising and shedding floods of tears from their leaky eyes. ³⁴ Afterwards the sorrowful relations removed the disgusting corpse with their bitter cries for its funeral, to never see it again in this passing world. ³⁵ They bore the body to the funeral ground with its rotten flesh and entrails, daubed all over with mud and dust. They placed it on the ground strewn with unnumbered bones, skeletons, and dried and rotten carcasses.

³⁶ Flights of flying vultures shaded the sunbeams on high and burning funeral pyres drove away the darkness below. The fearful glare of open mouthed jackals flashed on all sides like flames of living fire. ³⁷ Ravens bathed in floods of blood and crows dipped their wings in it. Hungry birds tore at entrails and old vultures were trapped in the strings.

³⁸ The friends of the dead burnt the corpse in the funeral flame and reduced it to ashes. The moisture of the body flew in fumes like the waters of the ocean evaporate from an undersea fire. ³⁹ The burning wood of the funeral pyre consumed the dead body with load cracking noises. The dry fuel of the pile flashed in encompassing flames with curling smoke over them. ⁴⁰ The devouring fire gnawed down the bones with crackling noise and filled the atmosphere with filthy stink and stench. It gorged up all

that was soft or hard, like an elephant devouring reeds with the moisture contained in their cellular vessels.

Chapter 45 — Gadhi Reborn as a Tribal, then Made Gavala, King of Kirapura

¹ Vasishta said:—

Then Gadhi, standing as he was in the water with his sorrowful heart, saw many other occurrences in the clarity of his mind.

² He saw a village in the vicinity of Bhuta district full of inhabitants, and that he was reborn there in the womb of a tribal woman, in which he remained with great pain. ³ Confined in the cavity of the womb, he felt his body pressed by the pressure of her intestines while his senses were sorely annoyed by being forced to abide the stink of the ordure and filth in the intestinal parts of the tribal woman.

⁴ After the fetus matured, he was born in proper time with a black complexion like a dark cloud in rainy season and soiled with filth all over his body. ⁵ He grew up to childhood and then to boyhood in the tribal woman's house, and moved about here and there like a pebble thrown up by a current of the Yamuna River. ⁶ He reached his twelfth, then his sixteenth year of age, and his body fully developed like a rain cloud increasing in size. ⁷ Then accompanied by a pack of hounds, the lad wandered from one forest to another, hunting and killing wild deer in his occupation of a hunter. ⁸ He was joined then with a tribal wife, as black as the leaf of a tamala plant and who with her budding breasts, swarthy hands and palms, resembled the newly sprouting stalks and leaves of trees.

⁹ She was black and swarthy in her whole complexion, except her two rows of milk-white teeth. All of her limbs were as lively and supple as the tender vines of the forest. ¹⁰ They played together at the edge of the forest in their youthful dalliance, and they wandered about the flowery meadows like a couple of black bees. ¹¹ When tired they took their seats on beds of leaves and vines spread over the plains by driving winds, like those scattered over the environs of Vindhya Hills. ¹² They rested in woodland gardens and slept in mountain caves. They sat on heaps of leaflets and lived under shrubberies and covered shelters of creeping plants. ¹³ They decorated their heads with kinkirata flowers and their necks and bosoms with blossoms of various kinds. They hung ketaka flowers from their ears and made necklaces of small amra flowers. ¹⁴ They rolled on beds of flowers and roved about the foot of the mountain. They knew all the trees where to play, and they were skilled in archery and hunting deer.

¹⁵ In the hilly region they produced many children as the descendants of their race. They were as rude and rough as the prickly thorns of the khadira plant. ¹⁶ After passing their youth in family life, they came gradually to their decay and decline until at last they were overtaken by decrepit old age, which was as dry of pleasure as a parched desert. ¹⁷ Then returning to their native village in Bhuta district, they built a poor hut of leaves and straws for themselves and lived there as hermits.

¹⁸ Gadhi (known as Katanja, the tribal) found his body worn out with age, grown as thin and lean as a dry leaf, and like a withered tamara tree growing in a mountain cave which, for lack of moisture, soon dwindle into decrepitude. ¹⁹ He saw his family of savages increasing in numbers and himself becoming reduced in means and irritated in speech in his extreme old age. ²⁰ Gadhi found himself to be the oldest man alive among the savages. In his dotage, his comfort was in the members of his family, ²¹ but at last he saw all his family swept away by the cruel hand of death, as rainwater carries away fallen leaves of the forest. ²² He continued to lament over their loss, his heart rent with sorrow

and his eyes drenched in tears, like those of a male deer separated from its companions.

²³ Thus passing some days in that forest with his heart overcome with grief, at last he left the land of his birth, as aquatic fowls quit their native lake when its waters and the lotus plants are dried up.

²⁴ He travelled through many countries with his sad and sick heart without finding a place to rest. He was driven to and fro, like a cloud carried by contrary winds.

²⁵ At one time he entered the opulent city of Kira. He observed birds flying over it, like so many balloons hanging in the air. ²⁶ There he saw rows of trees on both sides of the road, waving their variegated leaves and clusters of flowers like enameled cloths and gems. The road was strewn with beautiful flowers of various kinds up to the heels. ²⁷ Then he came to the royal road that looked like the milky path of heaven. He found it filled with soldiers and citizens and their women without number. ²⁸ There he saw the auspicious royal elephant decorated with shining and embroidered trappings, appearing like the golden mountain of the gods moving on the earth.

²⁹ He learned that the elephant was rambling about in search of a new king to be elected in place of the last king who had recently died. The royal elephant was employed as a jeweler to select the best gem to be placed on the royal throne. ³⁰ The savage gazed steadily at the elephant with a curious eye and found it to be no other than a hill in motion. ³¹ As he was looking on it with amazement, the elephant came to him and lifted him with his trunk and respectfully set him on his head, bearing him as Mount Meru bears the sun on its top.

³² Seeing him sitting on the animal's head, the people sounded their trumpets. The noise was as loud as that of the ocean crashing to the roaring of the antediluvian clouds in the sky. ³³ Then shouts of "Victory to the king!" rose from the assembled throng and filled the air. It seemed as if they were the united cries of morning birds all over the waking world. ³⁴ Next rose the loud voices of eulogists that moved in the air like the dashing waves of the sea.

³⁵ Then women joined to anoint him as their king, moving about him like waves of the sea surrounding Mandara Mountain after its labor of churning. ³⁶ The respectable ladies adorned him with many ornaments of various gems, like the sea washes rocks on its shore with the many colored waves under the beams of the rising sun. ³⁷ Youthful maidens poured cooling ointments on him, like rain clouds pour their waters on mountain tops. ³⁸ Other women used their tender hands to decorate his body with garlands of fragrant flowers, just as spring season with her hands adorns the forest with a variety of tender stalks, branches and flowers. ³⁹ They put a great many paints and pastes upon his body, which decorated it like the rays of the sun paint a mountain with the many colors of its minerals. ⁴⁰ His body decorated with ornaments made of gems and gold attracted all hearts to him, just as the variegated clouds of evening shining upon Mount Meru is attractive to all hearts. ⁴¹ He was adorned by beautiful maids with shoots of creeping plants which gave him the appearance of the wish-fulfilling kalpa tree entwined by its vines.

⁴² Being thus anointed and decorated, all the royal family and subjects attended upon him like travelers resting under a shady and flowering tree. ⁴³ They all assembled and installed him on the throne, just as the gods join together to place Indra on the throne after he is borne on the back of his elephant Airavata. ⁴⁴ In this manner, the tribal was made a king in the city of Kira. He was much

overjoyed at his unexpected good fortune, like a raven delighted to find a stout dead deer in the forest.

⁴⁵ His feet were rubbed by the lotus-like hands of the Queen of Kira. His body daubed with scented powder of frankincense which gave it the bright appearance of evening with its crimson clouds. ⁴⁶ He paraded in Kira city in the midst of their women like a lion strutting in the company of lionesses in a flowery forest. ⁴⁷ Now he forgot his former pains and sorrows. His body was much cooled by wearing a necklace of pearls, as if dropped from the heads of elephants killed by lions. He took great delight at the enjoyment of the luxuries in company with these good people, like a sunburned elephant is refreshed in a lake full of water and forage.

⁴⁸ He ruled for sometime in his self-gotten kingdom of Kirapura, having extended his power and mandates on all sides. He ruled the state through his ministers and became known by the name of Gavala throughout his dominions.

Chapter 46 — Gadhi's Loss of his Visionary Kingdom

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Thus was Gadhi surrounded by his courtiers and attended by his ministers. Chiefs paid their homage to him and the royal umbrella was raised above his head and the fan flapped about him.² He attained great dignity on seeing his mandates carried out on every side. He was delighted to learn of state affairs and to be informed that his subjects were happy and lived within his dominion without fear.

³ The paeans of the eulogists made him forget himself and his former state. The excesses of his delight made him as giddy as if intoxicated.⁴ He ruled for full eight years over Kirapura kingdom and managed himself in an honorable manner throughout that time.

⁵ Once he was sitting in the open air at his pleasure and without his royal clothing. He was looking at the clear sky devoid of clouds and darkness and without the light of the sun, moon or stars.⁶ His heart was full with the enjoyment of royal dignity, but he did not think much of the trinkets and ornaments that were loaded upon him.

⁷ One time he went abroad in this undressed state of his body and saw the setting sun bending his course below the horizon on his usual path of glory.⁸ There he saw a band of tribals with black complexions and big bodies singing like melodious cuckoos at the approach of spring season.⁹ They were plucking the strings of their lyres with trembling fingers, like a swarm of sweet sounding bees shaking the trembling leaves of trees with their fluttering and buzzing.

¹⁰ There stood an old man among them who seemed to be the leader of the band. With his grey head and ruby eyes, he appeared like Mount Meru with its snow covered top and shining caves.¹¹ He approached the king saying, “How is it, O Katanja, that you came to be here? Has the king of this place taken you for his associate on account of your skill in music?¹² Does he have a liking for sweet songsters, as they do for the musical kokila nightingales? Does he load his favors upon them with presents of household cloths and seats?”

¹³ “I am as glad to see you here today as men are pleased to see a mango tree filled with flowers and fruit in spring.¹⁴ I am as glad in my heart as the budding lotus at the sight of the rising sun, and the medicinal plants at moonrise. As great men are pleased with all their best gains, so am I pleased at seeing you here because the highest limit of joys is the sight of a friend.”

¹⁵ As the tribal was addressing the king in this manner, the king explained how the wheel of time had turned to his favor.¹⁶ At this instant the king’s consorts and servants who were standing at the window overheard their conversation. They were in deep sorrow to learn that he was a tribal by birth.¹⁷ They were as sick at heart as lotus flowers under a shower of frost or a land under famine. Upon learning this, citizens were as cheerless as if they had seen the woods of the mountain on fire.

¹⁸ The king hurled his defiance at the words of the old tribal, like a lion lying on the ground shows his teeth at the sneering of a cat on the top of a tree.¹⁹ He fled in haste to the inner apartment among its sorrowful residents with as much throbbing of his heart as a reluctant swan entering a lake of withering lotuses in dry season.²⁰ His limbs grew stiff and his face became pale with fear. His knees tottered with inner rage like tree trunks shaking with burning fire in their hollows.

²¹ He saw everyone there sitting in a melancholy mood with downcast looks and drooping heads, like the bending tops of plants eaten at the root by mice and rats. ²² The ministers, ladies of the harem, and all people of the city refrained from touching his body, just as they avoid touching a dead body lying in the house. ²³ Servants ceased to minister to him and ladies, despite all their previous love and sorrow for him, loathed his company. ²⁴ They looked upon his cheerless face and dark complexion with its departed brightness as if it was a corpse in a funeral ground which every one loathes to look upon.

²⁵ Though the people sorrowed for his dark body, now smoking with fumes of his own grief, yet they dared not approach his body, which appeared to burn like a volcano amidst its smoke. ²⁶ Courtiers left him with their hearts heaving. His orders were no longer obeyed any more than those of quenching the cool ashes with water. ²⁷ People fled from him like from a horrible rakshasa demon who is the cause of only evil and danger. ²⁸ Thus was he shunned by all and left alone in the populous city. He became like friendless traveler passing through a foreign country, without money or skill to support him. ²⁹ Though he called and approached everybody, he got no answer from anyone, like a hollow sounding reed never receives a reply from any passerby.

³⁰ They all said to one another that the guilt of their long association with the tribal could not be expiated by any penance other than burning themselves alive on the funeral pile. ³¹ Being so resolved, ministers and citizens all joined together and raised piles with heaps of dry wood. ³² These being lit, blazed all about the ground like stars in the sky. The city was filled with loud wailings of people.

³³ Wailing wives shed showers of tears with loud and piteous cries. All about the burning furnaces, weeping people heaved heavy groans with choked voices. ³⁴ The plaintive cries of the self-immolating ministers' dependents rose like the swell of whistling winds amidst forest trees. ³⁵ The bodies of great brahmins burning on the pyres sent forth their fatted fumes in the air. The smoke scattered by winds hung over the landscape like a portentous mist. ³⁶ The winds bore the stench of men's burning fat and flesh far and wide in the open sky, inviting flocks of birds to the feast. The disc of the sun was hidden under the wide shadow of the winged tribe. ³⁷ The flames of burning pyres, carried by the winds to the sky, burned like a conflagration on high. Flying sparks scattered in the air appeared like falling meteors blazing in the horizon.

³⁸ Helpless children were crying for their ornaments being robbed by atrocious robbers. They had no guardians. Citizens were threatened with the loss of both their lives and properties by violent thieves.

³⁹ On one side people lamented the loss of their relatives. On the other were bands of thieves, lurking and searching unobserved about houses for plunder and booty. ⁴⁰ As adverse fate brought on this dire change on the devoted city, its horrified residents remained in mute amazement, like on the final doomsday of creation.

⁴¹ Gavala, the tribal prince whose mind was purified and whose manners were refined in the society of the great men of the palace, witnessed the sad catastrophe of the state and mourned with a pensive heart. ⁴² "It is all owing to me," he thought, "that all this sorrow has befallen on this state, and that time has brought on the untimely dissolution of doomsday on this kingdom, the royal family, and its ministerial officers. ⁴³ What is the good of this miserable life of mine? My death is a blessing to me rather than living in this wretched state. It is better for the mean and base to die than to live and be

reviled by others."

⁴⁴ Thus resolved, Gavala prepared a funeral pyre for himself and made an offering of his body in the burning furnace without betraying a sigh, like a poor moth dropping on fire. ⁴⁵ As Gavala cast his body into the flames and was pulling his limbs singed by the fire, their violent motion and his painful emotion roused the dreaming Gadhi from his reverie in the water.

⁴⁶ Valmiki said:—

As the sage was saying these things, the day departed with the setting sun to its evening devotion. The congregation broke with mutual salutations to perform of their evening ceremonial baths. They assembled again with the rising sun after dispersion of the gloom of night.

Chapter 47 — A Traveler and a Journey Verify Gadhi's Dream

¹ Vasishta resumed:—

Soon Gadhi was relieved from the disturbances of his mind at the delusions of the world. He was set to rest from his perturbed state, like the disturbed sea after its waves subside.² His mind, freed from its painful thoughts, regained its repose after the troublesome dream passed away. He resumed his calmness, like the god Brahma having his rest after the labor of his creation was over at the end of a kalpa.³ He slowly regained his senses, like a man waking from sleep and like one gains sobriety after passing off his inebriation.

⁴ Then he thought to himself, “I am the same Gadhi doing the same thing I was doing (my sacred bath in the water). All that I have been seeing for so long is nothing. This I see as clearly as men see things after the shade of night is dispersed.”⁵ Remembering what he was, he lifted his feet from the water like a lotus bud lifting its head above water in spring after the frost is over.

⁶ He thought again, “This is the same water, sky and earth (where I stood before). But what I was just seeing is quite astonishing to me.⁷ What am I and what do I see now? What was I and what have I been doing all this time?” He remained a long time with these thoughts, knitted brows and staring eyes.⁸ “It was my weakness,” he thought, “that showed me this delusion.” Knowing it for certain, he came out of the water like the rising sun appearing above the horizon.

⁹ Then rising on the bank, he thought, “Ah! Where is my mother and wife who attended on me at the moment of my death?¹⁰ Or were my parents dead in the ignorant state of my boyhood, like the parent plant of a young shoot cut off by the sword of death?¹¹ I am not married and I do not know the form of a wife. I am as ignorant of married love as a brahmin is stranger to the destructive taste of forbidden liquor.¹² I am too far from my country and know no friend or relative to whom I can return to die.

¹³ Therefore all these scenes that I have seen are no more than the forms of a fairyland pictured in my fancy.¹⁴ Be it as it may, all this is only delusion and dream. We are living dead among our friends. It is all magic and delusion, and nothing is true or real here.¹⁵ Our minds are like wild beasts roaming furiously in the forest of errors which presents endless scenes of delusion to living beings.”

¹⁶ Reflecting on these delusions in his mind, Gadhi passed some days at his own house in the woods.

¹⁷ Then once he happened to entertain a brahmin as a guest at his house. He had stayed there to take rest from his travels.¹⁸ The visitor was highly gratified feasting upon fruit and flower syrups. He was as refreshed supplied with water as a tree supplied by a plentiful spring that in time shoots forth with foliage and fruit.¹⁹ Then they performed their evening service and turned their beads. Afterwards they took to their beds made of tender leaves and grass.

²⁰ There they began to talk on divine subjects with which they were conversant. Words fell from lips like the sweets of spring season.²¹ In the course of their conversation, Gadhi asked his guest, “Why is it sage, that you are so thin and lean and appear to lie so very weary?”

²² The guest replied, “Sage, hear me explain the cause of both my leanness and weariness. I will tell you the true facts, not like a travelling teller of tales, deals and lies.”

²³ “In this land, in the forest tracts of the north, there is the great kingdom of Kirapura which is

renowned for its riches.²⁴ I lived in the city there and was honored by its inhabitants. My soul and mind were mightily pleased with the variety of dainty foods that I used to get there.²⁵ There someone told me by way of gossip that a tribal had once been the king of that country for eight years.²⁶ I asked the village people whether this report was true, and they all told me with one voice that a tribal had really ruled there for full eight years.²⁷ But at last, being discovered as such, he immolated himself on a burning pyre, which was followed by the self-immolation of hundreds of brahmins on their funeral pyres.

²⁸ “Hearing this news from their mouths, I departed from that district, intending, O brahmin, to do penance by making a pilgrimage to Prayaga [*because the brahmin had polluted himself staying and eating in a city once ruled by a tribal*].²⁹ I made my *chandrayana* fast for three days and nights and broke my fast only today. This is why I have become so thin and lean as you now find me.”

³⁰ Vasishta said:—

On hearing this, Gadhi asked a hundred questions of his guest about the matter, to which all his guest's answers verified what had happened.³¹ Gadhi was quite surprised at this story and passed the night till sunrise with his heart throbbing.³² Waking in the morning, he made his sacred bath and discharged his morning prayers. Then he took leave of his guest and began to reflect with bewildered understanding.

³³ He said to himself, “What I saw in my delusion is ratified as a fact by my brahmin guest. I am puzzled to think whether this is magic or a fascination of the conjurer Sambara.³⁴ What I saw about my death among my relatives was undoubtedly a delusion of my mind. But the latter part of my vision (of becoming a tribal) is verified by the brahmin's observance of the *chandrayana* penance for having entered the tribal's city.³⁵ Therefore I must fully learn the details about this tribal and proceed immediately to the land of Bhuta district with an undaunted mind.”

³⁶ Thus determined, Gadhi arose to visit the distant district, just as the sun rises over the horizon to visit all sides of Mount Sumeru.³⁷ He travelled onward and at last reached sight of the country he had seen in his dream, like intelligent wayfaring men reach their desired destinations in distant regions.

³⁸ Finding everything, however unattainable it may first appear, to be attained by perseverance, Gadhi resolved to test of the truth of his delusive dream.³⁹ He left his home with the swiftness of a stream flooded in rainy weather and traversed many unknown countries, like a cloud passing over distant kingdoms on the back of its airy steed.⁴⁰ At last he came to the country of the Bhutas, a people following their own debased customs. He thought he was among a savage people, like a camel searching for thorny thistles is confounded to find it has fallen in a karanja forest.

⁴¹ There he saw a city like he had seen in his delusion. In every respect it resembled a place where the gandharva race lived.⁴² Proceeding onward, he saw on the other side the land of the tribals which resembled the hell pit of the underworld.⁴³ It was as spacious as the place he had seen in his vision. He saw his own likeness in the dream appearing in the figures of the tribals, just as one sees the shape of a gandharva or ghost in his dream or delirium.⁴⁴ In that dwelling place of tribals he saw with grief and coldness of his mind what he had seen before in his delusion.⁴⁵ He saw his own hut flooded by rainwater and overgrown with sprouts of barley and brambles. His hut was left roofless and his

bedstead was almost indiscernible.⁴⁶ His hut presented the picture of poverty and wretchedness. Its compound was a scene of ruin and desolation.

⁴⁷ Gadhi stood long gazing upon the dry white bones of bulls, cows, buffaloes and horses that lay strewn over the ground around his hut. He remembered they were the remains of the beasts of his prey and slaughter.⁴⁸ He saw the dry hollow skulls lying on the ground which had served as his eating and drinking vessels and which still lay unmoved on the spot, filled with rainwater.⁴⁹ He saw strings of dried entrails from the beasts he had slaughtered lying like parched plants on the ground and pining with thirst for rainwater.

⁵⁰ Gadhi, who was conscious of himself as the brahmin, looked long at his former house and its environs, resembling the dry and dilapidated skeleton of a human body lying unburied on open ground.⁵¹ He stood amazed at what he saw, then withdrew to an adjacent village, as when a traveler returns to the land of the Aryans after a journey in the land of barbarians.

⁵² There he asked a person, "Sage, do you remember anything concerning the former state of that village and the lives of its tribal inhabitants?⁵³ I have heard all good people say that knowledgeable men are familiar with the history of all places which they know like the backs of their hands.⁵⁴ If you know anything about a good old tribal that lived in that village, and if you remember his adventures, as every one does the past accidents of his own life,⁵⁵ and if you are acquainted with the details, then please relate them to me. For it is said there is great merit in directing a stranger and in dispelling the doubts of one hanging in suspense."

⁵⁶ The brahmin who was a stranger asked such questions of the village people one by one. They were as surprised at his odd questions as physicians are at a patient's strange complaints.⁵⁷ The villagers said, "It is an undeniable truth, O brahmin, as you say, that a tribal of hideous shape named Katanja lived at that place.⁵⁸ He was burdened by a large family consisting of his sons, grandsons, friends and servants. He also had other relatives and kinsmen. His children were as many as fruit on a mango tree.⁵⁹ But cruel fate snatched all his family in course of time, like a fire burning down a mountain forest with all its fruits and flowers."

⁶⁰ "Then he left his native land and went to the city of Kira where he became king and reigned there for eight years.⁶¹ Afterwards, the citizens came to know of his mean origin and drove him away, just as they remove a harmful and poisonous tree from a garden.⁶² He, seeing others immolating themselves on funeral pyres, entered a burning pyre which he had prepared for himself, and thus was purified with others by the sacred fire Pavaka."

⁶³ "But tell us, O brahmin, why you are so curious about the tribal? Was he a friend of yours?"

⁶⁴ Being approached in this manner, Gadhi made many more inquiries concerning the tribal, and passed a whole month in several of their houses asking questions.⁶⁵ He told the village people everything that he knew of the tribal in his dream, and they listened to him attentively relating the whole story from first to last.

⁶⁶ Gadhi being informed of all the particulars regarding the tribal, both from the hearsay of the people as well as from his personal observations, returned home equally ashamed and astonished with the disgraceful memory of his past vileness, which was stamped like the black spot of the moon upon the

tablet of his mind.

Chapter 48 — Gadhi Verifies His Dream Again; Vishnu Explains the Wonderful Power of Illusion

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Gadhi was bewildered with all that he heard and saw about the tribal and his home. He felt uneasy and wanted to learn more. ² He went back to the village and saw the huts that lay scattered upon the plain, as when the lotus-born Brahma looks over the ruins made by the great deluge at the end of a kalpa age.

³ He thought to himself, “Those bones lying scattered about the ruined huts in this forest look like little pisacha ghosts gathered round the trees standing on a burial ground. ⁴ These posts and pegs of elephant’s tusks fastened on the walls of ruined houses look like the crags of Mount Meru drowned under the waters of the kalpa deluge. ⁵ Here the tribal feasted on monkey flesh dressed with young bamboo sprouts. There he caroused with his country grog in company with his drunken friends. ⁶ Here he slept on his bed of lion’s skin in the embrace of his murky spouse, drunk with liquor mixed with ichor fluid from elephant noses. ⁷ There a pack of hounds used to be tied to the trunk of the withered bharaeda tree, fed with the rotten flesh of putrid carcasses. ⁸ Here I see three earthen vessels covered with buffalo hide resembling fragments of dark clouds and which had once contained precious pearls falling from the sculls of slain elephants.”

⁹ “I see the place I saw in my dream where tribal children played in the dust with as much glee and gaiety as cuckoos flitting on the tufts of mango leaves. ¹⁰ I see the place I saw in my vision where children sang to the tune of their bamboo pipes, drank the milk of bitches, and decorated themselves with flowers from funeral grounds. ¹¹ Here the families of wedding parties met to celebrate their marriage festivity, dancing and singing as loudly as the noise of the dashing waves of the sea. ¹² There I find bamboo cages, still suspended high, which used to be laid to catch flying birds for food.

¹³ Vasishta resumed:—

Thus Gadhi remained for a long time in that place, seeing all what he remembered to have seen in his dream. He was lost in wonder to think on the miraculous disclosure of these things in his dream.

¹⁴ Then he left and for a long time travelled through many countries beyond the boundaries of Bhuta district. ¹⁵ He passed over many rivers and rocks and through many deserts and forests until he reached the snowy mountain and the lands of humankind beyond its borders. ¹⁶ He arrived at Kira, the city of a great monarch, its towers rising like hills upon the earth. There he stopped after his long journey, like when sage Narada rests in his heavenly dome after the fatigue of travelling through numerous worlds. ¹⁷ In that city he saw all the places that matched the romantic thoughts in his mind, the ones he had seen and enjoyed in his dream.

He respectfully asked some residents, ¹⁸ “Good sirs, do you remember anything about the tribal king who reigned here for sometime? If you do, please tell me in its proper order.”

¹⁹ The locals replied, “Yes, O brahmin. There reigned here a tribal king for full eight years. He was elected to its government by kingdom’s auspicious elephant. ²⁰ In the end, he was discovered to be of so vile a race that he committed self-immolation on a funeral pyre. It has been a dozen years since that dire event took place.” ²¹ In this way the inquisitive Gadhi continued asking questions of every man he

met, and was satisfied to learn the same information from the mouths of everybody there.

²² Then he saw the king of that city in procession with his body guards and vehicles on their way going out of the city. Gadhi recognized them as none other than the god Vishnu and his attendants, just as he had seen in his tapas. ²³ He saw the sky shadowed by the cloud of dust raised by the feet of the passing procession, then he remembered with sadness the similar state of his pomp under his own past reign.

²⁴ He thought to himself, "Here are the same Kira ladies with their rosy skins resembling lotus petals, and those with their bodies blazing as liquid gold, their blue eyes trembling like blue lotuses. ²⁵ The waving of fans flash with the light of bright moonbeams and resembles the falling waters of a cascade and clusters of kasa flowers. ²⁶ Beautiful maidens waving snow-white fans in their beautiful hands resemble forest plants with pearly flowers on their branches. ²⁷ Rows of furious elephants standing on both sides of the field are like thick lines of kalpa trees growing on ridges of Sumeru Mountain."

²⁸ "These chieftains resemble the gods Yama, Kubera and Varuna, the lord of waters. They are like the rulers of the different quarters of the sky accompanying Indra, the lord of heaven. ²⁹ These long lines of good buildings, each full with a great variety of things and abounding in all sorts of comforts, resemble a grove of wish-fulfilling kalpa trees conferring all the objects of desire. ³⁰ In this royal city of Kira, and in the manners of its assembled people, I see exactly the same customs and usages as those of the kingdom of Kirapura in my past life."

³¹ "Truly this is only a vision in my dream which appears as a reality in my waking state. I cannot understand why this delusive magic show is spread out before me. ³² O yes, I am as fast bound by my ignorance and captivated by my memories like a captive bird in a net that has lost all power over itself. ³³ O fie. My silly mind is so deluded by its desires that it is always mistakes shadow for substance, or people dwelling in their castles in the air."

³⁴ "This is extraordinary magic. I believe Vishnu, the holder of the discus, is showing me this. I remember I asked him for the favor of showing delusion (*maya*) to me. ³⁵ Now I will undertake austere tapas in the cavern of a hill in order to learn the origin and existence of delusion."

³⁶ Having long thought in this manner, Gadhi left the city and came to a cave in a mountain where he rested after all his travels and mental exertions, like a lion tired with his roaming for food. ³⁷ He remained there for a whole year, living only on water from waterfalls collected in the hollow of his palm. He devoted himself to the worship of Vishnu, the holder of the bow named Saringi.

³⁸ Then the lotus-eyed god appeared to him in his pale blue form, which was clear and graceful to sight as a clear lake in autumn with blue lotuses in full bloom. ³⁹ With this form, the god approached the hermit's cell in the mountain and stood over it like a transparent, watery cloud rests on humid atmosphere. ⁴⁰ The lord spoke to him saying, "Gadhi, you have fully seen the great spell of my magic and know the network of delusion which destiny spreads over all the affairs of this world. ⁴¹ Now you well understand the nature of delusion, which in your heart you did desire to know. What is it again that you want to know through these austerities in this mountain cave?"

⁴² Vasishta said:—

Gadhi the best of brahmins, seeing Vishnu addressing him in this manner, honored him duly by scattering plentiful flowers at his divine feet.⁴³ After Gadhi had made his offering of flowers, with due obeisance and circumambulating the god, he addressed the god with words as sweet as the notes of a chataka cuckoo to a blooming lotus.

⁴⁴ Gadhi said, "Lord! I have seen the dark delusion that you showed me in her form of gloom. Now I pray that you show her to me in her fair form, like the sun appearing after the gloom of night.⁴⁵ The mind weakened by the dirt of its desires sees a great many errors rising before it like false phantoms and visions in a dream. But my Lord, how is it that the same visions continue to be seen in the waking state?⁴⁶ When I stood in the waters I experienced a false dream that I thought lasted only a moment. How was it, O enlightener of the mind, that it became manifest to my outward sense and sight?⁴⁷ Why wasn't the delusion of my birth and death as a tribal, which took place long ago, confined only to my memory like other idle creations of the brain? How could I have recently verified my delusions as tangible to my naked eyes by many visible signs?"

⁴⁸ The Lord replied:—

Gadhi, it is the nature of delirium, like one's desires, to present many false appearances to view and to make one believe what he has never seen before to be present to his external sight, which in reality is only a vision of his mind.

⁴⁹ There is nothing like the earth, sea, hills or sky on the outside of anybody. They are all contained in the mind like the fruit, flowers and leaves of trees are born in the seed and grow from its germ.⁵⁰ Like fruit and flowers growing out of the seed and its sprout, this earth and all other things are the productions of the mind alone. They are not distinct from it in their essences.⁵¹ Know for certain that this earth and all other things are situated in the mind and not outside of it, just as fruit, flowers and leaves are all contained inside the seed and not outside.

⁵² The sight of things present and the thoughts of the absent past and unseen future are all only acts of the mind, just as the making and unmaking of pots are the doings of the potter.⁵³ Whatever notions exist in the minds of men from their youth to old age are the same as the phantoms of their dreams or the deliriums of their intoxication or some mental disease.⁵⁴ The established desires of the mind present a thousand appearances before its sight, just as the rooted plants on earth abound with fruit and flowers of various kinds.⁵⁵ But when plants are uprooted, there remains no trace of fruit or flower or leaf upon the ground. So desires having been driven out of the mind, there is no more any trace of anything left behind, nor is there any probability of future reincarnations when the memory of the past is utterly obliterated from the soul.

⁵⁶ It is no wonder for the shifting stage of the mind to present you with a single scene of the tribal. It has in store and can with equal ease show you an infinity of appearances at its pleasure.⁵⁷ The impression in your mind made you think of yourself as the tribal, in the manner that many phantoms arise before the mind in the delirium of a sick person.⁵⁸ The same frenzy made you see the arrival of your brahmin guest and entertain him with board and bed. All your conversations with him were only the fantasies of your mind.

⁵⁹ Then the thoughts of leaving home and arriving at Bhuta district, your sight of the Bhutas and their

villages and homes, were only aberrations of your mind.⁶⁰ Next your sight of the ruins of the former huts of Katanja and the descriptions of the tribal that you got from the mouths of the people were all the fumes of your fancy.⁶¹ Afterwards, your visit to the city of Kira and the tale told you of the tribal's rule by the people were the reflections of your own mind.

⁶² Thus all that you heard and saw was the network of your imagination. What you believe as true is as false as a fantasy in your brain.⁶³ The mind infatuated by its hopes and desires sees everything before it, no matter how distant it may be. One dreams of objects as present before him which would take a whole year for him to reach.⁶⁴ There was no guest or city, no Bhuta district or Kirapura that you saw in reality. It was all a daydream that you saw with your mind's eye.

⁶⁵ The truth is that at one time, on your way to the country of the Bhutas, you did stay in a mountain cave, like a stag resting in a forest after his long wandering.⁶⁶ There being tired from your travel, you fell into a sound sleep and dreamed of the Bhuta city and the tribal, all in your reverie without seeing anything in reality.⁶⁷ It was there and in the same state of mind that you saw the city of Kira. It was the delusion of your mind that showed you those things when you were performing your devotion in the water.⁶⁸ In this manner you saw many other things whenever you went anytime, just like one flying high sees everything all about him.

⁶⁹ Rise therefore and remain unshaken in the discharge of your duties without being misled by the changes of your mind. Because it is practice of one's profession that leads him to success, and not the ideals or his mind.

⁷⁰ Vasishta said:—

So saying the lotus navel Vishnu, who is worshipped by saints and sages in all places, went to his abode in the sea where he was received by the hands of gods and holy sages who led him to his residence.

Chapter 49 — Vishnu Instructs Gadhi to Do Ten Years of Tapas; He Attains Self Realization

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Vishnu being gone, Gadhi again began to wander about the Bhuta country like a cloud moving about in the air.² Having collected a great deal of information about himself in his life as a tribal, he again worshipped Vishnu in the cave of a mountain.³ In course of a short time, Vishnu appeared to him again, as it is his nature to be pleased with a little devotion made with sincerity of heart.

⁴ The god spoke to Gadhi with as pleasing a disposition as a watery cloud addresses a peacock. He asked him what he wanted again by his repeated devotion.⁵ Gadhi replied, “Lord, for these past six months I have again wandered about the countries of the Bhutas and Kiras. I have found no discrepancy between what they told me recently and what they told me the first time.⁶ Lord, you told me that all this was mere delusion. I know the words of the great serve to dissipate and not increase the delusion.”

⁷ Lord Vishnu said:—

It often happens that many things occur simultaneously, like a crow landing on a coconut tree and a coconut falling. The idea of the tribal was a contemporary growth in the minds of all the Bhutas and Kiras as of yourself.⁸ This is why they corresponded with your thoughts and related your story as you did reflect it yourself. Because a reflection of something cannot be otherwise at the same time.

⁹ It is true that a tribal built a hut at the edge of the village which you saw reduced to ruins. But it was your false conception to think you were the same man who built that house.¹⁰ Sometimes many perceive the same illusion. The multitude is led astray in many ways by simultaneous currents of the same opinions.¹¹ In this manner many men see the same dream at the same time, as the giddy heads of drunken men fall equally into the same kind of dizziness at the same time, seeing the earth and skies turning and rolling round them.¹² Many children are seen to join in the same sport at the same time, and a whole herd of male deer is observed to meet together in the same green field.¹³ Many men are seen simultaneously pursuing the same employment for the purpose of gaining the same object of their pursuit.

¹⁴ It is commonly said that time is the giver and obstructor of the objects of human pursuits, as of all other events. But time is as quiescent as the Supreme Spirit. People’s desires and efforts cause their desired effects.¹⁵ Time is a formless void. It is identical with the nature and form of the uncreated great Lord God himself. It neither gives or takes anything to or from anyone at anytime.¹⁶ Time according to its common reckoning of years, kalpas and yuga ages is classed among the categories of substance. But time is far from being a substance. It is the source of all substances.

¹⁷ Men of deluded understanding are subject to the errors arising from the same cause of their fallacy. It was owing to this false conception that the Bhuta and Kira people fell into the very same error.

¹⁸ Therefore employ yourself to do your duty, and try to know your true self. Get rid of the error of your personality, and move about as freely as I do by myself.

Vasishta speaking:—

¹⁹ Saying this, Lord Vishnu disappeared from his sight and Gadhi remained in his cave with great

perplexity of his mind.²⁰ He passed some months on the same hill, then resumed his tapas to Vishnu with redoubled fervency.²¹ He saw his god appearing again to his view, when he bowed down before him, and addressed him.

²² Gadhi said, "O Lord, I am quite bewildered with the thoughts of having been a tribal and my reflection on the delusions of this world.²³ Please free me from my errors and employ me to the only act of adoring the holy one."

²⁴ Lord Vishnu said:—

O brahmin, this world is a delusion like the enchantment of the conjurer Sambara. All things here are the wonderful productions of imagination and proceed from forgetfulness of the self.

²⁵ It was your error that made you see many things in your sleeping and waking dreams.²⁶ The Kiras were also led to see the same things as you, and to mistake those falsities as true owing to the same error laying hold of all of you at the same time.²⁷ Now hear me tell you the truth for your own good, whereby your error will fade away like a creeping plant in the chilly month of November.

²⁸ The tribal Katanja, the one you thought you were, was a man who previously had really existed in that same locality.²⁹ He was bereaved of his family and left that place to wander about in foreign lands. Then he became king of the Kiras, and afterwards immersed himself in fire.³⁰ This life of Katanja entered your mind when you were standing in the water performing your devotion. The thoughts of the whole career of the tribal completely engrossed your mind.

³¹ Things which are seen or thought of even once cannot escape memory. Sometimes it happens that the mind comes to see many things in its imagination which it has never seen before with its eyes.

³² Like a man's vision of a kingdom in his dream, and like the delirium caused by weakened humors of the body, the mind sees many daydreams and deliriums in its waking states also.

³³ The past conduct of Katanja presented itself to your mind just as past and future world events are present before the mental vision of an oracle seer.³⁴ That this is 'I' and these things and those friends are 'mine' are the mistakes of those who are devoid of their self-knowledge.³⁵ But that 'I am all in all' is the belief of the truly wise, which prevents them from falling into such mistakes. The belief of the wise in the generality of all persons and things keeps them from wrong notions of individualities and particularities.³⁶ This general and universal view of all things preserves people from the mistaken notions of pleasure and pain, and makes a drowning wretch as buoyant as a floating gourd or bottle tied to a sinking net.

³⁷ But you are entangled in the snare of your desires. You are lost to your good sense. You cannot be at your perfect ease as long as you suffer the symptoms of your sickness.³⁸ Because of your imperfect knowledge you are incapable of warding off the errors of your mind, just as it is impossible for a man to protect himself from rain without effort to build a shelter for himself.³⁹ You are easily susceptible of every impression of your untutored mind, just as a small tree is easily over-reached by a tall person.

⁴⁰ The heart is the axis of the wheel of delusion (*maya*). If you can stop the motion of this central power, there is nothing to disturb you anymore.⁴¹ Now rise and return to the sacred covered shelter

on this mountain and there perform your austerities for a full ten years with a steady mind so that you may attain your perfect knowledge at the end of this period.

Vasishta speaking:—

⁴² So saying, the lotus-eyed god disappeared from that place, as a flimsy cloud or candle-light or the wave of Jamuna is put out by a slight gust of wind.

⁴³ Gadhi gradually gained dispassion by means of his discrimination, like trees fading away for lack of moisture at the end of autumn. ⁴⁴ Getting rid of his mind's wanderings, Gadhi reflected upon and blamed himself for fostering the false thoughts of the tribal and the like. ⁴⁵ Then with his heart melting in pity and sorrow for himself, he returned to the Rishya-mukha mount to undertake his tapas. He sat there like a rainy cloud stopping on the top of a mountain. ⁴⁶ He gave up all his desires and performed his austere penance. After completing ten years of tapas, he attained Self realization.

⁴⁷ Having obtained knowledge of his self like the great soul Brahma, and getting rid of his fears and sorrows in this world of retribution, he wandered about with the joy of a living liberated being with perfect tranquility of his mind, resembling the serene light of the full moon revolving in the sphere of the sky.

Chapter 50 — Live in the Present; Trust Consciousness; Control Mind, Heart & Greed

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Rama, know this delusion is as extensive in its form as it is inexplicable in its nature. It is filled with ignorance. It is a spiritual illusion and not any conscious deception.² Consider the brahmin's false dream that lasted a couple of hours and his transformation into a tribal which lasted for many years.

³ Observe how the brahmin's false conception appeared as real to his physical senses, and see how the false thought appeared true to him, his true knowledge of himself vanishing at last into untruth.

⁴ Therefore I say that this illusion is utterly inexplicable in its nature. How it leads the unguarded mind to a great many errors and difficulties and dangers!

⁵ Rama asked, "How sage, can we put a stop to the wheel of delusion? Its rapid rotation constantly grinds every part of our body."

⁶ Vasishta said:—

Know Rama, this revolving world is the wheel of delusion and the human heart is the axis of this great wheel which, by its continuous rotation, produces all this delusion within its circle.⁷ If by your courageous efforts you can put a stop to the motion of your heart, as it were by fixing a peg to the loop-hole of the wheel, you immediately stop the rotation of the circle of delusion.⁸ The mind is the center of the wheel of ignorance. If you can stop its motion by tying it tightly with the rope of your good sense, you escape the danger of falling into the dizzying rotation of errors.

⁹ Rama, you are well skilled in the martial art of hurling the discus. You cannot be ignorant of preventing its motion by stopping it at the central hole.¹⁰ Therefore, O Rama, be diligent and stop the center of your mind. Thereby you will be able to preserve yourself, both from the revolution of the world and changeable difficulties of time.¹¹ The soul who rejects this counsel is exposed to interminable misery. By keeping this counsel always before the sight of the mind, you avoid all difficulties in this world.

¹² There is no other medicine for anybody to heal the disease of his worldliness, except by restraining the mind at its own pivot.¹³ Therefore, O Rama, give up your acts of holy pilgrimage and observances of austerity and charity. Keep the mind under your control to attain your supreme joy.

¹⁴ The world is situated in the mind, just as air is confined in a pot. But the mind being restricted to itself, the world is lost to it, just as when the pot just broken, the air inside escapes and mixes in endless emptiness.¹⁵ You who are forever confined in the imaginary world of your mind, like a gnat trapped in the hollow of a pot, will get your release only by breaking out of this confinement, like the gnat flying into open air.

¹⁶ The way to rid the delusions of the mind is to fix your attention only to the present moment, and not employ your thoughts about past or future events.¹⁷ Then you will arrive to the state of that spiritual detachment called indifference when you immediately cease to pursue any of the objects of your desires or imagination.

¹⁸ The mind is hidden as long as it has the mist of its desires and fancies flying over it, just as the sky is overcast as long as watery clouds spread over it.¹⁹ As long as the intelligent soul is joined with the

faculty of the mind, it is subject to its gross desires and thickening retinue of its fancies, just as the sky is filled with bright moonbeams as long as the moon shines in it.²⁰ When the intelligent soul is known without the medium of the mind, then the existence of the world is rooted out from the mind, like trees burnt down to their roots.

²¹ The intelligence that does not belong to the mind is called discernment. It has a nature unconnected with thoughts or desires and is free from the foulness of the fumes of fancy.²² Discernment is truly the state of truth and of true joy. It is the true state of spirituality. It is an omniscience having all-clear vision of its own and seeing all things in itself. It is quite unconnected with any mental operation and it is enlightened by the light of the spirit.

²³ Whenever the mind is active it invariably is accompanied by desires and the senses of pleasure and pain. Feelings and passions accompany the mind just as the ravens accompany a cremation ground.

²⁴ The minds of the intelligent are not without action, but they are aloof from feelings of desire by their knowledge of the vanity of earthly things. Though these feelings are contained like plants in the seed vessel of their mind, yet they are not allowed to germinate in its sterile soil.

²⁵ The wise have come to know the insubstantiality and uncertainty of all worldly things and events by their knowledge of the natures of things, by their acquaintance with the scriptures, by their association with holy men, and by their habitual observance of the practices of a pious and saintly life.²⁶ They have forcibly withdrawn their minds from ignorance by their determined efforts to gain the true knowledge of things. They have strenuously applied them to the study of scriptures and the good conduct of righteous people.

²⁷ Only the pure soul has sight of the Supreme Spirit, just as a gem's brilliance makes it discernable in the waters of the deep and allows it to be distinguished from darkness.²⁸ As the soul naturally desires to get rid of things which it comes to know is attended with pain, so the soul is the sole cause of knowing the Supreme.²⁹ Therefore be free of your thoughts of all other things, both in your waking and sleeping states, and when you talk or think of anybody, give or receive nothing. Rely and reflect only on your consciousness. Constantly watch the secret admonitions and intuitions of your consciousness.³⁰ Whether when you are born or going to die, or do anything or live in this world, be steadily attentive to your conscious self and you will perceive the clear light of the soul.

³¹ Leave off thinking that this is "I" and that is another because all are alike before the Lord of all. Give up wishing this for yourself and that for others, for all things belong to God. Rely solely on the one, and that is your internal consciousness alone.

³² Be of one mind in your present and future states of life and continue to investigate into its various phases in your own consciousness.³³ In all the changes of your life from boyhood to youth and old age, and amidst all its changing scenes of prosperity and adversity, and also in the states of your waking, dreaming and sound sleep, remain faithful to your consciousness.

³⁴ Melt down your mind like a metal and purify it of its impurity of the impressions of external things. Break off the traps of your desires and depend on your awareness of yourself.³⁵ Get rid of the disease of your desire, of whatever is marked as good or bad for you, and turn your sight away from everything that may appear as favorable or unfavorable to you. Rely on your consciousness of pure

intelligence.

³⁶ Leave untouched whatever is tangible to touch and obtainable by your agency or instrumentality. Remain unchanged and unsupported by anything in the world and depend only upon your own consciousness. ³⁷ Think yourself as sleeping when you are awake. Remain as calm and quiet as if you are unconscious of anything. Think yourself as all and alone and as instinctively identical with the Supreme Spirit. ³⁸ Think yourself to be free from the changing and unchanging states of life. Though engaged in business, think of yourself as disengaged from all concerns.

³⁹ Forsake the feelings of your egoism (mine) and non-egoism (others). Be undivided from the rest of the world by thinking yourself to be the macrocosm of the cosmos. Support yourself on the diamond hard rock of your consciousness by remaining unshaken at all events. ⁴⁰ Continue to cut off the meshes of the net of your internal desires by the agency of your intellect and its helpmate patience. Be of the profession of belonging to no profession.

⁴¹ The sweet taste of trusting in the true faith of consciousness converts even the poison of false faiths to ambrosia. ⁴² The great error of taking the false world for true prevails only when the mind forgets to remember the pure and undivided self-consciousness. ⁴³ Again, the great error of the substantiality of the world is put to an end when the mind places its trust in the immaculate and undivided consciousness.

⁴⁴ One who has passed over the great gulf of his desires and known the true nature of his soul has his consciousness shining within himself with the full blaze of the bright sun. ⁴⁵ One who knows the nature of his soul and is settled in the transcendental bliss of knowing the peerless one finds the most nectar-like food as a poison to him. ⁴⁶ We revere those men who have known the nature of the soul, have reached their spiritual state, and know the rest bearing the name of men are no better than asses in human shape.

⁴⁷ Behold devotees going from hill to hill and wandering like big bodied elephants to perform their devotions. They are far below the spiritual being who sits as high above them like on the top of the mountain. ⁴⁸ The sight of consciousness reaching heavenward, beyond the limits of all regions to the unseen and invisible God, derives no help from the light of the sun or the moon. ⁴⁹ The lights of the luminaries fade away like candlelight before the sight of consciousness which sees the great lights of the sun and moon and all within the compass of its knowledge.

⁵⁰ He who has known the truth of God by means of his practice of yoga and self-sacrifice stands highest above the rest of men in the greatness of his soul. He is distinguished from others by the brightness of his body. ⁵¹ Like Him whose brightness shines on us in the light of the sun, moon, stars, gems and fire, the best of men shine among mankind in their knowledge of what is knowable and to be known.

⁵² Those who are ignorant of truth are viler than asses and other brute creatures that live on the land. They are meaner than the mean insects that dwell in holes in the ground. ⁵³ As long as an embodied being is ignorant of spiritual knowledge, he is said to be a devil of darkness. But as soon as is he acquainted with his soul and united with his self in his reasoning, he is recognized as a spiritual being.

⁵⁴ The unspiritual man is tossed about on earth like a carcass and is consumed with the fuel of his cares, like a dead body burned away by the flames of its funeral fire. But the spiritual being who knows the nature of his soul is aware of only his immortality. ⁵⁵ Spiritual wisdom flies far away from a man whose heart is hardened in this world, just as the glory of sunshine is lost under the shadow of thickening clouds. ⁵⁶ Therefore the mind is to be gradually curbed and contracted in itself by a dislike of all earthly enjoyments. The knower of his self, by long practice of abstinence, should try to deprive his spirit of its moisture to the dryness of a faded leaf.

⁵⁷ The mind is thickened and fattened by consolidating itself with those of others and staining it with affections of wife, children, relations and friends. ⁵⁸ Passions and feelings are often the causes of the denseness and impassivity of the mind: its egotism and selfishness, gaiety and impurity of thoughts, and its changing tempers and affections. But what feeds its gross density the most is the sense of meism and that "this is mine." ⁵⁹ The mind is swollen by coming to prosperity, by the deadly pains of old age and infirmity, and by the poisonous pangs of penury and miserliness. ⁶⁰ The mind grows lusty in its expectation of some good and under the afflictions of disease and danger. It grows stronger with enduring what is intolerable and doing what ought not to be done.

⁶¹ The heart, too, becomes stronger with its affection for others and with its desire to gain riches and jewels. It becomes lusty with its craving for women and in having whatever is pleasant to it for the moment. ⁶² The heart, like a snake, is swollen huge by feeding on false hopes like air, and by breathing the empty air of passing delights and pleasures. It is pampered by drinking the liquor of fleeting hope, and moves about in the course of its endless expectations. ⁶³ The heart is staunch in its enjoyment of pleasures, however injurious they are in their nature. Though situated inside the body, yet the heart is subject to brooding in disease and uneasiness and under a variety of pains and changes. ⁶⁴ A multitude of thoughts grows in the heart of the body, like a clump of orchids in the hollow of a tree. These bear the budding blossoms of hope and desire and hang down with the flowers and fruit of death and disease.

⁶⁵ Do not delay. Use the sharp saw of your reason to cut off the huge trunk of the poisonous tree of greed which has risen as high as a hill in the cavity of your heart. Do not to put off pruning the big branch of your hope and its leaves of desires. ⁶⁶ The elephant-like heart sits with its infuriated eyes in the solitary recess of the body. It is equally fond of its ease and its carnal gratification. It longs to look at the lotus bed of the learned as it does to meet a field of sugarcanes composed of fools and dunces.

⁶⁷ Rama, like a lion, the monarch of the forest, you should destroy your elephant-like heart seated in the wilderness of your body with the sharp saws of your understanding. Break the protruding tusks of its passions in the same manner as they break down all big bodies. ⁶⁸ Drive away the crow-like hungry heart, from within the nest of your bosom. It is fond of frequenting filthy places, like ravens hovering over funeral grounds and crows squatting in dirty spots, fattening their bodies by feeding on the flesh of rotten carcasses. The heart is cunning in its craft and too cruel in its acts. It uses its lips like the bills of the crow, only to hurt others, and is as one-eyed as the crow, looking only to its own selfish interest. The mind is black all over its body for its black purposes and deeds. ⁶⁹ Drive your raven-like heart far away. It sits heavy on the tree of your soul, intent on its wicked purposes and grating the ear with its jarring sound. It flutters everywhere at the scent of putrid bodies, to pollute its

nest with foul putrescence of evil intents.

⁷⁰ There is a destructive, hideous greed wandering at large like a demon, lurking in ambush in the dark cavity of the heart as in a dreary desert. It assumes a hundred forms and appears in a hundred shapes pursuing its habitual courses in darkness ⁷¹ unless and until you drive away this wicked demon of your heart from the abode of your intelligent soul. Unless you drive it away with your discrimination, dispassion, and power of mantras and tantras, you cannot expect to be successful in your endeavors.

⁷² Moreover there is the serpent-like mind hidden under the skin of the body. With its poisonous thoughts, frothing at the mouth like the destructive venom of mankind, it is continually breathing in and out like a pair of bellows, like a snake for the destruction of all other persons. ⁷³ O Rama, you must subdue this great serpent of the mind that lies hidden in a cell of the cellular simal tree of your body. Use some mantra formula pronounced by the garuda of your intelligence, and thus be free from all fear and danger forever.

⁷⁴ O Rama, repress your vulture-like heart that bears a greed for dead bodies that cannot be satisfied. It flies about everywhere annoyed by hungry crows and kites. It rests in desolate cemeteries. ⁷⁵ It ransacks all quarters in quest of its meat of living and dead bodies, and lifts its neck to watch for its prey when it is sitting silently with patience. The vulture-like heart flies far away from its resting tree of the body and must be diligently restrained from its flight.

⁷⁶ The monkey mind wanders through forests everywhere, and passing quickly beyond the area of its birth in search of fruit, it outruns the bounds of its native land and country. Thus being bound to nowhere, he derides the multitudes that are bound to the toils of their homes, confined to their native climate and soil. ⁷⁷ The big monkey mind that plays on the tree of the body, its eyes and nose like the flowers of the tree and having arms for its branches and fingers for its leaves, ought to be checked for one's success in anything.

⁷⁸ The illusion of the mind rises like a cloud with the mists of error. It lays waste to the good harvest of spiritual knowledge. It flashes forth lightning from its mouth to burn down everything and not to give light on the way. Its showers damage upon ripened crops and it opens the door of desire. ⁷⁹ Give up seeking the objects of your desire which are situated in the airy region of your mind. Exert your energy to drive off the cloud of your mind in order to obtain the great object of your aim.

⁸⁰ The mind is as a long rope that binds mankind to their constant acts. It is impossible to break or burn its knots in any way except by one's self knowledge. Its bond of reincarnation is painful to all until they obtain their final emancipation. ⁸¹ O Rama, use your lack of desire to boldly break the bondage of your mind that is bound fast in an infinite number of bodies to the chain of their reincarnation. Enjoy your freedom without any fear for evermore.

⁸² Know greed is like a venomous snake that destroys its devotees by the poison of its breath and never yields to the good counsel of anybody. This serpent has ruined mankind by its deceit and laying in wait for its prey. It emaciates the body to a stick. ⁸³ Greed hidden in the body lurks unseen in its cells. It is like a dark cobra in form. It must be burnt to death by the fire of detachment for your safety and security from all evil.

⁸⁴ Now put your heart to rest by the intelligence of your mind and gird yourself with the armor of

purity for your defense. Forsake your unsteady mind forever and remain like a tree that is not infested by the apes of passion.⁸⁵ Purify both your body and mind with the sanctity of your soul. Be fearless and quiet by the aid of your intelligence and clam composure of your consciousness. Think yourself as lighter and meaner than a straw and thus enjoy the sweets of this world by going across it to the state of transcendent bliss in this life.

Chapter 51 — The Story of Uddalaka: His Desire for Realization & the Cave

¹ Vasishta said:—

O Rama, have no reliance or confidence in the course of the mind, which is sometimes continuous and sometimes momentary, now even and flat and then sharp and acute, and often as treacherous as the edge of a razor.

² As the germ of consciousness sprouts in the field of the mind, O Rama who is a moral man, grow it by sprinkling the cold water of reason over its tender blades. ³ As long as the body of this plant does not fade away in course of time or roll upon the ground as the decayed and dead body of man, so long should you hold it up upon the prop of reason

⁴ Knowing the truth of what I say and pondering on its deep meaning, you will get a delight in your innermost soul like a serpent-killing peacock is ravished at the deep roaring of rain clouds. ⁵ Like sage Uddalaka, shake off your knowledge of fivefold materiality as the cause of all creation and accustom yourself to think more deeply with patient inquiry and reasoning on the prime cause of causes.

⁶ Rama asked, “Tell me sage, how did sage Uddalaka get rid of his thoughts of fivefold creation? How did he penetrate deeper into the original cause of all by the force and process of his reasoning?”

⁷ Vasishta replied:—

Rama, learn how sage Uddalaka of old rose higher from his investigation of fivefold matter to his inquiry into their cause, and how transcendent light dawned upon his mind.

⁸ In a spacious corner of this old house, the world, on the northwest side of this land, standing like a shed above surrounding rugged hills ⁹ there was the high tableland of Gandhamadana, full of camphor trees that continuously shed the odors of their flowers and pistils on the ground. ¹⁰ This place was frequented by birds of many colors and filled with plants at various kinds. Wild beasts lived in its banks and it was filled with flowers shining smilingly over the woodland scene. ¹¹ Some parts had bright swelling gems, and others blooming lotuses. Some parts were veiled by tufts of snow and others had crystal streams gliding like glassy mirrors. ¹² Here on the elevated top of a big cliff of this hill, studded with sarala trees and strewn with flowers up to the heels and shaded by the cooling shade of lofty trees, ¹³ there lived the silent sage named Uddalaka, a youth of a great mind with a great sense of honor.

Uddalaka had not attained his maturity when he undertook his rigorous austerity. ¹⁴ When his intellect first developed, the light of reason dawned upon his mind and he awakened to noble aims and expectations instead of arriving at the state of rest and quietude. ¹⁵ In this manner he undertook austerities, religious studies and observed his holy rites and duties. The genius of right reason appeared before him, just as a new year presents itself before the face of the world. ¹⁶ Then he began to reflect in the following manner, sitting as he was in solitude, weary with thoughts and terrified at the ever-changing state of the world.

Uddalaka thinking:—

¹⁷ What is that best of gains which once obtained leaves nothing else required for our rest? What can

be had which will lead us no more to reincarnate in this world? ¹⁸ When shall I find my permanent rest in the state of holy and transcendent thoughtlessness and remain above all the rest, like a cloud resting over the top of Sumeru Mountain or the polar star standing above the pole without changing its place?

¹⁹ When will my tumultuous desires of worldly increase and advancement merge in peaceful tranquility, just as loose, loud and noisy waves subside in the sea? ²⁰ When will the calm and unstirred composure of my mind secretly smile within to reflect on how mankind desires to do this thing after they have done the other, which leads them interminably in the circuit of their misery?

²¹ When will my mind be loosened from its noose of desire? When shall I remain unattached to everything, like a dew drop on a lotus-leaf?

²² When shall I get over the boisterous sea of my unsteady desires by the raft of my good understanding? ²³ When shall I laugh to scorn the foolish actions of worldly people as the silly play of children? ²⁴ When will my mind get rid of its desires and dislikes and cease swinging back and forth in the cradle of its choices and fancies? When will my mind return to its steadiness, as a madman is calmed after the fit of his delirium has passed away?

²⁵ When shall I receive my bright spiritual body and deride the course of the world? When shall I have my internal satisfaction, like the all knowing and all sufficient spirit of Virat (the Cosmic Being)? ²⁶ When shall I obtain calm stillness with internal equanimity, my soul serene and indifferent to external objects, like the sea after its release from churning? ²⁷ When shall I see the fixed scene of the world before me as a dream and keep myself aloof from it? ²⁸ When shall I see the inner and outer worlds as a fixed picture in my imagination? When shall I meditate on the whole in the light of an intellectual system?

²⁹ When shall I have calmness of mind and soul and become a perfectly intellectual being myself? When shall I have that supernatural light in me which enlightens the internal eye of those who are born blind? ³⁰ When will the sunshine of my meditation show me the pure light of my intellect, whereby I may see objects at a distance as I perceive the parts of time in me? ³¹ When shall I be free from my exertion and inertness towards the objects of my desires and dislikes? When shall I get self-satisfaction in my state of self-illumination? ³² When will this long and dark night of my ignorance come to its end? It is infested by my faults fluttering like the foreboding birds of night and infected with frost withering the lotus of my heart.

³³ When shall I become like a cold stone in a mountain cave and have the calm coolness of my mind in steady, unchanging samadhi? ³⁴ When will the elephant of my pride, ever giddy with its greatness, become prey to the lion of right understanding? ³⁵ When will the little forest birds build their nests of grass in my hair as I remain fixed in unalterable meditation, silence and samadhi? ³⁶ When will the birds of the air rest fearlessly on my bosom, as they do on the tops of fixed rocks, upon finding me sitting transfixed in my meditation and as still as a rock?

³⁷ Ah! When shall I pass over this lake of the world in which my desires and passions are like weeds and thorny brambles obstructing my passage to its borders of joy?

Vasishta speaking:—

³⁸ Immersed in these and similar reflections, twice-born Uddalaka sat in meditation in the forest.
³⁹ But as his silly, unsteady mind turned towards sensible objects in different ways, he did not obtain the state of attention which could render him happy. ⁴⁰ Sometimes his monkey-mind turned away from leaning to external objects and eagerly pursued the realities of the internal world or intellectual truths.
⁴¹ At other times his unsteady mind departed from the intangible things of the inner, intellectual world and fondly returned to outer objects mixed with poison. ⁴² He often saw the sunlight of spirituality rising within himself, and as often he turned his mind away from that golden prospect to the sight of gross objects.

⁴³ Leaving the soul in the gloom of internal darkness, the unrestrained mind flies as fast as a bird to the objects of sense outside. ⁴⁴ Thus turning from the inner to the outer world, and then from this to that again, his mind found its rest in the space lying between the light of the one and darkness of the other. ⁴⁵ Being thus perplexed in his mind, the meditative brahmin remained in his exalted cavern like a lofty tree shaken to and fro by a storm. ⁴⁶ He continued in his meditation like a man's attention is fixed upon an impending danger. His body shook to and fro, as if moved forward and backward by tiny waves splashing on the bank.

⁴⁷ Thus unsettled in his mind, the sage wandered about the hill like the god of day makes his daily rounds in his lonely course about Lokaloka Mountain. ⁴⁸ Wandering in this manner, he once saw a cave beyond the reach of all living beings. It was quiet and still as the liberated state of an anchorite.

⁴⁹ It was not disturbed by winds or frequented by birds or beasts. It was unseen by gods or gandharvas and it was as bright as heaven. ⁵⁰ It was covered with heaps of flowers and tender green grass. Being overlaid by a layer of moonstones, the floor of the cave seemed to be made of emerald.

⁵¹ It afforded cool and congenial shade, brightened by the mild light of the bright gems in its bosom. It looked like a secret haunt of woodland goddesses who chanced to play there. ⁵² The light of the gems spread over the ground was not too hot or too cold, but resembled the golden rays of the rising sun in autumn. ⁵³ This cave appeared like a new bride decorated with flowers holding a garland in her hand, her face fading under the light of lamps ornamented with gems and fanned by the soft whistling of winds.

⁵⁴ It was the abode of tranquility and the resting place of the lord of creation. It was charming by the variety of its blooming blossoms, and it was as soft and mild as the inside of a lotus.

Chapter 52 — Uddalaka Meditates and Reasons

¹ Vasishta resumed:—

The saintly Uddalaka entered that cave in Gandhamadana Mountain like a bee flying round and round enters the lotus-cell in the course of its romantic wandering.² To pursue his intense meditation, he entered the cave and sat inside, just as when the lotus-born creator retires and rests in seclusion after finishing his work of creation.

³ He made a seat for himself by spreading fresh tree leaves on the ground, like Indra spreading his carpet of many layers of clouds.⁴ Over the leaves he spread his deerskin, as the bedding of stars is laid over by the blue clouds of heaven.⁵ He sat upon it in his meditative mood, with the watchfulness of his mind, just as when an empty and light cloud alights on the top of Rishyasringa Mountain.⁶ He sat firmly in lotus posture like Buddha, his face turned upwards, his two legs and feet covering his private parts, his palms and fingers counting the prayer of Brahma.⁷ He restrained the fleet deer of his mind from the desires to which it ran by fits and starts. Then he reflected in the following manner in order to have unaltered steadiness of mind.

Uddalaka thinking:—

⁸ O my senseless mind, why are you occupied in worldly acts to no purpose when the sensible never engage themselves in what proves to be their destruction afterwards?⁹ He who forsakes his peaceful tranquility to pursue pleasure is like one who quits a grove of mandara flowers in order to enter a forest of poisonous plants.¹⁰ You may hide yourself in some cave of the earth, or find a place in the highest abode of Brahma, yet you can not have your quiet without the stillness of your spirit.

¹¹ Stop seeking the objects of your desire. They are beset by difficulties and produce your grief and anxiety. Fly from these to lay hold of your chief good, which you shall find only in your solitary retirement.¹² These different objects of your fancy or liking, so temporary in their nature, are all for your misery and of no real good at anytime.¹³ Why do you follow, like a fool, the hollow sound of some fancied good which has nothing substantial in it? It is like the great glee of frogs at the noise of clouds that promise them nothing.

¹⁴ All this time you have been wandering with your unsteady heart in blind pursuit after profit and pleasure. But tell me, what great boon has booted you out to all your ramblings about the earth?

¹⁵ Why do you not fix your mind to that stillness which promises to give you your self-sufficiency, and in which you may find your rest as liberated in your lifetime?

¹⁶ O my foolish heart, why are you roused at the sound of some good that reaches your ears? Why are you led by your deluded mind towards that sound and fall victim to it, like a deer deceived by the hunter's horn and trapped in the snare?¹⁷ Beware, O foolish man! Do not allow carnal desire to take possession of your breast and lead you to your destruction, just as the male elephant, deceived by the artful female elephant, is made to fall into a pit.¹⁸ Do not be misled by your desire of taste to stuff yourself with bitter poison as sweets, or bite the fatal bait that hooks the foolish fish to its destruction.

¹⁹ Do not let your fondness for bright and beautiful objects bewitch you to your ruin, like a bright light inviting a silly moth to its destruction.²⁰ Do not let your attraction to sweet smells tempt you to your ruin, or entice you like poor bees to the flavor of the elephant's nose secretion only to be crushed by

its trunk.

²¹ See how deer, bees, moths, elephants and fish are destroyed by their addiction to the gratification of a single sense. Consider the great danger to which a foolish man is exposed by his desire of satisfying all his unmanageable senses and organs. ²² O my heart, it is you yourself who stretches the snare of your desires for your own entanglement, just as the silk worm weaves its own cocoon with its own saliva for its own imprisonment. ²³ Be cleansed of all your impure desires and become as pure and clear as a autumn cloud. When you are fully cleansed and lifted up like a cloud, you are free from all bondage.

²⁴ You know the course of this world is pregnant with the rise and fall of mankind and in the end produces only the pangs of disease and death, yet you are still addicted to it for your destruction.

²⁵ But why do I vainly admonish my heart? It is only by reasoning with the mind that men are able to govern their hearts. ²⁶ As long as gross ignorance rules the mind, the heart remains in its state of dullness. As long as the earth is covered with mist and frost, the upper skies are shrouded in rain clouds. ²⁷ But as soon as the mind is cleared of its ignorance, the heart becomes lighter, like frost covering the earth disappears when the rain clouds disperse. ²⁸ As the heart becomes lighter and purer through the mind's act of reasoning, so I expect its desires to grow weaker and thinner, like the light and fleeting clouds of autumn.

²⁹ Admonition to the unrighteous proves to be as fruitless as blowing winds against falling rain.

³⁰ Therefore, I shall try to rid myself of this false and vacant ignorance. The scriptures admonish to use all means to get rid of ignorance.

³¹ I find myself to be the inextinguishable lamp of consciousness without my egoism or any desire in myself. I have no relation with false ignorance which is the root of egoism. ³² That this is "I" and that is another are the false suggestions of our delusive ignorance. Like an epidemic disease, ignorance presents us with such fallacies for our destruction. ³³ It is impossible for the slender and finite mind to comprehend the nature of the infinite soul, just as it is impossible for an elephant to be contained within the shell of a bilva fruit.

³⁴ I cannot follow the dictate of my heart which is a wide and deep cave containing the desires that cause all our miseries. ³⁵ What is this delusive ignorance which, like the mistakes of juvenile boys, creates the blunder of viewing the self-existent one in the different lights of "I", "you", "he" and other personalities. ³⁶ I have analyzed my body at each atom from head to foot, but in no part of it have I found what we call the "I" and what makes my personality. ³⁷ That which is the "I am" fills the whole universe and is the only one in all the three worlds. It is the unknowable consciousness, omnipresent and yet apart from all. ³⁸ Its magnitude is not to be known, nor does it have any name of its own. It is neither the one nor the other, nor an immensity nor minuteness. ³⁹ It is unknowable by the light of the Vedas. Ignorance of it causes misery and must be destroyed by the light of reason.

⁴⁰ This is the flesh of my body and this is its blood. These are the bones and this is the whole body. These are my breaths, but where is that "I" situated? ⁴¹ Its pulsation is the effect of vital breath and its sensation is the action of the heart. Decay and death also accompany the body. But where is its "I" situated? ⁴² Flesh is one thing and blood another, and bones are different from them. But tell me, my

heart, where is the “I” said to exist? ⁴³ These are the organs of smell and this is the tongue. This is skin and these are my ears. These are the eyes and this is touch. But what is the soul and where is it situated?

⁴⁴ I am none of the elements of the body, nor the mind nor its desires. I am only the pure intellectual soul, a manifestation of Divine Consciousness. ⁴⁵ The only knowledge of the true reality that we can have is that I am everywhere, and yet nothing whatever that is anywhere. There is no other way to it.

⁴⁶ For a long time I have been deceived by my ignorance and misled from the right path, just as the young of a beast is carried away by a fierce tiger to the woods. ⁴⁷ Now by my good fortune I have come to detect this thievish ignorance. No longer shall I trust this robber of truth. ⁴⁸ I am beyond the reach of affliction. I have no concern with misery, nor has it anything to do with me. This union of mine with these is as temporary as that of a cloud with a mountain.

⁴⁹ Being subject to my individual ego, I say, I speak, I know, I stay, I go, and the like. But on looking at the soul, I lose my ego in the Universal Soul. ⁵⁰ I truly believe my eyes and the other parts of my body to belong to me, but if they are something other than me, then let them remain or perish with the body, with which I have no concern.

⁵¹ Fie for shame! What is this word “I” and who first invented it? This is nothing but the childish blunder of some demonic child of earth. ⁵² For such a long time have I been groveling in this dusty den, wandering at large like a stray deer on a sterile rock without any grass or vegetation. ⁵³ If we inquire into the true nature of things, we are at a loss to find the true meaning of the word “I” which is the cause of all our grief on earth.

⁵⁴ If you want to feel your inner self by the sense of touch, then tell me how do you find what you call “I” other than it being a ghost of your own imagination. ⁵⁵ You set your “I” on your tongue and utter it as an object of that organ. You have no taste whatever of that empty word which you so often utter.

⁵⁶ You often hear that word ringing in your ears, though you feel it to be an empty sound like air, and you cannot account from where this rootless word had its rise. ⁵⁷ Our sense of smell, which brings the fragrance of objects to the inner soul, conveys no scent of this word into our brain. ⁵⁸ It is like a mirage, a false idea of something we know not what. What can it be other than an error of which we have no idea or sense whatever?

⁵⁹ I also see that my will is not always the cause of my actions because I find my eyes and other sense organs are employed in their respective functions without the direction of my will. ⁶⁰ The difference between our bodily and willful acts is this. The actions of the body done without the will of the mind are unattended with feelings of pain or pleasure. ⁶¹ Therefore let your sense organs perform their several actions without your will and by this means you will evade all pleasure and pain.

⁶² It is in vain that you blend your will with your actions when the act of your will is attended with a grief similar to that of children who break dolls while playing. ⁶³ Your desires and their productions are the facsimiles of your minds and not different from them, just as waves are composed of the same water from which they rise. Such is the case with the acts of will. ⁶⁴ Your own will guides your hand to construct a prison for your confinement, just as the silly silkworm is confined in the cocoon of its own making.

⁶⁵ Because of your desires you are exposed to the perils of death and disease, just as the dim vision of a traveler over mountainous areas hurls him headlong into a deep cavern below. ⁶⁶ Only your desires are the chief cause of you being attached to one another in one place, like a thread passing through the holes of pearls ties them together in a long strand around the neck.

⁶⁷ What is this desire but the creation of your false imagination? Whatever you think is good for yourself, as soon as you cease to take a fancy for it, your desire is cut off like by a knife. ⁶⁸ This desire, the creature of your imagination, is the cause of all your errors and your ruin, just as the breath of air causes both burning and extinction of lamps, lightening, and fiery furnaces. ⁶⁹ Therefore, O my heart that is the source and spring of your senses, join with all your consciousness to look into the nature of your unreality, and feel in yourself the state of your utter annihilation (*nirvana*). ⁷⁰ Give up your sense of ego and your desire of worldliness that are interminable and inherent to you in this life. Put on the amulet of the abandonment of your desires and earthliness and resign yourself to your God to be free from all fears on earth.

Chapter 53 — Uddalaka's Reasoning and Bliss

¹ Uddalaka continued:—

Consciousness is an unthinkable substance. It extends to the limits of endless space and is more minute than the smallest atom. It is quite aloof from all things and inaccessible to the reach of desires.

² It is inaccessible to the mind, understanding, egoism and the gross senses. But our empty desires are extended as wide as the shadowy forms of huge and formidable demons.

³ From all my reasoning and repeated reflections, I perceive a consciousness within myself. I feel it to be the stainless intellect. ⁴ My body, which is of this world and the depository of my false and evil thoughts, may last or be lost without any gain or loss to me because I am untainted consciousness.

⁵ Consciousness is free from birth and death, because there is nothing perishable in the nature of all pervasive consciousness. Then what does the death of a living being mean? How and by whom can it be put to death? ⁶ What does the life and death of consciousness mean? It is the soul and life of all existence. What else can we expect of consciousness when it extends through and gives life to all?

⁷ Life and death belong to the operative and imaginative powers of the mind and not to the pure soul.

⁸ The mind has the sense of its ego and the knowledge of its existence and nonexistence. But the soul is devoid of its ego and can have no sense of its birth or death.

⁹ Individual ego is a fallacy, the product of ignorance. The mind is nothing but an appearance, like water in a mirage. Visible objects are all gross bodies. Then what is this thing to which we apply the term ego? ¹⁰ The body is composed of flesh and blood and the mind is considered a nothingness of itself. The heart and other body parts are all dull objects. Then what contains the ego? ¹¹ The sense organs are all employed in their respective functions to support the body. All external bodies remain as mere bodies. So to what do you apply the term ego?

¹² The properties of things continue as properties, and substances always remain substances. The entity of Brahman is quite calm and quiet. So what among them is the ego? ¹³ There is only one Being which is all pervading and existing in all bodies. It exists at all times and is immensity in itself. It is only the Supreme Spirit that is the intelligent soul of all. ¹⁴ Now tell me which of these is the ego? What is it and what is its form? What is its genus and what are its attributes? What is its appearance and of what ingredients it is composed? What am I and what shall I take "I" to be and what to reject as not "I"?

¹⁵ Therefore there is nothing here which may be called individual ego, whether an entity or nonentity. There is nothing anywhere to which the ego may bear any relation or any resemblance whatever.

¹⁶ Therefore egoism is a perfect nonentity. It has no relation to anything at all. This non-relation of ego with all things being proved, the fiction of duality goes to nothing. ¹⁷ Everything in the world being full of the spirit of God, I am nothing other than that reality, and it is in vain that I think myself as otherwise and sorrow for it.

¹⁸ All things being situated in one pure and omnipresent spirit, from where could this meaningless word ego arise? ¹⁹ There is no reality of any object whatever except that of the supreme and all-pervading spirit of God. Therefore it is useless for us to inquire about our relation with anything that has no reality in itself.

²⁰ The senses are connected with the sense organs and the mind is familiar with mental operations, but the intellect is unconnected with the body and bears no relation with anybody in any manner. ²¹ As there is no relation between stones and iron nails, so the body, the senses, the mind and the intellect bear no relationship with one another, though they are found to reside together in the same person.

²² Once the great error of the unreal ego has obtained its footing among mankind, it has put the world to an uproar with the expressions of “mine” and “yours” and this is mine and that is yours, and that other is another’s and the like. ²³ Lack of the light of reason has given rise to meaningless and marvelous expressions of ego which are made to vanish under the light of reason, just as ice dissolves under the heat of sunlight. ²⁴ It is my firm belief that there is nothing in existence except the spirit of God. This makes me believe the whole universe is a manifestation of the great Brahman himself.

²⁵ The error of personal ego presents itself before us as vividly and colorfully as the various colors that paint the sky. It is better to obliterate it from the mind rather than retain any trace of it. ²⁶ I have completely rid myself of the error of my ego and now rest my tranquil soul in the Universal Spirit of God, like an autumn cloud resting in the infinite vacuum of the sky.

²⁷ The idea of egoism produces the great variety of our selfish acts which create only misconduct and misery. ²⁸ Egoism has taken a deep root in the moist soil of our hearts and sprouts forth in the field of our bodies with the germs of innumerable evils. ²⁹ Here is death closely following the course of life. There is a new life hereafter waiting upon our death. Now there is a non-being state of being distinct from its deprivation. And again there is the opposite in our reincarnation, only to our great annoyance.

³⁰ “This I have gained” and “this I will gain” are the thoughts that constantly employ the minds of men. The desire of a new gain is constantly lit in the minds of the senseless, like the ceaseless flame of the sun-stone is increased in summer heat. ³¹ That “this I want” and “this I must have” are thoughts ever attendant on egoism. The dull-headed pursue dull material objects with as much ardor as heavy clouds hastening to halt on high-headed hills.

³² Decay of egoism withers away the tree of worldliness, which then ceases to germinate, like a plant on sterile rocks. ³³ Your desires are like black serpents creeping in the hole of your heart, but hiding their heads at the sight of the snake-eater garuda bird of reason. ³⁴ The unreal world gives rise to the error of appearances. The unreal “I” and “you” seem to be realities, though they are caused by mere pulsations of the unreal mind.

³⁵ This world rises at first without a cause and to no cause. How then do we call a reality that which is sprung from and to no cause at all? ³⁶ As a pot made of earth long before continues in the same state at all times, so the body which has long ago come into existence still continues and will continue the same. ³⁷ The beginning and end of waves is mere water and moisture, and the intermediate part only presents a figure to view. So the beginning and end of bodies are mere earth and water, and the intermediate state is one of bustle and commotion. ³⁸ Only the ignorant trust this temporary and fluctuating state of the body which, like a wave, is hastening to subside in its original liquid and quiet state. ³⁹ What reliance is there on anything that makes a figure in the middle and is an unreality both in its prior and latter states? ⁴⁰ So the heart also is as quiet as consciousness, both at first and in the end. It remains immersed in itself, both when it exists in the body or not. What then if it heaves for a little while in between?

⁴¹ Marvelous things pass in our dreams and in our deluded sights, just as it happens in the giddiness of inebriation, journeying in boats, ⁴² in cases of weakened humors and delusion of senses, in cases of extreme joy and grief, and under some defect of the mind or body. ⁴³ Some objects come to sight and others disappear. Some appear to be smaller or larger than they are, and others to be moving. So do all these objects of our vision appear and disappear from our sight in the course of time.

⁴⁴ O my heart! All your conduct is of the same nature at the different times of your joy and grief. It makes the long of short and the short of long, just as the short space of a single night for separated lovers becomes as tedious as an age, and an age of joyful wealth as short as a moment. ⁴⁵ My long habit of thinking makes untruth appear as truth to me. Like the mirage of the desert, our mirage of life presents its falsehoods as realities to us. ⁴⁶ All things that we see in the phenomenal world are unrealities in their nature. As the mind comes to know the nothingness of things, it feels in itself its nothingness also.

⁴⁷ As the mind becomes impressed with the certainty of the unsubstantially of external objects, its desire for worldly enjoyments fades away like the fading green of autumn. ⁴⁸ When the mind comes to see the pure soul by means of its intellectual light, it rids itself of its temporal exertions. Being thereby freed from its passions and affections, it rests in itself with calm composure. ⁴⁹ The heart attains its perfect purity when, by withdrawing attention from the sense organs, it casts itself into the flame of the Supreme Soul where all its impurity is burnt away.

⁵⁰ As a hero boldly faces his death, fighting bravely in battle with the thought of ascending to heaven, so the mind conquers all impediments by casting off all worldly desires and attachments. ⁵¹ The mind is the enemy of the body and the body is the enemy of the mind, but each dies away without the other and both pass away without desire which supports them both. ⁵² Owing to the hostility between mind and body and their passions and affections towards each other, it is better to destroy both for our attainment of supreme bliss. ⁵³ The existence of either of these after death is as incapable of heavenly joy as it is for an aerial fairy to live on earth.

⁵⁴ When things that are naturally repugnant and opposed to one another meet together in any place or person, there is a continuous clashing of mutual mischief, like the crashing of conflicting arms. ⁵⁵ The base man who has a liking for this world of conflicts is like one left to burn in a conflagration of showering flames. ⁵⁶ The mind stout with its greedy desires loads the body with labor and feeds upon its precious life, like a yaksha ghost seizing the body of a boy. ⁵⁷ The body being harassed and oppressed with toil attempts to stop and stay the mind like an impious son intends to kill his father who openly abuses him. ⁵⁸ There is no one who in his nature is a foe or friend to another. One becomes a friend to the person who is friendly to him and a foe to he who harms him.

⁵⁹ The body attempts to kill the mind and the mind is ever intent to make the body the receptacle of its afflictions. ⁶⁰ What good can possibly accrue from the union of the body and mind? They are repugnant to one another. They are irreconcilable in their own natures. ⁶¹ The mind being weakened, the body has no pain to undergo, so the body is always striving to weaken the mind. ⁶² The body, whether alive or dead, is subject to all sorts of evils by its hostile mind unless it is brought under the subjugation of reason.

⁶³ When both body and mind become resolute and strong, they join together to break all bonds, like a lake and rainwater join to overflow banks. ⁶⁴ Though both are troublesome to us in their different natures, yet their union to one end is beneficial to us, just as the cooperation of fire and water for the purpose of cooking. ⁶⁵ When the weak mind is wasted and worn out, the body also becomes weakened and weak. But the mind being full, the body is flushed like a flourishing tree shooting forth with verdure.

⁶⁶ The body pines away with weakened desires and weakened mind. But the mind never grows weak at the weakness of the body. Therefore the mind must be curbed and weakened by all means.

⁶⁷ Therefore I must cut down the woody weed of my mind with its trees of my desires and plants of my thirst and, having reclaimed a large tract of land, wander about at my pleasure. ⁶⁸ After my egoism is lost and the net of my desires removed, my mind will regain its calm and clarity like the sky after clouds disperse at the end of rainy weather.

⁶⁹ It is of no matter to me whether my body, which is a collection of my humors and a great enemy to me, should waste away or last after the dissolution of my mind. ⁷⁰ The enjoyments my body craves are not mine, nor do I belong to them. Therefore, what is the good of bodily pleasure to me? ⁷¹ It is certain that I am not the body, nor is this body mine in any way, just as a corpse with all its parts intact is nobody at all. ⁷² Therefore I am something other than my body, and that is everlasting and never setting in its glory. It is by means of this that I have the light in me with which I perceive the bright sun in the sky. ⁷³ I am not ignorant of myself or subject to misery, nor am I the dull unintelligent body which is subject to misery. My body may last or not, I am beyond all bodily accidents.

⁷⁴ Where there is the soul or self, there is no mind, no senses, and no desire of any kind, just as vile commoners and idiots never associate with kings. ⁷⁵ I have attained that state in which I have surpassed all things. It is the state of my singleness, my extinction, my indivisibility, and my want of desires. ⁷⁶ Now I am loosened from the bonds of my mind, body and senses, like oil extracted from sesame is separated from sediments. ⁷⁷ I walk about freely in this state of transcendence. My mind disconnected from the bonds of the body considers its body parts to be its dependent instruments and accompaniments. ⁷⁸ Now I find myself situated in a state of transparency and buoyancy, of self-contentment and intelligence, and of true reality. I feel my full joy and calmness and preserve my reserve in speech. ⁷⁹ I find my fullness and magnanimity in my pleasantness and even temper. I see the unity of all things and feel my fearlessness and want of duality, choice and option.

⁸⁰ I find these qualities to be ever attendant on me. They are constant and faithful, easy and graceful and always propitious to me. My unshaken attachment to them has made them like my heartily beloved consorts. ⁸¹ I find I am all and in all at all times and in every manner. Yet I am devoid of all desire or dislike for anyone. I am equally unconcerned with whatever is pleasant or unpleasant, agreeable or disagreeable to me. ⁸² Removed from the cloud of error and melancholy, and released from doubt and duplicity in my thoughts, I traverse like a flimsy cloud in the cooling atmosphere of the autumn sky.

Chapter 54 — Uddalaka's Meditation and Samadhi

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Thinking himself raised to this state of his transcendence, the saint sat in lotus posture with his eyelids half shut and began to meditate in his translucent mind.

² Then he thought that the syllable Om is the true symbol of Brahman, and that he who utters this monosyllabic word rises to the highest state. ³ He uttered the word with a raised voice and high note which rang with a sound of a ringing bell. ⁴ His utterance of Om shook the seat of his intellect in the cranium and reached the seat of the pure soul in the topmost part of his head. ⁵ The *pranava* Om, consisting of three and half letters [“a” for waking, “u” for dreaming, “m” for deep sleep, and *bindu* (dot) for super consciousness, see Mandukya Upanishad], fills the whole body with the breath of inspiration by having its first part or the letter “a” uttered with an acute accent.

⁶ He exhaled the breath from his body and it became as insubstantial as the sea after Agastya sucked it up. ⁷ His vital breath was filled with the vitality of the intellect and rested in the outer air by leaving his body, like a bird leaving its snug nest and floating in open air. ⁸ The burning fire of his heart burned away his whole body and left it as dry as a forest scorched by the hot wind of a fire.

⁹ He was in this state at the first step of his practice of *pranava yoga* by chanting Om. He did not practice *hatha yoga* at all because it was physical. ¹⁰ Then he attended to the other parts of the mystic syllable and remained unshaken by suppressing his breath by the *kumbhaka* breathing. ¹¹ His vital breaths were not allowed to pass out of his body, nor were they allowed to circulate up and down in it, but were shut up in the nostrils, like water pent up in a drain.

¹² The fire consumed his body and was blown out in a moment, like the flash of lightning. He left his whole frame consumed to ashes, lying cold and grey on the naked ground. ¹³ The white bones of his body seemed to be sleeping unmoved, lying in quiet rest on the bed of grey ashes looking like camphor powder strewn on the ground. ¹⁴ These ashes and bones were carried aloft by the winds and covered his body which looked like the body of Shiva smeared with ash and wearing a garland of bones. ¹⁵ Afterwards the high winds of the air, flying to the face of the upper sky, bore aloft and scattered about those ashes and bones, resembling an autumn mist in the air. ¹⁶ The saint attained this second or middle stage of his *pranava yoga*, and it was through *kumbhaka* breathing and not by *hatha yoga*.

¹⁷ He then came to the third stage of his *pranava yoga*, the inhalation which confers a quiet rest to the yogi, and is called *puraka* for its fulfillment of his object. ¹⁸ In the process of this practice, the vital breath is carried through the intellect to the region of emptiness where it is cooled by the coldness of its climate. ¹⁹ From the region of vacuum, the breath ascended to the lunar sphere. There it became as cold as when the rising smoke turns into a watery cloud in the upper sky. ²⁰ Then the breath rested in the orb of the full moon, as in the ocean of ambrosial waters, and there became as cool as in the meritorious samadhi meditation.

²¹ The respiring breaths were then exhaled like cooling showers of rain and were brightened by the moonbeams into the form of fine wires of gold. ²² These fell like a dew drop on the remaining ashes, like the stream of the heavenly Ganges fell on Shiva’s head, and resuscitated the burnt body to its

former form.²³ The body became as bright as the orb of the moon. It had the four arms of Vishnu. It glistened like a parijata tree on the shore after the sea was churned by Mandara Mountain.²⁴ The body of Uddalaka competed in beauty with that of Vishnu Narayana. His bright eyes and lotus-like face shone with a celestial light.

²⁵ The vital breaths filled his body with a humid juice, like a lake filled with sweet water and trees supplied with moisture from a spring.²⁶ The internal airs filled the lungs and heart cavity like seawater flowing into a whirlpool.²⁷ His body was restored and regained its natural state, as when the earth regains its prior and pure state after it is washed by rain waters.

²⁸ He sat in lotus posture and kept his body fixed and firm in a straight and erect position. The five organs of his sense were bound as tightly as strong chains on the feet of an elephant.²⁹ He strove to practice an unshaken samadhi, wanting to make himself appear as clear as the autumn sky.³⁰ He controlled his breath and restricted his heart from its inclinations, tying it tightly as if by a rope to the post of his bosom.³¹ He forcibly stopped his heart from running madly into the pits of its affection, just as they stop the course of over-flowing waters with embankments.³² His eyes were half hidden under his half-closed eyelids. His eyeballs remained as fixed and unmoved as the contracted petal of the lotus against buzzing bees fluttering about and seeking to suck their honey.

³³ He practiced *raja yoga*, at first by remaining silent with a graceful countenance.³⁴ He abstracted his senses from their objects just like they separate oil from sesame seeds. He contracted the sense organs within himself like a tortoise contracting his limbs under his hard covering.³⁵ With his steady mind, he cast off the external sensations afar from him like a rich and brilliant gem casts off its outer coating and rubbish, then scatters its rays to a distance.³⁶ He compressed his external sensations without coming in contact with them, like trees contracting their sap in the cold season.³⁷ He stopped the circulation of his respiration to the nine openings of his body and their passing through the mouth and anus. By means of his breath control he compressed the winds in the internal cells of his body.

³⁸ He held his neck erect like the peak of Mount Meru in order to receive the light of the soul which irradiated in the form of flowers before the vision of his mind.³⁹ He confined his subdued mind in the cavity of his heart just like they imprison a big elephant in a cave of the Vindhya Mountains after being captured by some artifice.⁴⁰ When his soul gained its clarity resembling the serenity of the autumn sky, it forsook its unsteadiness like the calm ocean when it is full and not agitated by wind.

⁴¹ The mist of doubts which sometimes gathered in his breast and hid the light of his reason and truth fled from before him, like a flight of gnats driven by the wind.⁴² As crowds of doubt rose repeatedly in his breast of their own accord, he dispersed them boldly by the sword of his reason like a hero driving the enemy before him.⁴³ Upon the dispersion of the thick mists of doubts and all worldly desires from his mind, he saw the bright sun of reason rising in his breast from the parting gloom of ignorance.⁴⁴ He dispelled this darkness by the sunbeams of his full intelligence which rose in his mind like a blast of wind and dispersed the clouds of his doubts in the skies.⁴⁵ After this darkness was dispersed, he saw a beautiful collection of light shining upon him like morning twilight alighting upon his lotus bed.

⁴⁶ But this clear light of his soul was soon after removed by the worldliness (*rajas*, the principle of

action) of his mind which consumed the light like a young elephant feeds upon red lotuses, and like vetalas demons lick up drops of blood.⁴⁷ After he lost this heavenly light, his mind turned flighty from the giddiness of his passions. He became as drowsy as sleeping lotuses at night, and as tipsy as a drunken sot over his drinks.⁴⁸ But his reason soon returned and made him shake off his sleepiness, like winds dispersing clouds, a snake inhaling air, an elephant devouring a lotus bush, and sunlight dispelling the darkness of night.

⁴⁹ After his drowsiness was removed, his mind saw the broad expanse of the blue sky filled with fancied forms of animals and flights of peacocks and other birds.⁵⁰ As the rainwater washes blackness off tamara tree leaves, a gust of wind drives away the morning mist, and the light of a lamp disperses darkness, so his spiritual light returned to him and removed the blue emptiness of his mind by filling it with its benign radiance.⁵¹ The idea of an empty void was replaced with that of his self consciousness. His idea of the mind was absorbed in it, just as the drunken frenzy of a man is drowned in his sleep.

⁵² Then his great soul rubbed out the impressions of error from his weakened mind, like the bright sun driving the darkness of night from the world.⁵³ In this way, his misty mind, free from its shades of light and dark and from the impurity of its drowsiness and error, obtained its rest in the state of samadhi which no language can describe.⁵⁴ In this state of calm and quiet repose, his limbs dropped down as in the drowsiness of sleep. Their powers were absorbed in the channel of his self consciousness, like a flood flows to its basin when blocked by an embankment.

⁵⁵ Then by means of his constant inquiry he advanced from a state of consciousness of himself to the state of intellectuality, like gold molded into the form jewelry is reduced to the pure metal.⁵⁶ Then leaving his intellectuality, he thought of himself as the consciousness of his intellect. He became another form and figure, like clay made into a pot.⁵⁷ Then leaving his nature of a thinkable being (or objectivity), he became the subjective thinking intellect itself, and next to that, as identical with the pure universal consciousness, just as the waves of the sea create mist in the common air.⁵⁸ Losing the sight of particulars, he saw the great One as the container of all. He became as one with the sole empty consciousness.

⁵⁹ He found his joy in this extra-phenomenal state of the ideal which, like the ocean, is the reservoir of all moistures.⁶⁰ He passed out of the confines of his body and went to a certain place where, leaving his ordinary form, he became like a sea of joy.⁶¹ His intellect swam over that sea of joy like a floating swan, and remained there for many years with as serene a light as the moon shining in her fullness in the clear sky.⁶² His intellect remained as still as a lamp in the still air and like the shadow in a painted picture. It was calm as a clear lake without waves, like the sea after a storm and as immovable as a cloud after it has poured out its waters.

⁶³ As Uddalaka was sitting in this full blaze of light, he saw the aerial spiritual masters (*siddhas*) and a group of gods advancing towards him.⁶⁴ The groups of spiritual masters were eager to confer the positions of Sun god and Indra upon him. They assembled around him with groups of heavenly gandharvas and apsara nymphs from all sides of heaven.⁶⁵ But the saint took no notice of them, nor gave them their due honor. He remained in deep thought, continuing his steady meditation.⁶⁶ Without paying any regard to the assembled spiritual masters, he remained still in that blissful abode of his

bliss, just like the sun remains in the northern hemisphere for half of the year.⁶⁷ While he continued in the enjoyment of his blessed state of living liberation, the gods Vishnu, Shiva and Brahma waited at his door, together with groups of spiritual masters, disciples and other gods.

⁶⁸ Uddalaka remained in his state of detachment which lies between the two opposites of sorrow and joy, neither of which is of long continuance, except the middle state of detachment which endures forever.⁶⁹ When the mind is situated in its state of neutrality, and whether it is for a moment or a thousand years, it no longer has any taste for pleasure. It already sees its future joys of the next world as already begun in this.⁷⁰ When holy men have gained that blissful state in this life, they no longer look upon the outer world. They turn aside from it like men avoiding a thorny bush of brambles.

⁷¹ The saints who attain this state of transcendental bliss do not stoop to look upon the visible world, just like one who is sitting in the heavenly car of Chitraratha, the king of the gandharvas, never gets out to step on a thorny khadira bush.⁷² They who enjoy this joy of the invisible in them take no account of the visible world, just like a self-sufficient rich man takes no account of the condition of the miserable poor.⁷³ The wise heart that has found its rest in that blissful state either keeps from the thoughts of this world or shrinks from it with disgust and hatred.

⁷⁴ Uddalaka thus remained in his holy seat for six months, after which he awoke from his samadhi and moved to another place like the sun gets out of the mists of frost in spring season.⁷⁵ He saw before him an assembly of bright beings of enlightened minds who, their faces shining like the bright moon, hailed the hermit with great veneration.⁷⁶ They were fanned with fans flapping about them, like swarms of bees smeared with the white powder of mandara flowers, sitting on their heavenly cars decorated with flags waving in the sky.⁷⁷ Sitting in the aerial cars were great saints, like ourselves, decorated with ringlets of sacred grass on their fingers and accompanied by vidyadharas, gandharvas, and damsels ministering to them.⁷⁸ They addressed the great soul and saintly Uddalaka saying, "Consent, O venerable sage, to look upon us. We have been waiting here with our greetings for you.

⁷⁹ Please mount on one of these heavenly cars and come to our celestial abode. Because heaven is the last home where you shall have the full gratification of your desires after this life."

⁸⁰ "Remain in heaven to enjoy your desired pleasures until the end of this kalpa age. Pure heavenly bliss is the inheritance of saints and the main aim and object of ascetic austerities on earth.⁸¹ See the vidyadbara ladies waiting for you with fans and flower garlands in their hands. They have been hailing and inviting you to them, like a young elephant cow entices the big elephant towards her.

⁸² The main object of riches and good acts is only the desire for rewards, and the greatest of our enjoyments is the company of fairy ladies, just as flowers and fruit are the desired products of the spring season."

⁸³ The hermit heard his heavenly guests speaking in this manner. He honored them politely without being moved by anything they said unto him.⁸⁴ He neither complemented them with courtesy nor changed the even course of his even and unexcitable mind. He bid them to depart in peace and returned to his tapas.

⁸⁵ The spiritual masters honored him for his devotion to his practice and for refusing the desires of carnal gratifications. Then they left to return to their paradise abode, after tarrying there in vain for some days hoping to entice the hermit to their romantic fields.

⁸⁶ Afterwards the saint continued to wander about at pleasure in his character of a living liberated yogi. He frequented the hermitages of ascetics at the edges of woods and forests. ⁸⁷ He roved about freely over the mountains of Meru, Mandara, and Kailash and on the table lands of the Vindhyan and Himalayan ranges. He travelled through woods and forests, gardens and deserts and to distant islands everywhere. ⁸⁸ At last the saintly Uddalaka chose his home in a cave lying at the foot of a mountain. There he dedicated the rest of his life to secluded tapas and meditation.

⁸⁹ It was then in the course of a day, then of a month, and sometimes after the lapse of a year or many years, that he rose once from his meditation. ⁹⁰ After his yoga was over, he came out and mixed with the world. Though he sometimes was engaged in the affairs of life, yet he was quite reserved in his conduct and abstracted in his mind. ⁹¹ Being practiced in mental abstraction, he became one with the Divine Mind and shone resplendent in all places, like broad daylight. ⁹² He was habituated to ponder on the community of the mind until he became one with the universal Mind which spreads alike throughout the universe and neither rises nor sets anywhere like sunlight.

⁹³ He gained the state of perfect tranquility and his even mindedness in all places, which released him from the snare of doubts and the pain of repeated births and deaths. His mind became as clear and quiet as the autumn sky, and his body shone like the sun everywhere.

Chapter 55 — The Pure Consciousness and Being of Uddalaka

¹ Rama said, “Venerable sage, you are the sun of the day of spiritual knowledge and the burning fire of the night of my doubts. You are the cooling moon to the heat of my ignorance. Please explain to me, what does the state of pure existence mean?”

² Vasishta answered:—

When the thinking principle, the mind, is wasted and weakened and appears to be extinct and null, the consciousness which remains in common in all beings is called the common consciousness of all, pure being.³ This consciousness when devoid of its reasoning and absorbed in itself becomes transparent as it is nothing of itself. Then it is called pure consciousness.⁴ Similarly, when the intellect ignores knowledge of all internal and external objects, it remains as pure consciousness and is unconscious of any personality.⁵ When all phenomena are considered to have a common existence and to be of the same nature as one’s self, this is called pure consciousness.⁶ When phenomena are all dissolved of themselves into the one common spirit and there remains nothing different from it, then it is the one consciousness, pure being.

⁷ This common view of all things as one and the same is called Self realization and it is the same for embodied and disembodied beings in both worlds. It places the liberated being above the fourth stage of consummation.⁸ It is the enlightened soul exalted by ecstasy, and not the ignorant, who can have this consciousness of all as one.⁹ This common view of all existence is known by all great and liberated beings, just like the same moisture and air is spread throughout the earth and emptiness.¹⁰ Sages like ourselves, Narada and others, and the gods Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva have this common view of all things in existence.

¹¹ The saintly Uddalaka entertained this view of the community of all beings and things, and having thereby attained that state of perfection, free from fear or fall, he lived as long as he liked to live in this earthly sphere.¹² After a long time, he thought of enjoying the bliss of disembodied or spiritual liberation in the next world by quitting his frail mortal frame on earth.¹³ With this intention, he went into the cave of a mountain where he made a seat for himself with dried tree leaves.

He sat upon it in lotus posture, his eyes half closed under his eyelids.¹⁴ He shut up the opening of the nine organs of sense, then having compressed their properties of the nine senses in the one single sense of consciousness, he confined them all within his intellect.¹⁵ He compressed the vital airs in his body and kept his head erect on his neck. Then by fixing the tip of his tongue to the roof of his palate, he sat with his blooming face turned upwards to heaven.¹⁶ He did not allow his breath to pass up or down or out or inside his body, or fly into the air. He did not let his mind or sight to be fixed on any object. He compressed them all within himself with his teeth joined together.

¹⁷ There was a complete stop of breathing his vital airs and his face was composed and clear. His body was erect with the consciousness of his intellect and his hairs stood on their ends like thorns.

¹⁸ His habitual consciousness of reasoning taught him the community of consciousness. It was by his constant communion with pure consciousness that he perceived a flood of internal bliss stirring in himself.¹⁹ This feeling of internal bliss, resulting from his consciousness of intellectual community, led him to think himself as identical with the entity of the infinite soul and supporting the universal

whole.²⁰ He remained in his state of stillness in pure being with an even composure. He enjoyed an even bliss in himself with a serene countenance.

²¹ Being unruffled by his spiritual bliss and having attained the state of divine holiness, he remained in his samadhi meditation for a long time by withdrawing his mind from all thoughts and errors of the world. ²² His great body remained as fixed as an image in painting, and shone as bright as the autumn sky illuminated by the beams of the full moon. ²³ In course of some days, his soul gradually forgot its mortal state and found its rest in pure spiritual bliss, like the moisture of trees is dried by the sun at the end of autumn. ²⁴ Being devoid of all desires, doubts and levity of his mind, and freed from all foul and pleasurable inclinations of his body, he attained that supreme bliss on the loss of his former joys, before which the prosperity of Indra appears like a straw floating on the vast expanse of the ocean.

²⁵ The brahmin then attained that state of supreme good which is immeasurable and pervades through all space of the measureless vacuum, and which fills the universe and is felt only by the bliss of a yogi. It is called the supreme and infinite bliss, having neither beginning nor end and being a reality without any property assignable to itself.

²⁶ While the brahmin first attained this state of samadhi and had the clearness of his understanding, during the first six months of his tapas, his body became emaciated by sunbeams and the winds of heaven whistled over his dry frame with the sound of lute strings. ²⁷ After a long time elapsed in this manner, Parvati, the daughter of the mountain king, came to that place accompanied by other goddesses, shining like flames of fire with the grey locks of hair on their heads, as if to confer the boon to reward Uddalaka's austere meditation. ²⁸ Among them was the goddess Chaumundi who is adored by the gods. She took up the living skeleton of the brahmin and placed it on her crown, which added a new brightness to her body at night. ²⁹ Thus the disgusting and dead-like body of Uddalaka was set over the many other ornaments on the goddesses' body. She valued it as more precious than all her other jewels because of its intrinsic merit of spiritual knowledge.

³⁰ Whoever plants this plant of life and the conduct of Uddalaka in the garden of his heart will find it always flourishing within himself with flowers of knowledge and fruit of divine bliss. Whoever walks under the shadow of this growing tree is never subject to death, but will reap the fruit of his higher progress in the path of liberation.

Chapter 56 — Characteristics of Samadhi; Indifference to Surroundings

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Proceed in this manner to know the Universal Soul in your own soul and thereby obtain your rest in that holy state.

² You must consider all things by the light of the scriptures and dive into their true meaning. You will also benefit from your teacher's lectures, by pondering them in your own mind, and by your constant practice of ignoring phenomena until you come to know the invisible one.³ You can attain that holy state and come to God through habitual dispassion, your acquaintance with the scriptures and their meanings, listening to the lectures of the spiritual teachers, and your own conviction.

⁴ You can also attain that everlasting state of joy without the medium of anything else by your enlightened understanding, when it is acute and unbiased.

⁵⁻⁶ Rama said, "Tell me sage, who is acquainted with past and future, which of these two has greater merit: one employed in the affairs of life and at the same time is enlightened and situated in his quietude, or another who remains alone immersed in samadhi apart from worldly connections?"

⁷ Vasishta replied:—

He who does not associate his soul with phenomena enjoys a cool tranquility within himself called samadhi.⁸ He who is certain that phenomena relate only to his mind and have no connection with his soul, and who remains calm and cool in himself, may either be engaged in business or sitting quietly in meditation.⁹ Both of these are happy souls as long as they enjoy a cool calmness within themselves. This samadhi is the result of great and austere penance.

¹⁰ If the mind of a man who appears to be in samadhi is unsteady, he is a mad man.¹¹ On the other hand, when the mind of a man who appears to be mad is devoid of desires in his mind, he is in samadhi and his foolish frolics resemble the rapturous emotions and gestures of Buddhist mendicants.

¹² The worldly man who is enlightened in his mind and the enlightened sage who is sitting in his hermitage are both alike in their samadhi and have undoubtedly reached the state of enlightenment.

¹³ The man who is unrelated with the actions he does, whose mind is free from desires, as if engrossed with other thoughts, senses what he hears and sees only with his sense organs without being affected by them.¹⁴ A man becomes the agent of an act, even without actually doing it, who is fully intent upon the action, just as an unmoving man thinks himself to be moving about and falling down in a ditch.¹⁵ Know the inaction of the mind is the best state of samadhi, and one-pointedness of the mind (*samadhana*) is the best means to your detachment.¹⁶ Activity and inactivity of the mind are the sole causes of the restlessness and quietness of men, and also the causes of one-pointed meditation and lack of one-pointedness. Therefore destroy the germs of your rising desires.

¹⁷ Lack of desire is called neutrality of the mind and this constitutes its steadiness and meditation. This gives singleness to the soul and contributes to its everlasting tranquility.¹⁸ Diminishing desires leads the man to the highest station of innocence and lack of desires.¹⁹ Thickening desires serve to fill the mind with the vanity of its agency, which is the cause of all its sorrows. Therefore try to weaken your desires at all times.

²⁰ Samadhi or enlightenment is when the mind is tranquil, freed from its fears, grief and desires, and the soul is at rest and quiet for lack of its passions. ²¹ Renounce the thoughts of all things from your mind. Wherever you live, whether on a mountain or in a forest, live as calmly as you do in your own home. ²² To householders with well governed minds and to those without personal ego, their houses are like solitary forests to them. ²³ Cool-minded men see living in a house or in a forest in same light as they see all visible objects, only in the light of an empty vacuum. ²⁴ Men of pacified minds see beautiful buildings of cities in the same indifferent light as they see the woods in the forest. ²⁵ It is the nature of ungoverned minds to see even solitary woods as full of people like large towns and cities.

²⁶ The restless mind falls asleep after it gets rid of its labor, but the quiet mind has its enlightenment after its nirvana. Therefore do as you like. ²⁷ Whether one gets rid of worldly things or not, it is his sight of the infinite spirit that makes him meek and quiet.

²⁸ He is called serious and detached, and cool and meek, whose mind is expanded by his indifference to both the objects of his desire and disgust, and to whom all things are alike insignificant everywhere. ²⁹ He who in his innermost soul sees the world in God and never as without the Divine Spirit, and whose mind sees everything in waking as in his sleep, is truly the lord of mankind. ³⁰ As people in a market, whether coming in or going out, are strangers unrelated to one another, so the wise man looks upon the concourse of men with unconcern and thinks his own town a wilderness. ³¹ The mind fixed to its inner vision and inattentive to external objects thinks a populous city is like a wilderness, both when awake or asleep, active or inactive. ³² Those who are attentive to the inner mind see the outer world as a empty space. They see the populous world like a desolate desert owing to its unworthiness of attention.

³³ The world is all cool and calm to the cold hearted, just as the body is quiet cool to one without a fever. ³⁴ Those who are parched with their internal thirst find the world is like a burning fire because everybody sees the same outside as he sees within himself. ³⁵ The external world, with all its earthly, watery and airy bodies, and with all its rocks, rivers and quarters, is the counterpart of the inner mind and is situated outside the mind as it is contained within. ³⁶ The big banyan tree and small barley plants are exact copies of their foreshadowed counterparts in the eternal mind. They are exhibited outside of it as they are within, like the fragrance of flowers diffused in the air.

³⁷ There is nothing situated inside or outside this world other than casts and copies displayed by their patterns in the great mind of God. ³⁸ The external world is a display of the essence contained in the Universal Soul. It appears outside from within its concealment, like the smell of camphor coming out of its casket. ³⁹ The Divine Soul manifests itself in the form of ego and the world. Everything that we see externally or think internally is unreal, except the real images that are imprinted in the soul. ⁴⁰ The soul is conscious of its innate images. It sees them in their intellectual appearances within the mind and in their external manifestations in visible creation.

⁴¹ He who has his internal and external tranquility, enjoys his peace of mind, and sees the world inseparable from the soul, enjoys his quiet samadhi everywhere. But he who perceives differences and differentiates his ego from all others is always subject to be tossed about like the rolling waves of the sea. ⁴² A soul harassed by the troubles of this world sees the earth, sky, air and water, together

with the hills and all things in them, burning like the universal fire at the end of the world.

⁴³ The dispassionate yogi performs his work with his organs of action, has his soul fixed in its internal meditation, and is not moved by any joy or grief. ⁴⁴ The tranquil yogi beholds the all pervading soul in his own self and by remaining unruffled in his mind, never grieves or thinks about anything. ⁴⁵ He who looks calmly into the course of the world as it has passed or is present before him, and who sits still smiling at its changing states of fortune, that man is named the dispassionate yogi.

⁴⁶ Because these changing phenomena do not belong to unchanging spirit of God. They do not participate with my own egoism. They only resemble glittering atoms of gold in bright sunshine. They do not exist in the sky.

⁴⁷ He is the one who truly exists who has no sense of "I" or "you" in himself and who makes no distinction of things in his mind, such as between conscious and unconscious things, and not the other who thinks otherwise. ⁴⁸ The calm and quiet man conducts all his affairs with ease by remaining like the intangible and translucent air about him, and remaining as unconscious of his joy and sorrow as a block of wood or stone. ⁴⁹ He who, of his own nature and not through fear, looks on all beings as himself and accounts the goods of others as worthless stones is the man who sees them in their true light.

⁵⁰ No object whether great or small is slighted as a trifle by the polished or foolish. They value all things, but the foolish do not perceive in their hearts the Reality that abides in them, like the wise.

⁵¹ One possessed of such detachment and equality of his mind attains his highest perfection. He is quite unconcerned with regard to his rise and fall and about his life and death. ⁵² He is quite unconcerned with anything, whether he is situated amidst the luxuries of his home or the unnecessary things of the world, whether he is deprived of all his possessions and enjoyments or is exposed to a dreary and deep solitude. ⁵³ He is indifferent whether indulging in sensual pleasure or drunken revelry, or remaining retired from society and observing silence, ⁵⁴ whether he anoints his body with sandal paste or smears it with powdered camphor, or whether he rubs his body with ash or casts himself into the flames, ⁵⁵ whether drowned in sinfulness or marked by his merits, or whether he dies this day or lives for a kalpa age. ⁵⁶ The man of detachment is nothing in himself and therefore his doings are not his own acts. He is not polluted by impurity, just as pure gold is not sullied by dirt or dust.

⁵⁷ The wrong application of the words "consciousness" and "soul" to "I" and "you" (or the subjective and objective) has led the ignorant to the blunder (of duality), just like the silvery shell of clams misleads men to the error of silver. ⁵⁸ The knowledge of the extinction of all existence in the Supreme Spirit is the only cure for this blunder of one's entity and the only means to peace of mind. ⁵⁹ The error of "I" or "you" of the conscious soul, which is the source of its vain desires, causes the varieties of mankind's happiness and sorrow in repeated births. ⁶⁰ As the removal of the fallacy of the snake in the rope gives peace to the mind that there is no snake, so the subsidence of egoism in the soul brings peace and tranquility to the mind.

⁶¹ He who is conscious of his inner soul and unconscious of all he does, eats, drinks, and of his going to others and offering his sacrifice, is free from the results of his acts. It is the same to him whether he

does them or not.⁶² He who slides from outward nature and abides in his inner soul is released from all external actions and their resulting good and evil.⁶³ No wish stirs in such a calm soul, in the same manner as no germ sprouts from the bosom of a stone. Such desires as ever rise in it are like the waves of the sea, rising and falling in the same element.

⁶⁴ All this is Himself and He is the whole of this universe without any partition or duality. He is one with the holy and Supreme Soul, and the only entity called the true reality (*tat sat*).

Chapter 57 — Dualism Is Innate in the Soul

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Everyone feels consciousness residing in the soul, just like everyone feels the sharp smell inherent in pepper. It is this consciousness whereby we have reasoning of ego and non-ego and the distinctions of duration and space in what is undivided dimension and infinite.² The soul is like the universal ocean of salt, and consciousness is the salt in it. Consciousness gives us the knowledge of ego and non-ego and appears in the forms of infinite space and time.³ The consciousness of which we have knowledge is inherent in the soul, like the sweetness of the sugarcane, and spreads itself in the different forms of ego and non-ego of worldly objects.

⁴ The intellect, the hardness inherent in the stone-like soul, diffuses itself in the shapes of the compact ego and the unsolid non-ego of the world.⁵ The rock-like soul solidifies itself in the forms of “I” and “you” and the diversity of the world all about us.⁶ The soul, like a great body of water, presents its fluidity in the form of the intellect and assumes the forms of the whirlpools of the ego, and the varieties of non-ego in the world.⁷ The great tree of the soul stretches itself in the plentiful branches of consciousness producing the fruits of ego and the various forms of non-ego in the world.

⁸ The intellect, which is only a gap in the great vacuum of the soul, produces the ideas of “I” and “you” and of the universe beside.⁹ The intellect is as vain as vanity itself in the emptiness of the soul. The intellect gives rise to the ideas of “I” and “you” and of the world beside.¹⁰ The intellect situated within the environs of the soul has its egoism and non-egoism situated without it.

¹¹ When the intellect is known to be of the same essence as the soul, then the difference between ego and non-ego proves to be only an act of reasoning and not reality.¹² The reflection of the inner soul is understood to be the ego, mind and animated soul.

¹³ When the bright and moonlike soul entertains and enjoys the ambrosial beams of consciousness within itself, it forgets its egoism, which rises no more in its bright sphere.¹⁴ When the sweetness of consciousness is felt within the molasses of the soul, the mind tastes it with a zest and forgets its egoism in itself.¹⁵ When the bright gem of the soul shines with the radiance of consciousness in itself, it finds its egoism to be completely lost under the brightness of its intellectual light.

¹⁶ The soul perceives nothing in itself because of the complete lack of phenomena in it. It does not taste anything in itself for want of anything to be tasted.¹⁷ It thinks of nothing in itself for want of anything to be thought of, nor does it know anything in itself for want of anything to be known there.

¹⁸ The soul remains blank of all impressions of the subjective and objective, and also of the infinite fullness of space in itself. It remains by itself in the form of a firm and solid rock.

¹⁹ By way of common speech we use the words “I” and “you” and refer to an objective world. In reality, they are nothing whatever.²⁰ In the soul there is no seat or agent of thought, nor any error of the world. The soul remains like a mute and transparent cloud in the autumn sky.

²¹ As the fluidity of water causes it to form vortices in the sea, so the delusion of the knower and known in the intelligent soul assumes its errors of “I” and “you” in its undivided self.²² As fluidity is inherent in water and motion in air, so egoism and the objective known world are innate in the

subjective knower.

²³ The more a man understands the truth, the more clearly he knows that objects are the display of Divine Omniscience, the living god or jiva Brahma. But if owing to his vitality and activity he comes to conceive the individual self or objectivity of all others, even a learned or knowing man is no better than an egoist. ²⁴ To the extent the intelligent soul (*jiva*) derives pleasure from its knowledge of objects, it identifies with the knowledge of its sameness with or difference from that object.

²⁵ Living, knowing, and the knowledge of things are properties of the animated or concrete soul, but there is no difference of these in the distinct, or universal and intellectual soul. ²⁶ As there is no difference between the intelligent and the living soul, so there is no diversity between the intelligent soul and Shiva, the lord of animated nature who is the undivided whole.

²⁷ Know the all quiescent and the unborn one who is without beginning, middle or end, who is self manifest and joy itself, and who is inconceivable and beyond all assignable property or quality. He is all quiescent and all verbal and visual descriptions of him are entirely false. Yet for the sake of our comprehension, he is represented as the holy one, or Om.

Chapter 58 — Legend of King Suraghu; His Doubt and Sage Mandavya's Teaching

¹ Vasishta said:—

Rama, let me tell you an old legend to illustrate this subject. It is the story of the Kirata Chief Suraghu, which is marvelous in its nature.

² There was a land in the north which was as white with its snowfalls as a heap of camphor, and which seemed to smile like the clear night under the moonbeams of the bright fortnight. ³ It was situated on the summit of Himalaya called Mount Kailash. It was free from mountain elephants and the chief of all other peaks. ⁴ It was milk-white like the bed of Vishnu in the Milky Ocean, and as bright as the paradise of Indra in heaven. It was fair as the seat of Brahma in the core of the lotus, and as snow-white as the snowy peak of Kedarnath, the favorite seat of Shiva. ⁵ It appeared like the surging sea owing to the waving of rudraksha trees over it, the parade of the apsara nymphs about it, and the reflections of its various gems. ⁶ The playful pramathas and other demigods merrily sported here as gaily as blossoms of asoka plants tossed by the feet of wanton damsels. ⁷ Here the god Shiva wanders about and sees waterfalls receding into the caves of the mountain diluting the moon-stones contained in them.

⁸ By Mount Kailash there was a place enclosed by trees, plants, creepers and shrubs of various kinds, intersected by lakes, hills and rivers, and interspersed by herds of deer and does of various species.

⁹ That was where a Kiratas people called Hemajatas (yellow-haired) lived. They were as numerous as ants living at the foot of a big banyan tree. ¹⁰ They lived like owls in the shades and hollows of trees and subsisted upon the fruits and flowers and herbage of the nearby forests and by felling and selling the rudraksha woods of Mount Kailash.

¹¹ They had a chief among them who was noble-minded and brave to defeat his enemies. He was the arm of the goddess of victory and he stretched it to protect his people. ¹² His name was Suraghu. He was mighty killing his brave and dreadful enemies. He was powerful like the sun and as strong as the god of wind in his figure. ¹³ In the extent of his kingdom, dignity and riches, he surpassed Kubera, the lord of the Guhyakas. He was greater in wisdom than the guru of the lord of gods, and he excelled the teacher of the asura demons in learning.

¹⁴ He discharged his royal duties by giving rewards and punishments as he saw men deserve them. He was firm in the acquittal of his duties as the sun in making the day and his daily course. ¹⁵ He began to think about the pain or pleasure that his punishments and rewards caused his people, and to which they were like birds caught in nets from their freedom of flight. ¹⁶ “Why do I forcibly pierce the hearts of my people,” he thought, “like they bruise sesame seeds for oil? It is plain that all persons are susceptible of pain and affliction like myself. ¹⁷ Yes, they are all capable of pain. Therefore I will cease to inflict them anymore, but give riches and please everyone.”

¹⁸ “But if I refrain from punishing those who torment the good, the wicked are sure to eliminate good, just as a river bed dries up for lack of rain. ¹⁹ I am in such a painful dilemma! My punishment and mercy to men are both grievous to me, or pleasing and unpleasing to me by turns.” ²⁰ Being in this manner much troubled in his mind, his thoughts disturbed his spirit like waters in whirlpools.

²¹ It happened one time that sage Mandavya met him at his house, just like the divine sage Narada, in

his journey through the regions of the sky, meets Indra in his celestial abode.²² The king honored the sage with reverence and asked that he remove his doubt, as they cut down a poisonous tree in the garden with the stroke of the axe at its roots.

²³ Suraghу said, "I am supremely blessed, O sage, at your call at my place, which has made me as joyful as the visit of spring on the surface of the earth and gives a fresh bloom to the fading forest.

²⁴ Your visit, O sage, has made me more blessed than the blessed, and makes my heart bloom like the rising sun opens closed lotus petals."

²⁵ "O lord, you are acquainted with all truths and you are quite at rest in your spirit. Therefore please remove this doubt from my mind, as the sun displaces the darkness of night by his beams from the east.²⁶ A doubt festering in the heart is said to be the greatest pain of man, and this pain is healed only in the society of the good and wise."

²⁷ "The thoughts of my rewards and punishments to my subjects have been tormenting my heart, just as scratches inflicted by a lion's claws afflict the bruised body of the elephant.²⁸ Therefore, O sage, remove my pain and cause the sunshine of peace and equanimity to brighten the gloom of my mind."

²⁹ Mandavyа replied:—

O prince, through one's self-exertion, self-dependence and self-help the doubts of the mind are melted down like snow under sunshine.³⁰ It is also by self-discrimination that all mental anguish is quickly put to an end, just as thick mists and clouds are dispersed in autumn.³¹ One must consider the nature and powers of one's own internal and external organs, and the faculties of his body and mind.

³² Consider in your mind. What am I, and what are all these things and where do they come from? What does our life mean and what is this death that waits upon it?³³ As you come to know your true nature by your introspection into the state of your mind, you will remain unchanged by your joys and grief, like a firm rock.³⁴ As the mind is freed from its habitual unsteadiness and feverish heat, it regains its former tranquility, just like a rolling wave returns to the state of still water from which it arose.³⁵ As the mind remains aloof in living liberated men, all its imaginations are wiped off, just like its impressions and memories of past lives are lost and effaced upon its rebirth.

³⁶ The dispassionate are honored as the most fortunate among mankind on earth. The man knowing this truth and remaining self-contented is regarded as venerable father by everybody.³⁷ When you come to see the greatness of your soul by the light of reason, you will find you are of greater magnitude than the extent of the sky and ocean put together. You see the rational comprehensiveness of the mind has more meaning in it than the irrational comprehension of the spheres.

³⁸ When you attain such greatness, your mind will no longer dive into worldly affairs, just as a big elephant will not fall into a hole made by a bullock's hoof.³⁹ But the base and debased mind will plunge itself in mean and vile matters of the world, just as the contemptible gnat drowns in a drop of water in a little hole.⁴⁰ Greed drives little minds to dive into dirty affairs, like insects moving about in dirt. Their miserliness makes them covet all outward things.⁴¹ But great minds avoid taking notice of outward things in order to behold the pure light of Supreme Soul shining in themselves.

⁴² Ore is cleared and washed until pure gold is obtained. Spiritual knowledge is to be cultivated by

men until spiritual light fills their souls.⁴³ Always see all things with a universal view in all places, with utter indifference to the varieties of their outward forms and figures. See all with the eye of your soul fixed to one Universal Soul pervading the whole.⁴⁴ Until you are free from seeing particular specialties, you can have no sight of the Universal Spirit. After all particulars disappear, there remains the universal, transcendental spirit.⁴⁵ Until you get rid of all individuality, it is impossible for you to come to the knowledge of universality, much less comprehend the all-comprehending soul of all.

⁴⁶ When one endeavors to know the Supreme Soul with all his heart and soul and sacrifices all other objects to that end, then only is it possible for him to know the Divine Soul in its fullness.

⁴⁷ Therefore forsake seeking anything for your own soul. Only by leaving all other things can you come to the sight of the best of things.

⁴⁸ All these visible objects which appear to be linked together by the concatenation of causes and their effects are the creation of the mind. The mind combines them together like a string ties together a necklace of pearls. That which remains after expunging the mind and its created bodies is the sole soul, and this is that Supreme Soul.

Chapter 59 — King Suraghu's Self Inquiry and Realization

¹ Vasishta continued:—

O progeny of Raghu, after sage Mandavya advised the Kirata king in this manner, he retired to his solitary abode suited for holy saints and sages.² After the sage left, the king also retired to a lonely place where he began to reflect upon the nature of his soul and the manner of his existence.

³ Suraghu thought:—

I am not in this mountain nor is it mine. I am not the cosmos nor is this world me.⁴ This land of the Kiratas does not belong to me nor do I belong to it. It is the consent of the people that has made me the ruler of this place.⁵ Without this election I am nobody here, nor is this place anything to me, even though this city and this land may last forever.

⁶ The city, so magnificent with its high flying flags, its gardens and my servants, and the long retinue of horse, elephants and soldiers, is, alas, nothing to me.⁷ All this was nothing to me before my election and will not be mine after I am gone. All these possessions, enjoyments and consorts neither belong to me nor I to them.⁸ Thus this government with all its force and officers in the city is nothing to me, nor am I aught to it in reality except mere governmental compliments to one another.

⁹ I think I am my body composed of my legs, hands, and feet. I believe I am placed in the midst of these.¹⁰ But I perceive my body to be composed of flesh and bones and not my reasoning self which, like the lotus flower rising in the water, bears no relation to that element.¹¹ I find the flesh of my body to be dull and gross matter which does not make my soul. I find my rational part to be not this gross flesh at all. I find my bones likewise to be unconscious substances, consequently forming no part of my sentient soul.

¹² I am none of the organs of action, nor do these organs compose me. All organic bodies are composed of gross matter and consequently do not constitute the animated soul.¹³ I am not the nourishment which nourishes the body, and not the soul which makes me. I am not any of the organs of sense which perceive material impressions and have no consciousness without the intellect.

¹⁴ I am not the mind which is a passive agent and minds whatever it feels. It is called understanding because it stands under all its external and internal perceptions and conceptions, and it is the root of all worldly evils caused by its egoistic feelings.¹⁵ Thus I am not the mind or understanding or the internal senses or the external organs of action. I am not the inner subtle body or its outer material and self locomotive form, but I am something beside all of these which I want to know.

¹⁶ I see at last my intelligent living soul reflecting on what is perceptible, thence called its intelligence. But this intelligent principle being roused by others does not come under the category of the soul.¹⁷ Thus I renounce the knowable (living soul) and do not acknowledge the intelligible intelligence as myself. It is at the end of all the immutable and pure Consciousness which remains to be owned as myself.

¹⁸ Ah, it is wonderful at last to come to know the soul and find it to be me, the infinite soul, and the Supreme Spirit which has no end.¹⁹ As Indra and the gods reside and are resolved in Brahman, so the spirit of God pervades through all material bodies, like the string of a necklace passing through the

holes of all the pearls of which it is composed.

²⁰ The power of the soul known as consciousness is pure and unstained in its nature. It is devoid of the dirt of thinkable objects and fills infinite space with its immense and stupendous figure.

²¹ Consciousness is devoid of all attributes and pervades all existence in its subtle form. It stretches itself from the highest heaven to the lowest depths. It is the reservoir of all power. ²² It is full with all beauty and it is the light that enlightens all objects to us. It is the connecting chain to which all the worlds are linked together like pearls in a necklace.

²³ It is formless but capable of all forms and mutations, being connected with all matters and conversant with all subjects at all times. It has no particular name or form, but is taken as varied in different forms according to the operations of the intellect. ²⁴ It assumes fourteen forms in its awareness of so many sorts of beings contained in the two wombs of the world. It is varied in all these forms in order to be aware of all things composing the whole body of the natural world.

²⁵ The course of human happiness and misery is a false representation of understanding. The varieties of representations in the mind are mere operations of the soul and its attribute of the intellect. ²⁶ My soul is the same with the all pervading spirit, and this understanding in me is no other than that all knowing consciousness. The same mind represents these imaginary images in the senses of my mind and causes the error of my kingship in me.

²⁷ It is by good grace of Consciousness that the mind is seated in the vehicle of the body and ranges with joy amidst the play and diversions of the diverse scenes of this world. ²⁸ But this mind and this body and all diversities are nothing in reality. They are all destroyed by the cruel hand of death and not a trace of them remains behind. ²⁹ This world is a stage stretched out by the mind, its chief actor. The soul sits silently as a spectator of this scene, under the light of consciousness.

³⁰ Alas, I find my painful thoughts of punishment, retribution and well being of my people to be all for nothing because whatever is done for the body also perishes with the body. ³¹ O, that I am awakened to truth at present and released from the mirage of my long held false views. I have come to see what is worth seeing and have found everything that is worth having. ³² All these appearances seen throughout this universe are nothing more than false phantoms presented or produced by the vibrations of consciousness. They do not last long.

³³ Then what is the good of these my punishments and rewards to my people, which produce their pain and pleasure for a short time and do not lead to the lasting welfare of their souls? ³⁴ What do these pains and pleasures mean to us when they both proceed from ourselves and are alike in the sight of God? All along I have been ignorant of this truth which, fortunately, has now dawned upon me.

³⁵ What shall I now do under the influence of this light? Shall I now be sorry or joyous for it? What have I to look at and do now? Shall I remain in this place or go away from here? ³⁶ I behold this wonderful sphere of consciousness shining upon me in its full splendor. I hail you, O holy light which I see blazing before me, but of which I can describe nothing. ³⁷ I am now so awakened and enlightened and come to know the whole truth in me. Therefore I hail myself now knowing infinity and omniscience.

³⁸ Being freed from the paintings of my mind, cleared from the loss of the sensible objects, and

released from the errors of this world, I rest myself in the lap of my tranquil soul as in a state of sound sleep, in utter oblivion of all my internal and external impressions.

Chapter 60 — King Suraghu's Realization During and After Life

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Thus the lord of Hemajata attained the state of his perfect joy. It was by means of his self inquiry that he found his liberation in Brahman, like the son of Gadhi.² He was no longer employed in the discharge of his painful daily rituals, which are attended with repeated misery to those practicing them, but remained like the unchanging sun in its rotation of ever changing days and nights.³ From then on he remained without any care or anxiety. He continued as firm and unmoved amid the righteous and wrongful acts of his subjects as a rock stands in the midst of boisterous waves playing about and dashing against it.

⁴ He was not susceptible to gladness or anger at others' conduct in the discharge of their daily duties. He remained as grave as the deep ocean under the heaving waves of his clamorous people.⁵ He subdued his mental actions and passions like a man does in his sound sleep. He shone with an unshaken luster like the flame of a lamp in still air.⁶ He was neither unkind nor always kind to anybody, nor of was he envious or inimical to anyone. He was neither too wise nor unwise, nor was he a seeker or despiser of fortune.⁷ He looked upon all with an even eye and in an equal light. He conducted himself with unwavering steadiness and was as cool and gentle in his mind as the calm ocean and gentle moonlight.

⁸ Knowing all things in the world to be only workings of the mind, he remained quiet in every state of pleasure and pain with the soundness of his understanding.⁹ His mind was enlightened. His entranced soul enjoyed its trance in every state of his life and was full in itself both when he sat and slept as when he moved about or did anything.

¹⁰ He continued for a full hundred years to rule over his kingdom with his mind unattached to state affairs and with his unimpaired body and intellect.¹¹ At last he left his home of the frail body of his own accord, like dew dropping itself down impregnated with sunbeams.¹² Then his soul fled on the wings of his intelligence to the primary and final cause of causes, like the current of a stream runs to the main ocean by breaking down the bounds of its banks on its way.¹³ His intelligent soul, being freed from its remorse (of leaving the body) and released from the conditions of its reincarnation, became one with the immaculate spirit and was absorbed in the Supreme One, just as the air contained in a pot mixes with the all-encompassing sky after the pot is broken.

Chapter 61 — King Parigha's Tapas; His Meeting with King Suraghu

¹ Vasishta said:—

O lotus-eyed Raghava, you also act in the manner as Suraghu and rely on the sole existence of the Supreme One to cleanse your iniquities and to get rid of all sorrow in this world.

² The mind will no longer pant or sorrow when it has this universal sight in itself, just as a child is no longer afraid of dark when it gets the light of a lamp in the room. ³ The discriminating mind of Suraghu found its rest in perfect tranquility, just as a fool finds his security by laying hold of a big bundle of straw. ⁴ Having this holy sight in your view and by your preaching this light to others, continue to enjoy this uniform detachment of samadhi in yourself and shine forth as a bright-gem before the world.

⁵ Rama said, “Tell me, O chief of sages, what is this uniform detachment? Set my mind to rest, which is now fluttering like peacock plumes ruffled by winds.”

⁶ Vasishta replied:—

O Rama, listen to the marvelous story of enlightened and sagely King Parigha, and how he conducted himself by subsisting on tree leaves. ⁷ I will also tell you about the conversation between two princes, both of whom were equally enlightened in their souls and situated in the same sort of uniform quietism.

⁸ There was a mighty king of the Persians known by the name of Parigha. He was a victor over his enemies and the support of his kingdom, just as the axle is the support of a carriage. ⁹ He was joined in true friendship with Suraghu and was as closely allied to him as the god of love is to spring.

¹⁰ It happened at one time that a great drought occurred in the land of Parigha. It caused a great famine that resembled the final desolation of the earth brought on by the sins of men. ¹¹ It destroyed a great number of Parigha's people who were exhausted by hunger and weakness like a fire destroys unnumbered living animals of the forest. ¹² Seeing this great disaster of his people, Parigha was overwhelmed in grief. He left his capital in despair like a traveler leaving a city burned down to the ground.

¹³ He was so sorely soul-sick at his inability to remove this unavoidable calamity of his subjects that he went to a forest to devote himself to penance like Jiva, the chief of the devout. ¹⁴ He entered a deep wood unseen and unknown to his people, far away from mankind. There he passed his time in his disgust with the world. ¹⁵ He employed himself in austere penance in a mountain cave and remained sober-minded, living upon dry and withered tree leaves. ¹⁶ By subsisting on dry leaves for a long time, as fire devours them always, he earned the surname of Parnada (Leaf-Eater) among the devotees of that place. ¹⁷ From then on, the good and royal sage was known as Parnada to holy sages in all parts of Asia.

¹⁸ Having undergone the most rigid austerities for many years, he attained divine knowledge by his long practice of self-purification and by grace of the Supreme Soul. ¹⁹ He obtained his self-liberation by avoiding hatred and the passions and affections of anger, pity and other feelings and desires, and by his attainment of mental calmness and an enlightened understanding.

²⁰ He wandered at his pleasure all around the temple of the triple world. He mixed with the company of spiritual masters and disciples like bees mixing with the company of swans in lotus beds. ²¹ At one time, his wanderings led him to visit the city of Hemajata, built with shining stones and shining as brightly as a peak of Mount Meru. ²² There he met his old friend, Suraghu, the king of that city. They saluted each other with mutual fondness. They were both delivered from the darkness of ignorance and perfect in their knowledge of the knowable. ²³ They approached each other saying, "O! It is by virtue of our good fortune that we come to meet one another." ²⁴ They embraced each other with joyful faces and sat on the one and same seat, as when the sun and moon are in conjunction.

²⁵ Parigha (Parnada) said:—

My heart rejoices to see you with full satisfaction, and my mind receives a coolness as if it immersed in the cooling orb of the moon. ²⁶ Sincere friendship, like true love, shoots forth in a hundred branches in our separation from each other, just as a tree growing by the side of a pool stretches its boughs all around until the currents wash it and its roots away. ²⁷ O my good friend, the memories of our private talks, merry sports and idle plays of our early days awaken those innocent joys in me.

²⁸ I know well, O sinless friend, that the divine knowledge which I have gained by my long and painful tapas and by the grace of God is already known to you from the preaching of the wise sage Mandavya. ²⁹ But let me ask, are you placed beyond the reach of sorrow and set in your rest and tranquility? Are you situated in the supreme cause of all as firmly as if you were seated upon the unshaken rock of Meru? ³⁰ Do you ever feel that auspicious self-gratifying grace in your soul which purifies the fountain of your mind, like the autumn sky clears the springs of water on earth?

³¹ Do you, O ruler of your people, perform all your acts with a complacent air and steady mind discharging your duties for the good of mankind? ³² Do the people in your kingdom live in safety to enjoy their prosperity and competence. Are they all free from disease, danger and anxieties of life? ³³ Is this land plentiful in its harvests and are the trees here bending down with their fruits? Do the people here enjoy the fruit of their labor and the objects of their desire?

³⁴ Is your good fame spread about in all quarters, like the clear and cooling beams of the full moon? Does your fame cover the face of this land like a sheet of snowfall on the ground? ³⁵ Are all quarters of the sky filled with the renown of your virtues as to leave no gap in it, and as the roots and stalks of lotus bushes spread throughout a reservoir and choke the course of its waters? ³⁶ Do the young minds and virgins of your villages walk about pleasantly over plains and fields loudly singing your praises in their merry songs?

³⁷ Does all welfare attend you with respect to prosperity, wealth and possessions and the produce of your fields? Do your family, children and dependents fare well in this city? ³⁸ Do you enjoy your health free from all disease and complaint? Do you reap the reward of your meritorious acts done for this life and the next? ³⁹ Are you indifferent in your mind with regard to temporary enjoyments, which appear pleasant for a moment but prove to be our deadly enemies at last?

⁴⁰ It is after a very long separation that we come to meet again. It is my good fortune that rejoins me to you, as spring revisits valleys with verdure. ⁴¹ There are no joys or sorrows in this world which do not happen to the living in their union with and separation from one another. ⁴² During our long

separation we have become quite altered in our circumstances, yet we happened to meet each other in the same unchanged state of our minds by a wonderful accident of destiny.

⁴³ Suraghu replied:—

Yes, sage, the course of destiny is as crooked as that of a serpent. There is no man who can penetrate the depth of the mysterious nature of destiny. ⁴⁴ There is nothing impossible for destiny, which has after the lapse of so long a time reunited us in one place from the vast distance between our two countries.

⁴⁵ O great sage, we are all in good health and prosperity in this place. We have been supremely blessed by your graciousness to us. ⁴⁶ Behold us purified and cleansed of our sins by your holy presence among us. The tree of our merits has borne the fruit of our peace and satisfaction at your sight. ⁴⁷ O royal sage, we enjoy all prosperity in this our native city. Your presence here this day has made it shoot forth in a hundred branches of joy and happiness. ⁴⁸ O noble minded sage, your appearance and speech have sprinkled this place with sweet nectar drops, joy and holiness. The company of the virtuous is reckoned to equal the supreme joy of man.

Chapter 62 — King Suraghu Describes His Samadhi

¹ Vasishta related:—

King Parigha then resumed his personal speech, expressive of the affection he formerly bore to Suraghu. ² Parigha said, “Whatever acts of goodness are done in this earth of strife by men of well governed minds, they all redound to their happiness. But not so the evil deeds of ungoverned minds. They lead to their misery.”

³ “Sage, do you rely on that state of perfect rest which is free from desire? Do you rest in that state of subtle samadhi that is described as transcendental coma or trance?”

⁴ Suraghu replied:—

Tell me sage, what do you mean by the abandonment of all desires? What is meant by that perfect lethargy which they call transcendental coma or trance? ⁵ Tell me, O high minded sage, how can a man be called not entranced who is enrapt in his supreme intelligence and at the same time attends to his worldly concerns? ⁶ Men of enlightened understandings, however they are employed observing their usual worldly affairs, are said to be in bliss with their knowledge of the unity of the Supreme Soul. ⁷ Simply sitting in lotus posture with palms folded cannot endow supreme bliss if the mind is not subdued and one’s nature is unconquerable.

⁸ The knowledge of truth which burns away all worldly desires like straw is called samadhi, the true trance of the soul. Samadhi is not secluded devotees staying in one place and observing silence. ⁹ The wise describe samadhi as the repose of the soul, always gathered in knowledge attended with continued rest and self-content, which gives an insight into the nature of things. ¹⁰ The wise say samadhi or stillness is the mind unaffected by pride or hatred. The mind is as unmoved as a fixed rock against the howling winds of the passions. ¹¹ The mind is also said to have its stillness in samadhi when it is devoid of anxious thoughts and cares, when it is acquainted with the natures of its wished for objects, and yet remains free from its choice of and aversion to the objects of its liking or dislike. This is also said to be the fullness or perfection of the mind.

¹² The mind of the magnanimous, joined and acting with its understanding, is said to stand in its stillness of samadhi or quietism. ¹³ But this pause of samadhi, if stretched too far to become a standstill, is liable to break down by itself, just as a boy’s hand pulls the fiber of a lotus-stalk too long. Dead and dormant quiescence is the opposite extreme of conscious quietism.

¹⁴ As the sun does not cease giving his light to the other side of the world after he sets from this part, so our consciousness continues to glow even after it has run its course in this life. ¹⁵ As the course of a stream never stops in spite of its constant currents, so the course of our thoughts does not suspend from knowing further truths. ¹⁶ As the ever continuous time never loses the sight of fleeting moments, so the everlasting soul is never in abeyance to mark the fitting thoughts of its mind. ¹⁷ As the ever current time never forgets to run its habitual course, so intelligent understanding is never remiss to scan the nature of the mysterious Consciousness which guides its course.

¹⁸ When the mind wanders at random and is not settled in the sole object of its meditation, its thoughts run as quickly in succession as the continued rotation of the parts of time. ¹⁹ As the lifeless soul has no

perception of any external object, so the soul unconscious of itself has no knowledge of the course of time, as in the state of sleep, delirium and unconsciousness.²⁰ As there is no skillful man without some skill or other in the world, so there is no intelligent being without the knowledge of his soul and self-consciousness.

²¹ I find myself to be enlightened and wakeful and pure and holy at all times. My mind is tranquil and my soul at its rest on all occasions. ²² I find nothing intercepts the sweet repose of my soul which has found its anchorage in my uninterrupted communion with the divine spirit. ²³ Hence my mind is never without its quiescence at anytime, nor is it unquiet at any moment, it being solely resigned to spiritual meditation. ²⁴ I see the all pervading and everlasting soul in everything and in every manner. I know not whether it be the rest or unrest in my soul which has found both its quiet and employment in its perpetual meditation of the Divine Spirit.

²⁵ Great men of quiescent spirits always continue in an even and uniform tone and even course of their minds with themselves. Therefore the difference between the rest and restlessness of the soul is a mere verbal distinction and bears no shade of difference in their meanings.

Chapter 63 — Conclusion of Parigha's and Suraghu's Conversation

¹ Parigha said:—

Sage, I find you to be truly wise and enlightened in your beatitude. You shine like the full moon with your inner coolness.² I see the fullness of sweet delight in you. The shadow of prosperity rests upon you and you appear as graceful as a water lily with your pleasing and cooling face.³ The clarity, extent, fullness and depth of your understanding give you the appearance of the deep, clear and extensive ocean when it ceases to be disturbed by loud winds and waves.⁴ The pure and full delight of your inner soul, free from the cloud of egotism, gives it the grace of the clear expanse of the autumn sky.

⁵ I see you composed in your mind in all places and find you content at all times. Moreover you are devoid of passions, and all these combine to add to you an unutterable grace.⁶ You have overcome the bounds of knowing whatever is good and evil in this world. Your great understanding has acquainted you with everything in its entirety.⁷ Your mind is cheered with the knowledge of all existence and non-existence and your body is free from the evil of repeated birth and death, the common lot of all beings.

⁸ You have gleaned the truth from whatever is untrue. You are as satisfied with your true knowledge as the gods were satisfied with drinking the water of immortality which they churned out of the brackish water of the ocean.

⁹ Suraghu replied:—

There is nothing in this world, O royal sage, which we may consider valuable, for all that shines and glitters here is nothing in reality and has no intrinsic value.¹⁰ There being nothing desirable here to us, there is also nothing disgusting to us, because the lack of a thing implies the lack of its opposite also.¹¹ The ideas are weakened and obliterated from my mind that most worldly things are mean and that on particular occasions some are great.¹² Time and place give importance to the object and lower the best ones in our estimation. Therefore it behooves the intelligent neither to be lavish in the praise or disapproval of the one or the other.¹³ According to our evaluations we praise or disapprove of something. We esteem whatever is desirable to us. But they are the most intelligent who give their preference to what is the best and of the greatest good to us.

¹⁴ The world abounding in its woods, seas, mountains and living animals presents us nothing that is to be desired for our lasting and substantial good.¹⁵ What is there that we should desire when there is nothing worth desiring in this world except bodies composed of flesh and bones, and wood and stones, all of which are worthless and frail?¹⁶ As we cease to desire, so we get rid of our attachments and dislikes also, just as sunset is attended with the loss of both light and heat.

¹⁷ It is useless talk to elaborate on the subject. It is enough to know this truth for our happiness here. Have our desires under control and maintain an evenness of our minds under all conditions with inner serenity and universal regard for all.

Chapter 64 — Ignorance, the Life of a Bullock; Samadhi

¹ Vasishta resumed:—

After Suraghu and Perigha ended their discussion on the errors of this world, they honored one another with due respect and retired gladly to their respective duties of the day.² Now Rama, you have heard the whole of this instructive dialogue between them. Try to profit by maturely considering its meaning.

³ By reasoning with the learned, wits are sharpened with intelligence and the egotism of men melts down in their minds, like rain from a thick black cloud in the sky.⁴ It spreads a clear and calm composure over the mind, as the return of cloudless autumn over the spacious sky to the delight of mankind, and by its diffusion of bounteous plenty on earth.⁵ After the region of the intellect is cleared of its darkness, the light of the Supreme Soul, which is the object of meditation and our sole refuge, becomes visible in it.

⁶ A man who is always spiritually minded with insight within himself and who is always delighted with his intellectual investigations always has his mind free from sorrow and regret.⁷ Though a spiritual man is engaged in worldly affairs and is subject to passions and affections, yet he is unstained by them in his heart, like a lotus bud that is not stained by the water in which it is submerged.⁸ A silent sage who is all-knowing, holy and calm and quiet in himself is never disturbed by his ungoverned mind. He remains as firm as the dauntless lion against the rage of an unruly elephant.⁹ The heart of a wise man is never affected by the mean pleasures of the world. It stands like the lofty tree of paradise above the surrounding bushes of thorny brambles and poisonous plants.

¹⁰ A religious recluse who is disgusted with the world has no care for his life or fear of death. In the same way, a man whose mind is filled with full knowledge is never elated or depressed by his good or bad fortune.¹¹ A man who knows the falseness of the mind and the panorama of the world in the soul is never soiled by the stain of sin, just as the clear sky is nowhere smudged by any dirt or dust.

¹² The knowledge of one's ignorance is the best safeguard against falling into greater ignorance, and it is the only remedy for the disease of ignorance, just as the light of the lamp is the only remedy to cure the darkness of night.¹³ The knowledge of our ignorance is the best healer of ignorance, just as the knowledge of one's dreaming removes his trust in the objects of his dream.¹⁴ A wise man engaged in business, his mind disengaged from it and fixed on one object, is not obstructed by his business in his view of spiritual light, just as the eyesight of fish is not hindered by surrounding water.

¹⁵ As the light of intellectual day appears over the horizon of the mind, the darkness of the night of ignorance is put to flight. Then the mind enjoys its supreme bliss of knowledge like the full blaze of day.¹⁶ After the sleep of ignorance is over, the mind is awakened by its intelligence to the bright rising sunbeams of knowledge. Then the mind is ever awake to reason, which no dullness can overpower.

¹⁷ A man is said to live until he sees the moon of his soul and the moonbeams of his intellect shining in the sphere of his mind. He is said to have lived only for those few days when he has discharged his duties with joy.¹⁸ A man passing over the pool of his ignorance and taking himself to contemplation of his soul enjoys a coolness within him, just as the cooling moon enjoys the cold nectar juice

contained in her orb.¹⁹ Our true friends are the best scriptures. Those days are best spent with the scriptures, in discourse on dispassion, and when we feel the rise of the intellect within us.

²⁰ How lamentable are those born to perish like ferns in their native forests, who are immersed in their sinfulness by their neglect to look into their souls.²¹ Our lives are interwoven with a hundred threads of hopes and fears. We are as greedy as bulls for their fodder of straw. At last we are overtaken by old age and decrepitude and carried away with sorrow and sighs.²² Like heavy laden bullocks, the dull headed are made to bear great loads of distress on their backs in their native soil.

²³ They are bitten and disturbed by the gnats of their passions. They are made to plough the ground under the halter of their greed. They are shut in the cages of their masters and bound by the bonds of their kindred.²⁴ Thus we are harassed to support our wives and children. We are weakened by age and infirmity. Like beasts of burden we must wade in dirt and mire, be dragged to long journeys, and be broken under heavy loads without pause from toil and fatigue.²⁵ Bending under our heavy loads, we are tired from long journeys across deserts and burned under scathing sunbeams, without cool shade to shelter our heads even for a little while.

²⁶ We are like big bodied bulls with poor souls inside. We are oppressed at every limb and labor under our destiny tied around our necks like ringing bells on bullocks, the scourge of our sins lashing us on both sides.²⁷ We toil like bulls laboring under the poles of the carts they pull, crossing dreary deserts without a moment's rest.²⁸ We are always prone to and plunged in our own evils. We move like heavily laden bullocks, trolling and groaning all the way long.

²⁹ Rama, try your best to understand this bullock of your living soul and take your best measures to restore it to its pristine purity.³⁰ The animal soul released from the ocean of this world, purified in its mind by the light of truth, is no more liable to roll in the mud like some beasts.

³¹ In the society of high-minded men, the living soul receives instruction for its salvation in this ocean of the world, just as a passenger easily gets a boat from the ferryman to cross a river.³² A country is a desert without learned good people who resemble the green trees of the land. The wise must not dwell in a land where trees do not yield fruit or afford cooling shade.³³ Good men are the flowering plumeria trees of the land. Their cooling words resemble the shady leaves of the tree, and their gentle smiles its blooming flowers. Let men resort to the shade of such plumeria covered shelters.³⁴ For want of such men, the world is a desert burning under the darkening heat of ignorance where no wise man should allow himself to rest in peace and quiet.

³⁵ The self is one's true friend. Therefore support yourself by only your self. Do not obscure the brightness of your soul under darkness of bodily pride or bury your life in the skin of ignorance.³⁶ Let the learned ponder in themselves, "What is this body and how did it come into existence? What is its origin and what is its essence?" Thus let the wise diligently consider the miseries to which this body is subject.

³⁷ No riches, friends, learning or relative serves to save the drowning soul. It must be one's own mind that buys its own redemption by resigning itself to its source and cause.³⁸ The mind is the constant companion and true friend of the soul. Therefore one should inquire within by consultation with the mind.³⁹ By a constant habit of dispassion and deliberation one can cross the ocean of this world

riding on the raft of true knowledge.

⁴⁰ It is pitiful to see the inner torments of the evil minded who neglect to release their souls from all worldly vexations, ⁴¹ Release the elephant of your living soul (*jiva*) from the chains of its egoism, its bonds of greed, and the inebriation of its mind. Deliver the soul from the muddy pit of its birth place and retire to your solitude.

⁴² By these means, O Rama, the soul has its salvation. Therefore cast away your ignorance and wipe off your egoism. ⁴³ This is the best way to leave the soul to its purity, making you disentangle yourself from the snare of your mind and disengaging your soul from the trap of egoism. ⁴⁴ By this means we see the lord of gods, the Supreme Soul, and the physical body is regarded as no better than a clod of earth or a block of wood.

⁴⁵ The sunlight of intellect comes to view after dispersion of the cloud of egoism by which it is hidden. After this you attain the state of supreme joy. ⁴⁶ As the light of day is seen after the dark veil of night withdraws, so you come to see the light of the soul after removal of the curtain of your egoism. ⁴⁷ That blissful state of the soul which remains after the darkness of egoism is dispersed is the state of divine fullness. It is to be adored with all diligence.

⁴⁸ This state of the vast ocean-like and perfect fullness of soul, which no words can express and no eye can behold, is beyond all comparison and every color of human attribution. ⁴⁹ It is only a particle of the pure intellectual light which gains its stability in the devout spirit. Then it is comparable with nothing but the light of divinity which shines before the internal sight of the holy. ⁵⁰ Though it is beyond all comparison, yet we see it in our state of sound sleep (*susupta*). It is the state of immensity. It is as extended as the vast extent of the sky.

⁵¹ After egoism and mental powers are extinguished and all feelings in oneself subside, a transcendent ecstasy arises in the soul called divine or perfect joy and bliss. ⁵² This bliss is attainable only by yoga meditation and in some ways can be compared to sound sleep. But it cannot be described with words, O Rama. It must be perceived in the heart. ⁵³ The totality of divinity is perceived only by the perception of the mind and not by any categorical distinction made about the divine essence. Without this intuitive perception, we can have no conception of the soul. ⁵⁴ The knowledge of the soul comprehends in itself the whole totality and infinity together. It resides in the unchanging steadiness of the mind. By shutting out the internal and external from the senses and the mind, the lord of lords, the Divine Soul appears to our consciousness.

⁵⁵ Therefore, after our desire of sensible objects is extinguished we derive the light of our supreme joy and we have an even minded composure in all circumstances which leads the souls of the great to revert to that indescribable identity.

Chapter 65 — The Story of Bhasa and Vilasa

¹ Vasishta continued:—

As long as one does not come to perceive his soul by his effort to break down his own mind, lotus-eyed Rama, one does not get rid of his egoism and selfishness.² There is no end to his worldly misery just as there is no setting of a sun in a painting. His adversity becomes as extended as the vast ocean itself.³ His misfortunes are as interminable as the succession of waves in the sea. The appearance of the world is as gloomy to him as the face of the sky covered by the dark clouds of rainy season.

⁴ Here will I recite an old story containing a discourse between two friends Bhasa and Vilasa in a region of Sahya Mountain.

⁵ Now Sahya is a mountain mightier than the three worlds in its superior strength. In its height it surmounted the sky, in its extent it got the better of the ground, and with its foot it reached the infernal region.⁶ It was filled with various flowers and furnished with innumerable waterfalls. Its precious stones were watched ever by Guhya mountaineers. It was named Sahya or moderate being situated in the temperate zone, yet it was intolerable as a tropic mountain.

⁷ Its girdle of sun-stones seemed studded with pearls from the sloping sunbeams falling upon them. Its base with its pavement of gold looked like the golden Lanka island.⁸ Here a hill was full of flowers and there another filled with minerals. There were lakes with flowering water plants on one side and shining stones lying on another with nothing beside the light of the divinity, which shines before the internal sight of the holy.⁹ Here cascades were hurling and gurgling in foaming froths. There old bamboos were blowing through their hollow pipes. On one side winds were howling in mountain caves, and on another bees were buzzing on clusters of flowers.¹⁰ Apsara nymphs were singing in concert on mountain tops and wild beasts were growling in the forests. Birds were chirping in the gardens, clouds roared over mountain peaks, and birds of the air were crying and flying about the sky.

¹¹ Vidyadharas rested in mountain caves and black bees hummed on the lotus beds. Foothills resounded with the chorus of keratas and woodlands were resonant with the melodies of singing birds.

¹² The mountain appeared as if it was the home of the triple world. It had the seats of the gods on its top, the homes of men at its foot, and the holes of snakes under its bottom.¹³ Spiritual masters lived in its caves and precious metals lay hidden in its bosom. Its sandalwoods were the home of snakes and its peaks were the haunts of lions.¹⁴ It was crowned with wreaths of flowers hanging on high over its head. Its body was smeared with the dust and pollen of flowers. It was fanned by fragrant breeze of flowers and was all flowery with the fallen flowers.¹⁵ It was daubed with the grey dust of its metallic ores and stood on its footstool of precious stones. It was often the playground of heavenly damsels who frequented its covered shelters to pick mandara flowers.¹⁶ Its peaks were veiled by the blue covering of clouds and decorated with gems hidden under them. They appeared as beauties beaming with the golden sunbeams and rising to meet their loving gods in heaven.

¹⁷ On the northern edge of that mountain there was a tableland overhung by trees loaded with bunches of fruits, and also a shining lake formed by the waters of cataracts falling from high.¹⁸ Small flowers from the waving stalks of amra trees lay scattered on the ground, and its sides were decorated with

blossoming kolkara and punnaga plants, shining like blue lotuses around a lake.¹⁹ Sunbeams were shut out by the cover of sheltering alcoves of vines, and the ground sparkled with its gems like the floor of heaven. Jambu fruits distilled their juice like cooling moonbeams, and all these made this spot as delightful as the moon light sky.²⁰ It was delightful as the heaven of Brahma and the celestial seat of Shiva.

Here sage Atri held his hermitage which blotted away the austerities of spiritual masters.²¹ In this hermitage there dwelt two hermits, both of whom were as wise and knowing as Brihaspati and Shukra, the teachers of gods and demigods.²² The two were of one flesh and soul and in time brought forth two children, like two buds of lotuses growing in the same bed, their bodies as pure as the clear lake from which they sprang.²³ They were named Bhasa and Vilasa.

They grew up in time like two orchids upon the branching arms of their parents.²⁴ They had one soul and mind in two bodies, united to one another as those of two loving brothers and intimate friends. They remained inseparable like oil in sesame seeds and like a flower and its fragrance.²⁵ The fond parents became even more attached to each other in their hearts and minds from their affection and taking care of their sons who seemed to be one and the same person in two different bodies.²⁶ The two children of graceful forms also enjoyed each other in the same hermitage. They moved about like two bees over the same bed of lotuses in the same lake.

²⁷ They passed their boyhood and attained their youth, shining forth in a short time as the two luminaries of the sun and moon rising together.²⁸ Then the aged parents left their infirm bodies and went to heaven like a pair of birds quitting their broken nest.²⁹ The death of the parents made the youths as dejected as a drooping lotus in a dried-up channel. The vigor of their bodies gave way to a lack of energy.³⁰ They discharged the funeral rites and remained long in their mourning. The sad accidents of life cannot be avoided even by the good and great.³¹ After they completed the funeral rites, they were overpowered by grief and sorrow. They continued to wail over their memory with piteous cries and tears. They sat silently and inactive like pictures in a painting, their melancholy faces and hearts heavy with sobs and sighs.

Chapter 66 — The Two Hermits Wander & Meet in Old Age

¹ Vasishta continued:—

The two sorrowful hermits continued observing their rigorous austerities until their bodies became emaciated like two withered trees in the forest.² They passed their time in the solitary forest with cool apathy in their minds. They were as helpless as a stray, separated male deer. They wandered separately far away from their home and possessions.³ They passed their days and nights, then months and years in this manner, until both were worn out by age, like two withered trees in a valley.⁴ Not attaining true knowledge, their austerities served only to shatter their frames and reduce their strength. Finally at last they happened to meet one another, and took to their conversation in the following manner.

⁵ Vilasa said, “O Bhasa, who is the best fruit of the tree of my life, who has his seat in the recess of my heart and is a sea of ambrosia to me, I welcome you, O my best friend in this world.⁶ Tell me my good friend, after you separated from me, how and where have you passed such long a time? Have your austerities been successful and rewarded with their fruit?⁷ Tell me whether your mind is free from anxieties and whether you are in possession of your self. Say, have you obtained the reward of your learning and after all, have you gotten your peace and quiet?”

⁸ Being addressed and asked in this way by Vilasa, whose mind was troubled with the vexations of this world, Bhasa, who had attained complete knowledge, replied to him as respectfully as a friend does to his dearest friend.

⁹ Bhasa replied:—

O good friend! You are fortunately and happily met here this day. But how can we expect to have our peace and rest as long as we have to remain in this world of strife and valley of misery?¹⁰ How can I have my rest while turbulent passions are not subdued in my breast, until I know the knowable, and until I can get across this sea of the world?¹¹ How can we have our quiet while our desires and hopes and fears continue to infest our minds, and until we can weed them out like thorns and brambles with the spade of our reason?¹² Until we gain true knowledge and have even minds, and until we have a full knowledge of things, we can have no rest.¹³ Without knowledge of the soul and acquisition of true knowledge, which is the greatest remedy against all diseases of the mind, it is impossible to escape from the pestilence of the world.

¹⁴ The poisonous plant of worldliness sprouts forth in our childhood. It shoots out in leaves in our youth, flowers in our old age, and never bears fruit before our death.¹⁵ The body decays like a withered tree and our relatives flutter over it like bees. Old age overtakes us with blossoming grey hairs and produces the fruit of death.¹⁶ We have to reap the bitter fruits of our actions of bygone times. They are laid up in store and bear fruit in their seasons. Thus years upon years glide upon us in the same monotonous rotation of business and in the sad course of thought of our minds.¹⁷ The tall body, rising like a thief on the ground, has all its inner cells and cavities filled with the thorns of our cravings. It is the abode of the serpentine retinue of our actions, emitting the poison of continuous sorrow in our repeated reincarnations in new bodies.

¹⁸ See how our days and nights roll on in their circuit of continued misery and misfortune,

misconstrued by men for transient joy and good fortune.¹⁹ See how our lives are spent in useless pursuits after objects of our vain wishes, and how we misspend our time with trifles that are of no good to us.

²⁰ The furious elephant of the ungoverned mind breaks loose from its chains of good sense, then joining with the elephants of wild desire, ranges at large without rest or sleep.²¹ The bawling tongue screams like a vulture in the hollow of the tree of the human body, fostering itself by feeding on the gems of thought lying hidden inside.

²² The slackened limbs of the old and withered body drop down like dry tree leaves. There is nothing to prop up the drooping spirit from its decay and decline day by day.²³ The brightness of the body flies away in old age, and the mind dejected at others' disregard becomes as pale and withered as a lotus flower fading away under frost.²⁴ As the channel of the body dries up in old age and the water of youth is drained out of it, so the swan of life flies far away and there is nothing to retard its flight.²⁵ The old, time worn tree of the aged body is overpowered by the force of the blasts of time, blowing its leaves and flowers below, then burying them in the ground.

²⁶ The serpent of desire lying dormant in the heart is content, like a croaking frog, to hold its complaints in the mouth. The mind, like a monster, hides itself in a pool of dark despondence.²⁷ Our desires with their various wishes are like the multicolored flags of a temple, furling and fluttering in all directions until they are hurled down by the hurricane of old age.²⁸ The world is a long linked chain lying in the depth of eternity in which the rat of death is always busy gnawing the knot of life at the root.

²⁹ The stream of life glides muddily on with the foam and froth of cares and anxieties. There are whirlpools of repeated reincarnations and waves of youthful frivolities that are as noisy as they are dangerous.³⁰ The stream of our actions on earth flows on interminably with the waves of our worldly duties and the various arts of life all leading to the abyss of destruction.³¹ The current of our friends and relations and the concourse of people glide on constantly to the deep and boundless ocean of eternity from whose boundary nobody ever returns to life.

³² The body is a valuable instrument for the discharge of our worldly duties, but it is soon lost under the mud of this ocean of the world. Nobody knows where it is buried in its repeated births.³³ The mind is bound to the wheel of its anxieties and put to the rack for its deceptions. It turns about constantly like a piece of straw in the whirling currents of this ocean of the world.³⁴ The mind dances and floats over waves of endless duties of life. It does not have even a moment's respite from its thoughts, but continues to oscillate with the action of the body, rising and falling according to the course of events.³⁵ The mind, like a bewildered bird, flutters between various thoughts of what it has done, what it is doing, and what it is about to do. Thus it is caught in the trap of its own fancies for evermore.

³⁶ The thoughts that "this one is my friend" and "the other one is my foe" are our greatest enemies in this world. These tear my heart strings like the rough wind that tears tender lotus leaves and fibers.

³⁷ The mind is overwhelmed in the whirlpool of its cares. Sometimes it is hurled down to the bottom, and at others floating and loosened from it like a living fish caught by angling hook.³⁸ The mistaken

belief that the external body is the internal self is the cause of all our grief here. Taking others as our own is equally for our misery.

³⁹ All mankind placed between their happiness and sorrow in life are swept away to age and death, just as the leaves of trees growing on high hills are scattered by the high winds of heaven.

Chapter 67 — Soul & Mind Are Unrelated to Phenomena; Abandonment of Intrinsic Relations

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Having thus approached and welcomed each other, the two brothers applied themselves to the acquisition of divine knowledge and thereby gained their liberation in the living state.

² O strong armed Rama, I will now tell you that without true knowledge of God, there is no salvation for the enslaved mind. ³ Know, O Rama of polished understanding, that this world of endless sorrows is as easily traversed by the intelligent as a wide ocean is crossed over by Vishnu's garuda bird, though it be impossible for any other bird to do so.

⁴ The great soul is without and lies beyond the body. It is situated in its own intellect and it looks on the body from a distance, just as a spectator beholds a concourse of people. ⁵ The body pulled down by decay and disease does not affect us anymore, like a broken coach that causes no injury to the rider. ⁶ The mind's depressions and dejections do not affect understanding, just as the moving waves that ruffle the surface of the sea do not disturb the waters of the deep.

⁷ What relation do swans bear to the waters of a lake? What is the relation between the pebbles and stones of the sea and its waters? The pieces of wood carried by currents are unrelated to the waters of the stream. In like manner, no object of sense has any relationship to the Supreme Soul. ⁸ Tell me, O fortunate Rama, what is the correlation between a rock and the sea? The rock truly is not an obstruction to the internal current of the sea, so none of these worlds can stop the course of the Divine Mind. ⁹ What relation do lotuses bear to the waters of a stream, other than their being contained in the bosom of their containing waters? So all solid bodies are related as contents with the all containing Divine Soul.

¹⁰ When a log hits a body of water there is spray all around. In the same way, when the body contacts the soul it produces the various affections of the mind. ¹¹ As the association of a tree on a bank produces its shadow in the waters below, so the proximity of all objects to the soul reflects their images in the mind. ¹² As the reflections of things in a mirror, still waters, or the swelling waves of the sea are neither real nor unreal, so the reflections in the soul are neither substantial nor unsubstantial. ¹³ As the breaking of a tree or rock by howling winds does not affect the wind at all, so the union or separation of the elemental component parts of a body makes no alteration in the soul.

¹⁴ As a tree falling in water produces a vibration and sound, so the contact of the body and soul produces a vibration in the intellectual organs. ¹⁵ But these impressions have no relation either with the pure and simple soul or with the gross body. All these are only delusions of our false knowledge. When these delusions are gone, we are left with only transparent consciousness. ¹⁶ As no one has any notion how wood and water are connected, so nobody has any knowledge of how the body is united with the soul.

¹⁷ The world appears a reality to the unintelligent and as a substantial entity to those ignorant of truth.

¹⁸ Those without an internal perception of moisture in wood and stone are like worldly minded materialists who have knowledge of only external objects. ¹⁹ Those without intuitive knowledge find no difference between wood and water, so they believe the body and the soul to be the same thing. They do not know their lack of relation or connection with one another. ²⁰ As the relationship between

wood and water is imperceptible without reasoning, so such people are unacquainted with the lack of any relationship between soul and body because they lack intuition.

²¹ The soul is purely conscious of itself in all places and without any objective knowledge of anything at all. It is not liable to the false knowledge of a duality. ²² The soul's false apprehension of unrealities converts its bliss to misery, just as one's false imagination of a ghost makes him see an apparition. ²³ Our internal conviction of relevancy makes things quite irrelevant become relevant, like seeing and catching thieves in our dreams or the appearance of a demonic apparition in a block of wood.

²⁴ As the relationship between wood and water is altogether unreal, so the correlation between soul and body is wholly false and unsubstantial. ²⁵ As the water is not troubled if a tree does not fall into it, so the soul is not disturbed without its thoughts of the body. The soul freed from its connection with the body is free from all the maladies and miseries which flesh is heir to.

²⁶ The misconception of the body being the soul makes the soul subject to all the imperfections and infirmities of the body, just as the clear waters of the lake are soiled by the leaves and twigs that float upon it. ²⁷ Absence of any intrinsic relationship between external and the internal soul liberates the soul from all the casualties in the course of things. But the presence of extraneous associations makes the internal soul like turbid water by reason of the mess of leaves, foul things, fruit and flowers continually falling upon it. ²⁸ The soul free of its innate knowledge of the objective is wholly absolved from misery, while the knowledge of its connection with the body, senses and mind is the mainspring of all its sorrows. ²⁹ The internal connection of externals is the seed of all the evils of men in this world, bringing forth all of mankind's pain, sorrow and errors.

³⁰ A man who is internally connected with the externals sinks deep under the load of his connections in the depth of this earth, but he who is aloof from his internal relations floats above the surface of this sea and rises up in the air like an aerial being. ³¹ A mind with its internal bearings is like a tree with a hundred branches, but the mind lacking internal relation is said to have faded and grown extinct. ³² A mind unattached to the world is like a pure crystal without any shade of color in it. But a mind attached to the world is like a prismatic glass with all the colors of the rainbow. ³³ An unattached and untainted mind is said to be set at liberty, even though it is working in the world. A mind is said to be unattached if it is thoughtless of the world through the practice of austerities.

³⁴ A mind attached to the world is said to be bound to it, but that which is detached from the world is said to be set free from it. The internal attachment and detachment of the mind cause its bondage and liberation. ³⁵ Unworldly minded persons are not tied to the earth by their worldly actions. They remain aloof from all their actions, like a floating vessel remains above the sweet or salty waters beneath it.

³⁶ The tendency of the mind makes a man master of an action which he actually has not done, just as the delusion of the dreaming mind makes one feel the pleasure and pain of his pleasing and unpleasing dreams. ³⁷ The activity of the mind also gives activity to the body, just as the action of the mind in dreaming gives motion to the inert body of the sleeping man. ³⁸ Inactivity of the mind causes the inaction of the body, and though the body should act by its physical force, yet the detached mind is not enmeshed in the action.

³⁹ Man gets the retribution of the actions he has done with his mind and not those that pass without his knowledge. The inert body is never the cause of an action. The mind is never joined with the living body like an automaton or self moving machine, or like a clock whose spring lies in itself. The body requires the action of the mind to put that animal force into motion.

⁴⁰ The mind which does not pay attention to an action of the body is never considered to be the agent of that action. No reward of any action ever accrues to one who is not engaged in doing that action.

⁴¹ The man who is not intentionally employed in the sacrifice of a horse or the slaughter of a brahmin neither reaps the good of the one nor incurs the guilt of the other, just as the minds of distracted lovers are never aware of the results of their own deeds.

⁴² One free from any intrinsic relationship with anything is most agreeable to all by his elevated behavior. Whether he acts or neglects his part, he remains indifferent to both. ⁴³ No agency is attached to the man whose action is involuntary and whose mind is released from its internal attachment to anything. The unconcerned detachment of the mind is attended with composure. The mind's careful concern for anything whatsoever is filled only with vexation. ⁴⁴ Therefore, avoid your internal concern for anything that you know to be related to you only externally. Release yourself from the mortification of the loss to all external relations.

⁴⁵ The mind cleared of the foulness of its internal relationship with external phenomena acquires the transparency of the cloudless sky. After all dirt and waste are cleared within, the mind becomes one with the soul like a bright gem shining with double brightness of a luminary, or like a blue streamlet receiving the blue color of the azure sky.

Chapter 68 — The Pain of Attachment; the Liberation of Non-Attachment

¹ Rama said, “Tell me, sage, what are the connections that become the bondages of men? How are they to be avoided? What is that connection that leads to their emancipation in this life?”

² Vasishta answered:—

The division of unity into the duality of the body and soul, and the rejection of the latter part, the soul, produce the mistaken belief in only the body. This is called the association of bondage.³ Again, taking the infinite soul to be a finite being confined to the body leads to the bondage of the soul.⁴ But the conviction that, “this whole cosmos is the identical soul, therefore we have nothing to choose or reject in it other than the soul” is termed the unrelated condition of the mind settled only in the Supreme Self. This state is known as living liberation.

⁵ The unattached and self-liberated man thinks, “Neither do I exist nor do these others exist. Let any good or evil, pleasure or pain befall me. I am not to be changed in any condition of life.”⁶ He is undistracted and self-devoted who does not foster his desires, or hanker after things, or continues thinking he is doing actions.⁷ The self-devoted man whose mind is not subject to feelings of joy or sorrow and who is indifferent to worldly matters is truly said to be liberated in his lifetime.⁸ He whose mind is not concerned about the results of his actions, but takes them lightly as they come to pass upon him, such a man is said to be lacking vigor and is lukewarm in his mind.⁹ All our efforts impelled by various motives are avoided by our indifference to those pursuits. This lack of concern about worldly matters produces our greatest good.

¹⁰ We load innumerable distresses upon ourselves because of our concerns with many things. All worldly cares serve only to multiply the growing ills of life, like branching thorny bushes in caves.

¹¹ The effect of worldly attachment drives silly men to labor under their heavy burdens, just as the dastardly donkeys are dragged by their nose-strings to trudge and drudge under their loads in long and lonesome journeys.¹² One’s attachment to home and country makes him stand in one place like an immovable tree and endure all the rigors of heat, cold, winds and rains without shrinking.

¹³ See the reptiles confined in the caves of earth with their weak bodies and tortuous movements. They are examples of earthly attachment, passing their time in pain and agony and in continuous helplessness.¹⁴ See the poor birds resting on the tops of trees, whining their while with cries of their empty stomachs and constant fear of predators, as examples of worldly attachment.¹⁵ Observe the frightened fawn, grazing on tender blades of grass and dreading the darts of hunters, to serve as another example of earthly inclination.¹⁶ The transformation of men into worms and insects in their repeated reincarnations, and the congregation of all these animals of all kinds in all places, are only examples of their earthly fondness.¹⁷ The multitudes of animal beings that you see rising and falling like the waves of the sea are all the effects of their worldly attachment.

¹⁸ The self-moving man becomes immovable and turns into the state of fixed trees and plants growing and dying by turns because of his worldly propensities.¹⁹ Grass, shrubs and vines that grow on earth from its moisture are all products of the cause of their addiction to the world.²⁰ These endless processions of beings carried away in this running stream of the world and buffeted by their ever-increasing difficulties are all the play of their earthly inclinations.

²¹ Worldly affections are of two kinds: the praiseworthy and the fruitless. Those of the wise and learned men belong to the former praiseworthy kind, but the tendencies of the ignorant are of the latter unfruitful kind. ²² Any tendency towards this world which springs from base bodily or mental affection, and which does not proceed from or bears any relation to spiritual motives and purposes, is said to be quite fruitless of any good result. ²³ But that tendency which has its origin in spiritual knowledge and in true and right discrimination and bears no relation to anything that is of this world, but leads to one's future and spiritual welfare, is the truly praiseworthy one.

²⁴ The god Vishnu, holding the symbols of the conch shell, his discus and the club, had various inclinations of this better kind whereby he became the support of the three worlds. ²⁵ By means of this good tendency, the glorious sun makes its daily course in the unsupported path of heaven for ever more. ²⁶ The god Brahma, who now shines in his fiery form, had to foster his project of creation for an entire kalpa age. Owing to this praiseworthy purpose, he became the creator of the world. ²⁷ It was because of this kind of praiseworthy purpose that the god Shiva acquired his half-man, half-woman body, graced by the female form of Uma linked with his as its other half.

²⁸ The spiritual masters and other heavenly and aerial beings, and the rulers of the skies who move in their spiritual spheres of intelligence, have all attained their high positions by means of their praiseworthy tendencies. ²⁹ They bear their bodies of heavenly growth and have set themselves beyond the reach of disease, decay and death by means of their praiseworthy inclinations.

³⁰ Fruitless desire expects to derive pleasure from unworthy objects and causes the mind to pounce like a vulture on a bit of flesh. ³¹ Force of habit makes the winds to blow in their habitual course and causes the five elements to continue in their usual states in support of the order of nature. ³² This force of habit constitutes the constitution of the system of nature composed of the heavens, earth and infernal regions and peopled by gods, men, demons and other beings, all of whom are like gnats fluttering about the fruit of the mundane fig tree. ³³ Numberless orders of beings are born, grow and fall and die away, like the ceaseless waves of the sea.

³⁴ The results of worldly inclinations rise and fall by turns until they disappear all at once. They are as bitter to taste as the drops of waterfalls. ³⁵ Mere worldliness makes these crowds of men devour one another like sharks and fishes. They are so infatuated by their ignorance that they have been flying about like stray tree leaves in the wind. ³⁶ Worldly leanings make men wander about like revolving stars in their courses in the sky, or flutter about like flights of gnats on fig trees, or lie low like the swirling waters of whirling currents underneath the ground. ³⁷ The hands of fate and death toss men around like a child's play ball and wears men out like these toys by their constant rise and fall and rolling upon the ground. Yet these worrying wanderings do not abate the force of their habitual motions, like the repeated waxing and waning of the ever changing moon make no change in the blackish spot marked upon her disc.

³⁸ The mind is hardened by seeing the miseries of repeated revolutions of ages resembling the rotations of fragments of wood in whirlpools. Yet the gods will not consent to heal the strong boiling of the mind by any operation in their power.

³⁹ O Rama, this wonderful frame of the universe is only the product of the desire of the Divine Mind.

⁴⁰ The pleasure of association presents this sight of the triple world in the empty sphere of the mind. Know this wonderful world is only a creation of the mind and nothing in reality.

⁴¹ The greed of worldly men eats up their bodies like fire feeding upon dry fuel. ⁴² Yet the bodies of worldly minded men are as countless as the sands of the sea, and these again are as unnumbered as the atoms of earth which nobody can count. ⁴³ It may be possible to count the white foams of the Ganges River and the pearly froths of sea waves. It is likewise possible to measure the height of Mount Meru from its foot to the top and its peaks. But it is impossible to number the desires in the minds of worldly minded men. ⁴⁴ These rows of inner apartments, built for the home of the worldly minded, are like the lines of Kala Sutra and the spires of hellfire. ⁴⁵ Know these worldly men are like dry fuel heaped up to light the piles of hell-fire. ⁴⁶ Know all things in this world are full of pain and misery, stored up not for enjoyment but to torment the worldly minded.

⁴⁷ The minds of all worldly men are the receptacles of all sorrow and misery, just as the great sea is the recess of the outpourings of all rivers. ⁴⁸ The mind attached to the world and the body bent down under its laborious loads are both fields for the exercise of ignorance which elevates and depresses them by turns.

⁴⁹ Want of attachment to worldly enjoyments produces ease and prosperity. It expands the capacity of the mind like rain increases the extent of rivers. ⁵⁰ Inner attachment of the mind to worldly objects is the burning flame of the outer body, but the absence of this internal attachment is the healing balm for the entire being. ⁵¹ Inner attachment burns the outer body like a hidden poisonous plant infects the vines that grow on it for support. ⁵² The mind unattached to everything in all places is like the lofty sky aloof from all things. By having no desire in the mind, it is always clear and bright and enjoys its joy forever. ⁵³ As the light of knowledge rises before the sight of the mind, the darkness of ignorance which veiled all objects wastes away of itself and is put to flight. The man who is devoid of all sorts of worldly attachments and lives in communion with his own mind is truly liberated in his life.

Chapter 69 — Living without Attachment

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Though remaining in all company and doing all the duties of life, and although employed in all the acts, yet a wise man watches the movements of his mind.² The mind is not to be engaged in cares of this world or employed in thoughts relating to this life. It is not to be fixed in the sky above or on the earth below or let to wander about over objects on all sides.³ It must not roam over the extensive field of outward enjoyments or dwell on the objects and actions of the senses. It must not look internally or be fixed upon breathing, the palate or the crown of the head.⁴ It must not be attached to the eyebrows, the tip of the nose, the mouth, or the pupil of the eye, nor should it look into the light or darkness or into the cavity of the heart.⁵ It must not think of its waking or dreaming states, nor those of its sound sleep or internal clearness of sight, nor should it take any color as white, red, black or yellow for the object of its thought or sight.⁶ It must not be fixed on any moving or unmoving substance or set in the beginning, middle or end of any object. It must not take a distant or adjacent object either before or inside itself.⁷ It must not reflect on any tangible or audible object or on the states of joy and unconsciousness. It must not think of the fleetness or the measurement of time by the measure or number of its thoughts.

⁸ Let it rest in consciousness only with a slight intelligence of itself, tasting no joy except that of its self-delight.⁹ Being in this state of mind and devoid at all attachment to anything, the living man becomes like a dead body. He is at liberty to pursue his worldly callings or not.

¹⁰ The living being who is attached to the thought of himself is said to be doing and acting though he refrains from doing anything. He is as free from the consequence of acts as the sky is free from the shade of the clouds that hang below it.¹¹ Or he may forsake his intelligential part and become one with the mass of Consciousness itself. The living soul thus becomes calm and quiet in itself and shines with a light as serene as a bright gem in a mine.¹² The soul being thus extinct in itself, is said to rise in the sphere of Consciousness. The animal soul continuing in its acts with an unwilling mind is not subject to results of the actions in its embodied state.

Chapter 70 — Perfect Bliss of Living Liberation

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Men whose souls are expanded and content with the delight of their habitual un-attachment to worldliness have set themselves above the reach of internal sorrow and fear, even though they may be engaged in worldly affairs. ² Though overtaken by inner sorrow, yet their countenances are unchanged owing to their uninterrupted meditation. The fullness of their hearts with holy delight is manifest in the moonlike brightness of their faces.

³ He whose mind relies on the intellect to be free of the feverishness of the world, and who remains apart from the objects of reasoning, throws a luster over those around him, just as the clearing kata fruit purifies water. ⁴ The wise man, though he may be moving about in busy affairs, is always quiet having withdrawn his soul from them. He may be attacked by outward sorrow, yet his inner soul shines like an image of the sun. ⁵ Men of great souls, awakened and enlightened by knowledge and raised high above the rest of mankind, waver on their outside like a peacock's feather, but inwardly they are as firm as a mountain of rock. ⁶ The mind controlled by the soul is no longer susceptible to the feelings of pain and pleasure, any more than a piece of painted glass receives the shadow of any other color. ⁷ The man of elevated mind who has known the nature of superior and inferior souls is not affected by the sight of phenomena any more than a lotus leaf is affected by the color of its surrounding waters.

⁸ It is impossible to evade the impressions of the outer world until and unless the mind is strengthened in itself. The mind becomes strong by its knowledge of the Supreme Spirit, by removing the foulness of its fancied objects, and by meditation and enjoyment of the light of the soul, even when the mind is not in its meditative mood. ⁹ The mind loses its attachments through spiritual communion and internal bliss. Our worldly associations wear out of themselves only by knowledge of the soul. There is no other way. ¹⁰ The waking soul may consider itself to be in sound sleep by its unconsciousness of the outer world. Likewise it may consider itself to be ever awake and never asleep by its sight of the unfading light of the soul, by preservation of its equanimity and equality in all circumstances, and its lack of duality and differentiation of the objects of its love and hatred.

¹¹ Being ripe in its practice of yoga meditation, the soul sees the pure light of the sun in itself until at last it finds its own and the Supreme Soul shining like the sun and moon in conjunction. ¹² When the mind loses its mental powers and remains vacant, as if distracted or demented, and its faculty to imagine is at an utter stop, it is said to be in its deep sleep in wakefulness (*susupta*). ¹³ The man having attained this state may live to discharge the duties of his life, but he will be dragged to one side or the other by the rope of his happiness or sorrow. ¹⁴ Whatever actions are done in this world by a man in his state of deep sleep in wakefulness, they do not inflict him with their good or evil results, any more than a dancing puppet has any sense of pleasure or pain in its actions.

¹⁵ The mind possesses the power of giving us the perception of our pains and pleasures, and the sense of our want and bitter sorrow, but when the mind is assimilated with the soul, how can it have the power of annoying us anymore? ¹⁶ The man in the hypnotic state of his mind does his works as insensibly as he did them in his sleep, because he does them with no effort on his part and not because of his former habitual practice. The living soul that is unconscious of its actions is said to rest in its

state of living liberation.

¹⁷ Rely upon this state of deep sleep while awake and either perform or refrain from your actions as you may like. Our actions are only what arise of our nature. They pass for the results of the deeds of our past lives and they are enacted by ordinances of eternal laws. ¹⁸ A wise man is not pleased with the acts of charity or penury. He is delighted with his knowledge of the soul and lives content with whatever may fall to his lot. ¹⁹ All that you do with your mind by remaining as still as in your sleep is reckoned as no doing of yours. Though doing nothing with your body, you are the doer if you do it with your mind. Therefore do your acts with your body or mind as you may like. ²⁰ As a baby lying in the cradle moves its limbs to no other purpose than its mere pleasure, so Rama, do your duties for pleasure's sake and not for reward.

²¹ Whoever has his mind fixed in his consciousness and not in any object of reasoning, and remains dormant in his waking state, is said to be master of his soul. All he does is reckoned as no deed of his doing. ²² The wise man who obtains the state of deep sleep while awake and has freed his mind from desires gets a calm coolness within himself which is equal to the cooling moisture of the humid moon.

²³ The man of great valor remains coolly dormant in himself and is as full as the orb of the moon in the fullness of her digits. He has the evenness of his mind at all times and seasons like the steadiness of a hill. ²⁴ The man with a calm soul is pliable in his outer conduct, though he is inflexible in his mind. He resembles a mountain whose trees wave with the breeze without being shaken.

²⁵ Samadhi purifies the body of all its impurity. It is the same whether a person in samadhi perishes sooner or later, or lasts forever as a rock. ²⁶ This state of samadhi, which is acquired by constant practice of yoga, becomes mature and perfect with time until it becomes what is called the fourth stage (*turiya*) by the spiritual masters and those learned in divine knowledge. ²⁷ He becomes the most exalted yogi whose mind is cleared of all its impurity and whose inner soul is full of joy, its mental powers all quiet and at rest. ²⁸ In this state, the yogi is in full bliss and quite giddy with inner delight. He looks upon the whole of creation as an exhibition of play and a cosmic dance.

²⁹ Once a man has attained his fourth stage, when he is free from sorrow and fear and has passed beyond the errors and troubles of this world, he has no fear of falling from this state. ³⁰ The man of calm understanding who has attained this holy state laughs to scorn and spurns at the whirling orb of the earth, just as one sitting on a high hill looks down upon objects lying below it. ³¹ After one has obtained his everlasting position in this firmly fixed fourth state of blissfulness, he becomes joyless for lack of a higher state of joy to desire.

³² The yogi, having past his fourth stage, reaches a state of indescribable joy which has no part or degree in it and is absolute liberation in itself. ³³ The man of great soul is released from the snare of the reincarnation of his soul and of his repeated birth and death, and is freed from the darkness of his pride and egoism. He is transformed into an essence of supreme ecstasy and pure flavor and becomes like a mass of sea salt in the waters of the deep.

Chapter 71 — Samadhi and Beyond; Body Unrelated to Soul; Various Names for Jiva

¹ Vasishta continued:—

The fourth stage (*turiya*) is attended with the knowledge of the oneness of all and, according to statements in the Vedas, this is the characteristic of the living liberated man.² Beyond this is a state in which one sees nothing but an empty void. This is the state of disembodied spirits who are lost in infinity and of whom the scriptures can say nothing.³ This state of quiet rest lies far away from the farthest objects and is attained by those who are liberated of their bodies, just as the aerial path is found only by aerial beings.⁴ After a man has been in his state of sound sleep for sometime, he forgets the existence of the world and gains the fourth state of *turiya* which is full of joy and bliss.

⁵ The manner in which yogis have come to know the non-dual state (*turiya*) should also be followed by you, O Rama, in order to understand that unparalleled state of joy which attends upon it.⁶ Remain, O Rama, in your state of trance (*susupta*) and continue in your course of worldly duties even in that state. Your mind, like the moon in a painting, will not be subject to its waning phases or be seized by any alarm.⁷ Do not think that the waste or stability of your body can affect the state of your consciousness. The body is not related to the mind. That is only a false conception of the brain.

⁸ Although the body is nothing, yet it must not be destroyed by any means. You gain nothing by destroying it and you lose nothing by its firmness. Continue with your duties and leave the body to go on in its own habitual course.

⁹ You have known the truth that God presides over the world. You have understood the divine nature in all its threefold states. You have attained your true state of spirituality. You are freed from your worldly sorrows.¹⁰ You have rid yourself of your liking and disliking for what you desire or despise. You are graced with the cooling light of your reason. You have removed the dark cloud of prejudice. You have become as graceful as the autumn sky with the brightness of the full moon (of your intellect) shining over it.

¹¹ Your mind has its self possession and does not lower itself to meaner things. It has become as perfect as those who are accomplished in their meditation, so that you would not want to stoop to earth from that higher sphere.¹² This is the region of the pure and uniform consciousness that has no bounds. There are no false landmarks of “I” and “you,” “this” and “that,” “mine” and “yours” and similar errors.

¹³ In common speech this Divine Consciousness is labeled with the imaginary title of Atma (Soul or self), but there is no occasion to distinguish any name or form in that being who is quite distinct from all.¹⁴ The sea is a vast body of water with its waves of the same element and in no way different from the sea itself. In the same way all this fullness composed of pure soul and this earth and water are nothing other than itself.¹⁵ As you see nothing in the ocean except the vast body of water, so you find nothing in the universe except the one Universal Soul.

¹⁶ Say O intelligent man, what do you want to call yourself, itself and the like? What do you call yourself and what belongs to you? What is not yourself or does not belong to you?¹⁷ There being no duality beside the only soul, there can be no material body at all. There is no relation between this and that, any more than there is between the light of the sun and the gloom of night.

¹⁸ Even supposing the existence of a duality, yet I will tell you, O Rama, that the existence of material bodies bears no relationship with the spiritual soul. ¹⁹ As light and shade and darkness and sunshine bear no relation to one another, so the embodied soul has no connection with the body. ²⁰ As the two opposites of cold and hot can never combine, so the body and soul can never join with one another. ²¹ As two opposites can have no relation between them, so is it with the body and soul. One is dull matter and the other an intelligent principle. ²² A connection between the body and the pure intellect of the soul is as improbable as the existence of a sea in a fire.

²³ The sight of truth removes every false appearance, just as understanding light in the sandy desert removes the mirage of water. ²⁴ The intellectual soul is immortal and without decay, perfectly pure and shining by itself. The body is perishable and impure. Therefore the body cannot be related to the spirit. ²⁵ The body is moved by vital breath and is fattened by solid food. Therefore it cannot be related with the self-moving soul which is without increase or decrease.

²⁶ So even if we acknowledge the duality of the body, that does not prove its relation with the soul. The duality of material bodies being disproved, the theory of its relativity falls at once to the ground.

²⁷ Knowing the essence of the soul, you must rely on its subjective being within yourself. Then you will be free from both your bondage and liberation in all places and at all times. ²⁸ Believe all nature to be quiet and full of its quiescent soul. Let this be your firm belief whatever you see inside or outside yourself. ²⁹ The thoughts that "I am happy or miserable" or "wise or ignorant" proceed from our false, comparative view of things. You will always remain miserable as long as you continue to believe in the substance of outward things.

³⁰ As there is a huge difference between a rock and a heap of hay, and between a silk-pod and a stone, the same applies to the comparison of the pure soul with the gross body. ³¹ As light and darkness bear no relation or comparison between themselves, such also is the case, O Rama, between the body and soul, which are quite different from one another. ³² We never hear of the union of cold and hot, even in story, or of the union of light and darkness in any place. In the same way, there is no union between the soul and body. They are never joined together.

³³ All bodies are moved by the air, and the human body moves to and fro by its breath. It makes sound by means of its breath and the machinery of its wind pipes. ³⁴ The human body utters its sounds combined with the letters of the alphabet by means of its internal breathings. Its mechanism is the same as that of a hollow bamboo pipe. ³⁵ The internal air moves the pupils and the eyelids. It is the same air that gives motion to the limbs of the body. But consciousness moves the soul and gives movement to its intellect.

³⁶ The soul is present in all places, whether in heaven above or in the worlds beneath, and its image is seen in the mind as its mirror. ³⁷ You will have some notion of the soul in your mind by thinking that it flies like a bird from the cage of its body and wanders about at random being led by its desires and fancies. ³⁸ As knowledge of a flower is accompanied by its fragrance, so the knowledge of the soul is inseparable from that of the mind. ³⁹ As the all pervading sky is partly seen in a mirror, so the omnipresent soul is partially seen in the mirror of the mind.

⁴⁰ As water seeks the lowest level in a reservoir, so the soul makes the mind the receptacle of its

knowledge.⁴¹ The knowledge of the reality or unreality of the world reflected upon the internal organ of the mind is all the working of the conscious soul, just as light produces solar rays.⁴² This internal organ of the mind is regarded as the actual cause of all, the cosmic egg. The soul, which is the prime cause of causes, is regarded as no cause at all owing to its transcendent nature.

⁴³ Men of great minds have given the name of fallacy, misjudgment and ignorance to this internal or causal mind which is the source of the creation of worlds.⁴⁴ It is error and lack of full investigation that make us mistake the mind for a distinct entity. It is the seed of all our ignorance which casts us in darkness from the sunlight of reason.

⁴⁵ Rama, the mind becomes a nothing through true knowledge of the soul, just as darkness becomes nothing before the light of the lamp.⁴⁶ Ignorance mistakes the mind for the cause of creation and recognizes it under its various names, whether *jiva* or the living soul, the internal organ, the mind, the thinking principle or thought.

⁴⁷ Rama said, "Tell me sage, why are there so many different names heaped upon the only one thing of the mind? Deliver me from the confusion they cause in my mind."

⁴⁸ Vasishtha answered:—

All these are only various modes of the single substance of the soul whose intellect displays these modalities, just as the same substance of water displays itself in the variety of its waves.⁴⁹ The soul is a fluctuating principle which inheres in all its modifications, just as the fluidity of water is inherent in the moving waves of the sea.

⁵⁰ The Supreme Soul is sometimes without its vibration and remains stationary in all immovable things, just as water which presents its fluidity in moving waves shows its inelasticity in liquids at rest.⁵¹ Hence stones and other immovable substances remain at rest with their inherent spirit, but men and all animated nature are like the foaming froths of the distilled liquor of the Universal Soul.

⁵² The almighty power resides in all bodies with the inertia of his spirit, known as the unconsciousness, dullness or ignorance of inert bodies.⁵³ The infinite soul involved in that ignorance takes the name of the living or animal soul that is confined like an elephant in the prison house of the delusion of this world.⁵⁴ It is called *jiva* or living because of its animation, and also ego from its egoism. It is termed understanding from its power of discernment, and the mind from its will or volition.⁵⁵ It is called dull nature from its natural dullness, and also body from being embodied with many elementary principles. It is inert in its natural state, and conscious also from the essence of the soul inborn in it.⁵⁶ The spiritual substance that lies between the inert and active principles is called the mind. It passes under various names according to its different faculties and functions.

⁵⁷ This is the essential nature of the animating soul (*jiva*), as given in the Brihadaranyaka and other Upanishads. There are many other definitions of it to be found in the other works of Vedanta.⁵⁸ But over and above these, fools using false logic have invented many other words to designate the animal soul, and thereby they have bewildered and misled the ignorant to false beliefs.

⁵⁹ Know thus, O long armed Rama, that this animating soul is the cause of creation, and not the dull and dumb body which does not even have the power to move itself without being moved by some

spiritual force.

⁶⁰ Many times it happens that the destruction of either the container or contained causes the destruction of both. So it is with the receptacle of the body and its content the soul. The removal of the one leads to the dissolution of both. ⁶¹ The moisture of a leaf when dried is neither wasted nor lost in air, but extracted from it to reside in the rays of the all sucking sun. ⁶² So the body being wasted, there is no waste of the embodied soul. It is carried to live in banishment from its former abode and to reside in the region of empty air or in the reservoir of the Universal Spirit.

⁶³ He who falls into the error of thinking himself as lost at the loss of his body is like a baby who is snatched away from the breast of its mother by a fairy. ⁶⁴ He who is thought to have his utter extinction is said to rise again (by the reincarnation of his soul). Cessation of the mind is called utter extinction and liberation of the soul. ⁶⁵ A dead person is said to be lost, but this is entirely false. Just as one who has been long absent from his country returns, so the dead man revisits the earth in his repeated reincarnations.

⁶⁶ The current of death carries away men like sticks and straw to the vast ocean of eternity. Having disappeared, they appear in other scenes according to the fruits of their nature, soil and season.

⁶⁷ Living beings bound to their desires are led from one body to another in endless succession, like monkeys quitting decayed trees to search for others elsewhere. ⁶⁸ They leave them again when they are worn out and go to others at distant times and climates. ⁶⁹ Each hour living beings are seen moving about and led away from place to place by their unsatisfied desires, just as restless infants are rocked and carried by their cunning wet-nurses.

⁷⁰ Bound by the rope of desire to the decayed trees of their infirm bodies, men drag their lives of labor in search of their living in this valley of misery. ⁷¹ Even when men have grown old and decrepit and loaded with misery, shattered in their bodies at the last stage of their lives, they are still dragged about by the inborn desires of their hearts to be cast into hell pits.

⁷² Valmiki said:—

As the sage had said thus far, the sun sank down and bade the day to observe its evening rites. The assembly broke with mutual salutations and all of them proceeded to their evening cleansing rituals until they met again after dispersion of the gloom of night by the rising rays of the eastern sun.

Chapter 72 — A Lecture on the Nature of Liberation

¹ Vasishta continued:—

You are not born with the birth of your body and you are not dead with its death. You are the immaculate spirit in your soul and your body is nobody to you.

² The metaphors of the plum on a plate and of vacuum in a pot which are offered to prove that the loss of the one means the loss of the other are false reasoning. Neither the plum nor the vacuum is lost by breaking the plate or the pot. ³ Whoever thinks that he will perish with his perishable body and is sorry for it is truly blinded in his mind. He is to be pitied for his mental blindness.

⁴ As there is no relationship between the reins of a horse and the chariot, so there is no relationship between the organs of the body and the intellect. ⁵ As there is no relationship between the mud and clear water of a reservoir, so O Raghava, there is no correlation between the body parts and the soul.

⁶ As the traveler retains no love or sorrow for the path he has passed and the journey he has already made, so the soul bears no affection or dislike towards the body with which it sojourned and which it has left behind.

⁷ As imaginary ghosts and fairies strike fear and love in some persons, so the ideal world inspires pleasure and pain in the mind of the idealist. ⁸ The assemblage of the five elements has framed all these different forms of beings in the world, just as various images are carved from the same wood.

⁹ You see nothing but woody substance in all timber, so you find nothing except a collection of the five elements in all tangible bodies.

¹⁰ Therefore, O Rama, why should you rejoice or regret at anything, seeing that the five elements have their own course, joining and disjoining themselves, in the formation and dissolution of bodies?

¹¹ Why should one be so fond of female forms, or the forms of other beautiful things on earth? Men run after them like flies, falling in fire only to consume themselves. ¹² Good features and good shapes are delightful to the ignorant, but to the wise they present their real figures of combinations of the five elements and no more.

¹³ Two statues cut from the same stone and two figures carved of the same wood bear no affection or relationship to one another, however close they may be placed to each other. It is the same with the body and mind. ¹⁴ Dolls made of clay and placed together in a basket do not form any friendship by their long association with one another, so understanding, the organs of sense, the soul and mind, though so closely united in the same body, bear no relation with one another. ¹⁵ Marble statues, though so fair and closely kept in the sculptor's house, contract no acquaintance or friendship with one another. In the same way the organs of sense, life, the soul and the mind, though they reside in the same body, have no alliance with one another.

¹⁶ As things growing apart from one another come to be joined together for an instant by some accident, like reeds and rushes carried by the waves of the sea. So all beings, such as men and their bodily senses and mind and the soul, are brought to meet together only for a time in order to be separated forever. ¹⁷ As reeds and rushes are joined in heaps, and again separated from one another by the current of the river, so the course of time joins the elements, the mind and soul in gross bodies only for their separation. ¹⁸ The soul in the form of the mind unites the component parts of the body

like the whirling currents of the sea swirls reeds and rushes.

¹⁹ The soul, awakened to its knowledge of itself, relinquishes its knowledge of objects and becomes purely subjective in itself, like water by its own motion throws away its dirt and becomes as pure as crystal. ²⁰ The soul, released of its objective knowledge of the world, looks upon its own body like the gods look upon this speck of earth below the region of air. ²¹ The soul, seeing itself quite unconnected to the elemental particles quite, becomes disembodied as a pure spirit, then shines forth in full brightness like the blazing sun at midday. ²² Then it comes to itself by itself, as it were without any check or bounds set to it. Then being set free from the giddiness of the objective, it sees itself subjectively in its own consciousness.

²³ It is the soul which agitates the world rising of its own essence, just as the agitation of water particles raises the waves all over the wide extent of the sea. ²⁴ Thus dispassionate and sinless men of great understanding who have obtained their self-liberation in this life move about as freely as the waves in the great ocean of the all-comprehending soul. ²⁵ As the waves move freely in the sea and pour the gems and pearls which they bear over distant shores, so the best of men wander everywhere free of all desire, enriching mankind with the treasure of their knowledge.

²⁶ As the sea is not soiled by the floating wood it carries from the shore, and the face of the sky is not soiled by the flying dust of the earth, so men of great minds and souls are not perverted by their conduct with the world. ²⁷ Those who are masters of themselves are not moved to love or hatred in their behavior with others, or with those who are steady or unsteady in their friendship, or with those who are vicious and ignorant, ²⁸ because they know that whatever passes in the mind relating to worldly matters are all its vagaries and reveries of thought, which are only airy nothings.

²⁹ The knowledge of one's self and of other things belonging to the past, present and future, and the relation of visible phenomena with the sense of vision, are all workings of the mind. ³⁰ Phenomena depending only upon sight may be false from the deception of our vision, like an apparition in darkness. In vain we are glad or sorry at their sight or disappearance. ³¹ What is unreal is always unreal and what is real is ever the same. But that which is real and unreal at the same or different times must be a false appearance and does not merit our rejoicing or sorrow at their presence or absence. ³² Refrain from a partial view of things and employ yourself to the full knowledge of objects. Know that a learned man of vast knowledge never falls into the false conceptions of things.

³³ I have fully expounded the relation of visible phenomena and their vision, and shown the spiritual pleasure which is derivable from contemplation of the abstract relation existing between them. ³⁴ The abstract meditation of things is said to be a divine attribute, and our consciousness of the relations of vision and visible phenomena afford the highest delight to the soul. ³⁵ The consideration of the relationship between visible phenomena and vision affords the physical delight of knowing the material world to the ignorant. It gives the spiritual joy of liberation to the wise.

³⁶ Hence the attachment of our mind to visible phenomena is called its bondage. Its detachment from them is said to be its freedom. The former is pleasant to the sensuous body and the latter is delightful to the conscious soul. ³⁷ The mind understanding the relationships among things before it and freed from thoughts of its loss or gain in this world is said to enjoy its freedom. ³⁸ Abstaining from the sight

of visible phenomena constitutes the trance (deep sleep perception) vision of the soul, which is enlarged and illuminated by its inner vision within itself.³⁹ Release from the bondage of phenomena and restraining the mind to its inner workings constitute fourth stage of perfection (*turiya*) which is also called its liberation.

⁴⁰ Knowledge in the conscious soul of the relationships of phenomena does not make it stout or lean, or more manifest or obscure in its nature.⁴¹ The soul is not intelligent or inert, not a being or a non-being. It is not the ego or non-ego, not a unit or many in one.⁴² It is not near or far away from us, nor is it an entity or nonentity either. It is not within or beyond our reach. It is in all yet not the all and nothing at all.⁴³ It is none of the categories or no category. It is not the fivefold elements or composed of any of them. It is not the well known mind which is reckoned as the sixth organ of sense.⁴⁴ That which is beyond all things is nothing at all of this world, but it is something known and seen in the hearts of the wise.

⁴⁵ All the world is full of the soul and there is nothing beyond it. It is in all that is solid or soft or liquid, and in all motions that proceed from it.⁴⁶ The soul is all in all things composed of the five elements of earth, water, air, fire and ether. There is nothing, O Rama, that has its existence without the essence of the soul.⁴⁷ This single soul is diffused in all the worlds and throughout all space and time. There is no fragment of anything without the soul. Therefore, if you will have a great soul in you, keep your mind fixed in the Universal Soul.

Chapter 73 — Visualizations of the Soul; Its Experience More Manifest in Living Beings; — Knowledge, not Liberation

¹ Vasishta continued:—

By reasoning in this manner and by renouncing the knowledge of duality, the yogi comes to know the nature of his soul, just as the gods know the divine nature which is the gem of their meditation.

² Now hear about this unsurpassed sight which is the soul or in-being of all visible beings. By this attitude, you will have the keen clear vision of the gods and get sight of God.

³ Think of yourself as the light of sun and the endless sky with all its ten sides and the upper and lower regions of space, and that your soul is the soul of gods and demigods and the light of all luminous bodies. ⁴ Know yourself as darkness, the clouds, the earth and seas, the air and fire and dust of the earth, and that the entire world is combined in you. ⁵ Know that you are everywhere in all the three worlds together with the soul abiding in them, and that you are nothing other than the unity itself. There is no duality of anybody, only the unity which pervades the whole. ⁶ Being certain of this truth, you will see innumerable worlds situated in your internal soul. By adopting this attitude, you will escape from being subjected to or overcome by the joys and sorrows of life.

⁷ Tell me, O lotus-eyed Rama. How can you call one as connected or separate from you when you know that the entire creation including yourself is contained in the all-containing Universal Soul?

⁸ Tell me, do the wise live outside that Being that they should give way to joy or grief, which are the two phases of the Universal Soul?

⁹ There are two kinds of individual egos growing out of the knowledge of truth. Both of these are good and pure in their natures and produce spirituality and liberation of men. ¹⁰ One ego is the form of a minute particle, transcending all things in its minuteness. The other is the ego of one's self. The first is that the one ego is all. ("I am the extremely subtle and transcendental self.") The second is the knowledge that my or your ego is the same one. ("I am all and everything.")

¹¹ There is a third sort of ego amounting to the non-ego which takes the body for the ego and thus becomes subject to misery and finds no rest in this life or in the next. ¹² Now leaving all these three kinds of subjective, objective and non-egos, he who holds fast to the fourth sort of non-ego sees the sole intellect beyond these three. ¹³ This Essence, being above all and beyond the reach of all existence, is the manifesting soul of the unreal world. ¹⁴ Look into your notion of it and you shall find yourself assimilated with it. Then get rid of all your desires and ties of your heart and become full of divine knowledge.

¹⁵ The soul is not known by any logical inference or from the light the revelations of the Vedas. It is always best and most fully known to be present with us by our direct experience of it. ¹⁶ All the sensations and vibrations that we have in our bodies, and all the thoughts of which we are conscious in our minds, are all attributes of the sovereign Soul which is beyond our vision and visible phenomena. ¹⁷ This Lord is no real substance, nor an unreal non-entity. He is not a minutiae or a vast massiveness either. He is not in the midst of these dimensions, nor is he this or that, but is always as he is. ¹⁸ It is improper to describe him as such and such, or that he is otherwise than this or that. Know him therefore as the inexpressible and indefinable one.

¹⁹ To say that this is the soul and that is not the soul are only verbal differences of something that words cannot express or differentiate. The soul is an attribute of the omnipresent Power. ²⁰ It is present in all places and comprehends the three times of the past, present and future in itself. Yet it is invisible and incomprehensible to us, owing to its extreme rarity and immensity.

²¹ The soul resides in the infinity of substances. It reflects itself as the living soul in animated bodies, just as sunlight reflects its rays through a glass prism. ²² Owing to the animating power of the soul, we have some experience of the soul. Although the soul pervades all things, it is most manifest in living bodies, as the air which surrounds all bodies everywhere circulates only in the open ethereal space.

²³ The intellectual soul is all pervading and everywhere and never stationary in any place. The spirit of the Lord has the same boundaries as the vast range of his creation. ²⁴ But the animating soul of living beings does not breathe in minerals but only in animals, just as the light enlightens the eye only and the dust flies with the winds.

²⁵ When the animating principle resides in the soul, it bursts forth with all its desires, just as people pursue their callings when the sun has risen above the horizon. ²⁶ But just as the sun is unaffected if people should cease their activities when he is shining above their heads, so it is nothing to consciousness whether men be without their desires and actions while it resides in the soul. ²⁷ If the soul exists by the inherence of the Lord (Consciousness) in it, it suffers no loss by the absence of the frail body.

²⁸ The soul is not born nor does it die. It does not receive or desire anything. It is not restrained or liberated, but it is the soul of all at all times. ²⁹ The soul is awakened by its enlightenment, or else the soul is supposed to be what is no soul only for our misery, just as the snake is supposed to be in a rope only for our error and fear. ³⁰ The soul being without its beginning, it is never born. Being unborn, it is never destroyed. It seeks nothing except itself for lack of anything beside. ³¹ The soul is unbounded by time or space. It is never confined in any place. Being always unconfined, it requires no liberation.

³² Such, O Rama! are the qualities of the souls of all persons. Yet the ignorant deplore its loss from their want of reason. ³³ Look thoroughly, O Rama! into the course of all things in the world and do not lament for anything like senseless men. ³⁴ Abandon thoughts of both your imaginary confinement and liberation. Behave like wise men: like a dumb self-moving machine.

³⁵ Liberation is not something confined in this earth or in heaven above or the seven lower regions (Patala), but resides in the hearts of the wise, in their pure souls and enlightened understandings.

³⁶ The minute subtlety of the mind, by extinguishing its gross desires, is said to be its liberation by those who know the truth and look into the workings of their souls. ³⁷ As long as the pure light of consciousness does not shine forth in the sphere of the mind, it longs for liberation as its chief good. Liberation, or freedom from all feelings, is less meritorious than the knowledge of all things. The sage gives preference to knowledge above liberation. ³⁸ After the mind has the fullness of its intellectual powers and consciousness has been fully enlightened, it would not care for all the tenfold blessings of liberation, much less desire its salvation.

³⁹ O Rama, stop thinking about the distinctions of the bondage and liberation of the soul. Believe its

essence to be exempted from both.⁴⁰ Be free of your thoughts of the duality and remain steadfast in your duty of ruling the earth to its utmost limits of the sea dug by the sons of Sagara.

Chapter 74 — Qualities of One Who Abides in the Truth

¹ Vasishta continued:—

It is easy to take pleasure looking at the outer world, and difficult to turn the sight to the inner soul, just as it is pleasant to see delightful prospects abroad and be bitter in the heart to be without them.

² Fascinated with these delightful objects, we become subject to all our errors and blunders, just as the taste of alcohol fills the brain with giddiness.³ This intoxication drives the knowledge of sober truth from our minds and introduces the delirium of the phenomenal world instead, like the sun's heat producing a false mirage in the desert.⁴ Then the deep ocean of the soul boils in its various aspects of the mind, understanding, egoism, sensation and volition like the sea, moved by hot winds, bursts into the forms of foaming froths, waves and surges.

⁵ The duality of the mind and its egoism is a verbal distinction without reality, for egoism is only a thought (*chitta*) and thought is only the mind (*manas*).⁶ It is in vain to think of snow apart from its whiteness, so it is false to suppose the mind as distinct from egoism.⁷ There is no difference between ego and mind. The destruction of one means the loss of the other, just as the removal of cloth is accompanied by the absence of its color.

⁸ Avoid both your desire of liberation and your eagerness for worldly bondage. Instead, strive to enfeeble your mind by lessening its egoism by the two means of your detachment and discrimination of worldly objects.⁹ The thought of getting liberation growing big in the mind disturbs its peace and rest, and it also injures the body (by austerities).¹⁰ Whether we visualize the soul as apart from all things or intimately connected with all, it can neither have its liberation nor its bondage.

¹¹ When the air circulates in the body by its natural property of motion, it gives movement to the members of the body and moves the rolling tongue like the flitting leaf of a tree.¹² As the restless wind gives motion to the leaves and twigs of trees, so the vital airs add their force to the movement of the body parts.¹³ But the soul which pervades the whole never moves like the wind, nor is it moved as any part of the body. It does not move of itself but remains unshaken like a rock at the motion of the winds. Like the Lord of all, it is unmoved by the breeze.¹⁴ The soul by its reflection shows all things hidden in it, just as a lamp by its light shows whatever lay concealed in the darkness of a room.

¹⁵ Why should you fall into the painful error of thinking like ignorant and senseless men that these members of your body and these things belong to you?¹⁶ Infatuated by this ignorance, men think the frail body as lasting and attribute knowledge and agency of action to it.¹⁷ Only gross error makes us believe the body is a self acting machine of its motions, actions and passion. Only our sanguine wishes present so many false views before us, like the sun's heat raises mirages of water in a sandy desert.¹⁸ The ignorance of truth makes the mind seek the pleasures of senses. Ignorance drags the mind along like a thirsty doe to perish in the watery mirage of the parching shore.¹⁹ But when untruth is distinguished from truth, untruth flies from the mind like a tribal woman fleeing from the company of brahmins.²⁰ When error is found out, it can no more deceive the mind than the mirage, when discovered, fails to attract the thirsty.

²¹ Rama, as truth is known and rooted in the mind, the seeds of earthly desires are uprooted from it, just as thick darkness is dispelled by the light of a lamp.²² The mind arrives at certain truths by the

light of scriptures and reason, so its errors quickly fade away like icicles melting under the heat of the sun.²³ The certainty of the moral truth that “it is useless to foster and fatten this frail frame of the body” is as powerful to break down the net of worldly desires as the robust lion is capable of breaking down the iron bars of his prison.

²⁴ The mind of man free from the bonds of its desires becomes as brilliant as a moonlit night with pure beams of disinterested delight.²⁵ The contented mind gets a coolness like that of a heated rock after it is washed by a shower of rain. It finds a satisfaction equal to that of a pauper who obtains the riches of a king and his whole kingdom.²⁶ The face of a contented man shines as clear as the face of the autumn sky. His soul overflows with delight like the flood waters at the end of a kalpa age.²⁷ A contented man is silent like a mute cloud after rain. His soul remains composed with its consciousness, just as the profound sea is tranquil with its fullness.²⁸ He has patience and steadiness like a rock and glistens as quietly in himself as a fire glowing after its fuel is burnt out.²⁹ He is extinct in himself like a lamp that has been extinguished. His inner satisfaction is like one who has feasted on ambrosia.³⁰ He shines with his inner light like a lantern with its lighted lamp, and like fire with a brightness that can never be put out.

³¹ He sees his soul as identical with the universal and all pervading soul which is the lord and master of all and which abides in all forms in its formless state.³² He smiles at everything by setting himself above and beyond all mortal and frail things. His days glide away sweetly and softly with him, and he laughs at those men whose unsteady minds are made the marks of the arrows of Kama, the god of desire.

³³ His holy mind is isolated from the society of men and from all their amusements and rests secluded from all company and concern with the fullness of its spiritual bliss within itself.³⁴ His mind is clear of the muddy and turbulent ocean of this world and of the dirt of worldly desires. It is loosened from the chains of its error and set free from the fear of dualism.

³⁵ A man being thus released attains the highest state of humanity and rests in that supreme joy which is desired by all and found by few, and from which nobody returns to revisit the earth.³⁶ This height of human ambition being arrived at, there is nothing else to wish for. This great gratification being once gained, there is no other joy which can delight us more.

³⁷ The self contented man neither gives or receives anything from anybody. He does not praise or criticize anyone, he does not rejoice or grieve at anything, and he is never elated or depressed at any occurrence.³⁸ He is said to be liberated in his lifetime because he takes no title on himself, withholds from all business, and is free from desires.³⁹ Abstaining from wishing anything in his heart and holding his tongue in unspoken silence, he remains as dumb as a cloud after it has poured down all its waters.

⁴⁰ Even the embrace of a fairy fails to afford such delight to the body as the cooling beams of contentment gladdens the mind.⁴¹ Even though he may wear the disc of the moon dangling like a breast plate from his neck, a man does not derive such coolness as he feels in himself from the frigidity of contentment.⁴² A flowery shrub decorated with blooming small flowers of the spring is not as refreshing a sight as the smiling face of one filled with the magnanimity of his soul and lacking

strong desires in his mind.⁴³ Neither the frost of the snowy mountain nor the coldness of a string of pearls, not even the frigidness of the forest of the plantain trees or sandal paste or refreshing moonbeams can afford that internal coolness as the lack of desire produces in the mind.⁴⁴ Content with everything is more charming than the pleasure of royal dignity, heavenly joy, the pleasantness of moonlight, or the delights of spring. It is more charming than the enchanting graces of a beauty.

⁴⁵ Renunciation of desire is the source of complete self-sufficiency to which the riches of the three worlds can make no addition.⁴⁶ Self-complacency strikes the axe at the root of the thorny difficulties of the world and decorates its possessor with blessings like the blossoms of a flowery tree.⁴⁷ A man decorated with a lack of desire has all in himself though possessed of nothing. He spurns the deep earth like a cave, and the big mountain as the trifling trunk of a tree. He looks on all the sides of air as mere caskets, and regards the worlds as straws.⁴⁸ The best of men who are devoid of desire laugh with scorn at the busy affairs of the world, and at men taking from one and giving to another, or storing or squandering their riches.⁴⁹ That man is beyond all comparison who allows no desire to take root in his heart and who does not care a fig or a straw for the world.⁵⁰ With what shall we compare a man whose mind is never employed in the thoughts of craving something and avoiding another, and who is ever master of himself?

⁵¹ O you wise and intelligent men, rely on the lack of cravings of your heart, which is your greatest good fortune, by setting yourself in the bliss of safety and security beyond the reach of the dangers and difficulties of the world.⁵² Rama, you have nothing to desire in this world. You are not led away by worldly desires like one who is moving in a car, looks sideways, and thinks he is seeing things receding back from him.⁵³ O intelligent Rama, why do you fall into the error of ignorant men by taking this thing to be yours and that as another's by the delusion of your mind?

⁵⁴ All the world is the same identical spirit, and all its variety is in perfect uniformity with the Supreme Soul. The learned know that the world is eternally the same and unvaried in itself. They do not grieve at the apparent changes of things and changing fortunes of times.⁵⁵ Seeing all things in their true light, a manifestation of the divine essence, all intelligent men place their dependence in Him and do not desire anything else.⁵⁶ Rely therefore on that unchanging state of things which is free from the conditions of existence and nonexistence and of beginning and end.

⁵⁷ This illusive enchantment of the world flies far away before the detachment of strong minded men, like a timid fawn running at the sight of a ferocious lion.⁵⁸ Men of subdued passions and calm minds regard the graces of fairy forms to be no more than the loveliness of wild vines, or the faded beauty of dilapidated statues of stone.⁵⁹ No pleasures gladden their hearts and no dangers depress their spirits. No outward good or bad can make any effect on their minds which are as inflexible as firm rocks against the violence of winds.⁶⁰ The mind of the magnanimous sage is as impregnable as a rock. His mind baffles the allurements of youthful damsels and breaks the arrows of love to pieces, falling down like pulverized atoms of dust and ashes.

⁶¹ One knowing his self is not carried away by his fondness or aversion of any person or thing. A heart without any vibration is unconscious of all feelings.⁶² A dispassionate man who looks on all things with an equal eye is as unconscious as a stone to the charms of blooming maids and is adverse to destructive pleasures like a traveler is to a sandy desert.

⁶³ All things necessary for life are obtained with little labor by those who are indifferently minded about their gain. The wise get free gifts of nature with as much ease as eyesight gets sunlight. ⁶⁴ The gifts of nature, allotted by fortune to the share of every one, are tasted by the wise without rejoicing or murmur.

⁶⁵ Neither rejoicing nor bewilderment can overtake the mind of the wayfarer who well knows his way. He stands firmly as Mandara Mountain amidst the turbulent waves of the sea. ⁶⁶ He looks indifferently on the pains and pleasures of the world with his usual patience, silence and lack of anxiety. He places his trust in that spirit which resides inside everyone. ⁶⁷ Though beset by anxious cares, he remains without anxiety in his mind and stands steadfast with confidence in the Supreme Soul, like Brahma in his rush to create the world. ⁶⁸ Though overtaken by the accidents of the times, places and circumstances of life, yet he is not overpowered by the influence of their pain or pleasure but stands erect like a sturdy oak against the influence of the seasons. ⁶⁹ The wise may fail in the action of their bodily organs and falter in their speech also, but their strong and unconcerned minds never fail in their operations or despond under the pressure of outward circumstances.

⁷⁰ Gold becomes impure from its inner alloy and not by its outward soil. So a man becomes unholy by the impurity of heart and foulness of his mind, and not on account of the dust or dirt on his body.

⁷¹ The learned understand the wise man apart from his body because the mutilated body does not take anything away from the wisdom of a man. ⁷² Once the pure and luminous soul is known, it is never to be lost sight of, like a friend once known is never thought to be a foe. ⁷³ The fallacy of the snake in the rope being removed, it is no more looked upon as a snake, just as a river receiving its torrents from the waterfall of a hill in rainy season does not retain its current after the rains have passed.

⁷⁴ Gold purified by fire retains its purity forever even though it becomes dirty by being thrown into the mud and mire. ⁷⁵ After the heart string has been broken, it can never be joined anymore, just as a flower fallen from its stalk cannot be stuck back to it again. ⁷⁶ No analysis can distinguish the gem from the ore when they are both broken to pieces, so there is no reasoning to show the soul is lost with the body. ⁷⁷ Who, having understood what error is, will be so great a fool as to fall to it again? No brahmin who has recognized another to be a tribal will ever like to mix in his company.

⁷⁸ As the mistake of milk in water passes away upon examination of the liquid, so the error of worldly desires vanishes upon knowledge of their vanity. ⁷⁹ Even learned brahmins may fall into the error of drinking some liquor for pure water, until they come to realize their mistake. ⁸⁰ Those acquainted with truth look upon the outer forms of fairies like paintings or pictures. ⁸¹ The dark hair and crimson lips of a fairy are portrayed in black and red in a picture, so there is no difference between the figure in its living form or in a painting.

⁸² The idea of sweetness is inseparable from sugar. In the same manner, the idea of bliss is inseparable from the soul, which is indestructible by the destruction of the body. ⁸³ Spiritual joy may be enjoyed in this physical body in the same manner as one enjoys the pleasure of imagination. ⁸⁴ Thus a man who is steadfast in his spiritual meditation and intent upon the Supreme Soul is not to be turned away from it by the power of the gods or by the jealousy of Indra.

⁸⁵ There is no lover of a woman who can turn her heart away from the dearest object of her love, so

there is nothing in the world that can alienate the unsteady mind from its love of spiritual joy.⁸⁶ There is no joy in the whole world that is able to divert the mind of the magnanimous philosopher from its reliance on the delight of intellectual light.

⁸⁷ A married woman who is subject to all domestic toils and privations and is constantly employed in her household drudgeries, subjected to maltreatment and subjugated by her husband and father-in-law,

⁸⁸ still has the comfort of thinking upon her sweetheart and dissipates her sorrows with the thought of her favorite lover. Such is the mystic love of spiritualists.⁸⁹ A man bound to the cares of worldly affairs has the consolation of his soul and spiritual bliss by freeing his mind from ignorance and conducting himself in the right way by his comprehensive spiritual view of all things.⁹⁰ He does not break under bodily torture nor does he wail with bleeding heart and weeping eyes. He is not burnt by the flame of his martyrdom, nor does he die when perishing under the scourge of the stake and stock of persecution.⁹¹ His mind is free from the pain and pleasures that are the lot of humanity. He is unmoved amidst all the mishaps of fortune.

The devotee rejoices in the region of his spiritual bliss whether he remains in his hermitage in the forest or wanders about in deserts or over mountains.

Chapter 75 — Examples of the Living Liberated

¹ Vasishta continued:—

See Janaka, the king employed in the government of his kingdom, yet liberated in his lifetime from his bondage in the world because of his mental release from all its cares and anxieties. ² Remember your grandfather Dilipa who, though deeply engaged in his state affairs, yet enjoyed his long and peaceful rule owing to the dispassion of his disposition. ³ Think of Buddha who ruled over his people free of all passions and affections. Bring to your mind how Manu ruled his kingdom in peace and who was an example of liberation in his lifetime. ⁴ Remember how the monarch Mandhata obtained the blessed state of liberation even though he was constantly engaged in various wars and state affairs.

⁵ Think of Bali who, while he was confined in the infernal region, conducted himself with virtue and became liberated in his lifetime by his unbounded generosity and lack of attachment to the world.

⁶ Namuchi, the lord of Danava demons, waged continuous wars against the gods yet was of cool and quiet in his mind. ⁷ Vritra, the asura demon who fell in battle with the god Indra, was of a great, calm and quiet mind as long as he fought with him. ⁸ Prahlada, the prince of the Daitya demons, dwelling in the demon world underneath the ground, dispensed his administration with an unruffled and glad mind. ⁹ Sambara, the demon who was a sorcerer in warfare, was cool blooded like water in his heart, whereby he was delivered from the sorcery of the world, like a fleet deer flying from an arrow.

¹⁰ The demon Kusala also, whose mind was not bound to the world, waged an unprofitable war against Vishnu from whom he obtained his spiritual knowledge and his deliverance from this temporary scene.

¹¹ Look at fire, how free and uncompressed it is as it serves as the mouth of gods, permitting the offerings to reach the gods and perform endless works of melting for them. ¹² See the gods drinking the juice of soma plants and presiding over the endless functions of the world. They are ever as free as air.

¹³ Brihaspati (Jupiter) the guru of the gods, and Moon, the pursuer of his wife Rohini, have been continually performing their revolutions without changing their places in heaven. So have the other planets also. ¹⁴ Shukra (Venus), the learned teacher of the asura demons, shines in the same manner in the heavenly sphere and runs in his unvaried course while protecting the interests of the asuras. ¹⁵ See also the winds, flying freely at all times throughout all the worlds with their charge of enlivening and giving motion to all bodies.

¹⁶ See Brahma continuing in the same unchangeable state of his mind, giving life and velocity to all beings which thereby have been continually moving about in the world. ¹⁷ Lord Vishnu, though ever liberated from every bond, has been continually employed in his contests and combats with the asura demons as if in sport. ¹⁸ The three-eyed god Shiva, though ever free from all concerns, is joined in one body with his dearer half, the beautiful Gauri, in the manner of a lover enamored of his beloved one. ¹⁹ The fair Hara (Shiva), though ever free, is bound in the embrace of his fair Gauri and wears a crescent of the fair moon and Gauri as a lace of pure pearls about her neck.

²⁰ The heroic Skanda, vast in understanding and like a sea with all the gems of his learning and perfectly free, made war with Taraka of his free will. ²¹ Mark how Bhringi, Shiva's attendant, was

absorbed in his meditation and, thinking himself to be freed from the burden of his body, made a free offering of his blood and flesh to his goddess Gauri.

²² Sage Narada, who was of a liberated nature from his very birth and resigned the world and all its concerns altogether, was still engaged in many affairs with his cool understanding. ²³ The honorable Vishwamitra, who is now present here, is liberated in his lifetime and yet he does not neglect to preside at sacrifices, solemnized according to the ritual of the sacred Veda.

²⁴ The infernal snake bears the earth on its head and the sun makes the day by turns. The god of death is ever employed in his act of destruction, and still they are all free agents of their acts. ²⁵ There are many others among the yakshas, suras and asuras of the world who are all liberated in their lifetime and still are employed in their respective duties.

²⁶ There are many employed in worldly affairs and many more engaged in different courses of life who remain cold blooded and cool headed within themselves, and as still and quiet as cold stones without. ²⁷ Some attain the acme of their understanding and retire to solitude to pass their lives in abstract meditation. Among these are the venerable Bhrigu, Bharadvaja, Shukra and Vishwamitra.

²⁸ Many among mankind were rulers of their kingdoms and held the exalted canopy and flapper-fans and other emblems of royalty on their heads, and were not less distinguished for the piety and spirituality at the same time. Among these, the conduct of the royal Janaka, Saryali and Mandhatri stand preeminent above the rest.

²⁹ Some among the living liberated are situated in the planetary spheres and therefore are adored by their devotees for their blessings on the world. Of these Brihaspati (Jupiter), Shukra (Venus), Surya (Sun) and Chandra (Moon) are the deities for gods, demons and humans. ³⁰ Some among the gods are seated in their heavenly vehicles and continually minister to the needs of all created beings, as the rulers of fire, air, water and death, and Tumbura and Narada. ³¹ Some situated in the secluded regions of Patala (the netherworld) are equally distinguished for their holiness and piety, such as Bali, Subotra, Andha, Prahlada and others.

³² Among beasts of the field, fowls of the air, and inferior animals you will find many intelligent beings, such as the bird Garuda, the monkey Hanuman, the bear Jambavan, and others. Among the demigods there are some who are wise and others who are as muddle headed as beasts.

³³ Thus it is possible for the Universal Soul, residing everywhere and at all times the same, to show itself in any form in any being according to its will. ³⁴ It is the multiform law of His eternal decree and the manifold display of His infinite power that invest all things with multiple shapes and diverse capacities, as they appear to us. ³⁵ This law of divine decree is the lord of all and embodies in itself the creative, preservative and destructive powers under the titles of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. These names are indicative of the intelligent faculties of the Universal Soul.

³⁶ It is possible for the Supreme Soul to reside in all bodies in any manner it likes. It presides sometimes in the manner of grains of pure gold amidst worthless sands and dust, and at others as the mixture of some base metal in pure gold. ³⁷ Seeing some good connected or resulting from evil, our inclinations would lead us to the evil were we not deterred by fear of the sinfulness of the act and its consequent punishment.

³⁸ Sometimes we see something substantial arising from the unsubstantial, such as when we attain the substantial good of divine presence through the unsubstantial meditation on his negative attributes.

³⁹ What never existed before comes to existence at sometime or place unknown to us, just as the horns of a rabbit, never before seen in nature, are shown to us in magic play by the black art of sorcery.

⁴⁰ Those seen to exist as firm and solid as a diamond become null and void and disperse in air, like the sun, moon, earth, mountains, and the godlike people of the world before the great flood.

⁴¹ Seeing these changes in the state of things, you, O mighty armed Rama, must give up your joy and grief on any occasion and preserve the equanimity of your mind at all times. ⁴² The unreal (material existence) seems as real and the sober reality (of spiritual essence) appears as a nonentity in nature. Therefore give up your reliance upon this deceitful world and preserve the equanimity of your mind under all circumstances. ⁴³ It is true that you gain nothing by your resignation of the world. On the other hand, it is equally true that you lose nothing by your getting rid of its unrealities. ⁴⁴ But it is true, O Rama, that you gain a certain good by getting rid of this world, and that is your riddance from the manifold evils and misfortunes which are the unavoidable accompaniments with this life. ⁴⁵ You obtain the certain gain of your salvation by your resignation of the world, which you can never earn by your attachment to it. Therefore strive for your liberation by purging your mind from its attachments to the world.

⁴⁶ He who wishes for his liberation must take the pains to have an insight of his soul. A single glimpse of the soul is sure to cut off all the pains and pangs of the world at their roots. ⁴⁷ There are many dispassionate and disconnected men, even in the present age, who are liberated in their lifetimes, like King Janaka and others. ⁴⁸ So you too are liberated in this life to the extent you have a dispassionate and unprejudiced mind, and may manage to conduct yourself with your tolerant spirit, like the patient earth, stone and motionless metals.

⁴⁹ There are two kinds of liberation for living beings. One is in their present life and body and the other after separation of life from the body, both of which admit of some varieties as you will hear afterwards. ⁵⁰ First of all, the peace of mind that comes from its unconcern with everything is termed its liberation. This peace is possible for the sinless man either in this life or in the next. ⁵¹ Lessening of affections is filled with the bliss of singleness, and it is possible both in the embodied as well as disembodied states of life. ⁵² He who lives in perfect apathy and without his affection for anybody is called the living liberated man, but the life which is bound by its affections is said to be in bondage, or else it is free as air.

⁵³ It is possible to obtain liberation by means of diligent inquiry and reasoning. Otherwise, it is as difficult to attain as it is hard for a lame man to leap over a hole, though as small as the footprint of a cow. ⁵⁴ For know, O Rama of great soul, that the soul should not be cast into misery by your neglect of it, or by subjecting it through ignorance to its affection for others. ⁵⁵ He who relies on his patience, employs his mind, and meditates upon the Supreme Soul in his own soul to attain his consummation finds the deep abyss of the world like a small chink in his vast comprehension.

⁵⁶ The high station to which Buddha had attained by his patience, and from which the Arhata prince fell to skepticism by his impatience, and that supreme good which great minds reach, is the fruit of the tree of diligent inquiry, which like the wish-fulfilling kalpa tree, yields all what is desired of it.

Chapter 76 — The World Compared with the Ocean

¹ Vasishta continued:—

These worlds sprung from Brahma the creator are upheld by ignorance and become extinct before right reason.² The worlds are like revolving circles of water, whirlpools in the ocean of Brahman. They are as numerous as particles of light and as innumerable as the small particles that fly in sunbeams.³ Imperfect knowledge of the world causes its existence. Full knowledge makes it vanish into nothing.

⁴ The world is a dreadful, unbounded ocean that cannot be forded. There is no way to cross it except by the raft of right investigation and diligent scrutiny.⁵ This ocean is full with the water of ignorance. Its vast basin is filled with fatal whirlpools and overwhelming waves of discord and dangers.⁶ Here goodness and good actions float on the surface as its froth and foams. But they hide the deadly latent heat of hellfire underneath. Here roll the constant waves of greed, and there snores the huge whale, the great leviathan of the mind.⁷ It is the reservoir of the endless channels and streams of life running as its streams and currents. It is the depository of innumerable treasures of brilliant gems hidden under its depth. It is infested with the serpents of diseases and the horrid sharks of the senses.

⁸ See Rama! Playful women, resembling the shaking waves of this ocean, are able to attract and pierce the hearts of the wise with the hooks and horns of their looks.⁹ Their lips are as red as rubies and their eyes are as black as blue lotuses. Their teeth are like blossoms of fruits and flowers and their sweet smiles are like the white froth of the sea.¹⁰ The curled locks of their hairs are like the curled vines of blue lotuses and their twisted eyebrows are like the slanting of little waves. Their backsides are like protruded little islands and their throats and necks are lined like conch shells.¹¹ Their foreheads are like plates of gold and their graces are like the sharks of the sea. Their loose glances are like splashing waves and their complexions are gold colored like the sands on the seashore.

¹² Such is this ocean-like world with its tremendous surges and rolling waves. The role of a mahatma is to cross it by heroic exertions in order to save one's self from sinking under them.¹³ Shame on that man who having good sense for his vessel and reason for his helmsman does not conduct himself across the wide expanse of this worldly ocean.¹⁴ He is reckoned the most valiant man who measures the immeasurable expanse of this ocean (by his knowledge of the infinite soul).¹⁵ He who well considers this world with the learned, who looks into all its hazards with the eye of the mind, and who places his trust in the Lord becomes blessed forever.

¹⁶ You are truly blessed, O Rama, having been employed from your early youth to scrutinize this world.¹⁷ Men who consider the world and take it as you do in the same light of a dangerous ocean, are not likely to be drowned in it when they steer their ship in it after due consideration.¹⁸ The enjoyments of the world are to be duly considered by self inquiry before one dares to enjoy them, like ambrosia, before they feed on any other fare like Garuda enjoying snakes as food.¹⁹ He who considers beforehand the employment in which he should be engaged and the enjoyments he ought to share in this world fares well in his present and future life. Otherwise, he falls in danger like an inconsiderate man.²⁰ The judicious and forewarned man prospers in his fame and fortune and rises in

his power and understanding in his life, like trees flowering and bearing fruit in spring.

²¹ Rama, you will shine with the elegance of bright and cooling moonbeams and with the beauty of perpetual prosperity if you will only begin your worldly career with full knowledge of all that is to be known respecting the world.

Chapter 77 — Description of Living Liberation

¹ Rama replied, “O sage! nobody is fully satisfied with all that you say, but must learn more and more from you. Therefore, tell me in short the substance of the present subject, which is as grand as it is wonderful to hear.”

² Vasishta replied:—

I have already given you many interpretations of living liberation. Here are some more for your satisfaction and close attention.

³ The living liberated see this world with their visual organs and their state of sound sleep as a hazy maze. In their spiritual light, their minds fixed solely on the Supreme Soul, they consider the world to be an unreality. ⁴ He who is disengaged has his mind as still as in sleep. He who sees the soul is seized with joy at the sight. ⁵ He takes nothing that is within his reach and does not retain what is within his grasp, but keeps his mind looking within himself as having everything there.

⁶ He sees the bustle of the tumultuous crowd with the eye of his mind, and smiles in himself at the hurry and commotion of the world. ⁷ He does not live in future expectation, nor does he rely on his present possessions. He does not live on the pleasure of his past memory, but lives without any inclination.

⁸ Sleeping, he is awake in his vision of heavenly light. Waking, he is plunged into the deep sleep of his mental reveries. He does all his works with his external body, but he does nothing with his inner mind (which is fixed in his God). ⁹ In his mind he has renounced the thoughts of all things and his care for anything. He does his outward actions and remains as even as if he is doing nothing. ¹⁰ He pursues the course of duties of his caste and family as they have descended to him from the custom of his forefathers. ¹¹ He does all that is required and expected of him with a willing mind and without the error of believing himself as their actor. ¹² He remains indifferent and unconcerned of all that he does by routine and habit. He does not long for or dislike or rejoice or grieve at anything.

¹³ He takes no notice of others' friendship or hatred towards him. He is devoted to those who are devoted to him, but cunning with those who deal in craftiness with him. ¹⁴ He deals as a boy with children and as a veteran with old people. He is youthful in the society of young men and is grave in the company of the aged and wise. He is not without sympathy with the sorrows of others. ¹⁵ He opens his mouth in uplifting speeches and never betrays his privation in any way. He is always calm in his mind and ever of a cheerful complexion.

¹⁶ He is wise and deep, yet open and sweet. He is ever free from pain and misery. ¹⁷ He is magnanimous in his disposition and as sweet as a sea of delight. He is cool and cools the pains of others and is as refreshing to mankind as the beams of the full moon. ¹⁸ His objects are praiseworthy deeds. No action or worldly good is of any purpose to him, nor does he gain anything by his abandonment of pleasures or riches or friends.

¹⁹ No action or inaction, no labor or ease, no bondage or release, and no heaven or hell can add or take away anything from his inner contentment. ²⁰ He sees everything everywhere in the same uniform light. His mind is neither afraid of bondage nor eager for its release. ²¹ His doubts are wholly

removed by the light of his knowledge. His mind towers upwards like the fearless eagle of the sky.
22 His mind, free from error and settled in its equanimity, does not rise or fall like any heavenly body, but remains unaltered as the high heaven itself.

23 The living liberated does his outward actions by the mere movements of the outer members of his body and without applying his mind to them, just as a baby sleeping in a cradle spontaneously moves his limbs without any purpose of his mind. 24 A drunk or delirious man does many acts in his state of unsound mind. He never does them with the attention of his mind, so he retains no trace of them in his memory. 25 Children grab or throw away everything without knowing whether it is good or bad for them. So do men act or refrain without deliberate choice or aversion. 26 A man doing his duty by habit or compulsion is not aware of any pain or pleasure derived from it. 27 An act done by the outer body without the person's intention in the inner mind is reckoned as no act of the actor. It does not confer any good or bad result on the person.

28 He does not shrink from misery or rejoice at his good fortune. He is not elated at his success or depressed by his failure. 29 He is not dismayed at seeing the sun growing cool and the moon shining warmly over his head. He is not disconcerted by the flame of fire bending downwards or at the course of waters rising upwards. 30 He is neither frightened nor astonished at any wonderful occurrence in nature because he knows all phenomena of nature are the wonderful appearances of the omnipotent and all-intelligent soul.

31 He expresses no need or want and he has no need of others' favor or kindness. He has no need to recourse to wiliness or cunning. He undertakes no shameful act like begging or the like, nor does he betray his shamelessness by doing an unworthy action. 32 He is never mean-spirited or arrogant in his spirit. He is not elated or depressed in his mind, nor is he sad or sorry or joyful at anytime. 33 No passions arise in his pure heart, which is as clear as the autumn sky and like the clear sky which gives no growth to thorns or thistles.

34 Seeing constant births and deaths of living beings in the course of this world, who would you say is always happy or unhappy? 35 Froth and foaming bubbles burst in the water, so our lives flash and fly out into eternity. Therefore, who can be called happy anywhere? What is that state of permanent pleasure or pain? 36 In this world of endless entrances and exits, what being lasts or is lost forever? Our sight produces the view, just as our failing sight takes it out of view.

37 The sights of these worlds are no more than the passing scenes in our nightly dreams, unforeseen of momentary duration and sudden disappearance. 38 What cause for joy or sorrow can there be in this wretched world which is the scene of constant advents and departures? 39 The loss of some good brings sorrow to the sufferer, but what sorrow can assail the self-liberated man who sees nothing as positive good in the ever-changing state of things in this world? 40 Of what use is prosperity or the enjoyment of any pleasure when in the next moment it is succeeded by adversity and pain, embittering life by its harmful effects.

41 Deliverance from pleasure and pain, choice and dislike, desirable and displeasing, and prosperity and adversity contributes to the true joy of man. 42 After you abandon pleasing and unpleasing objects and renounce your desire for enjoyments, you get a cold renunciation which will melt your mind like

frost.⁴³ The mind being weakened, its desires also will be wasted, just as burnt sesame seeds leave no oil behind.

⁴⁴ By thinking existence as non-existent, the man of great soul gets rid of all his desires and sets himself aloof as in the air. With joyful spirits that know no change, the wise man sits and sleeps and lives always content with himself.

Chapter 78 — Techniques of Meditation, Pranayama and Inquiry

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Like a swirling firebrand describing a circle of sparkling fires, so the revolving mind depicts the apparent circumference to the sky as the real circle of the universe.² Similarly, rolling waters make curves in the sea that appear to be something other than water. The turning of the mind forms many ideal worlds seeming to be bodies other than itself.³ As you see strings of pearls in the sky by the twinkling of your eyes fixed upon it, so these false worlds present themselves to view by the pulsation of your mind.

⁴ Rama said, “Tell me sage, how does the mind have its vibration and how it is repressed, so that I may learn how to control it?”

⁵ Vasishta answered:—

Know Rama, as snow is accompanied by whiteness, sesame seeds are associated with oil, fragrance is attendant upon flowers, and flame is inherent with fire,⁶ so the mind is accompanied by its fluctuations hand in hand. They are virtually the one and same thing, though passing under different names by fiction.⁷ Of the two categories of mind and its pulsation, if either is extinct, the other is also extinguished. The properties of a thing being lost, their subject likewise ceases to exist. There is no doubt of this.

⁸ There are two ways of extinguishing the mind: yoga and spiritual knowledge. Yoga is the suppression of mental powers. Knowledge is the thorough investigation of all things.

⁹ Rama asked, “How is it possible, sage, to suppress the vital airs and thereby attain that state of tranquility which is filled with endless joy?”

¹⁰ Vasishta replied:—

There is an energy circulating and breathing through the lungs and arteries of the body called the vital breath (*prana*) or life, just as water flows through the veins and pores of the earth.¹¹ The fluctuation of this energy impels and gives force to the internal organs of the body. This energy has various names such as *prana* and *apana* depending on its position and motion.¹² As fragrance resides in flowers and whiteness in frost, so motion is inherent in the mind. Mind and motion are one and the same.

¹³ Now the vibration of this vital breath excites the perception of certain desires and feelings in the heart. The cognitive principle of these perceptions is called the mind.¹⁴ The vibration of vital air gives pulsation to the heart strings which causes their awareness in the mind. It is similar to the motion of waters giving rise to the waves rolling and beating on the shore.¹⁵ In the Vedas, the learned say that the mind (*chitta*) is the movement of the vital breath (*prana*), and this *prana* being suppressed or controlled quiets the mind.¹⁶ The action of the mind being stopped, the perception of the existence of the world becomes extinct. It is like the extinction of worldly affairs at sunset.

¹⁷ Rama asked, “How is it possible to stop the course of the energy (*prana*) perpetually circulating through the cells of the body, like the unnumbered birds flying in the air to their nests?”

¹⁸ Vasishta replied:—

It is possible by study of the scriptures and association with the good and wise, by habitual dispassion, by the practice of yoga, and by removal of reliance in every transaction of the world.

¹⁹ The best way to suppress the vital energy is meditation on the desired object, keeping that single object in view, and firm reliance on that one particular object. ²⁰ Next is by suppression of breath in the acts of inspiration and respiration in such a way as to not cause pain. This together with fixed meditation makes it possible to suppress the vital energy. ²¹ Uttering the syllable Om, reflecting upon its meaning, and dormancy of the perceptive senses, are also ways to suppress the breath.

²² The practice of breathing out (*rechaka*) serves to purge the body of impurities. By leaving the nostrils untouched, the vital energy is suppressed altogether. ²³ The practice of breathing in (*puraka*) tends to fill the insides like clouds fill the sky. Then when breathing is stopped, its vibrations are also stopped. ²⁴ With the practice of holding of the breath (*kumbhaka*), the vital air is shut up in a closed vessel and this serves to stop the course of breathing.

²⁵ The tongue carried to the opening of the roof of the mouth, and the tip of the tongue attached to the guttural bulb at the beginning of the throat, prevents the vibration of the breathing. ²⁶ Again, the mind rid of its flights of fancy and becoming as vacant as empty air prevents the course of breathing by its fixed meditation of itself, *samadhi*. ²⁷ Again, as the vital energy ranges within twelve inches from the tip of the nose, this region should be closely watched by the eyesight in order to prevent the going out and coming in of breath. ²⁸ Moreover, the practice of stretching the tongue twelve inches above the roof of the mouth and sticking the tip of the tongue to the cavity called *brahmarandhra* serves to make one unconscious of himself and stop his breathing.

²⁹ The eyesight being lifted upwards and fixed in the cavity between the eyebrows exhibits the light of the intellect and stops the vibrations of breath. ³⁰ As soon as the spiritual light dawns over the soul and the mind is steadfastly fixed to it, without any mixture of dualism, there is an utter stop of breathing.

³¹ The lifelong practice of seeing a simple emptiness within one's self and freeing the mind from all its thoughts and desired objects, serves to stop the fluctuation of breath.

³² Rama asked, "Sage, what is this thing called the human heart which receives the reflections of all things like a large mirror?"

³³ Vasishta replied:—

Listen, my good Rama. The hearts of all animals in this world are of two kinds: the superior and inferior. Learn their difference.

³⁴ The inferior heart forms a part of the body. It has a certain dimension and is a piece of flesh inside the breast. ³⁵ The other is of the nature of consciousness. It is called the superior mind because it is both inside and outside the body, yet it is situated in no part of it. ³⁶ The superior part is where all this world is situated. It is the great reflector of all things and the receptacle of all good.

³⁷ The consciousness of all living creatures is also called their heart, though it is not any part of the animal body, nor is it a dull inert substance such as a pebble or stone. ³⁸ Now the vibrations of vital energy of this conscious or sensitive heart, which necessarily is the same as the thinking mind

(*chitta*), cease when it is purified of its internal desires.

³⁹ These methods, as well as many others adopted by others and taught by many sages, equally serve to suppress the breathing. ⁴⁰ These methods of yoga meditation are to be slowly adopted by continued practice for the redemption of the good from this world. Otherwise, their hasty adoption may prove detrimental to life. ⁴¹ Long practice perfects a man to the rank of a monastic and hermit, so the gradual suppression of breath is attended with equal success, and the repression of desires is accompanied by many happy results.

⁴² By continued practice the vital breath is compressed within the confines of twelve inches about the cavities of the brows, nostrils and palate, like a floodgate confining a body of water. ⁴³ Through repeated practice, the tip of the tongue should be brought to contact the gullet of the throat, through which the breath passes both in and out.

⁴⁴ These are the various modes which, by constant practice, lead to samadhi when the mind has its fullest tranquility and its union with the Supreme Soul. ⁴⁵ By practice of these methods a man is freed from sorrow and filled with internal bliss becoming enrapt in the Supreme Soul. ⁴⁶ The vibration of vital energy, being suppressed by continued practice, brings a tranquility to the mind which is like its extinction.

⁴⁷ Human life is wrapped in desires. Release of the mind from these is liberation. Breathing is the operation of life and its suppression is the path to its extinction or nirvana. ⁴⁸ The vibration of breath is the action of the mind that produces the error of the existence of the world. The breath and mind being brought under control dispels this error.

⁴⁹ Removing the knowledge of duality shows the existence of only unity, an experience that no words can describe except by attributes that are ascribed to it. ⁵⁰ In whom and from whom is all, and who is all in every place. Yet who is not this world, nor does such a world as this abide in him, nor has the world come out from him. ⁵¹ Owing to its perishable nature, its situation in time and space, and its limitation by them, this material world cannot be a part of or identical with that immaterial spirit which has no attribute or likeness. ⁵² It is the moisture of all vegetables and the flavor of everything that can be eaten. It is the light of lights and the source of all desires rising in the heart, like moonbeams coming from the lunar disc. ⁵³ It is the wish-fulfilling kalpa tree yielding all earthly delights as its fruits which are constantly carried aloft only to fall down with their juicy flavors of various tastes.

⁵⁴ The high minded man who depends on that boundless spirit and rests secure in its bosom is truly called wise and liberated in his lifetime. ⁵⁵ He is the best of men whose mind is free from all desires and cravings and who has found his rest from the thoughts of his fancied good and evil. He remains without any inclination amidst all the cares and concerns of this life.

Chapter 79 — Spiritual Knowledge: All Is Subjective

¹ Rama said, “Sage, you have described the methods of suspending the mind by means of yoga practices. Now I hope you will kindly tell me how it is brought to stand still by means of perfect knowledge.

² Vasishta replied:—

Perfect knowledge means a man’s firm belief in the existence of one self manifest or Supreme Soul that is without beginning or end. This is what the wise mean by full or perfect knowledge.³ Its fullness consists in viewing all visible forms, such as these pots, those pictures, and all these hundreds of types of beings, to be manifest in the fullness of that Spirit and not distinct from it.

⁴ Imperfect knowledge causes our birth and pain. Perfect knowledge liberates us from these. Our defective sight shows us the snake in the rope. Our complete view of it removes the error.

⁵ Only knowledge free from imagination and free from any belief in the objective and complete reliance on conscious subjectivity lead to the liberation of men. Nothing else can do.⁶ Knowledge of the purely subjective is identical with that of the Supreme Spirit. This purity intermingled with the impure objective matter is termed ignorance (*avidya*).⁷ Consciousness itself is the thing which it is conscious of. Knowledge is identical with the known. There is no difference between them. The soul knows only itself as there is no other beside itself.

⁸ “Seeing the soul alone in its true light in all the three worlds,” is equivalent to the expression “all this world is the soul itself” in the Sruti scriptures. Knowledge of this truth constitutes the perfection of man.⁹ The whole being the soul, why talk of an entity or a non-being? What meaning can there be in bondage or liberation?¹⁰ The mind is nothing other than its perceptions which are manifested by God himself. The whole is an infinite vacuum. There is no bondage or liberation of anyone.¹¹ All this is the immense Brahman extending in the form of this vast immensity. Therefore, you may enlarge your invisible soul by yourself and by means of your knowledge of yourself.

¹² By this comprehensive view of Brahman, as all in all, you can find no difference between a piece of wood or a rock and your cloth. Why then are you so fond of making these distinctions?¹³ Know the soul as the only indestructible substance. It remains quiescent from first to the last, and know this also to be the nature of your soul.¹⁴ Know that this boundless universe, with all the fixed and moving bodies it contains, is a transcendent void where there is no room for your joy or sorrow whatever.

¹⁵ The shapes of death, disease, unity and duality arise constantly in the soul like endless waves in the sea.¹⁶ He who remains in the close embrace of his soul with his inner understanding is never tempted to fall a prey to the trap of worldly enjoyments.¹⁷ He who has a clear head for right judgment is never moved by the force of earthly delights, but remains as unshaken as a rock against the gentle winds of the air.¹⁸ Ignorant, unreasonable and stupid men, guided only by their desires, are preyed upon by continued misery like fish in a dried pond are eaten mercilessly by cranes.¹⁹ Knowing the world to be full of spirit and without the matter of ignorance, close your eyes against its visible phenomena and remain firm with your spiritual essence.

²⁰ Plurality of things is the creation of imagination. They have no existence in reality. It is like the many forms of waves in the sea, which in reality are only its water. Therefore, the man who relies on

his firm faith in unity is said to be truly liberated and perfect in his knowledge.

Chapter 80 — Investigation of Visible Phenomena; Ode to the Death of the Mind

¹ Vasishta continued:—

I will now describe to you the thoughtful mental examination that keeps the reasoning mind from attending to objects placed in its presence.

² The eyes are only for seeing and the living soul is only for bearing the burden of pain and pleasure. They are like the eyes and bodies of beasts of burden which see and carry loads of food without being able to taste it. ³ The eyes, being confined to visible phenomena, can do no harm to the soul residing in the body, just as an ass that has fallen in a pit is but a slight loss to its owner.

⁴ Do not, O base man, entertain your eyes with the dirty sight of visible phenomena that perish of themselves in the twinkling of an eye and put you to peril. ⁵ An acutely intelligent man thinks he is living and counts the duration of his lifetime by the acts judged as one's own deeds and beings. At last, these very acts turn against him and make him accountable for them. ⁶ Do not have your eyes rely upon visible objects that are unreal in their nature and are produced to perish soon after. They please your sight only for a moment. Know visible phenomena to be destroyers of your otherwise indestructible soul.

⁷ O my eyes that are only witnesses of forms situated in the soul! It is in vain that sights flash only to consume yourselves after a short while, like burning lamps. ⁸ What our eyes see is like the fluctuation of waters. Its objects are like the small particles that fill sunbeams in the sky. Whether these sights be good or bad, they are of no matter to our minds. ⁹ Again there is that little bit of egoism beating in our minds, like a small shrimp stirring in the waters. Let it stir as it may, but why should we give it titles of "I" or "you" or "he" or "this" or "that"?

¹⁰ All inert bodies and their light appear together to the eye. One is the container of the other. But they do not affect the mind and therefore do not deserve our notice. ¹¹ The sight of objects and the thoughts of the mind have no connection with one another. And yet they seem to be related to each other, as our faces and their reflections in mirrors. ¹² Such is their inseparably reciprocal relation in the minds of the ignorant. But the wise who are freed from their ignorance remain aloof from the visible with their mental meditations alone. ¹³ The minds of the vulgar are as closely connected with the visible as sacrificial wood is with the flammable lac.

¹⁴ Through diligent study, the chain of mental thoughts is severed from the visible in the same way as right reasoning removes our wrong notions. ¹⁵ After ignorance and the connection between visible and the mind are dispersed, there is no more blending of forms and figures and the reflections and thoughts of them. ¹⁶ The sense impressions that have taken possession of the inner mind are to be rooted out, just as they drive a demon out from the house.

¹⁷ "O my mind!" says the intelligent man. "It is in vain that you delude me. I have known your first and last as nothing. If you are so mean in your nature, you must be so and a nothing even now."

¹⁸ "Why do you display yourself to me in your five-fold form of the five senses? Go make your display before him who acknowledges and owns you as his. ¹⁹ Your grand display of the universe yields me no satisfaction because I am convinced, O vile mind, that all this is no better than a magic

play.²⁰ Whether you abide in me or not is of no matter to me because I consider you as dead to me as you are dead to reason.²¹ You are a dull unessential thing, false and deceitful and always reckoned as dead. You mislead only the ignorant, not the reasonable.”

²² “For so long our ignorance made us ignorant of you, but now by the light of reason we find you as dead as the darkness under the light of a lamp. There is always an impenetrable darkness under the lighted lamp.²³ You have long taken possession of this house of my body and prevented me, O tricky mind, from associating with the good and wise.²⁴ You lie as dull as a dead body at the door of this bodily house, blocking the entrance of my worshipped guests (of good virtues).”

²⁵ “O my mind, gigantic monster of the world which has its existence in no time, are you not ashamed to assume this deceitful form of the world and appear before me in this hideous shape?²⁶ Leave my body, O demonic mind, and take your retinue of female fiends of greed and her companions, and the whole host of your devilish comrades of rage, wrath and the like.²⁷ Seeing the advance of reason in the temple of the body, the demon mind flies from it like a savage wolf leaving its den at the approach of a hunter.”

²⁸ “O pity those foolish folks who are so subdued by this dull and deceitful mind like unwary people are spellbound by a magic wand.²⁹ What is your boast and might in subduing the ignorant rabble? Try your power upon me who defies your power to prevail over the unity of my belief!³⁰ I have already frustrated your attempts against me and laid you to dust. I need not try to defeat the power of my foolish mind.”

³¹ “Long before I had taken you for a living thing and passed many a whole life and day and night with your company in this dreary world.³² Now I have come to know the nothingness of the mind and that it is put to death by my power. Hence I have given up my concern with you and rely only upon my ever existent soul.³³ By good luck, living liberated men come to know the death of their minds and cease to spend their lives under the illusion of its existence.³⁴ Having driven away the deceitful demon of the mind from the house of my body, I am situated at rest without any troublesome thought or turbulent passion in me.³⁵ I smile to think of the many follies to which I was led for so long under the influence of my demonic mind.³⁶ By my good fortune the gigantic demon of my mind is at last defeated by the sword of my reason and driven out of the house of my body.³⁷ It is also my good fortune that my heart is purified of its evil inclinations by suppression of my demonic mind. Now my soul rests alone in peace in the abode of my body.³⁸ With the death of my mind there is an end to my egoism and all my troublesome thoughts and cares. Through breath or mantra of reason, the expulsion of the monsters of evil passions from my heart has made it a place of rest for my soul.³⁹ What is this mind with its egoism and eager expectations to me? It is only a family of intractable inmates of whom I fortunately have rid by their wholesale deaths.”

⁴⁰ “I hail that pure and ever prosperous soul which is identical to my inner soul and identical with the immutable intellect.⁴¹ I hail that Ego in me which is yet not myself nor I nor any other person, nor is it subject to sorrow or error.⁴² I hail that Ego in me which has no action nor agency and no desire or worldly affair of its own. It has nobody and it does not eat or sleep.⁴³ This Ego is not myself or any other, and there is nothing as I or anybody else. The Ego is all in all and I bow down to that being.”

⁴⁴ “The Ego is the first cause and support of all. It is the intellect and the soul of all worlds. It is the whole without parts. I therefore bow down to that Ego. ⁴⁵ I prostrate to the identical Ego of all, which is eternal and immutable and which is the sole immense Soul without any parts. It is all, in all and abides at all times. ⁴⁶ It is without any form or name and is manifest as the immense spirit. It abides in itself and I bow down to that Ego. ⁴⁷ It is the same in all things in its extremely minute form or as the manifestation of the universe. It is the essence of my existence and abides in me, and it is in that state to which I bow down.”

⁴⁸ “It is the earth and ocean with all their hills and rivers, which are not the ego, nor are they the Ego itself. I bow to the same Ego which comprises the world with all its contents. ⁴⁹ I bow to that indestructible Lord without decay which is beyond thought and is ever charming and ever the same, who manifests the endless universe with all its worlds and many more yet invisible and unformed bodies. He is unborn and without decay, and his body is beyond all attributes and dimensions.”

Chapter 81 — The Mind Is Unknowable, Only the Soul

¹ Vasishta resumed:—

Having thus considered and known the mind in this way, O mighty Rama, it is the business of the wise who know the truth to inquire into the nature of the soul to the extent it is knowable.² Knowing the world to be purely the soul, it is to be asked, from where did the phantom of mind arise? It is nothing in reality.

³ It is ignorance, error and illusion which exhibit the vacant and visionary mind to view, just as it is our false imagination which forms an illusionary tree in the sky.⁴ As the objects standing on the shore seem to be moving to ignorant children passing in a boat, so the calm soul appears to be in motion (like the mind) to the unintelligent.⁵ After our ignorance and error are removed, we have no perception of the fluctuation of our minds, just as we do not think mountains to be in motion after a speedy air car is stopped.

⁶ I have given up thoughts of all internal and external things, knowing them to be only the creation of my airy mind. Thus the mind and its actions being null and void, I see all things exist in the spirit of Brahman alone.⁷ I am free from my doubts and sit quietly devoid of all care. I sit as Shiva without a desire stirring in me.⁸ The mind lacking, there is an end of its youthful desires and other properties also. My soul being in the light of the Supreme Spirit, it has lost its sight of all other colors and forms the present themselves to the eyes.⁹ The mind being dead, its desires also die with it, and its cage of the body is broken down without it. The enlightened man is no longer subject to his mind so he is also liberated from the bondage of his egoism. Such is the state of the soul after it is separated from the body and mind, when it remains in its spiritual state in this and the next world.

¹⁰ The world is one calm and quiescent unity of Brahman. Its diversity is as false as a dream. What then shall we think or talk about the world when in reality it is nothing?¹¹ My soul has advanced to the state of divine holiness, so it has become as rarefied and all-pervasive as the eternal spirit of God in which it is situated forever.¹² That which is the soul and the mind, the substantial and the unsubstantial, and what is not, are all the counterpart of the something which is rarer than air, calm and quiet, eternal and intangible, and yet all pervading and extended through all.¹³ Let there be a mind in us or let it remain or perish forever. I have nothing to discuss about it when I see everything is situated in the soul.

¹⁴ I considered myself to be a limited and embodied being as long as I was unable to reason about these abstruse subjects. Now I have come to know my unlimited form of spirit. But what is “myself” is something I have not yet been able to know because the whole is full with the one Supreme Spirit.

¹⁵ But the mind being granted as dead, it is useless to doubt about it. We gain nothing by bringing the demon of the mind to life again.¹⁶ I immediately repudiate the mind, the source of false desires and fancies. I meditate on the mystic syllable “Om” with the quietness of my soul resting in the stillness of the Divine Spirit.¹⁷ With my best intelligence, I always inquire of my God when I am eating or sleeping or sitting or walking about.

¹⁸ Saints conduct their temporal affairs with a calm and careless mind, meditating all along on the Divine Soul in their calmed spirits.¹⁹ So do all great minded men gladly pass their lives discharging

their respective duties without being elated by pride or the giddiness of vanity. They manage themselves with a cheerfulness resembling the gentle beams of the autumn moon.

Chapter 82 — Sage Vitahavya's Self Inquiry into the Nature of His Mind

¹ Vasishta continued:—

It was in this manner that the learned Samvarta, who had knowledge of the soul, reasoned with himself. He communicated this to me in the Vindhya Mountains.² He said, "Shut out the world from your sight and employ your understanding to abstract reasoning in order to cross the vast ocean of this world."

³ Rama, hear me tell you of another view of things, whereby the great sage Vitahavya gave up the practice of making offerings to fire and remained firmly established in his spiritualistic faith.

⁴ The illustrious Vitahavya wandered about the forests in former times, then resided in a cave of the Vindhya Mountains which was spacious as a cave of Meru under the sun's passage.⁵ In course of time, he grew dissatisfied with the ritual acts which serve only to bewilder men and cause diseases and difficulties to man.⁶ He fixed his aim on the highest object of unalterable ecstasy and abandoned his cares for the rotten world in the course of his conduct in life.⁷ He built a hut of leaves with the branches of plantain trees. The floor was strewn with black stones, and he perfumed it with fragrant earth.⁸ He spread a seat of deer's skin, which serves as a pure mattress for holy saints. He sat still upon it as a rainless cloud in the clear sky.⁹ He sat there in the lotus posture, his legs crossed upon one another. He held his heels with the fingers of both his hands and remained with his head uplifted, like the fast and fixed peak of a mountain summit.¹⁰ He closed his eyes from looking upon surrounding objects, and confined his mind to his heart, as the descending sun confines his beams in the hollow caves of Meru.¹¹ Then, having stopped the course of his internal and external senses, he reasoned in his mind which was free from sin and deceit.

Vitahavya reasoning:—

¹² How is it that although I have restrained my outer organs, I cannot stop the course of my mind, even with all my force. It is always as unsteady as a leaflet floating and dancing over the waves.¹³ My mind impels my external organs and in turn is propelled by them to their different objects, like a juggler tosses about and flings his play balls up and down.¹⁴ Though I refrain from exercising my external faculties, yet my mind pursues them eagerly and runs towards the objects from which I try to stop its course.¹⁵ It turns from this object to that, as they say from the pot to the picture and from that to the chariot. And in this manner my mind wanders about the objects of sense like a monkey leaping from branch to branch.

¹⁶ Let me now consider the courses of the five external senses and their organs, which serve as so many passages for the mind.¹⁷ My senses are wicked and wretched. How shall I bring you to your good senses when you are so senseless as to roll on restlessly like the waves of waters in the sea?

¹⁸ Do not disturb me anymore with your unsteadiness, for I well remember to what parades of difficulties I have suffered because of your inconstancy.¹⁹ What are my organs but passages to the inner mind? My organs are dull and base of themselves, no better than the waves of the sea and water in a mirage.²⁰ My senses are unsubstantial in their forms and without any spiritual light. Senses, your efforts are like those of blind men only to fall into the pit.

²¹ It is only the intellectual soul that witnesses the objects of sense. It is in vain that mind and senses

are busy without the soul.²² It is in vain for the organs of sense to display themselves. It is like the twirling of a firebrand or the appearance of a snake in the rope. They have no essence of their own and are of no use without the soul.²³ The all knowing soul knows the eyes and ears well, though none of these organs knows the internal soul. They are as far from the soul as hell is from heaven.

²⁴ As a traveler is afraid of snakes and twice born brahmins dread demonic savages, so consciousness fears for its safety and avoids the company of the senses.²⁵ Yet from a distance, unseen consciousness directs the organs of sense to their various duties like the distant sun, from his situation in heaven, directs the daily duties of men on earth.

²⁶ My mind is wandering all about like a beggar in search of food to fill his belly. My mind acts like a Charvaka materialist making a god of my body to enslave itself to its service. Do not wander about the world like this in vain search of your harmony.²⁷ My mind falsely alleges that it is intelligent, an intelligence, or as consciousness itself. You two are too different in your natures and cannot agree together.²⁸ It is my mind's vain boast to think itself to be living and to be life or ego. All these things belong to the soul, and my mind is entirely devoid of them.

²⁹ Egoism produces the knowledge of "I am the Ego" which you are not. Neither are you anything except a creature of false imagination. It would be good for you to give up this imagination at once.

³⁰ Conscious intellect exists without beginning or end. Nothing else exists. So then, what are you in this body that takes the name of the mind?³¹ The impression of the activity and passivity of the mind is as wrong as the belief that poison and nectar are the one and same thing, because two opposites can never meet together.³² Therefore, my fool mind, do not expose yourself to ridicule by thinking you are both active and passive agent, which you are not. You are only a mere dull thing, as everyone knows.

³³ What is your relationship with enjoyments, or theirs with you, that you wish to have them come to you? You are a dull thing. Without your soul you can have no friend or enemy.³⁴ The unreal has no existence. The existence of the mind is as unreal as the redness of a crystal. Knowledge, action and passion belong only to the soul. They are not attributable to the mind.

³⁵ If you are the Eternal Mind, then you are identical with the Eternal Soul. But the painful mutability of my mind's nature tells me that it is not the same as the imperishable soul.³⁶ Now that you, my mind, have become acquainted with the falsity of your actions and passions, listen to how I am cleansed of these impressions by my own reasoning, as follows.

³⁷ You, my mind, are an inert unreality. This is a truth beyond all doubt. The activity of an inactive nothing is as false as the dancing of imaginary demons or inert stones.³⁸ Therefore, you are dependent on the Supreme Spirit for your movement. You only vainly think of yourself as living or doing anything by yourself.³⁹ Whatever is done by the power of another is ascribed to that other, just as the harvest reaped by a farmer's sickle is said to be the act of the farmer and not his instrument.⁴⁰ He who kills with an instrument is considered the slayer, and not the intermediate instrument of slaughter. Nobody censures the passive sword with guilt or pardons the perpetrator.⁴¹ He who eats and drinks is said to be the eater and drinker and not the plate or cup which holds the food and drink.⁴² My mind, you are entirely inactive in your nature. You are moved by the all wise Consciousness. Therefore only the soul perceives everything by itself, and not you, my ignorant mind.

⁴³ The Supreme Soul awakens and informs the mind without intermission, just as ignorant people require to be constantly guided and admonished by their superiors. ⁴⁴ The essence of the soul in its form of consciousness is obvious to everyone. It is from this consciousness that the mind derives its power, its name, and its existence. ⁴⁵ Thus the ignorant mind is produced by some power of the soul and remains all along with its ignorance until it comes to melt away like snow under the sunshine of its spiritual knowledge. ⁴⁶ Therefore, my ignorant mind, you are now dead under the influence of my knowledge of the soul. Do not boast anymore of being a particle of spiritual origin. Such is only for your sorrow.

⁴⁷ The concept that the unreal mind is an entity is as false as the production of a plant by the light of a magic lantern. There is only that true knowledge which proceeds directly from the Great God.

⁴⁸ Rama, these worlds are not manifestations of divine power. They are only illusive representations of His consciousness, like the glittering waves of waters in the sea.

⁴⁹ My ignorant mind, if you are full of consciousness as Consciousness, then there would be no difference between you and the Supreme One, nor would you have any cause of sorrow. ⁵⁰ The Divine Mind is all knowing, omnipresent and all forms at all times. By attaining the Divine Mind, one obtains everything. ⁵¹ There is no such thing as "you" or "he" except the great Brahman who is always manifest everywhere. we have conceptions of ourselves without any exertion on our part.

⁵² My ignorant mind, if you are the soul, then it is the soul that is everywhere here and nothing beside. If you are anything other than the soul, then you are nothing. All nature is the body of the Universal Soul. ⁵³ The triple world is composed of the Divine Soul, beside which there is no existence. Therefore, if you are anything you must be the soul. Otherwise, you are nothing.

⁵⁴ I am now this (as a boy) and then another (as an old man). These things are mine and those belong to someone else. These are all your vain thoughts, my mind, for you are nothing positive. Positivism is as false a theory as the horns of a rabbit. ⁵⁵ We have no idea of a third thing between consciousness and body which we can refer to as the mind, just as we have no idea of an intermediate state between sunlight and shade.

⁵⁶ We get something by our sight of truth after the veil of darkness has been removed from our eyes. It is our consciousness which we call the mind. ⁵⁷ Hence, my foolish mind, you are no active or passive agent of action, only the calm self-consciousness of Brahman. Now therefore cast off your ignorance and know yourself to be a condition of the very soul.

⁵⁸ The mind is described as an organ of the sense of perception and action, the internal instrument of knowing the soul, and not the soul itself. But this is only by way of explaining the knowable by something familiar and better known to us. It is a metaphor. ⁵⁹ The mind is an unreal instrumentality. It can have no existence without support, nor can it have any action of its own without the agency of an actor. Hence it is false to attribute activity or consciousness to the mind. ⁶⁰ Without the agency of an actor, the instrument of the mind has no power or activity of its own, just as the passive sickle has no power to cut the harvest without the agency of the reaper. ⁶¹ The sword has the power to slay men, but only with the agency of a swordsman. Otherwise, the dull instrument has no power in any part of its body to inflict a wound on another.

⁶² So my friend the mind, you have no power or agency of your own to do your actions. You trouble yourself in vain. It is unworthy of you to toil for your worldliness like the base, unless it were for your spiritual welfare.

⁶³ The Lord is not to be pitied like you who is subject to labor, because His works are all as unaccountable as those he has not yet done. ⁶⁴ Your boast that you serve the soul proceeds only from your ignorance and your friendship with the unconscious organs of sense. It is all quite unworthy of you. ⁶⁵ You are wrong to pursue the objects of sense for the sake of your maker and master. The Lord is independent of all desire, being full and satisfied in himself forever.

⁶⁶ It is by His self-manifestation, and not by his effort to create, that the omnipresent and omniscient God fills the whole with his unity, which admits of no duality even in imagination. ⁶⁷ The one God manifests himself as many, and that is all by himself. He comprises the whole within himself. He has nothing to want or seek apart from himself.

⁶⁸ All this is the magnificence of God, and yet the foolish mind craves after them in vain, just as a miserable man longs to have another's princely pomp that is displayed before him. ⁶⁹ You may try to obtain divine blessings by being intimate with the Divine Soul, but there can be no more intimacy between soul and mind than there is between a flower and its fruit. ⁷⁰ An intimate relation between two things is when one agrees in all its properties with the other. This identity is lacking between soul and mind. The first is immortal, calm and quiet. The second is a mortal and restless thing.

⁷¹ My mind, you are not the same as the soul because of your changing appearances, ever changing occupations, and your promptness for various inventions. Moreover, your alternating states of happiness and misery speak plainly to be of a different nature. ⁷² The relationships of the homogeneous (as of the liquid and curdled milk) and the heterogeneous (as between the milk and water) are quite apparent to sight. But there is no relationship between opposites. ⁷³ It is true that many things have the qualities of other things or a collection of properties common to others. Yet everything has a special identity of its own.

Therefore I ask you, my mind, not to lose consciousness of your identity with that of the soul or you expose yourself to misery. ⁷⁴ Therefore, employ yourself with intense application to the meditation of the soul. Otherwise you are doomed to misery ruminating in your internal recesses on the objects of the visible world. ⁷⁵ Sliding from consciousness of yourself and running after the imaginary objects of your desire are calculated only for your misery. Therefore man must forget associating with the mind and the bodily organs in order to find rest in the soul or samadhi.

⁷⁶ From where does the mind's activity come from? It is proved to be a nothing, like a sky-flower. The extinction of its thoughts and desires extinguishes the mind. ⁷⁷ The soul also is as void of activity as the sky is devoid of its parts. It is only the Divine Spirit that exhibits itself in various shapes within itself. ⁷⁸ It bursts forth in the form of oceans with its own waters and foams in froths by the waves of its own breathing. It shines in the brightness at all things by its own light in itself. ⁷⁹ There is no other active principle anywhere else, just as there is no burning firebrand to be found in the sea. None of the inert body, mind and soul has any active force.

⁸⁰ There is nothing essential or more obvious than what we are aware of in our consciousness. There

is no such thing as “this is another” or “this no other” or “this is good or bad” besides the self-evident One.⁸¹ The One is no unreal ideal, such as that of the Nandana pleasure gardens in the sky. It is the subjective, true consciousness (*samvid*) and not an objective object of consciousness (*samvedya*) that extends all around us.⁸² Then why entertain the suppositions of “this is I and that is another” in this existence? There can be no distinction whatever of this or that in one unlimited, all extending and indefinable expanse of the soul. The ascription of any attribute to it is like the assumption of water in a mirage or a writing in the sky.

⁸³ My honest mind, if by the purity of your nature you can free yourself from the unrealities of the world and become enlightened with the light of the soul that fills the whole with its essence and is the inbeing of all beings, then you shall truly set me at rest from the uneasiness of my ignorance and the miseries of this world and this miserable life.

Chapter 83 — Sage Vitahavya Continues His Self Inquiry, Admonishes Mind, Arrives at Soul

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Hear now, Rama, how Vitahavya, that great sage of enlightened understanding, silently reasoned with his unmanageable senses.² I will tell you openly what he secretly admonished to his senses. By hearing his exhortations, you will be set above the reach of misery.

Vitahavya reasoning:—

³ O my senses, I know your inherent qualities work only to create our misery. Therefore I pray, give up your intrinsic natures for the sake of my happiness.⁴ My admonitions will annihilate your false actualities which are no more than creatures of ignorance.

⁵ The mind's amusement with the springing up of its senses causes its fury and fever heat, just as lighting a fire burns one's self or others in its flame.⁶ The mind being disturbed and bewildered makes restless feelings and sensations flow and fall to it with the fierceness of turbulent rivers falling into the sea, which it breaks out and runs in the form of foam and froth onto the shore.⁷ Sensing minds burst forth in passions of their pride and egoism, clashing against one another like conflicting clouds and falling in showers of hailstorms on others' heads.

⁸ The anxieties of prosperity and adversity are the tormenting sores in the minds' breasts. They pierce and perforate hearts to such a degree as if intent upon uprooting hearts from their innermost recesses.

⁹ They are attended with hiccups and labored breathing in the chest, with groaning and sobbing in the lungs, like hooting owls in the hollow of withered trees, whether covered with tufts of moss on their tops or resembling white haired heads on the dried trunks of old and decayed bodies.¹⁰ The cavities of the heart inside the body are perplexed with crooked cares resembling the folds of snakes, white hairs like hoar frost hanging over the head, and apish wishes lurk about in the caves within the heart.

¹¹ Greed is like a dancing stork clattering her pair of sharp bills (to entice men towards her), then pulling off their eyes from their decayed frames, as also the intestinal cords of the body.¹² Impure lust and lawless desire, symbolized as the filthy cock, scratches the heart as his dunghill and sounds shrill on this side and that.¹³ During the long and gloomy nights of our ignorance we are disturbed by fits of frenzy bursting like a hooting owl from the hollow of our hearts. We are infested by passions barking in our bosoms like vetala demons in charnel domes and funeral grounds.¹⁴ These and many other anxieties and sensual desires disturb our rest at nights, like horrible pisacha monsters appearing in the dark.

¹⁵ But the virtuous man who has rid himself of the gloom of ignorance beholds everything in its clear light. He exults like a blooming lotus at the dawning light of the day.¹⁶ His heart is cleared of the cloud of ignorance and glows as the clear sky unclogged by fogs or mists. A pure light envelops the heart after the flying dust of doubts has been driven from it.¹⁷ When doubts cease to disturb the mind with gusts of uncertainty, it becomes as calm and still as the dome of the sky and the face of a city after swirling winds have stopped blowing.

¹⁸ Mutual friendship and brotherly love purify and cheer the heart of everybody. They grow the graceful trees of concord and cordiality, just as plants bring forth their beautiful blossoms and

stamens in spring.¹⁹ The minds of ignorant and unskillful men are as insubstantial as a barren waste. They are shriveled with cares and anxieties, just as a lotus bed is withered under shivering cold and ice.

²⁰ After the fog and frost of ignorance are dissipated from the atmosphere of the mind, it gains its glaring luster, as the sky gets sunshine after the clouds disperse in autumn.²¹ The soul having its calmness is as clear and cheerful and as deep and undisturbed as the deep and wide ocean which regains its calm and serenity after the fury of a storm has passed over it.²² The mind is full with the ambrosial nectar of everlasting happiness, just as the roof of heaven is filled with the nectarous moonbeams at night.²³ After the dispersion of its ignorance, the mind becomes conscious of the soul. Then it views the whole world in its consciousness as if it were situated in itself.

²⁴ The contented mind finds its body to be full of heavenly delight, which is never perceived by those living souls who are ensnared by their desires of worldly enjoyments.²⁵ As trees burnt by a wildfire regain their green foliage with the return of spring, so people tormented by the troubles of the world and wasted by age and burden of life find their freshness in holy asceticism.²⁶ Hermits resorting to the woods are freed from their fear of reincarnation and have many joys which are beyond all description.

²⁷ Think, O man who cannot be satisfied! Either your soul is dead to your carnal desires or your desires are dead in your soul. In both cases, you are happy, whether in possession or extinction of your mind.²⁸ Do not delay choosing whatever you think is more blissful for yourself, but it is better to possess your mind and kill your cares and desires than to kill your mind with troublesome desires and anxieties.²⁹ Know that what is painful to you is really nothingness, because it is foolish to part with something pleasant to yourself. If you have your inner understanding at all, remain true to yourself by avoiding the false cares of the world.

³⁰ Life is a precious treasure and its loss is liked by nobody, but I tell you in truth that this life is a dream and you are nothing in reality.³¹ Yet be not sorry that you live in vain, because you have lived such a nothingness before and your existence is only a delusion.³² It is unreasonable to think yourself as being so and so because the delusion of individual self-existence is now exploded by right reason.³³ Reason points towards the uniform entity of the identical Being at all times. It is sheer irrationality that tells you of your existence, at it is the lack of true light that exhibits this darkness to you.

³⁴ Reason will disprove your entity as light removes darkness. It was in your irrationality, my friend, that you have passed all this time with the vain idea of your separate existence.³⁵ It is only because of this irrationality of yours that your gross ignorance has grown so great as to be sad because of your disasters. Your delusive desires have subjected you to the devil, like children caught by their imagined demons and ghosts.³⁶ After one rids himself of his former states of pain and pleasure and his transitory desires in this temporary world, he comes to feel the delight of his soul under the province of his right reason.³⁷ Your reason has wakened you from your dullness and enlightened your soul and mind with the light of truth. Therefore we should bow down to reason above all others as the only enlightener of our hearts and souls.

³⁸ After desires are cleared from your heart, you shall find yourself as the great lord of all. You shall

rejoice in yourself under the pure and pristine light of your soul.³⁹ Being freed from your desires, you are set on the footing of the sovereign lord of all. The unreasonableness of desires growing in your ignorance will go away under the domain of reason.⁴⁰ Whether you like it or not, your desires will fly from your mind under the dominion of your reason, just as the deep darkness of night flies at the advance of daylight.

⁴¹ The thorough extinction of your desires is attended with your perfect bliss. Therefore rely on the conclusion of your nothingness by every mode of reasoning.⁴² When you have lorded over your mind and your organs and think yourself extinct at all times, you have secured every joy to your spirit forever.⁴³ If your mind is freed from its disquiet and is set at rest and becomes extinct in your present state, it will not come back to life in the future when you shall have your spiritual trance forever.

⁴⁴ When I remain in my spiritual state, I seem to be in the fourth (*turiya*) or highest heaven in myself. Hence I forever discard my mind with its creation of the mental world.

⁴⁵ Only the soul is the self-existent being, beside which there is nothing else in existence. I feel myself to be this very soul and that there is nothing else beside myself.⁴⁶ I find myself to be ever present everywhere with my intelligent soul and beaming forth with its light of consciousness. This we regard as the Supreme Soul which is situated in the translucent sphere of our inner hearts.⁴⁷ This soul which is without its counterpart is beyond our imagination and description. Therefore I think of myself as this soul, not in the form of an image of it, but as a wave of the water of that profound and unlimited ocean of the Divine Soul.

⁴⁸ When I rest in silence in that soul within myself, which is beyond what can be known and is identical with my consciousness itself, I find all my desires and passions, together with my vitality and consciousness, to be quite defunct in me.

Chapter 84 — Vitahavya's Tapas; His Mental or Imaginary Worlds

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Sage Vitahavya, having thus reflected in his mind, renounced all his worldly desires and sat in his hypnotic trance in a cave of the Vindhya Mountains.² His body became motionless and devoid of its pulsations. His soul shot forth with its intellectual delight. Then with his calm and quiet mind, he sat in his penance (tapas) like the still ocean in its calmness.

³ His heart was cold and his breathings were stopped. He remained like a fire that has gone out after consuming its fuel.⁴ His mind withdrew from all objects of the physical senses and intensely fixed upon the object of his meditation. His eyes were almost closed under the slight pulsations of his eyelids.⁵ His slight and acute eyesight was fixed upon the top of his nose. His eyelids had the appearance of half opened lotus buds.⁶ The erect head and neck and body of the meditating sage gave him the appearance of a bas relief carved upon rock.

⁷ Sitting in this posture in the Vindhya cave with his close attention on the Supreme Soul, he passed a period of three hundred years as if only half a moment.⁸ The sage did not perceive the flight of this length of time owing to the fixedness of his mind in his soul. Having obtained his liberation in his listless state, he did not lose his life in his extreme tapas.⁹ All that time, nothing could rouse him from his profound samadhi trance. Not even the loud roar of rainy clouds could break his entranced yogic sleep (*yoga nidra*) meditation.¹⁰ Loud shouts and shots of soldiers and hunters, the cries and shrieks of beasts and birds, and the growling and snarling of tigers and elephants on the hills could not break his profound samadhi.¹¹ The loud roars of lions, the tremendous roars of waterfalls, the dreadful noise of thunder, and the swelling clamor of the people about him could not shake his firmness.¹² The deep howling of furious fantastic sarabha animals, the violent crackling of earthquakes, the harsh cracking of the woods on fire, and the dashing of waves and splashing of torrents upon the shore could not move him from his seat.¹³ The rush of waters falling on rocky shores, the clashing off the torrents dashing on each other, and the noise and heat of wild fires did not disturb his samadhi.

¹⁴ He continued only to breathe at his will to no purpose, just as the course of time flows forever to no good to itself. All sides of his cave were washed over by currents of rainwater resembling ocean waves.¹⁵ Soon he was submerged under mud carried by floods of rainwater in the mountain cave of his tapas penance.¹⁶ Yet he continued to keep his seat in that dreary cell, buried as he was by mud up to his shoulders.

¹⁷ The long period of three hundred years had passed over him in this way when his soul was awakened to light under the pain of the rains of his mountain cell.¹⁸ His oppressed body then assumed its intellectual or spiritual form, the astral body (*linga deha*), which is a living, subtle body like air or light, but without its acts of breathing vital energy.

¹⁹ This subtle body grew by degrees to its rarefied form by its imagination. It became of the form of the inner mind which was felt to reside within the heart.²⁰ It thought in itself of having become a pure and living liberated sage, in which state it seemed to pass a hundred years under the shade of a kadamba tree in a romantic grove of Kailash Mountain.²¹ It seemed to take the form of a vidyadhara spirit for a century of years, in which state it was quite free from the diseases of humanity. It next

thought of becoming the great Indra who is served by the celestials, and its passed full five yuga ages in that form.

²² Rama said, "Let me ask you, sage. How could the mind of the sage conceive itself as Indra or a vidyadhara, whom it had never seen? How could it have any idea of extensive Mount Kailash or pass many ages in its small space in the cave? This is impossible in nature."

²³ Vasishtha replied:—

Consciousness is all comprehending and all pervading. Wherever it exerts its power in any form, it immediately assumes that form by its own nature. Thus undivided consciousness exhibits itself in various forms throughout the whole creation. ²⁴ It is the nature of consciousness to exhibit itself in any form as it represents itself in understanding. Its nature is to become whatever it pleases at any place or time.

²⁵ So the impersonal sage saw himself in various forms and personalities in all the worlds in the ample sphere of his consciousness within the narrow space of his heart. ²⁶ The man of perfect understanding has transformed his desires to detachment. The desires of men, like seeds of trees burned by the fire of intelligence, produce no germ of acts. ²⁷ He thought to be an attendant on the god Shiva who bears the crescent moon on his forehead. He became acquainted with all sciences and the knowledge of all things past, present and future. ²⁸ Everyone sees everything in the same manner on his outside as it is firmly impressed in his inner mind. But this sage, being freed from the impression of his personality in his lifetime, was at liberty to take upon himself whatever personality he chose.

²⁹ Rama said, "I believe, O chief of sages, that the living liberated man who sits in this manner obtains the emancipation of his soul, even though he is confined in the prison house of his body. Such was the case of the self-liberated sage Vitahavya."

³⁰ Vasishtha answered:—

Ram, how can living liberated souls be confined to the body? They remain in the form of Brahma in the outward temple of his creation, which is pure and tranquil as air. ³¹ Wherever the empty and airy consciousness represents itself in any form, it finds itself to be spread out there in that form. ³² So many ideal worlds appear to be present before us. They are full with the presence of the all pervading spirit of God.

³³ Thus Vitahavya, confined in the cave and submerged under mud, saw multitudes of worlds and countless unformed and ideal creations in the intellect of his great soul. ³⁴ First he thought of himself as celestial Indra. Then he conceived himself to be an earthly ruler preparing to go hunting in some forest. ³⁵ At one time this sage supposed himself to be the swan of Brahma. At another he became a chief among the Dasa hunters in the forests of Kailash. ³⁶ He who once thought himself to be a prince in the land of Surastra became as a forester in a village of the Andhras in Madras.

³⁷ Rama said, "If the sage enjoyed heavenly bliss in his mind, what need did he have of assuming these ideal forms?"

³⁸ Vasishtha replied:—

Why do you ask this question, Rama, when you have been repeatedly told that this world is a false

creation of the Divine Mind? The creations of the sage's mind were also false creations.

³⁹ The universe is the creation of Divine Consciousness. It is as unsubstantial as empty air. The ideal world of the human mind, being only a delusion, is the same. ⁴⁰ In truth, O Rama, neither is that world nor is this other anything in reality. Neither you nor I have any essentiality in this nonessential world which is filled only with the essence of God. ⁴¹ The one is as the other at all times, whether past, present or future. All this visible world is the fabric of the mind which is only a copy of Consciousness. ⁴² Such is the whole creation, although it appears otherwise. Creation is only a transcendental vacuum, although it seems to be as firm as a diamond.

⁴³ It is its ignorance that the mind exhibits itself in the forms of the production, growth and extinction of things, all of which are like the rise and swinging and sinking of waves in the ocean of eternal emptiness. ⁴⁴ All things are situated in the empty sphere of consciousness and are perceived by its representative of the mind in the form of the firm and extended cosmos, though it has no extension in reality.

Chapter 85 — Vitahavya's Samadhi; the Sun God Restores His Body

¹ Rama said, "Now tell me sage. What became of this sage in his house in the cave? How did he lift his body from it? What did he accomplish by his austere and intense tapas?"

² Vasishta said:—

At last the mind of the sage was extended as the Divine Mind and he saw the Divine Soul in its full glory in his own soul. ³ He saw the primeval, dawning light of consciousness in his meditation, which displayed to his memory the scenes of his former states of existence. ⁴ He saw the various forms of the bodies through which he had passed in his former lives, and also those things which had passed and gone and those living with his present body in the cave.

⁵ He found his living body lying in the cave like an insect, and he had a mind to raise it above the surrounding mud and mire. ⁶ This body of Vitahavya confined in the cave was covered with the mud carried by the rain waters. ⁷ He saw his body pent up in the prison house of the cave with loads of clay on its back and fettered in its limbs by the shrubs carried in by the torrents of rain. ⁸ In his clear understanding, he thought of raising his incarcerated body out of the cave and he made repeated efforts by force of his breathing to extricate it from its confinement. ⁹ With all his efforts, he found it impossible for his bodily powers to extricate himself and walk upon the ground. So he exerted his spiritual power to raise his spirit to the orb of the sun.

¹⁰ He thought either of being raised upward by the golden rays of the sun, or of obtaining his disembodied liberation by the disengaging his soul from the bondage of his body. ¹¹ He thought in his elevated mind, "I lose nothing by the loss of my bodily exertions and exercise, but rather I would loosen myself from my bonds and return to my state of blessedness." ¹² Remaining for some time in his thoughtful mood on earth, he thought, "Neither leaving nor having this body is of any good or loss to me. ¹³ For as we forsake one body, so we take another. The difference is the size and bulk of the one and the minuteness and lightness of the other. ¹⁴ So let me mount this golden ray (*pingala*) of the sun and fly in the open air. Carried by the vehicle of light, I will enter into the body of the sun. ¹⁵ I will enter in the form of my shadow in the ethereal mirror of the sun. My aerial breath will conduct me to that orb."

¹⁶ He ascended with his subtle, spiritual body upon the air, just as the heat of fire passes out through the hollow of a pair of bellows. The mindful sun god saw the great sage in this state within his heart.

¹⁷ On seeing the sage in this state, the high minded sun god called to his mind the former acts of his tapas penance, and remembered his body lying in the cell of the Vindhya region. ¹⁸ The sun god, traversing amidst the ethereal regions, came to know the actions of the sage and saw his body lying unconscious in the cave covered under the grass and stones. ¹⁹ He ordered his chief attendant to lift up the body of the sage, whose soul had now assumed its spiritual form.

²⁰ The aerial form of the sage now saluted the adorable sun god with his reverent mind and was then recognized and received by the sun god with due honor. ²¹ He entered into the body of the solar attendant, Pingala, who proceeded from heaven to the cave amidst the delightful gardens of the Vindhya range. ²² Pingala entered the Vindhya grove in the form of a cloud, which assuming the shape of a big elephant, removed the earth from the surface of the cave with the long nails of his toes.

²³ Then with his trunk, he brought out the body of the sage, just as a stork pulls up a lotus stalk from amidst the mud. Then the spiritual body of the sage fled from the form of Pingala to his own.

²⁴ After his long wanderings in the regions of ether, like a bird in the sky, the sage at last found his own body, into which it entered as its nest. He took leave of Pingala with mutual salutations,²⁵ and each hurried to their respective callings with their brilliantly shining forms. One fled into the air, and the other went to a lake to cleanse his body.²⁶ It shone like a star in the clear lake and like sunbeams under the water. Then it appeared above it like a full blown lotus on the surface of waters.²⁷ He rose out of the water like a young elephant after its sport in some dirty pool. Then he offered his adoration to the sun god who had restored his body and mind to their luminous states.

²⁸ Afterwards the sage passed sometime on the bank of the Vindhya lake, filled with the virtues of universal benevolence, fellow feeling and kindness, joined with the qualities of his peace and tranquility, his wisdom and internal bliss, and above all his seclusion and retirement from society, and unconcern with the concerns of the world.

Chapter 86 — Vitahavya Bids Farewell to His Mind, Bodily Organs

¹ Vasishta resumed:—

The muni thought to resume his accustomed meditation again, and at the end of the day he entered a spacious cave in the Vindhya. ² He continued his investigation of the soul with his command over the sensible organs. He reflected on the reality and unreality of things in his mind.

³ “I find,” thought he, “these organs of sense which before were under my control are now set at liberty in the exercise of their various functions. ⁴ I will now cease to think concerning the existence and nonexistence of substances. I will recline solely with my steady posture on that Being. ⁵ I will remain wakeful inwardly, appearing outwardly as if I were dead or asleep. Yet I am conscious in my unconsciousness as the quiet and living soul. Thus I will continue both with the vigilance and inactiveness of my spirit in the state of my quietism.”

⁶ “Waking as if asleep and sleeping as if awake, I will remain in my mental inactivity state of *turiya*, which is neither dead nor living. ⁷ I will remain retired like a rock from all things, even apart from my mind, and dwell in the embrace of the all pervading soul. I will abide with the Universal Spirit in my tranquility, having ease from all disease.”

⁸ Having mused in this manner, he sat in meditation for six days and nights, after which he was roused like a passenger wakes after his short nap on the way. ⁹ Then this great tapas yogi, having obtained the consummation of his tapas, passed his long life in the state of his living liberation. ¹⁰ He took delight in nothing and hated nothing. He felt no sorrow for anything and no pleasure in anything. ¹¹ Whether walking or sitting, he was thoughtless of everything. His heart was void of cares and he conversed with his mind alone at pleasure.

¹² He said to his mind, “O lord of my senses, see the unstained joy without decay that you enjoy in tranquility! Tell me if there is any greater joy than this to be found on earth. ¹³ Therefore O my mind who is the fleetest of all things, repress your flight and excitability. Rely on your cool composure for your lasting happiness. ¹⁴ O my mischievous senses and O you my perverted organs, you have nothing to do with me. ¹⁵ The stiffness of the outer organs is the cause of their failure. The will of the mind is the cause of its disappointment. Neither of these has the power to protect me from evil.”

¹⁶ “Those who believe the senses are the same as the soul are as deluded as mistaking the rope for a snake. ¹⁷ To take what is not the self for the self is the same as taking an unreality for reality. Lack of reason produces this mistake, but right reason removes the fallacy. ¹⁸ You my senses and you my mind, and my living soul are different things quite separate from the unity of Brahma. The mind is the active principle and consciousness is passive, so neither is related to the other. ¹⁹ Their union serves to produce the same effect, just as the wood that grows in the forest, the rope made of flax or hide, the axe made of iron, and the carpenter who works for wages all combine to build a house. ²⁰ Such is the accidental conjunction of different things that becomes the efficient cause of producing certain effects, which could never result alone, as in the case of house building just mentioned. ²¹ So also the various acts of the body, such as speech and all other works, are affected by the accidental and simultaneous union of the different organs of the body and mind, without the waste or impairing of any of them. ²² Thus when the forgetfulness of death and sleep are buried in oblivion, and memory is awakened

upon renewal and waking, that which is not in actuality is again brought to the position of actuality."

²³ In this manner that great devotee continued his reflections for many years in that solitary cave of the Vindhya Hills. ²⁴ Freed from ignorance and far from temptation, he remained there in perfect joy, ever contemplating on the means to prevent the transmigration of his soul. ²⁵ Seeing the natures of things in their true light, he avoided all that presented a false appearance. For fear of being misled by appearances, he resorted to the shelter of meditation. ²⁶ Having his option of choosing what he liked from whatever he disliked, he was indifferent to both. His impassive mind was elevated from all that is desirable or detestable in life. ²⁷ Having renounced the world and all its connections and the society of mankind, and setting himself beyond the bonds of repeated births and actions of life, he became one with the incorporeal unity and drank the ambrosial nectar of spiritual delight. ²⁸ In his lonely abstraction, he seemed to be sitting in the golden cave of Sahya Mountain. He looked upon the entangled paths of the world below without any desire of walking in it or mixing in its treacherous society.

²⁹ Then sitting in his erect posture, he thought to himself.

Vitahavya thinking:—

Be passionless, O my impassioned heart, and rest at peace my intolerant spirit. ³⁰ I bid you farewell, O you enjoyments of the world that have tempted me to taste your bitter pleasures in innumerable births and transmigrations. ³¹ Your pleasures have deluded me so long, like the indulgences of children. Now I see them placed above your reach by the absence of desire in my state of holy and heaven-born nirvana trance.

³² I hail you, O spiritual delight that made me forget my past pleasures. I thank you pains that have led me to the inquiry of the soul with so much intense enthusiasm! ³³ It is by you, O sour misery, that this blissful state is revealed to me. You are to be thanked for bringing me under the cooling shade of heavenly delight. ³⁴ I thank you, O adversity, for you have revealed the joy of my soul to me. I bless you, my friend, for your making the vanity of worldly life known to me. ³⁵ O my body that is so intimately united with me, I see your union to be only a temporary one, like the short lived amity of interested men who forsake their beneficent friends in a moment. ³⁶ Thus am I forsaken by all my bodies in my various bygone births. So my soul has forsaken them all in its repeated transmigrations in different forms of living bodies.

³⁷ Even in my present state, my body brings its own ruin on itself by being slighted by the soul's advancement in spiritual knowledge. ³⁸ It is not my fault that the body is discontented at my contentment, or that it should be impaired by my abstinence and broken down by my poverty.

³⁹ Grieve not, my mean greed, that I have grown adverse to gain. You must pardon me, O my fond desires, that I have become so devoid of wishes and adopted the virtue of renunciation (*vairagya*).

⁴⁰ I have now taken myself to my detachment and want to thrive therein. I pray of you, O you restless desire, to have no more any concern with me. ⁴¹ And I bid my last farewell to you, O you god of piety and pious deeds, that I may no more engage myself in the performance of acts.

⁴² I am lifted from the pit of hell and placed in heaven. I bid farewell to the tree of pleasures growing in the soil of wicked acts and bearing the torments of hell as its fruits. ⁴³ I bid farewell to the tree of

sin that bears the flowers of our punishment, whereby I was doomed to repeated reincarnations in lower births.⁴⁴ I bow down to that unseen form of delusion which uttered the sweet voice of a sounding bamboo and covered itself with a garment of leaves.

⁴⁵ I bow to you, my holy cave that is my associate in this devout tapas. You are the only refuge for this weak body of mine after its weary journey in the rugged paths of the world.⁴⁶ You were my kind companion and the remover of all my desires. You have been my only shelter after I fled from all the dangers and difficulties of the world.⁴⁷ You are my pilgrim's staff that was the support of my aged body and arm. I have found my best friend in you for relieving my fatigue and guiding my footsteps in this dangerous and cavernous retreat.

⁴⁸ I also thank you, O my aged body that is the support of my life, even in this old age of yours when you are reduced to your ribs covering your bloodless entrails and shriveled veins and arteries.

⁴⁹ Depart now, my dilapidated body, with the core and foundation that there yet remain in you. Away with your excrements that required my repeated ablutions and purifications.

⁵⁰ I bid farewell to all my acts and dealings in the world that have been the destined causes and my connate companions in all my reincarnations in this world.

⁵¹ I next bid you farewell, O my vital airs, who kept company with me through all my various births and from whom my soul will soon fly away.⁵² How often have I passed with you to foreign parts and rested in the valleys and gardens of mountain meadows. How long have we played about in cities and dwelt in mountain retreats.⁵³ How many times we have run in different directions, engaged in various works of life. In fact there was no time or place in the universe when and where we did not live together.⁵⁴ In truth I have never done or seen or given or taken anything apart from you. Now I bid you farewell my friend, as soon I must part from you.

⁵⁵ All things in the world have their growth and decay and are destined to rise and fall by turns. So also are the union and separation of things, the unavoidable course of nature.⁵⁶ Let this light which is visible to sight reenter the sun from where it proceeds. Let these sweet scents which come to my smell mix with the flowers from which they are breathed and blown.⁵⁷ Let my vital breath and vibration join with the ethereal air. Let all the sounds I hear return from my ears to the empty sphere.

⁵⁸ Let my taste revert to the orb of the moon from where it has sprung. Let me be as quiet as the sea after its churning by Mount Mandara, and like the cool hour of the evening after the sun has set.⁵⁹ Let me be as silent as the dumb cloud in autumn and as still as creation after the great deluge at the end of a kalpa age. Let me remain thoughtless, as when the mind is concentrated on the syllable of Om, and when my soul rests in the Supreme Soul. Let me be as cold as when fire is reduced to ashes and as extinct as the extinguished lamp without oil.

⁶⁰ Here I sit devoid of all actions and removed from the sight of all living beings. I am freed from the thoughts of worldly things. I am resting in the peace of my soul which is seated in my crown (*brahmarandhra* hole at the top of the head).

Chapter 87 — Vitahavya's Samadhi, Union with All

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Then repeating aloud the sacred syllable Om and reflecting on the Universe contained in it, having rid himself of thoughts and free from his desires, Sage Vitahavya obtained his internal peace.² He meditated on the several parts that compose the utterance of that mystic Om syllable. Then leaving aside all its attributes, he meditated only on the reality of the pure and imperishable one.

³ He withdrew his mind from his internal and external organs, and also from the grosser and finer feelings and sensibilities of his heart and body. He dismissed whatever there is in the three worlds and converted all his desires to detachment.⁴ He remained unmoved in his body, and like the thoughtful touchstone, rapt in his abstraction. He was full in himself like the full moon and as still as Mount Mandara after its churning was over.⁵ He was the motionless wheel of the potter's mill, like the calm ocean undisturbed by waves and winds.⁶ His mind was the clear sky without sunshine or darkness. His heart was bright without the light of the sun, moon or stars. His consciousness was unclouded by the fumes, dust and cloud of ignorance. His soul was clear as the autumn sky.

⁷ Then raising his voice from the heart center (*anahata*) to the topmost crown (*brahmarandhra*) of his head, his mind transcended the region of the sensations, like the wind blowing a fragrance over an area.⁸ His mental darkness fled from his mind, like the gloom of night dispelled by the light of the dawning morning, and like the perception of wisdom puts down and extinguishes the sparks of anger in the heart.⁹ Then he saw the reflection of a flood of light within himself, which he found to be ceaseless in its brightness and unlike the light of the luminaries which is repeatedly succeeded by darkness.¹⁰ Having attained that state of indescribable light and inextinguishable brightness, he found his mental powers to be quickly burnt down by its glare, like straw consumed by fire.

¹¹ In a short time he lost his consciousness of that light, just as in no time, a new born child loses its knowledge of whatever it perceives through any of its sense organs.¹² It was in a twinkling or half of that time that this calm sage stopped the course of his thought, just as the wind stops its motion in a moment.¹³ Then he remained as fixed as a rock, his inattentive and mute gaze on what passed before him. He retained his vitality like a motionless dreamer in his sleep.

¹⁴ He was next lost in his deep sleep (*susupta*) trance, like in the unconsciousness of his profound sleep, and thereby he attained his ultimate joy of *turiya*, the retention of only absolute joy.¹⁵ He was joyful in his joylessness. He was alive without his liveliness. He remained as something in his nothingness and was blazing amidst obscurity.¹⁶ He was conscious in his spirit without consciousness of the senses. He was the Sruti scriptures say, neither this nor that nor the one or the other. He therefore became that which no words can express.¹⁷ He became that transparent substance which is transcendently pure and purifying. He was that all pervasive something which is corporate with nothing.

¹⁸ He was the vacuum of vacuists, and the Brahman of the brahmists. He was the Knowledge of gnostics, and omniscience of scientists.¹⁹ He became like the Purusha spirit of the Sankhya materialists, and the Ishwara of yoga philosophers. He was the Shiva of the Saivites, bearing the mark of the crescent moon on their foreheads. He was the Time of Timeists.²⁰ He was the same with the

soul of souls of the psychologists, and as the no soul of physicists. He was similar to the Middle Way of the Madhyamikas, and the All of the even-minded pantheists.²¹ He was identified with the main truth of every religion and the essence of all creeds. He was identical with the all essential and Universal Reality.

²² He was identical with the supreme and unimpaired light which is seen in all luminous bodies. He was one with the inner light which he perceived to be glowing within himself.²³ He became the very thing which is one and many, which is all and yet nothing, which is simple and combined with all, and which is that which is (*tat sat*).

²⁴ In short he remained as the one without decay or beginning, which is one and many, simple without parts, purer than the pure ether, the Lord God of all.

Chapter 88 — Lessons to Be Drawn from Vitahavya's Tapas

¹ Vasishta continued:—

After Vitahavya had passed beyond the bounds of nature and crossed this ocean of misery, he also pacified the fluctuations of his mind. ² Being thus calmed and brought to the state of perfect inertness, he was absorbed in his ultimate mental impassiveness, like a drop of rainwater and the particles of waves mix in the ocean. ³ Sitting continually in his mentally inactive state, his body became thin and lean, without food or its functions. Without water or nourishment, it quickly decayed like a fading lotus in winter. ⁴ His vital breaths fled from the tree of his body and entered into the cavity of the heart, like birds let loose from the net fly to their nests. ⁵ His physical body composed of flesh, bones and the organs of sense remained beneath the shady branches of the woodland retreat, but his spirit roved beyond the bounds of the elemental worlds above.

⁶ His individual consciousness was absorbed in the ocean of Universal Consciousness, just as particles of metallic substances are fused together in the same metal. So the soul of the sage found its rest in its intrinsic nature of the Supreme Soul.

⁷ Thus have I told you, O Rama, about the rest of the sage in his torpid quietism. All this is full of instruction, and you must consider well its hidden meaning. ⁸ O Rama, know that by your good gifts of these things and perfections, you will be able to attain that state of beatitude. ⁹ O Rama, consider well all that I have already told you and what I will expound to you now and in future. ¹⁰ As I myself have known and well considered all these things in my long life, and by my experience of the past and my knowledge of present and future events, so will you be also. ¹¹ Therefore have the clear sight and clairvoyance of the sage, as I have shown you, and know that only through your transcendental knowledge can you have your emancipation in both worlds.

¹² The light of knowledge dispels the darkness of ignorance and destroys the mist of false fears and sorrows. Knowledge alone is the cause of that result which nothing else can bring about. ¹³ See how sage Vitahavya destroyed all his desires by means of his knowledge, and how he cleared the mountain of his mind from all its poisonous plants of worldliness. ¹⁴ His conscious, clairvoyant knowledge of other spheres led the sage to penetrate the solar orb of his desire on the wings of his rays, and from there return (by his memory) to restore his buried body from the cave of earth. ¹⁵ This sage was the personification of the mind, and it is the mind which is personified in the conscious or visible forms of "I", "you", "he" and this other. The mind is also this world which consists in it, and without which it is not known to exist.

¹⁶ By knowing this transcendent truth, and being freed from the faults of passions and feelings, and far removed from the faults and frailties of the world, the silent sage followed the dictates of his mind and thereby attained the endless bliss of his soul, the supreme good of human life.

Chapter 89 — Acquiring Powers; How Yogis' Bodies Survive During Tapas; Yogis' Thoughts Actualize

¹ Vasishta said:—

Rama, you must imitate this sage in order to know the nature of the soul and all that is knowable and worth knowing. In order to know these things, you must be without passion and without the emotions of fear and disturbance of your spirit at all times. ² As this sage seemed to pass the course of many millions of years in cheerful meditation, so you shall have to habituate yourself to silent contemplation without any discontent in your mind.

³ There have been many more sages of great minds in their times and places who have had their perfection in the same way and who are worthy of your imitation to attain your object. ⁴ Knowing that pain or pleasure never affects the soul and that it is everlasting and everywhere in all places, no one, O mighty prince, has any cause to be sorry for it.

⁵ There are many persons living in this world who are well acquainted with the nature of the soul. But nobody is so sorry for the misery of human souls as yourself. ⁶ Remain quiet and in good cheer, with the magnanimity and composure of your mind. Know yourself to be imperishable, without any change or regeneration. ⁷ No living liberated man like yourself is ever subject to sorrow or joy at the changing fortunes of life, just as the brave lion is never moved from his calmness like the changeful peacock.

⁸ Rama said, “Sage, your discourse raises a question in me, which I want you to disperse like an autumn cloud. ⁹ Tell me sage, who is best acquainted with spiritual knowledge, why are the bodies of living liberated persons not seen mounting the skies?”

¹⁰ Vasishta replied:—

Rama, know the powers of mounting the sky and flying in the air naturally belong to winged creatures.

¹¹ All the various motions seen to act in different directions are according to the natural tendencies of bodies. They are never desired by the spiritually minded person. ¹² The ability to fly is not desirable for the living liberated soul. The power to fly is easily acquired by unspiritual and ignorant people, by many physical and artificial powers derived by application of proper means, mantras and other practices.

¹³ The power of flying is no business for the knower of the Self who is only concerned with his knowledge of the soul. He is content with spiritual knowledge and union with the Supreme Soul and does not meddle with the practices of the ignorant practitioners of false yoga. ¹⁴ Know all earthly contrivances to be the offspring of worldliness and the progeny of spiritual ignorance. Say then, what wise knower of the Self is there who would be so foolish as to plunge himself in this gross ignorance? ¹⁵ He who pursues the path of spiritual ignorance by his meditation and contrivances for his temporal welfare must be blind to the future welfare of his soul and lives against the course of the holy sage and saint. ¹⁶ By the continued practice of yoga, or some other arts and expedients of mantras and the like, it is possible for the wise as well as the unwise to acquire the power of flying in the air.

¹⁷ But the spiritual man remains quite aloof and afar from these. He has no desire for any such thing. He is content with himself and finds his rest in the Supreme Soul, beside which he has nothing in

view.

¹⁸ He has neither aerial journey nor any supernatural power or worldly enjoyment for his object. His view is neither earthly glory nor honor, nor does he desire to live or fear to die. ¹⁹ He is ever content and quiet in his soul, devoid of desires and affections in his mind. He is of the form of empty air and remains with his spiritual knowledge as the idol of his soul. ²⁰ He is not apprehensive of adversity or calamity. He is unaffected by feelings of pleasure and pain. He is fully satisfied in his privation of everything, and is unconcerned about his life and death by remaining like the living dead. ²¹ He remains unmoved at all evens and odds, just as the ocean is at a standstill with all the outpourings of the rivers. He continues to meditate on and adore the Divine Spirit in his own spirit. ²² He has no need of acquiring or amassing any wealth for himself, nor is he in need of asking anything of anybody for his support.

²³ The unspiritual man who aims at the acquisition of supernatural powers must sacrifice the means of his perfection in order to acquire such powers. ²⁴ All things are accomplished by application of their proper means, and what is thus ordained to take place cannot be undone even by the three-eyed god Shiva himself. ²⁵ The power of flying depends on the application of proper means, and not on one's act of willing only. Nothing can alter the nature of things, as that of the coolness of moonbeams. ²⁶ Whether one is all-knowing or much-knowing, or all-powerful or much powerful as a Vishnu or Shiva, yet there is nobody who has the power to set aside the destined law of nature.

²⁷ Thus it depends on the nature of things, Rama, the combination of times and circumstances, and the application at proper means and mantras that cause a mortal to fly in the air and an immortal to descend on earth. ²⁸ Similarly, it is the property of some drugs, gems and mantras to destroy the destructive power of poison, and of wine to intoxicate the wine-drinker, and of vomiting agents to cause vomiting. ²⁹ All things naturally have the power of producing some effect according to its proper application and the mode and manner of it. ³⁰ Hence no one who is unacquainted with these things is able to fly in the air, and he who is filled with spiritual knowledge has no need of such practices.

³¹ All knowledge relating to the properties of things and their application in proper mode and manner to bring about certain ends is of no good to the knower of the Self for his attainment of spiritual wisdom. ³² He who wishes to have supernatural powers may gain them by long practice. But what need has a yogi of these practices or powers for himself? ³³ After his freedom from the net of his desires the yogi attains his spiritual state. Then how can he entertain any desire which is opposed to it?

³⁴ Everyone endeavors to remain in the course to which he is led by the desires rising in his heart. Whether he is learned or not, in due time he reaps the reward of his endeavors. ³⁵ Vitahavya never endeavored to acquire any supernatural power. All his endeavors were directed towards gaining spiritual perfection, which he obtained by his tapas in the forest.

³⁶ Should one persist practicing and applying the proper means, it is not impossible or hard to acquire supernatural powers. ³⁷ One's success attaining perfection in any object depends entirely on his personal efforts, and may be called the fruit of the tree of his own labor. ³⁸ But these successes and

perfections are of no use to those great minded men who have known the Knowable One in himself, and who have made an end of their worldly desires.

³⁹ Rama said, "Sage I have yet another question for your explanation and it is this. Why didn't the hungry beasts of the desert devour the dead-like body of the devoted sage, and why did it not spoil under the earth that covered it? ⁴⁰ How was it that the bodiless and liberated soul of the sage, which was absorbed in the sunlight, returned to resume its dilapidated body buried in the mountain cave?"

⁴¹ Vasishta replied:—

The conscious soul that believes itself to be embodied with its mortal body and bound by the ropes of its desires and the bonds of its affections is subject to both the feeling of pleasure and the pangs of pain. ⁴² But the intelligent soul which relies on its pure consciousness and is freed from the net of its desires remains only with its subtle spiritual body.

⁴³ Hear now, Rama, the reason why the body of the yogi is not subject to the accidents of disjunction or corruption for many hundreds of years.

⁴⁴ Whenever the mind is occupied with the thought of anything, it is immediately assimilated into the nature of that object and assumes the same form on itself. ⁴⁵ Thus, upon seeing or thinking of an enemy, the mind turns to hatred at the very sight or thought of its foe. The mind assumes the nature of friendliness upon the visit and memory of a friend. ⁴⁶ So on seeing a hill or tree or passenger that bears no hatred or friendship to it, the mind remains equally indifferent, without any change in its disposition as it is perceived by us. ⁴⁷ Again the mind is sweetened tasting sweets, and embittered by tasting the bitter. It becomes fond of the sweet and averse to whatever is sour and bitter and unpalatable.

⁴⁸ So when a hungry beast comes in the sight of a calm yogi, its envious nature is changed to dispassion and it desists from doing him any injury. ⁴⁹ The malicious, being freed from his malice in the company of an even minded sage, desists from the doing any harm to anyone, just as the indifferent traveler has no business breaking straggling branches and trees growing on the wayside, which the rude rustics are likely to chop off and cut down (for fuel). ⁵⁰ But the savage beast, removed from the side of the yogi, resumes its hungry nature again in the company of devouring and wild beasts of the forest. ⁵¹ Hence it was that the envious beasts of the forest, the tigers, lions and bears, and also the reptiles and creeping insects of earth, did not molest the calm body of the sage so long as they lurked and crept about it.

⁵² The reason why the body was not reduced to the dust of the earth is because the silent conscience that dwells in common in all bodies of animals, vegetables and minerals and abides in them as in the person of a dumb creature would not allow them to injure the innocent body of the sage lying flat on the ground. ⁵³ The spiritualized body of the yogi is seen to move about on earth, like the shadow of something floating on the water. ⁵⁴ Therefore the spiritual body of the sage, which was rarefied above the elemental bodies by virtue of his spiritual knowledge, became quite incorruptible in its nature.

⁵⁵ Hear me tell you another reason, Rama! It is the lack of vibration which causes destruction, as it is vibration or breathing of the heart that is the cause of life. ⁵⁶ The breathing of vital breaths causes the vibration of the arteries, and this being stopped, the body becomes as still as a stone. ⁵⁷ He who has

lost the pulsations of his heart and vital breaths, has also lost both his vitality and mortality, and becomes like a stone.⁵⁸ When the internal and external pulsations of the body are at a stop, know, O well-informed Rama, the intestinal parts are not liable to any change.⁵⁹ The motion of the body being stopped, and the action of the heart having ceased, the humors of the body become as stiff and inert as the solid mountain of Meru.⁶⁰ So the lack of fluctuation causes the steadiness of all things in the world. Hence the bodies of sages are known to be as quiet as the blocks wood or stone.

⁶¹ Therefore, the bodies of yogis remain entire for thousands of years. Like clouds in the sky and stones underneath the water, they are neither soiled nor rotten at anytime.⁶² It was in this manner that this sage who knew the truth and was best acquainted with the knowledge of the knowable left his earthly body in order to find the rest of his soul in the Supreme Spirit.

⁶³ Those men of great minds who are dispassionate and know what is chiefly to be known above all others pass beyond the bounds of this earth and even of their bodies to assume an independent form of their own.⁶⁴ They are perfect masters of themselves whose minds are well governed by their right understanding. They are not affected by the influence of their destiny or the acts of their past lives, nor moved by their desires of any kind.⁶⁵ The minds of complete yogis are of the nature of destiny because they can easily effect whatever they think upon, as if they were the acts of chance as in Kakataliya Sanyoga.⁶⁶ So it was with sage Vitahavya, who no sooner thought of the renovation of his body than he found it presented before his sight, as if it were an act of chance.

⁶⁷ When the soul forsakes its earthly frame after the fruition of the fruits of its past actions is over, it assumes a spiritual form which is the state of its disembodied liberation and when it enjoys its perfect liberty in its independent state.⁶⁸ The mind free from its desires is released from all its bonds and assumes the spiritual form of the pure soul. Then it effects instantly all that it wishes to do and becomes all powerful as the great Lord of all.

Chapter 90 — Two Forms of Mind Extinction: with and without Form

¹ Vasishta said:—

After sage Vitahavya had subdued his heart and mind by his self inquiry and reasoning, there arose in him the qualities of universal benevolence and generosity.

² Rama asked, “How do you say, sage, that the quality of benevolence sprang in the mind of the sage after it had been wholly absorbed in itself by its rationality? ³ Tell me sage who is the best of speakers, how can the feelings of universal love and friendliness arise in the heart which is wholly cold and quiet, or in the mind which is entranced in the Divine Spirit?”

⁴ Vasishta replied:—

There are two kinds of mental numbness. One is coma in the living body and the other its deadness after the material body is dead and gone. (One is where the form of the mind remains and the other is where even the form ceases to be.) ⁵ Possession of the mind is the cause of grief and its extinction is the spring of happiness. Therefore one should practice grinding the essence of his mind (or personality) in order to arrive to its utter extinction.

⁶ The mind beset by the net of the vain desires of the world is subject to repeated births which are the sources of endless grief. ⁷ He is considered a miserable being who thinks much of his person and esteems his body as the product of the good rewards of his past lives, and who accounts his foolish and blinded mind as a great gift to him. ⁸ How can we expect the decrease of our distress as long as the mind is the mistress of the body? Upon setting down the mind the world appears to disappear before us. ⁹ Know the mind is the root of all the miseries of life, and its desires are the sprouts of the forest of our disasters.

¹⁰ Rama asked, “Who is it, sage, whose mind is extinct? What is the manner of this extinction? How is its extinction brought on and what is the nature of its annihilation?

¹¹ Vasishta replied:—

O support of Raghu’s race, I have told you before of the nature of the mind. Now you will hear, O best of inquirers, the manner of extinguishing its impulses.

¹² When the mind is unmoved and remains steady in pleasure or pain, unshaken like a rock at the gentle breath of our breathing, then it is paralyzed and dead. ¹³ Know that the mind is also dull as dead when it is devoid of the sense of its separateness from others, and when it is not degraded from the loftiness of its universality to the meanness of its personality. ¹⁴ Know also that the mind is dead and cold when it is not moved by difficulties or dangers, or excited by pride or giddiness, or elated by festivity or depressed by poverty; in short, when it does not lose its serene temperament at any reverse of fortune. ¹⁵ Know, gentle Rama, that this is what is meant by the death of the mind and numbness of the heart. This is the inseparable property of living liberation.

¹⁶ Know mindfulness to be foolishness, and un-mindedness is true wisdom. Upon extinction of mental affections, the pure essence of the mind appears to light. ¹⁷ The true, intrinsic nature of the mind is revealed after its emotions are extinguished, and this temperament of the mind is what living liberated persons have. ¹⁸ The mind is filled with benevolent qualities has best wishes for all living beings. It

is freed from the pains of repeated births in this world of grief. It is called the living liberated mind.

¹⁹ The nature of the living liberated mind is said to be its intrinsic essence, which is full with its holy wishes and exempt from the doom of reincarnation.

²⁰ The personal mind (*swarupa*) has a notion of its personality as distinct from its body. This is the nature of the mind of those who are liberated in their lifetime. ²¹ When the living liberated person loses the individuality of his mind and becomes as pleasing as moonbeams by virtue of his universal benevolence, then the mind becomes expanded and extended, present everywhere at all times. ²² The living liberated person being mindless of himself becomes as cold hearted as a plant growing in a frigid climate, where it blooms with its mild virtues like blossoms of a winter plant. ²³ The impersonal mind (*arupa*, without form) that I described earlier is the coolness of the disembodied soul that is altogether liberated from the consciousness of its personality.

²⁴ All the excellent virtues and qualities that reside in the embodied soul are utterly lost and drowned in the disembodied soul upon its liberation from the knowledge of its personality. ²⁵ In the case of disembodied liberation, the consciousness of self personality being lost, the mind also loses its formal existence in formlessness (*virupa*) when there remains nothing of it. ²⁶ There remains no more merit or demerit, or any beauty or deformity. It neither shines nor sets anymore, nor is there any consciousness of pain or pleasure in it. ²⁷ It has no sense of light or darkness, or the perception of day or night. It has no knowledge of space and sky, or of the sides, altitude or depth of the firmament. ²⁸ Its desires and efforts are lost with its essence and there remains no trace of its entity or nothingness whatever. ²⁹ It is neither dark nor light, nor transparent as the sky. It does not twinkle like a star or shine forth as solar and lunar lights. There is nothing to which it may resemble in its transparency. ³⁰ Those minds that have freed themselves from all worldly cares and are rid of their thoughts are the minds that rove in this state of freedom, as the winds wander freely in the region of vacuum.

³¹ Intelligent souls that are numb and sleepy are set in perfect bliss beyond the trouble of activity (*rajas*) and lethargy (*tamas*). They have assumed the forms of empty bodies and find their rest in the supreme joy in which they are dissolved in the unity of the deity.

Chapter 91 — Seeds for the Mind: Breathing Vital Breath, Thinking Thoughts, Desires; Thoughts Create Form

¹ Rama said, “I see the stupendous rock (Brahma) filling the infinite dome of vacuum and bearing countless worlds as its vast forests, with the starry frame for its flowers and the gods and demigods for its birds and fowls. ² Flashes of lightning are its blooming blossoms and blue clouds are the leaves of the forest trees. The seasons and the sun and moon fructify these trees with good looking fruits. ³ The seven seas are the aqueducts at the foot of this forest, and flowing rivers are its channels. Fourteen worlds are so many regions of it, peopled with various kinds of beings.”

⁴ “This wilderness of the world is beset by the wide spreading net of desire which has spread over the minds of people like a creeping vine filling a vineyard. ⁵ Disease and death form the two branches of the tree of the world yielding plentifully the fruits of our happiness and grief. Our ignorance serves to water and nourish this tree to its full growth.”

⁶ “Now tell me, sage, what is the seed that produced this tree and what is the seed of that seed? Tell me what is the original seed of the production of the mundane tree of the world (*samsara*)? ⁷ Briefly explain this to me for the edification of my understanding, and so I may acquire the true knowledge with which you are best acquainted.”

⁸ Vasishta answered:—

Know Rama that the physical body is the seed or cause of this tree of the world (*samsara*). This seed is the desire concealed in the heart of the body. It shoots forth luxuriantly in the sprouts of good and bad acts and deeds. ⁹ It is full of boughs and branches and luxuriant with the growth of its fruits and flowers. It thrives as thickly and quickly as the paddy fields flourish in autumn.

¹⁰ The mind is the seed of the body and is subject to and the slave of all its desires. Its treasure house consists of alternate plenty and poverty, and its casket contains the gems of pleasure and pain. ¹¹ The mind spreads this network of reality and unreality as it projects the ornaments of truth and falsehood in dreams and visions.

¹² As a dying man imagines he sees the messengers of death appearing before him, so the mind presents the figure of the unreal body as a reality. ¹³ All these forms and figures that appear to our view in these worlds are the creatures of the mind, just like pots and toys are the works of clay.

¹⁴ There are two kinds of seeds that give rise to the tree of the mind entwined by the creepers of its faculties. One kind of seed is the breathing of the vital breath. The other is thinking thoughts.

¹⁵ When the vital energy vibrates through the lungs and arteries, then the mind has consciousness of its existence. ¹⁶ When the vital energy ceases to circulate through the lungs and wind pipes, there ensues the unconsciousness of the mind and the circulation of the heart-blood is put to a stop. ¹⁷ It is by means of the vibrations of breath and the action of the heart that the mind perceives the existence of the world which is as false as the appearance of the blue sky in the empty space of vacuum. ¹⁸ But when these vibrations and actions fail to rouse the sleeping mind, then it is said to enjoy its peace and quiet. Otherwise they move the body and mind, just like wires move dolls in a puppet show. ¹⁹ When the body has its consciousness caused by the breathing of the vital energy, it begins to move about like a

doll dancing in its giddy circle in the courtyard by the puppet player's skill.²⁰ The vibrations of breath awaken our self-consciousness, which is more minute than the minutest atom and yet all pervasive in its nature, just as the fragrance of flowers is blown afar in the air by the breath of the wind.

²¹ It is of great good, O Rama, to confine one's consciousness in one's self. This is accomplished by stopping the breath by means of the practice of *pranayama* (breath control).²² By restraining our self-consciousness we refrain from our consciousness of other things because the knowledge of endless objects is attended with infinite trouble to the mind.²³ When the mind comes to understand itself after it is roused from its dormancy of self-forgetfulness (addiction to thoughts of external objects), it gains what is known to be the best of gains and the purest and the holiest state of life.²⁴ If with the vacillation of your vital breaths and the fluctuation of your wishes you do not disturb the even course your consciousness, like the giddy part of mankind, then you are like the great Brahma himself.

²⁵ The mind without its self-consciousness is a barren waste, and the life of man without knowledge of truth is like a maze troubled with traps and snares of errors and dangers.

²⁶ Meditation and yoga are practiced to suppress the breath for the peace of mind. Practice breath control (*pranayama*) and single-pointed meditation (*dhyana*) according to the directions of the spiritual guide and the precepts of the scriptures.²⁷ Restraint of breath is accompanied by peace of mind and causes the evenness of its temperament. It is attended with health and prosperity and gives its practitioner the capacity of reflection.

²⁸ Rama, learn another cause of the activity of the mind which the wise consider to be the source of its perpetual restlessness. This is its restless desires which cannot be satisfied.

²⁹ Now this desire is defined as the fixed desire of the mind to possess something without consideration of its prior and ultimate conditions.³⁰ The intensity of one's thought of getting something produces it before him in utter disregard of the other objects of its memory.³¹ The man infatuated by his present desire believes himself as his desire depicts him to be. He takes his present form for real by forgetting the past and absent reality.³² The current of our desires carries us away from reality, just as the drunkard sees everything whirling about him in his intoxication.³³ Men of imperfect knowledge are led to errors by their desires like a man driven to madness by the impulse of passions.

³⁴ Such is the nature of the mind that leads to the imperfect knowledge of things, seeing the unreal as real and the unspiritual as spiritual.³⁵ The eager expectation of getting a thing, fixed and rooted in the heart, impels the restless mind to seek its desired object in repeated births and transmigrations.

³⁶ When the mind has nothing desirable or disgusting to seek or shun and remains apart from both, it is no more bound to reincarnation in any form of existence.³⁷ When the mind is thoughtless about anything, owing to its lack of desire, it enjoys its perfect composure owing to it being unmindful of desires and all other things.³⁸ When there is no shadow of anything covering the clear face of consciousness, like a cloud obscuring the face of the sky, the mind is said to be extinct in a person. It is lost like a lotus flower which is never seen to grow in the expanse of the sky.³⁹ The mind can have no field for its action when the sphere of consciousness is drained and emptied of all its notions of

worldly objects.

⁴⁰ Thus far have I related to you, Rama, about the form and features of the mind that entertains thoughts of something with the fond desires of the heart. ⁴¹ There can be no action of the mind when the sphere of consciousness is as clear as the empty sky, without the thought of any imaginary or visible object moving before it like the speck of a cloud.

⁴² It is also called un-mindedness when the mind is practiced in the yoga of thoughtlessness of all external objects and remains transfixed in its vision of the sole essence of God. ⁴³ When the mind has renounced the thought of everything within itself and remains in the perfect coolness of cold-heartedness of yogis, such a mind, though exercising its powers and faculties, it is said to be nil and extinct. ⁴⁴ He whose lack of desires has chilled his intense desire for anything and made him impassionate is said to have become extinct and reduced like a rag to ashes. ⁴⁵ He who has no desire of gain to cause his repeated birth and death is called the living liberated, though he may move about in his busy career like an unconscious potter's wheel.

⁴⁶ They are called the living liberated who do not taste the pleasure of desire but remain like fried seeds, without germinating into the sprouts of new and repeated births. ⁴⁷ Men who attain spiritual knowledge in their earthly lives are said to have become mindless in this world and to be reduced to emptiness in the next.

⁴⁸ There are, O Rama, two seeds or sources of the mind, namely, vital breath and desire. Though they are of different natures, yet the death of either occasions the extinction of both. ⁴⁹ Both of these are causes of the regeneration of the mind, just as a pond and a pot are the joint causes of water supply.

⁵⁰ Men's gross desires cause their repeated births like seeds causing the repeated growth of trees. The germ of regeneration is contained in the desire like a future plant is contained in the seed and oil is innate in the sesame seed. ⁵¹ The conscious mind is the cause of all things in the course of time and the source of all its pleasure and pain which rise and fall in itself and never grow without it.

⁵² As the union of the breath of life with the organs produces sensations, so these being united with desire are productive of the mind. ⁵³ As the flower and its fragrance and the sesame seed and its oil are united together, so is animal life inseparably connected with its desire. ⁵⁴ Desire, being the active principle of man and subversive of his passive consciousness, tends to unfold the seed of the mind as moisture serves to expand the sprouts of vegetable seeds.

⁵⁵ The pulsation of vital energy awakens the senses to their action and the vibrations of sensation touching the heart strings move the mind to its perception of them. ⁵⁶ The infant mind, being produced by fluctuating desires and the fluctuations of vital breaths, becomes conscious of itself as separate and independent of its causes. ⁵⁷ But the extinction of either of these two sources of the mind dissolves the mind and its pains and pleasures, which resemble the two fruits of the tree of the mind.

⁵⁸ The body resembles a branching tree attacked by the creepers of its acts. Our greed is like a huge serpent coiling about it, and our passions and diseases are like birds nestling in it. ⁵⁹ It is beset by our false senses, resembling ignorant birds setting upon it. Our desires are the sores that continually corrode our hearts and minds. ⁶⁰ The shafts of death cut down the trees of our minds and bodies, just as the blasts of wind toss the fruits of trees upon the ground. The flying dusts of our desires have

filled all sides and hidden the sights of things from our view.⁶¹ Loose and thick clouds of ignorance hang over our heads. The pillars of our bodies are covered by the flying straws of our loose desires.⁶² The small ship of our body, gliding slowly along in quest of pleasure, falls into the whirling current of despair. So everybody falls into utter gloom without looking to the bright light that shines within himself.

⁶³ Just as flying dust settles when the winds die down, so does the dust of the mind settle by extinguishing the force of our vital airs and desires.⁶⁴ Again, intelligence is the seed or root of both of these, and there being this intelligence within us, we have both our vitality and our desires also.

⁶⁵ This intelligence, by forsaking its universality and retaining its individuality, springs from consciousness. Then it becomes the seed both of vitality and slight wish.

⁶⁶ Know that your intelligence is the same as your consciousness. It resembles the seed of the mind and its desires, both of which quickly die with their root, like an uprooted tree.⁶⁷ Intelligence never exists without consciousness. It is always accompanied with it, like mustard seed and its oil.

⁶⁸ Wakeful consciousness gets its intelligence from its desire, just as the waking consciousness of men views their death or departure to distant lands in dreams from their thoughts of the same.⁶⁹ Only our curiosity makes our consciousness have its intelligence of what can be understood only by the intellect (God), just as the desire of knowing anything leads the conscious soul to its knowledge.

⁷⁰ This world is no more than a network of our imagination, as children imagine a demon hidden in the dark.⁷¹ It is like a tree stump that looks like a man in the dark. The world is like the streaks and particles of sunbeams and moonlight beaming through a chink in a wall that look like fire. So is everything that can be known by our thinking.⁷² The objects of our knowledge are as deceptive as the appearance of a moving mountain to a passenger in a boat. All appearances are the presentations of our error or ignorance and disappear at the sight of right knowledge.⁷³ As the fallacy of a snake in a rope and the appearance of two moons in the sky vanish before the keen clear vision of the observer, so the representation of the triple world disappears before penetrating understanding.

⁷⁴ The inner certainty that the world is an illusion is called the perfection of knowledge by the wise. The knowledge of all things, whether seen before or not, is equally a delusion of the mind.

⁷⁵ Therefore it is right to rub out the impressions of consciousness with diligence, because the preservation of those visible signs is the cause of our bondage in the world.⁷⁶ The erasure of these marks from the mind is equivalent to our liberation because the consciousness of these impressions is the painful cause of repeated reincarnations in this world of grief.

⁷⁷ Consciousness which is unconscious of the outward world but preserves consciousness of the self is attended both with present joy and the lack of future regeneration. Therefore be unconscious of the externals and conscious of the internal bliss of your soul. The wakeful soul that is unconscious of the externals is blessed with the consciousness of its inward blissfulness.

⁷⁸ Rama asked, "Sage, how is it possible to be both unconscious and yet active? How can unconsciousness be freed from its unavoidable mental inactivity?"

⁷⁹ Vasishta replied:—

Sensible unconsciousness, having its existence, dwells on nothing beside itself. Though it is living, it

is unconscious of everything else.⁸⁰ He is both unconscious and yet not inactive who has no visible object in his consciousness, and who discharges his duties and all the affairs of his life without attaching his mind to them.⁸¹ He is not sleeping and yet unconscious whose mind is unconscious of the sensible objects of perception, but yet clear with the impressions of the knowable objects of intellectuality. Such a person is said to be the living liberated.

⁸² When the indifferent soul thinks of nothing in itself, but remains with its calm and quiet composure in possession of his internal consciousness, like a young child or a deaf and dumb person,⁸³ it becomes possessed of its wisdom and rests in full knowledge of itself without its dullness. Such a soul is no more liable to the troubles of this life or to the doom of future births.⁸⁴ When the yogi rests in his state of calm mental tranquility by forsaking all his desires, he perceives a calm delight pervading his innermost soul like blue spreading over the sky.⁸⁵ The unconscious yogi remains with the consciousness of his unity with that Spirit which has no beginning or end and in which he finds himself to be utterly absorbed and lost.⁸⁶ Whether moving or sitting or feeling or smelling, he always seems to abide and do everything in the Holy Spirit. With his self-consciousness and unconsciousness of anything beside, he is dissolved in his internal delight.

⁸⁷ Shut out these worldly sights from your mind with your utmost, painstaking endeavors. Cross this world of grief, resembling a perilous ocean, on the firm bark of your virtues.⁸⁸ As a small seed produces a large tree stretching wide in the sky, so does the minute mind produce these ideal worlds which fill the empty space of the universe and appear to sight as real.⁸⁹ When the conscious soul entertains the idea of some figure in its imagination, memory or hope, that becomes the seed of its production in the very form which the soul had in its view.⁹⁰ So the soul brings forth itself and falls into its deception by its own choice. Thus it loses the consciousness of its freedom and is subjected to the bondage of life.

⁹¹ Whatever form it dotes upon with affection, the same form it assumes to itself. The soul cannot get rid of it as long it cherishes its affection for it. The soul cannot return to its original purity until it is freed from its impure passions.⁹² The soul is no god or demigod or any yaksha or raksha, and not even any man or kinnara. It is by reason of its original illusion (*maya*) that it plays the part of a player on the stage of the world.⁹³ An actor represents himself in various shapes, then resumes and returns to his original form. A silkworm binds itself in the cocoon of its own making, then breaks out of it by itself. Similarly, the soul resumes its primal purity by virtue of its self-consciousness.

⁹⁴ Our consciousness is like the water in the great deep of the universe, encompassing all the four quarters of the world and the huge mountains within it.⁹⁵ The universal ocean of consciousness teems with heaven and earth, air, sky, hills, mountains, seas and rivers and everything else as its surges, waves and whirling currents.⁹⁶ Our consciousness comprises the world. There is nothing other than consciousness because the all comprehensive consciousness comprehends all things in itself.⁹⁷ When our consciousness has its slight pulsation and not its quick vibration, then it is said to rest in itself and is not moved by the action of outward objects upon it.

⁹⁸ The seed or source of our consciousness is the Divine Spirit, which is the essence of all beings and which produces our consciousness like the solar heat produces light and like fire emits sparks.⁹⁹ This Essence (Pure Existence) in us exhibits itself in two forms within ourselves. One is our self-

consciousness and the other is our consciousness of many things lying without us. The former is uniform and the latter is of mutable form.¹⁰⁰ This twofold division of the one and same soul is like the difference between a pot and its painting, and like that of I and you, which are essentially the same thing and have no difference in their in-being.

¹⁰¹ Now do away with this difference and know the true entity to be a pure unity, which is the positive reality in common with all objects.¹⁰² Forsake the particulars and seek the universal which is the same and in common with all existence. Know this unity as the totality of beings and the only adorable One.¹⁰³ The variety of external forms does not indicate any variation in the internal substance. Change in outer form makes a thing unknowable to us as to its former state, but outer differences of form make no difference in the real essence.¹⁰⁴ Whatever preserves its uniform and unchanging appearance at all times, know that to be the true and everlasting inner essence of the thing.

¹⁰⁵ Rama, renounce the doctrines that maintain the eternal existence of time and space, of atoms and generalities and the like categories. Rely on the universal category of the one Being into which all others are reduced.¹⁰⁶ Though the endless duration of time approximates the nature of the Infinite Existence, yet its divisions into present, past and future make it not uniform and an unreal entity.¹⁰⁷ That which admits of divisibility and presents its various divisions and what is seen to diverge into many cannot be the uniform cause of all.

¹⁰⁸ Think all bodies as belonging to one common essence and enjoy your full bliss by thinking yourself as the same, filling all space.¹⁰⁹ Know, O wise Rama, that the Being who is the ultimate end of all existence in common is the source and seed of the whole universe.¹¹⁰ He who is the utmost limit of all things in common and who is beyond description and imagination is the first and beginning of all, without any beginning of his own and having no source or seed of himself.¹¹¹ No man is subject to trouble, but enjoys his full bliss in He in whom all finite existences are dissolved and who remains without any change in himself.¹¹² He is the cause of all without any cause of his own. He is the best of all without having anything better than himself.

¹¹³ All things are seen in the mirror of his Intellect, just as the shadow of trees by a river reflects in the clear stream below.¹¹⁴ All beings taste their delight in Him like in a reservoir of sweet water. Anything delicious the tongue tastes is supplied from that pure fountain.¹¹⁵ The intellectual sphere of the mind, which is clearer than the mundane sphere, has its existence from His essence which abounds with more pure delight than all sweet things in the world can offer.¹¹⁶ All creatures in the world rise and live in Him. They are nourished and supported by Him and they die and are dissolved in Him.

¹¹⁷ He is the heaviest of the heavy and the lightest of all light bodies. He is the most ponderous of all bulky things and the minutest of the very minute.¹¹⁸ He is the remotest of the most remote and the nearest of whatever is near to us. He is the eldest of the oldest and the youngest of the very young.¹¹⁹ He is far brighter than the brightest and more obscure than the darkest. He is the substratum of all substances and the farthest from all the sides of the compass.

¹²⁰ That Being is some as nothing, and exists as if He were non-existent. He is manifest in all, yet invisible to view. That is what I am and yet I am not the same.

¹²¹ Rama, try your best to rest in that supreme state of joy which is the highest state for man to desire.

¹²² Knowledge of that holy and unchangeable Spirit brings rest and peace to the mind. Know that all-pervasive Soul and identify with the pure Consciousness for your liberation from all restraint.

Chapter 92 — Means to Obtain Divine Presence: Knowledge of Truth, Subjection of the Mind, and Abandonment of Desires

¹ Rama said, “Of all of the seeds that you have described, tell me sage, which is the most essential to lead us to the attainment of the supreme Brahman?”

² Vasishta replied:—

One can attain his consummation in a short time by the gradual demolition of the seeds and sources of grief, which I have described one after the other. ³ By your courageous fortitude, you can renounce your desire for temporal objects. Seek that which is the first and best of beings. ⁴ If you remain in your exclusive and intense meditation on the Supreme Being, then in that very moment you are sure to see the divine light shining in full blaze in and before you. ⁵ If it is possible for you to think of all things in general in your well developed understanding, then you can have no difficulty elevating your mind a little higher and think of the Universal Soul of all. ⁶ O sinless Rama, if you can remain quietly meditating on your conscious soul, then by a little more exertion of your intellect, you can find no difficulty contemplating the Supreme Soul.

⁷ It is not possible, O Rama, to know the knowable Spirit at once in your understanding unless you think of it continually in your consciousness. ⁸ Whatever you think and wherever you go and do are all known to you in your consciousness. So the conscious soul is the seat of God where He is to be sought and seen.

⁹ Rama, if you will only strive to renounce your earthly desires, you will loosen yourself from all its bonds and diseases and dangers. ¹⁰ Of everything I have said before, the most difficult task is to rid oneself earthly desires. It is as impossible to root them out of the mind as it is to uproot Mount Meru.

¹¹ As long as you do not subdue the mind, you cannot get rid of your desires. Unless you suppress your desires, you can not control your restless mind. ¹² Until you know the truth, you cannot have peace of mind. As long as you are a stranger to your mental tranquility, you are barred from knowing the truth.

¹³ As long as you do not shun your desires, you cannot come to the light of truth. You cannot know the truth unless you disown your earthly desires.

¹⁴ Hence the knowledge of truth, subjection of the mind, and abandonment of desires are the joint causes of spiritual bliss, which is otherwise unattainable by the practice of any one of them singly.

¹⁵ Therefore, O Rama, the wise man practices of all these triple virtues at once and abandons his desire of worldly enjoyments with the utmost of his courageous efforts. ¹⁶ Unless you become a complete yogi in the practice of this triple morality, it is impossible for you to attain the state of divine perfection, even if you were to practice tapas for a whole century.

¹⁷ Know you, O high-minded muni, that simultaneous attainment of divine knowledge and the subjection of the mind and its desires brings about realization of the divine presence. ¹⁸ The practice of anyone of these separately from the others is as fruitless as curses of one’s death or derangement of understanding. ¹⁹ Though a yogi may be long accustomed in the practice of these virtues, yet none of them by itself will help him approach the Supreme, just as no single soldier or regiment can dare advance before an enemy host. ²⁰ These virtues practiced by the undivided attention and vigilance of a wise man will break down every obstacle in his way, like the current of a confluence of three streams

carrying away a rock from the banks.

²¹ Accustom yourself with diligence to destroy the force of your mind and its desires and feelings. Habituate your intellect to the acquisition of knowledge with equal ardor, and you will escape from every evil and error of the world. ²² Having mastered these triple virtues, you will cut asunder your heartstrings of worldly affections, just as the breaking of the lotus-stalk severs its interior fibers.

²³ Even with the constant practice of these triple virtues, it is hard to remove the memories of worldliness inherited and strengthened over the long course of hundreds of lives. ²⁴ Continue to practice these at all times, whether sitting quietly or moving about, talking or listening, or awake or asleep, and it will contribute to your greatest good.

²⁵ Also, controlling breathing is equivalent to controlling desires. You must practice this likewise, according to the directions of the wise. ²⁶ By renunciation of desire, the mind is reduced to an unconscious and dead block. By restraining your breathing, you can do whatever you like. By the practice of breath control (*pranayama*), the yogi identifies himself with the Supreme, and can do all things as God. ²⁷ By the protracted practice of restraining the breathing, according to the directions given by the guru, and by keeping an erect posture, and observing the rules of diet and the like, one restrains his respiration.

²⁸ By right observation of the nature of things, we can have no desires for anything. There is nothing which is the same or remains unchanged from first to last except the unchangeable nature of God, which must be the only desirable object. ²⁹ The sight and knowledge of God serve to weaken our worldly desires. So will our avoidance of society and worldly thoughts. ³⁰ Seeing the dissolution of human bodies, we cease to desire our worldly goods. Seeing the loss of desired objects puts a check to our desiring them anymore. ³¹ As flying dust sets on the ground after a gust of wind passes, so the flying thoughts of the mind are stopped when our breathings are put to a stop, they being the one and the same thing. ³² From this correspondence of the motion of thoughts with the vibrations of breath, there is thrown up a large mass of worldly thoughts resembling heaps of dust on earth. Therefore let intelligent men try their utmost to suppress their breath.

³³ Or do away with this process of *hatha yoga* (if it be hard for you) and sit quietly to suppress your fleeting thoughts at all times. ³⁴ If you want to keep control over the mind, you will be able to do so in the course of a long time, because it is not possible to subdue the mind without the discipline of strict reason. ³⁵ As it is impossible to restrain an infuriated elephant without goading it, so it is not possible for you to curb your unmanageable mind without the help of spiritual knowledge and association with the wise and good.

³⁶ The abandonment of desires and the suppression of breathing, in the manner as will later be taught, are the most efficient means to subdue the mind. ³⁷ There are milder means of pacifying the mind, as the cooling rain showers can also settle the dust of the earth, yet *hatha yoga* (*pranayama*) attempts to restrain the mind by stopping the breath, as it were to prevent the rising of dust by means of a breathless calm.

³⁸ Ignorant men who want to subdue the mind by *hatha yoga* (physical exercises) or bodily restraints are like those silly folks who want to dispel darkness by black ink instead of a lighted lamp. ³⁹ Those

who attempt to subdue the mind by bodily contortions strive as vainly as those who wish to bind a mad elephant with a rope of grass or straw.⁴⁰ Those rules which prescribe bodily practices instead of mental reasoning and precepts are known as the methods of *hatha yoga*. They mislead men to dangers and difficulties.

⁴¹ Wretched men like beasts have no rest from their labor, but wander in valleys and woods in quest of herbs and fruits for their food.⁴² Ignorant men, infatuated in their understandings, are timid cowards like frightened male deer. They are both dull-headed and weak-bodied and weak in their limbs.⁴³ They have no place of confidence anywhere, but stagger like a distrustful deer in the village. Their minds are ever wavering between hopes and fears, like seawater rising and falling in waves.

⁴⁴ They are carried away like leaves falling from a tree and like the current of the cascade gliding below a waterfall. They pass their time in the errors of sacrificial rites and religious gifts and austerities and in pilgrimages and adoration of idols.⁴⁵ They are subject to continued fears, like timid deer in the forest, and there are few among them who happen by chance to come to the knowledge of the soul.⁴⁶ Being scorched by outward misery and internal passions, they are rarely conscious of their real state. They are subjected to repeated births and deaths and their temporary lives in heaven or hell.⁴⁷ They are tossed up and down in this world like play balls, some rising up to heaven and others falling to hellish torments even while they are here.⁴⁸ These men roll on like the constant waves of the sea.

Therefore leave off the exterior view of the exoteric and sink deep into the spiritual knowledge for your everlasting rest.⁴⁹ Remain quiet and calm with your firm faith in your inward consciousness and know that knowledge is power. The knowing man is the strongest being on earth. Therefore be wise in all respects.

⁵⁰ Rama, renounce the perception of the knowable objects and depend upon the abstract knowledge of all things in your subjective consciousness. Remain firm in full possession of your inner soul and think yourself as no actor of your acts. Then forsaking all inventions of men as falsehoods (*kalana* and *kalpana*), shine with the brightness of your spiritual light.

Chapter 93 — Universal Detachment

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Rama! He who is possessed of little reason and tries to subdue his mind as well as he can succeeds to reap the fruit (object) of his life (salvation). ² The small particle of reason implanted in the mind, by culture and in time, becomes a big tree projecting into a hundred branches in all departments of knowledge. ³ A little development of reason serves to destroy the unruly passions of the human breast, then fill it with good and pure virtues, just as the roes of a fish fill a tank with fishes.

⁴ A rational man who becomes wise by his vast observation of past and present is never tempted by the influence of the ignorant who value their wealth above their knowledge. ⁵ Of what good are great possessions and worldly honors to him, and of what evil are the diseases and difficulties onto the man who looks upon them with an indifferent eye?

⁶ It is impossible to stop an impetuous hurricane, or to grasp flashing lightning, or to hold rolling clouds in the hand. ⁷ It is impossible to put the moon in a jewelry box like a brilliant moonstone. It is not possible for a beautiful lady to wear the crescent moon like a flower on her forehead. ⁸ It is impossible for buzzing gnats to put an angry elephant to flight with a swarm of bees sucking his frontal ichor and lotus bushes gracing his forehead. ⁹ It is impossible for a herd of timid male deer to withstand fighting a brave lion, bloodstained with the slaughtered elephant's head in his bloody chase. ¹⁰ It is impossible for a young frog to devour a huge and hungry snake which, like a poisonous tree, attracts other animals by its poison and then swallows them whole. ¹¹ So it is impossible for the robbers of outward senses to overpower the man of reason who is acquainted with the grounds of knowledge and knows the knowable Brahman.

¹² But the objects and organs of sense destroy imperfect reason, just as the violence of wind breaks off the stalks of tender plants. ¹³ Yet wicked passions and desires have no power to destroy perfected understanding, just the lesser gales of minor deluges are not strong enough to move a mountain.

¹⁴ Unless the flowery tree of reason takes deep root in the ground of the human mind, it is liable to be shaken at every blast of conflicting thoughts. An unstable soul can have no stability. An uncertain mind can have no certainty. ¹⁵ He whose mind does not stick to strict reasoning, either when he is sitting or walking or waking or sleeping, is said to be dead to reason.

¹⁶ Therefore always contemplate, in a spiritual light and in the society of good people, what is all this, what is this world, and what is this body. ¹⁷ Reason displays the darkness of ignorance and shows the state of the Supreme as clearly as when the light of a lamp shows everything clearly in the room.

¹⁸ The light of knowledge dispels the gloom of sorrow like sunlight putting the shadow of night to flight. ¹⁹ Upon appearance of the light of knowledge, the knowable comes to appear of itself, just as the appearance of sunlight in the sky shows every object on earth below.

²⁰ The science that brings the knowledge of Divine Truth is identical with the knowable truth itself.

²¹ Spiritual knowledge is the result of reason and is reckoned as the only true knowledge by the wise. It includes the knowledge of the knowable soul, just as water contains its sweetness within itself.

²² The man knowing all knowledge becomes full of knowledge, just as a heavy drinker is constantly intoxicated.

²³ The wise come to know the knowable Supreme Spirit as immaculate as their own souls. Only through the knowledge of the Supreme Spirit does this bliss impart its grace to the soul. ²⁴ The man filled with perfect knowledge is full of unfailing bliss within himself. He is liberated in his life. Being freed from all connections, he rules supreme in the empire of his mind.

²⁵ The wise man remains indifferent to the sweet sound of songs and to the music of the lute and flute. He is not humored by songstresses or the allure of their bodies or the enticement of their foul association. ²⁶ He sits unaffected amidst the hum of buzzing bees fluttering joyfully over spring flowers, and amidst blooming blossoms of rainy weather under the growling noise of roaring clouds.

²⁷ He remains unexcited by the loud screams of peacocks, the joyous shrill of storks at the sight of fragments of dark clouds, or the rolling and rumbling of gloomy clouds in humid sky. ²⁸ He is not elated by the sound of musical instruments such as the jarring cymbal or ringing hand bells. No deep bellowing drums beaten by sticks or any wind, string or skinned instruments can act upon his mind.

²⁹ He turns his mind to nothing that is sweet or bitter to taste, but delights in his own thoughts, just as the moon sheds her light upon the spreading lotus bud in the lake. ³⁰ The wise man is indifferent to the attractions of beauties and celestial nymphs who are as graceful in their stature and attire as the young shoot of a plantain tree with its spreading foliage. ³¹ His mind is attached to nothing that is his own, but remains indifferent to everything, like a swan exposed to a barren spot.

³² The wise have no taste for delicious fruits nor do they hunger after dainty food of any kind. ³³ He does not thirst after delicious drinks such as milk, curd, butter, ghee and honey. He does not like to taste sweet liquors at all. He is not fond of wines or liquors of any kind, or of beverages and drinks of any sort for his sensual delight. ³⁴ He is not fond of the four kinds of food that are either chewed or licked or sucked or drunk, nor is he fond of the six flavors of sweet, sour, bitter, pungent and the like to sharpen his appetite. He longs for no sort of vegetable or meat food.

³⁵ Quite content in his countenance and unattached to everything in his mind, the wise brahmin does not bind his heart either to the pleasures of taste or tending to the gracefulness of his body. ³⁶ The wise man does not observe the adoration paid to Yama, Sun, Moon, Indra, and the Rudras and Marutas (in the Vedas), nor does he observe the sanctity of Meru, Mandara and Kailasa Mountains, or of the table lands of the Sahya and Dardura hills. ³⁷ He takes no delight in bright moonbeams that cover the earth like a silken garment. He does not like to wander about the gardens of wish-fulfilling kalpa trees to refresh his body and mind. ³⁸ He does not resort to houses rich with jewels and gold, and with the splendor of gems and pearls, nor does he show fondness upon apsara beauties with their fairy forms of celestials nymphs, as an Urvashi, Menaka, Rambha or a Tilottama. ³⁹ His graceful body and mind that is not enticed do not yearn for whatever is pleasant to sight, but remain indifferent about everything with his satisfaction and fullness of mind and with his stern silence and inflexibility even among his enemies.

⁴⁰ His cold mind is not attracted by the beauty and fragrance of the fine flowers such as lotuses, lilies, roses and jasmine. ⁴¹ He is not tempted by the taste of luscious fruits such as apples, mango, jamb and the like, nor by the sight of asoka or kinsuka flowers. ⁴² He is not drawn over by the fragrance of the sweet scenting sandalwood, agulochum, camphor, clove or cardamom trees.

⁴³ Preserving an even course of action in his mind, he does not incline his heart to anything. He holds the perfumes in loathing like a brahmin holds wine in abhorrence. His even mindedness is neither moved by pleasure nor shaken by any fear or pain. ⁴⁴ His mind is not agitated by fear at hearing the hoarse sound of the ocean, a tremendous thunderclap in the sky, or roaring clouds on mountain tops. The roaring lions below does not intimidate his dauntless soul. ⁴⁵ He is not terrified at the loud trumpet of warfare or the deep drum of the battlefield. Clattering arms of warriors and cracking clubs of combatants bring no terror to his mind. The most terrific of all (God) that is terrible is familiar to his soul.

⁴⁶ He does not tremble at the stride of an infuriated elephant or at the loud uproar of vetalas demons. His heart does not thrill at the color and cry of pisacha cannibals or at the alarm of yaksha and raksha demons. ⁴⁷ The meditative mind is not moved by loud thunder or cracking rocks and mountains. The loud clanging sound of Indra and Airavata cannot stir the yogi from his intense reverie. ⁴⁸ The rigid sage does not slide from his self-possession at the harsh sound of a crashing saw and or the clanking of a burnished sword striking another. He is not shaken by the twanging of a bow or deadly arrows flying and falling around him.

⁴⁹ He does not rejoice in pleasant gardens or suffer in parched deserts because the fleeting joys and sorrows of life find no place in his inevitable mind. ⁵⁰ He is neither intolerant of a desert's burning sands, resembling the cinders of living fire, or charmed in shady woodlands filled with flowery and cooling trees. ⁵¹ His mind is unchanged whether when he is exposed on a bed of thorns or lying on a bed of flowers, whether he is lifted on the height of a mountain or flung to the bottom of a fountain. His mind is always meek.

⁵² It is all the same with him whether he wanders on rough and rugged rocks, moves under the hot sunbeams of the south, or walks in a temperate climate. He remains unchanged in prosperity and adversity and is alike under the favor or frown of fortune. ⁵³ He is not sad in his wanderings over the world or joyous and of good cheer in his rest and quiet. He enjoys doing his duty with the lightness of his heart, like a porter bearing his light burden with an unburdened mind.

⁵⁴ Whether his body is cut upon a guillotine or broken under the wheel, whether impaled in a charnel ground or exiled in a desert land, whether pierced by a spear or battered by a cudgel, the believer in the true God remain inflexible. ⁵⁵ He is not afraid at any fright and does not humiliate himself or lose his usual composure in any way, but remains with his even temper and well composed mind as firm as a fixed rock.

⁵⁶ He has no aversion to impure food, but takes the unpalatable, dirty and rotten food with zest. He digests poisonous substances as they were his pure and clean diet. ⁵⁷ A deadly poisonous herb is tasted with as good a zest by the impassive yogi as any milky and sweet food. Hemlock juice is as harmless to him as the juice of the sugarcane. ⁵⁸ Whether you give him a sparkling cup of liquor or a red hot bowl of blood, or whether you serve him a dish of flesh or dry bones, he is neither pleased with the one nor annoyed at the other.

⁵⁹ He is equally complacent at the sight of his deadly enemy as his benevolent benefactor. ⁶⁰ He is neither gladdened nor saddened at the sight of any lasting or perishable thing. He is neither pleased or displeased at any pleasant or unpleasant thing that is offered to his impassive nature. ⁶¹ By his

knowledge of the knowable, by the dispassion of his mind, by the unconcerned nature of his soul, and by his knowledge of the unreliability of mortal things, he does not have faith in the stability of the world.⁶² The wise man never fixes his eye on any object of his sight, seeing them to be momentary sights and perishable in their nature.

⁶³ But restless people who are blind to truth and ignorant of their souls are constantly pressed upon by their sensual desires, like leaves of trees eaten by deer.⁶⁴ They are tossed about in the ocean of the world by the dashing waves of their desires. They are swallowed by the sharks of their sense, with the loss of their lives and souls.

⁶⁵ The growing desires and fleeting fancies of the mind cannot overpower the reasonable soul or the orderly and mannerly man who has found his security in peace and tranquility, just as a great torrent of water has no power to flow over a mountain.⁶⁶ Those who have passed the circuit of their longings and found their rest in the Supreme Being have really come to the knowledge of their true selves. They look upon a mountain as it were a speck.⁶⁷ The vast world seems like a bit of straw to the wise. Deadly poison is taken for ambrosia and a millennium passes a moment for the man of even and expanded mind.

⁶⁸ Knowing the world to consist in consciousness, the mind of the wise is enraptured with the thought of his universality. The wise man wanders freely everywhere with the consciousness of the great cosmos in himself.⁶⁹ The whole world appears in its full light in the cosmic consciousness within one's self. There is nothing which a man may choose for or reject from his all including mind.

⁷⁰ Know your consciousness to be all in all. Reject everything as false which appears to be otherwise. As everything is embodied in your consciousness, there is nothing for you to own or disown; no "us", "yours" or "not yours".

⁷¹ Just as the ground grows the shoots of plants and their leaves and branches, so our consciousness brings forth the shoots of all things that can be affirmed (*tatwas*) which are inherent in it.⁷² That which is a nonentity at first and last is so even at present. By an error of our consciousness, we become conscious of existence at anytime.⁷³ Knowing this for certain, abandon your knowledge of reality and unreality. Transcend the knowledge of existence and transform yourself to the nature of your consciousness. Remain unconcerned with everything beside.

⁷⁴ The man employed in his business with body and mind or sitting idle with himself and his limbs is not stained by anything if his soul is unattached to any object.⁷⁵ He is not stained by the action which he does with an unconcerned mind, nor is he who is neither elated nor dejected at the changing fortunes of his fortune or the success or failure of his undertakings.⁷⁶ He whose mind is heedless of the actions of his body is never stained with the taint of joy or grief at the changes of his fortune, or the speed or defeat of his attempts.

⁷⁷ The heedless mind takes no notice of a thing that is set before it, but being intent on some other object within itself, is absent from the object present before its sight. This case of the absence of mind is known even to children.⁷⁸ The absent minded man does not see the objects he actually sees or hear what he hears or feel what he touches.⁷⁹ His soul and mind are quite aloof from whatever he watches as if he winks at it whatever he smells as if he has no smell of it, and while his senses are engaged

with their respective objects.⁸⁰ This absence of mind is well known to persons sitting at their homes and thinking of living in another land. Such wandering attention is known even to children and ignorant people.

⁸¹ Attention causes the perception of sensible objects. Attachment of the mind causes human society. Mental concern causes our desires. This concern of ours about other things causes all our grief.

⁸² Abandonment of connections, which is called liberation, and forsaking earthly attachments release us from being reborn in it, but it is freedom from worldly thoughts that makes us emancipate in this life.

⁸³ Rama said, "My lord, who like a gale blows away the mist of my doubts, tell me briefly, what are these connections that we are to get rid of in order to be freed both in this life and in the next?"

⁸⁴ Vasishtha answered:—

Impure desire of the pure soul for the presence or absence of something which tends to our pleasure or pain is called our attachment.⁸⁵ Those who are liberated in their lifetime foster pure desire unattended by joy or grief which is not followed by future regeneration.⁸⁶ Thus the pure desire, unconnected with any worldly object, is called unworldly and is apart from the world. It continues through life, and whatever actions it does do not tend to the bondage of the soul or lead to its future reincarnations.

⁸⁷ Ignorant men who are not liberated in their present state of existence in this world entertain impure desires causing their pleasure and pain in this life, leading to their bondage to repeated reincarnations in future.⁸⁸ Impure desire is also expressed by the word attachment, which leads its captive soul to repeated births, and whatsoever actions are done by it, they tend to the faster bondage of the miserable soul.

⁸⁹ Therefore abandon your desire and attachment for anything of this kind, which at best serve only to trouble the soul. Your freedom will keep your mind pure, although you may continue to discharge your duties of life with a willing mind and un-enslaved soul.⁹⁰ If you can remain unaffected by joy, grief, pleasure, pain, or passions, and not subdued by fear or anger, you become impassible and indifferent.

⁹¹ If you do not suffer in your pain or exult in your joy, and if you are not elated by hope or depressed by despair, you are truly unconcerned about them.⁹² If you conduct your affairs with equanimity, both in your prosperity and adversity, and do not lose your temper in any circumstance of life, you are truly unconscious and regardless of them.⁹³ When you can know the soul, and by knowing it you can see it in yourself, and if you manage yourself with evenness under any circumstance that may happen, then you are unconscious of them.

⁹⁴ Rama, rely on your easily obtainable detachment and stick firmly to your liberation in this life. Be passionless and even tempered and rest in your peace forever.

⁹⁵ The honorable man is free from the feverish passions of pride, giddiness and envy in his mind. Possessing his liberation, he has silence and full mastery over his organs of sense.⁹⁶ So is he who retains his equanimity and meekness of mind regardless of what is presented before him. He never deviates from the duties of his caste to deal with others who bear no relation to him.⁹⁷ One who attends to his hereditary duties which are natural with him, and discharges them with a mind free from

all concern and expectation, is truly happy in himself.

⁹⁸ Whether under the trial of troubles and tribulations or under the temptations of rank and prosperity, the great minded man does not transgress his intrinsic nature, just as the Milky Ocean does not tarnish its whiteness though perturbed under charming Mandara Mountain. ⁹⁹ Whether gaining sovereignty over the earth, elevated to the dignity of the lord of gods, degraded to grovel upon the earth, or lowered to the state of a creeping worm under the ground, the great minded man remains unchanged at his rise and fall, as the bright sun remains the same in his elevation and setting.

¹⁰⁰ Freed from turmoil and differences of faith and exempted from pursuits for different results, employ your great mind, O Rama, to the highest duty of investigation into the nature of the soul. Secure your ultimate liberation by it. ¹⁰¹ Live by the clear stream of your investigation and you will come to rely on the undecaying and unstained state of the pure soul. Then by coming to the knowledge and sight of the Supreme Spirit by the light of your understanding, you will no longer be bound to future births on this earth.

BOOK VI, Part 1
On Liberation
(*Nirvana Khanda Purvadha*)

This section explains that the atman is the true form (swarupa) of the individual being (jiva). The seeker is instructed to give up all ideas of diversity and to still the movement of the mind. Once the mind is quiescent one should persist in remaining absorbed in the atman in the form of pure consciousness (chit). From this practice, a stage comes when the person perceives the identity of his or her own atma with Brahman (God). The manifest universe is perceived as no different from Brahman and, like the subtle tree that lies embedded in the seed, this whole universe in the form of created and uncreated beings is seen as a subtle seed-form lying within each persons own heart.

This sub-section also includes the highly instructive teachings that Lord Shiva gave to Sage Vasishtha. At this stage of the discourse Rama becomes absorbed in deep dhyana meditation.

Chapter 1 — Description of Evening and the Assembly Breaks

¹ Valmiki said:—

You have heard the discussion of the subject of detachment or composure of the soul. Attend now to that of nirvana, which will teach you how to attain your final liberation.

² As the chief of sages was giving his grand speech in this manner and the princes remained mute with intense attention to the sage's captivating oration, ³ the assembled chiefs remained like silent and motionless portraits. They forgot their devotions and duties, so impressed on their minds were the sense and words of the sage's speech. ⁴ The assembly of saints reverently reflecting upon the deep sense of the words of the sage, with their curled brows and signs of their index fingers (indicating their wonder). ⁵ The ladies in the harem were lost in wonder, and turned their wondering eyes upward, resembling a cluster of black bees intently sucking the nectar honey of the new blown flowers (of the sage's speech).

⁶ The glorious sun sank down in the sky at the fourth and last watch of the day and was divested of his radiant beams as he set in the west. ⁷ The winds blew softly at the eve of the day, as if to listen to the sage's sermon, and blew about the sweets of his moving speech like the fragrance of gently shaking mandara flowers. ⁸ All other sounds drowned in the deep meditation of the audience, as when the humming of the bumble bees is paused when they rest in the cells of blooming flowers at night. ⁹ Bubbling waters of pearly lakes sparkled unmoved amidst their enclosed beds, as if they were intently listening to the sage's words which dropped like strings of pearls from his fluent lips.

¹⁰ Beams from the declining sun penetrating the windows of the palace indicated the halting of the departing sun under the cooling shade of the royal canopy after his weary journey throughout the day.

¹¹ The pearly rays of the parting day, covered by the dust and mist of dusk, seemed to be smeared like the body of an ascetic with dust and ashes. The day gained its coolness after its journey under the burning sun.

¹² The chiefs of men, their heads and hands decorated with flowers, were so entertained with the sweet speech of the sage that their senses and minds remained in bliss. ¹³ Ladies listening to the sage were now roused by the cries of their infants and the birds in their cages to get up and to give them their food.

¹⁴ Now the dust flung by the wings of fluttering bees covered the petals of the night blooming kumuda flowers. Flapping chowrie fans were now at rest with the trembling eyelids of the princes. ¹⁵ The rays of the sun, fearing to be attacked by the shade of dark night loosened from dark mountain caves, fled through windows to the inner apartment of the palace. ¹⁶ The time watches of the royal palace, knowing it had passed the fourth watch of the day, sounded their drums and trumpets mixed with the sound of conch shells loudly resounding on all sides. ¹⁷ The high-sounding speech of the sage was drowned under the loud sound of the jarring instruments, just as the sonorous sound of the peacock is hushed under the sound of roaring clouds.

¹⁸ Birds in cages began to quake and shake their wings with fear. The leaves and branches of lofty palm trees shook in the gardens, as if by a tremendous earthquake. ¹⁹ Babies sleeping on their nurses' breasts trembled with fear at the loud uproar. They cried like smoking clouds of the rainy season

resounding between two mountain crags resembling the breasts.²⁰ This noise made the chieftains' helmets shed the dust of their decorating flowers all about the hall, just as the moving waves of the lake sprinkle the drops of water upon the land.

²¹ Thus Dasharata's palace, full of apprehension at the close of the day, regained its quiet at the gradual fall of the fanfare of conch shells and the noisy confusion of drum beatings heralding the advance of night.²² The sage put a stop to his discourse and in a sweet voice and graceful language he addressed Rama sitting in the midst of the assembly.

²³ Vasishta said:—

O Raghava! I have already spread before you the long net of my words. Trap your flying mind in the same way and bring it to your heart and under your subjection.²⁴ Take the meaning of my discourse in such a way as to leave out what is unintelligible and lay hold of its substance, just as the swan separates and sucks the milk from water.²⁵ Reflect upon it repeatedly, consider it well in your mind, and go on in this way to conduct yourself in life.

²⁶ By going on in this manner, you are sure to evade all dangers. Otherwise you must soon fall like a heavy elephant in some pit of Vindhya Mountain.²⁷ If you do not receive my words with attention, and act accordingly, you are sure to fall into the pit like a blind man left alone in the dark and be blown away like a lit lamp exposed in the open air.²⁸ In order to derive the benefit of my lectures, you must continue in the discharge of your usual duties with indifference, knowing detachment to be the correct teaching of the scriptures, and regardless of everything besides.

²⁹ Now I bid you, O mighty monarch, and you princes and chiefs, and all you present in this place, to get up and attend to the evening services of your daily ritual.³⁰ Let all attend to this much at present, as the day is drawing to its close. We shall consider the rest when we meet in the morning.

³¹ Valmiki related:—

After the sage said this, the assembled chiefs and princes rose up, their faces blooming like full blown lotuses at the end of the day.³² The chiefs paid their obeisance to the monarch, made their salutation to Rama, offered their reverence to the sage, and departed to their respective homes.

³³ Vasishta rose up from his seat with the royal sage Vishwamitra. They were saluted on their departure by the aerial spirits who had attended the audience all along.³⁴ The sages were followed closely for a long way by the king and chieftains. They parted after approaching them on the way, according to their rank and dignity.³⁵ Celestials took their leave of the sage and took to their heavenward journey. Munis returned to their hermitages in the woods. Some of the saints turned about the palace, like bees flying about a lotus bush.³⁶ The king offered handfuls of fresh flowers at the feet of Vasishta, then entered the royal seraglio with his royal consorts.

³⁷ But Rama and his brother princes kept company with the sage until they his hermitage. Then, having prostrated themselves at his feet, they returned to their princely houses.

³⁸ Those who had heard the sage speak, having arrived at their houses, made their ablutions. Then they worshipped the gods and offered their offerings to their ancestors. They treated their guests and gave alms to beggars.³⁹ Then they took their meals with their brahmin guests and family members. Their

dependants and servants were fed one after the other according to the rules and customs of their order and caste.⁴⁰ After the sun had set down with the daily duties of men, the bright moon rose on high, imposing many nightly duties on mankind.

⁴¹ At last the great king and princes, chiefs of men and munis, together with the sages and saints and all other terrestrial beings took themselves to their several beds, with silken bedspreads and bedcloths of various kinds.⁴² They lay thinking intensely about the teachings of sage Vasishta, and on the mode of their passing over the boisterous gulf of this world by means of this spiritual knowledge.⁴³ Then they slept and lay with closed eyelids for only one watch of the night, then opened their eyes like the opening buds of lotuses to see the light of the day.

⁴⁴ Rama and his brother princes passed three full watches of the night in waking and pondering over the deep sense of the lectures of their spiritual guide.⁴⁵ They slept with closed eyelids for only one and a half watches that night. Then they shook off the dullness of their sleep, after driving the fatigue of their bodies by a short nap.

⁴⁶ Now minds being full of goodwill raised by the rising reason in their souls and knowledge of truth, they felt the crescent of spiritual light lightening their dark bosoms, just as the crescent of the moon illuminates the gloom of night, which afterwards disappeared at the approach of daylight and the gathering heat of daytime.

Chapter 2 — On the Perfect Calm and Composure of the Mind

¹ Valmiki related:—

Then the shade of night, her face as dark as the darkened moon, began to waste and wane away, just as the darkness of ignorance and the mists of human wishes vanish before the light of reason.² Now the rising sun showed his crown of golden rays on the top of the eastern mountain by leaving his rival darkness to take its rest west beyond the setting Mount Astachala.³ Now the morning breeze began to blow, moistened by moonbeams and bearing particles of ice, as if to wash the face and eyes of the rising sun.

⁴ Now rose Rama, Lakshman and their attendants from their beds and couches. After discharging their morning services, they returned to Vasishta's holy hermitage.⁵ There they saw the sage coming out of his closet, having completed his morning devotion. They worshipped his feet with offerings of arghya.

⁶ In a moment, the sage's hermitage was crowded with munis and brahmins and the other princes and chiefs, whose vehicles, chariots, horses and elephants completely blocked the pathways.⁷ Then the sage, accompanied by these and attended by their suite and armies, followed by Rama and his brothers, was escorted to the palace of King Dasharata.

⁸ The king, who had completed his morning service, hastened to receive the sage and walked a great way to welcome, do him honor, and pay homage.⁹ They entered the court hall which was adorned with flowers and strings of gems and pearls. There they seated themselves on rich sofas and seats set in rows for their reception.¹⁰ In a short time the entire audience from the previous day, composed of both earthly men and celestial spirits, assembled at that place seated in their respective seats of honor.¹¹ All who entered that graceful hall respectfully saluted one another. Then the royal court shone as brilliantly as a bed of blooming lotuses gently moved by a fanning breeze.¹² The mixed assembly of munis, rishis, saints and sages, Vipra and Raja brahmin priests, and kshatriya caste warriors sat in proper order on seats set for each.¹³ The soft sounds of their mutual greetings and welcomes gradually faded away. The sweet voices of eulogists sitting in a corner of the hall were all hushed and lulled to silence.

¹⁴ Sunbeams appearing through cracks in the windows seemed to be waiting to join the audience and listen to the sage's lectures.¹⁵ The jingling sound of bracelets on the shaking of hands of visitors in the hall was likely to lull those hearing the sage to sleep.¹⁶ Then, just as Kumara looks reverently on the face of his father Shiva and as Kacha looks with veneration upon the face of Brihaspati (Jupiter), the teacher of the gods, and as Prahlada gazes upon the face of Shukra (Venus), the teacher of demons, and as Garuda views the face of Vishnu,¹⁷ so did Rama gaze upon the face of Vasishta, his eyes gazing upon it like black bees fluttering about a full blown lotus.

¹⁸ The sage resumed where he left off from his last lecture. He delivered his eloquent speech to Rama, who was also well versed in eloquence.

¹⁹ Vasishta said:—

Rama, do you remember the lecture I gave yesterday, which was filled with deep sense and knowledge of transcendental truth?²⁰ Now I will tell you some other things for your instruction, and you shall have to hear it with attention to complete your spiritual wisdom.²¹ A habit of dispassion

and the knowledge of truth enable us to cross the boisterous ocean of the world. Therefore, you must learn, O Rama, to practice and gain these in good time.²² Your full knowledge of all truth will drive away your bias towards untruth. Riddance of all your desires will save you from all sorrow.

²³ There exists only one Brahman unbounded by space and time. He is never limited by either. He is the world himself, though it appears to be a distinct duality beside Him.²⁴ Brahman abides in all infinity and eternity and is not limited in anything. He is tranquil and shines with equal brilliance on all bodies. He cannot be any particular thing other than his nature of universality.²⁵ Knowing the nature of Brahman as such, be free from the knowledge of your personal egoism. Knowing yourself to be the same with Him, think of yourself as bodiless and as great as He and thus enjoy the tranquility and joy of your soul.

²⁶ There is neither mind nor ignorance, nor any living principle which is a distinct thing in reality. They are all words describing a fiction.²⁷ The same Brahman exhibits Himself in the forms of our enjoyments, in the faculties of enjoying them, in our desires and desires for the same, and also in the mind for their perception. The great Brahman that is without beginning or end underlies them all, just as the great ocean surrounds the earth.

²⁸ The same Brahma is seen in the form of his intellect or wisdom in the heavens, on earth, in the infernal regions, and in the plant and animal creations. There is nothing else beside Him.²⁹ The same Brahma, who has no beginning or end, spreads himself like a boundless and unfathomable ocean under all bodies and things and in whatever we consider as favorable or unfavorable to us, such as our friends and our enemies.³⁰ The fiction of the mind, like that of a serpent in a rope, continues as long as we are subject to the error and ignorance of taking these words for real things and remain unacquainted with the knowledge of Brahman.

³¹ The error of the mind and what it perceives continue as long as one believes his personality is associated with his body, understands the world of phenomena to be a reality, and has the selfishness to think such and such a thing to be his own.³² So long as you do not raise yourself by the counsel and company of the wise and good, and as long as you do not get rid of your ignorance, you cannot escape from the meanness of your belief in the mind.³³ So long as you do not lose your worldly thoughts and have the light of the Universal Spirit before your view, you cannot get rid of the contracted thoughts of your mind, yourself and the world.³⁴ As long as there is the blindness of ignorance and one remains subject to worldly desires, there is the delusion of falsehood and the fictions of the delusive mind.³⁵ As long as the exhalation of yearnings infest the forest of the heart, the chakora parrot of reason will never live with you but will fly far away from the infected air.

³⁶ The errors of thought disappear from the mind that is unattached to sensual enjoyments, that is cool with its pure lack of desire, and which has broken loose from its net of greed.³⁷ He who has gotten rid of his thirst and delusion of wealth, who is conscious of the inner coolness of his soul, and who possesses the tranquility of his mind is said to have fled from the province of his anxious thoughts.

³⁸ He who looks upon unsubstantial things as unworthy of his regard and reliance, and who looks upon his body as extraneous to himself, is never misled by the thoughts of his mind.³⁹ He who meditates on the Infinite Mind and sees all forms of things as copies of the Universal Soul, and who views the world absorbed in himself, is never misled by the false conception of the living principle.

⁴⁰ The incomplete understanding of a distinct mind and a living principle serves only to mislead men. All such conceptions vanish at the sight of the rising sun of the one Universal Soul.⁴¹ A complete understanding gives the full view of one undivided soul, a view which consumes the particulars, just as a bright fire burns the dry leaves of trees and a sacrificial fire consumes the offerings of butter.

⁴² Men of great souls who have known the supreme one and who are self-liberated in their lifetime have their minds without their essences, which therefore are called nonentities (*asatwas*).⁴³ The body of a living liberated man has a mind employed in its duties but free from its desires. Such minds are not active agents but merely passive objects. They are no longer self-willing free agents but are acted upon by their paramount duties.

⁴⁴ They who know the truth are mindless and unmindful of everything except their duty. They wander about at pleasure and discharge their duties by memory and practice in order to gain any object.⁴⁵ They are calm and cold with all their actions and in all their dealings. They have the members of their bodies and their senses under full control, and know no desire or duality.⁴⁶ The saint has his sight fixed upon his inner soul and sees the world burnt down like straw by the fire of his intellect. His false conceptions of the mind fly far away, like flies from a fire.

⁴⁷ The mind purified by reason is called the *sattwa*, as said before, and does not give rise to error, just as fried paddy seed cannot produce a plant.⁴⁸ The meaning of *sattwa* is the opposite of *chitta*, which latter is used in lexicons to mean the mind that has the quality of being reborn on account of its actions and desires.⁴⁹ You have to attain the attainable *sattwa* or true calm state of your mind, and to have the seed of your active mind, *chitta*, singed by the blaze of your spiritual mind, *sattwa*.⁵⁰ The minds of the learned, lighted by reason, immediately melt down to liquidity. Those of the ignorant, hardened by their worldly desires, will not yield to the force of fire and steel but continue to sprout like grass the more they are mowed and put on fire.

⁵¹ Brahman is vast expanse, and such being the vastness of the universe, there is no difference between them. The consciousness of Brahman is as full as the fullness of his essence.⁵² Divine Consciousness contains the three worlds, as pepper has its pungency within itself. Therefore the triple world is not a distinct thing from Brahman and its existence and nonexistence.⁵³ Popular language speaks of existence and non-existence as different things, but they are never so in reality to right understanding because whatever is or is not in being is ever present in the Divine Mind. This emptiness contains all things in their empty state. God as the absolute, eternal, and spiritual substance is as empty as thought.

⁵⁴ If you do not believe in the intellectual, then you can have no belief in your spirituality. Then why fear death or future punishment when you leave your body turning into dust? Tell me Rama. How can you imagine the existence of the world without the intellectual principle?⁵⁵ But if you find by the reasoning of your mind that all things are always merely reasoning of consciousness, then tell me. Why do you rely on the substantiality of your body?

⁵⁶ Rama, remember your transparent intellectual and spiritual form which has no limit or division to it, but is an unlimited and undivided whole. Do not mistake yourself to be a limited being by forgetting your true nature.⁵⁷ Thinking yourself as such, take all the discrete parts of the universe as

forming one concrete whole, and this is the substantial intellect of Brahman.⁵⁸ You abide in the womb of your consciousness. You are neither this nor that nor any of the many discrete things interspersed in the universe. You are as you are and last as the end in your obvious and yet hidden appearances.⁵⁹ You are contained within no particular category, nor is there any predicate which may be predicated of you. Yet you are the substance of every predicate in your form of the solid, heavy and calm consciousness. I salute you in that form of yours.

⁶⁰ You are without beginning or end and abide with your body of solid intellect amidst the crystal sphere of your creation, shining as the pure and transparent sky. You are calm and quiet, and yet display the wonderful world as the seed vessel shows the wood of vegetation.

Chapter 3 — The Unity and Universality of Brahman: Intellect Is the Soul and Is Brahman

¹ Vasishta continued:—

As the countless waves continually rising and falling in the sea are no other than its water assuming temporary forms to view, so consciousness exhibits the forms of endless worlds heaving in itself. Know, O sinless Rama, this intellect (*chidatma*, the intellectual soul) is your very self or soul.

² Tell me, O Rama who has the intellectual soul, what relation does your immaterial soul bear to the material world? Being freed from your earthly cares, how can you entertain any earthly desire or affection? ³ It is Consciousness that manifests itself in the forms of living soul (*jiva*), mind and its desires, and the world and all things. Say then what else can it be to which all these properties are to be attributed? ⁴ The consciousness of the Supreme Spirit is like a profound sea with its huge surges, and yet, O Rama, it is as calm and cool as your soul and as bright and clear as the transparent sky.

⁵ As heat is not separate from fire, and fragrance not apart from the flower, and as blackness is inseparable from collyrium, and whiteness from ice, and as sweet is inborn in sugarcane, so is reasoning inherent in and not separate from consciousness. ⁶ As light is nothing distinct from sunbeams, so reasoning is no other than consciousness itself. As waves are no way distinct from the water, so the universe is in no way different or separate from the nature of consciousness which contains the universe. ⁷ Ideas are not apart from the intellect, nor is the ego distinct from the idea of it. The mind is not different from the ego, nor is the living soul anything other than the mind. ⁸ The senses are not separate from the mind and the body is connected with the senses. The world is the same as the body and there is nothing apart from the world. ⁹ Thus the great sphere of the universe is nothing other than the unbounded sphere of consciousness. There is nothing now done or made or ever created before.

¹⁰ Our knowledge of everything is only our memory of it. This is to continue for evermore, in the manner of all partial spaces being contained in infinity without distinction of their particular localities. ¹¹ As all spaces are contained in endless emptiness, so the vastness of Brahman is contained in the immensity of Brahman. As truth resides in verity, so this fullness of space is the fullness of the Divine Mind.

¹² Seeing the forms of outward things, the intelligent man never takes them to his mind. Only the ignorant set their minds to the worthless things of this world. ¹³ They are glad to long after what they like, but for their trouble only in this world. But he who takes these things as nothing remains free from the pleasure and pain of having or not having them.

¹⁴ The apparent difference between the world and the soul of the world is as false in reality as the meaning of the words sky and skies, which though taken in their singular and plural senses, still denote the same uniform emptiness. ¹⁵ He who remains with the internal purity of his vacant mind, although he observes the customary differences of external things, remains as unaffected by the feelings of pain and pleasure as an unconscious block of wood or stone. ¹⁶ He who sees his blood-thirsty enemy in the light of a true friend is the person who rightly sees into the nature of things. ¹⁷ As the rapid currents and flood of a river uproot big trees on both sides, so does the dispassionate man destroy the feelings of his joy and grief to their very roots.

¹⁸ The sage who does not know the nature of passions and affections, and does not guard himself from their impulse and emotions, is unworthy of the respect which awaits saints and sages. ¹⁹ He who has no sense of his egoism and whose mind is not attached to this world saves his soul from death and confinement after his departure from this world. ²⁰ The belief in one's personality is as false as one's faith in an unreality which does not exist. This wrong notion of its existence is removed only by one's knowledge of the error and his riddance from it. ²¹ He who has extinguished the ardent desire of his mind, like the flame of an lamp without oil, and who remains unshaken under all circumstances, stands as the image of a mighty conqueror of his enemies in a painting or a statue.

²² O Rama, that man is said to be truly liberated who is unmoved under all circumstances and has nothing to gain or lose in his prosperity or adversity, nor anything to elate or depress him in either state.

Chapter 4 — The Unity and Universality of Brahman: All Derives from Consciousness

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Rama, knowing your mind, understanding, egoism and all your senses to be unconscious of themselves and deriving their consciousness from the intellect, tell me. How can your living soul and vital breaths have any sensation of their own? ² The one great soul infuses its power to those different organs, just as the one bright sun dispenses his light to all the various objects in their diverse colors.

³ As the pangs of poisonous thirst after worldly enjoyments come to an end, so the unconsciousness of ignorance flies away like darkness at the end of the night. ⁴ Only spiritual knowledge is able to heal the pain of harmful greed, just as only the power of autumn can dispel the clouds of the rainy season. ⁵ The dissipation of ignorance washes the mind of its desires, just as the disappearance of rainy weather scatters clouds in the sky. ⁶ The mind being weakened by un-mindfulness loses the chain of its desires, just as a necklace of pearls loosened from its broken string tosses the precious gems all about the ground.

⁷ Rama, they who are unmindful of the scriptures and wish to undermine them resemble worms and insects that mine the ground where they remain. ⁸ The unsteady eyesight of the idle and curious gazer on all things becomes motionless after their ignorant curiosity is over and has ceased to stir, just as the shaking lotus of the lake becomes steady after the gusts of wind have passed and stopped. ⁹ O Rama, you have rid yourself of your thoughts of entities and non-entities and found your steadiness in the ever-steady unity of God, just as restless winds at last mix with calm emptiness.

¹⁰ I believe you have been awakened to sense by my series of sermons, like kings awakened from their nightly sleep by the sound of their eulogists and the music of tambourines. ¹¹ Seeing that common people of low understanding are impressed by the preaching of their family teacher, I have every reason to believe that my sermons must have made their impression upon the good understanding of Rama. ¹² As you are in the habit of well considering the good counsel of others, so I do not doubt that my counsel will penetrate your mind as cool rainwater enters parched earth. ¹³ Knowing me as your family priest and my family as the spiritual guides of the Raghu race forever, you must receive my good advice to you with regard and set my words like a precious garland in your heart.

Chapter 5 — Rama Acknowledges the Effect of Vasishta's Preaching

¹ Rama said:—

O my venerable guide! My contemplation and memory of your sermons have set my mind to perfect rest. I flee the traps and turmoil of this world before me with a quite indifferent and calmed mind.

² My soul has found its perfect tranquility in the Supreme Spirit. It is like after a long and painful dryness when parched ground is cooled by snow or rainfall.

³ I am as cool as coldness itself. I feel the joy of an entire unity in myself. My mind has become as tranquil and transparent as a clear lake undisturbed by elephants.⁴ O sage, I see Brahman as the whole fullness of the universe in its pristine pure light and as clear as the face of the wide extended sky without the dimness of frost or mist.⁵ I am now freed from my doubts and exempted from the mirage of the world. I am equally aloof from affections and have become as pure and serene as the lake and sky in autumn.

⁶ I have found that boundless bliss in my innermost soul which knows no bounds or decay. I have enjoyment of that taste which defies the taste of the ambrosial nectar of the gods.⁷ I am now set in the truth of actual existence. My repose is in the joyous rest of my soul. I have become the delight of mankind and my own joy in myself, which makes me thank my blissful self, and you also, for giving me this blessing.

⁸ My heart has become as expanded and pure as the expanse of clear lakes in autumn. My mind has become as cold and serene as the clear and humid sky in autumn season.⁹ Doubts and creations of imagination which mislead the blind have now fled afar from me, just as the fear of ghosts appearing in the dark disappear at the light of daybreak.

¹⁰ How can there be the spot of impurity in the pure and enlightened soul? How can the doubts of the objective nature arise in the subjective mind? All these errors vanish to nothing, like darkness before moonlight.¹¹ All these appearances appearing in various forms are only the diverse manifestations of the identical soul. It is therefore a fallacy to suppose this is one thing and that another, by our misjudgment of them.

¹² I smile to think how I had been the miserable slave of my desires and how now I am so well satisfied without them.¹³ Since I received my bath with the ambrosial shower of your words, I remember how my single and solitary self is one and all with the Universal Soul of the world.¹⁴ O the highest and holiest station to which I have now attained, from where I behold the sphere of the sun to be situated as low as the infernal region.¹⁵ I have arrived from unreality and seeming existence to the world of sober reality and existence. Therefore I thank my soul that has become so elevated and adorable with its fullness of the divine.

¹⁶ O venerable sage, I am now situated in everlasting joy, far removed from the region of sorrow, by the sweet sound of the honeyed words which have crept like humming bees into the core of my lotus-like heart.

Chapter 6 — Excellent Sayings to Edify the Audience: Disparagement of the Ignorant

¹ Vasishta continued:—

My dear Rama, let me tell you some excellent sayings for your good, and also for the benefit of everyone here in my audience.² Though you are unlike others in the greater enlightenment of your understanding, yet my lecture will equally edify your knowledge and that of less enlightened men.

³ He who is so senseless as to take his body for the soul is soon found to be upset by his unruly senses, like a charioteer thrown down by headstrong and restless horses.⁴ But the wise man who knows and relies on the soul without body has all his senses subject to his soul. They do not overthrow him, as obstinate horses do their riders.⁵ He who praises no object of enjoyment, but rather finds fault with all of them and discerns well their evils, enjoys the health of his body without any complaint.⁶ The soul has no relationship to the body, nor is the body related to the soul. They are as unrelated to each other as the light and shade.

⁷ The distinct soul is different from concrete matter and free from material properties. The soul is ever shining and does not rise or set like the physical sun and moon.⁸ The body is a dull mass of vile matter. It is ignorant of itself and its own welfare. It is quite ungrateful to the soul that makes it conscious. Therefore it well deserves its fate of diseases and final dissolution.

⁹ How can the body be considered an intelligent thing when the knowledge of the one (soul) as consciousness proves the other (body) to be only dull mass?¹⁰ But then, how is it that they reciprocate their feelings of pain and pleasure to one another, unless they are the one and the same thing and have same properties?¹¹ Rama, it is impossible for feelings that never agree in their natures to reciprocate. The gross body has no connection with the subtle soul, nor has the rarefied soul any relationship to the solid body.¹² The presence of one nullifies the existence of the other, as in the cases of day and night, of darkness and light, and of knowledge and ignorance.

¹³ The soul without body presides over all bodies without its adherence to any, just as the omnipresent spirit of Brahman pervades throughout all nature without uniting with any visible object.

¹⁴ The embodied soul is as unattached to the body as a dew drop on a lotus leaf remains separate from the leaf. The Divine Spirit is quite unconnected with everything it fills and supports.¹⁵ The Soul residing in the body is as unaffected by the body's affections as the sky remains unmoved by the motion of winds raging in its bosom.

¹⁶ Knowing that your soul is no part of your body, rest quietly in your soul to eternity. But if you believe you are the body, be subject to repeated reincarnations of it in endless forms.¹⁷ All that is visible is seen like rising and falling waves in the boundless ocean of the Divine Soul. Reliance on the Supreme Soul will show only the light of the soul.¹⁸ This bodily frame is the product of the Divine Soul, just as the wave is produced of the water of the sea. Though bodies are seen to move about like waves, yet their receptacle the soul is ever as steady as the sea, the reservoir of all moving waves.

¹⁹ The body is the image of the soul, just as the sun seen in the waves is a reflection of that luminary. Though the body, like the reflected sun, is seen to be moving and waving, yet its archetype the soul is ever as steady as the fixed and un-fluctuating sun in the sky.²⁰ The error of the substantiality and

stability of the body is put to flight as soon as the light of the permanent and spiritual substratum of the soul comes to shine over our inner sight.

²¹ To the partial and unspiritual observers of materialism, the body appears to be in constant motion like a wheel. They believe it is perpetually subject to birth and death, like the succession of light and darkness. ²² These unspiritual men who are unconscious of their souls are as shallow and empty minded as arjuna trees that grow without any pulp or core inside. ²³ Dull headed men devoid of intelligence are as contemptible as grass on the ground. They move their limbs like blades of grass moved by the force of passing winds. Those unacquainted with the conscious soul resemble senseless and hollow bamboos that shake and whistle by breath of the winds.

²⁴ The unconscious body and its limbs are actuated to perform their acts by the vital breath, just as the movement of trees and leaves is caused by the breeze. Both bodies and trees cease to move when the currents of airs cease agitating them. ²⁵ Dull bodies are like the boisterous waves of the sea, heaving with huge shapes and tremendous noise. They look like drunken men staggering with drinks of luscious juice of the vine. ²⁶ Foolish men resemble the rapid currents of rivers which, without a jot of sense in them, keep up their continual motion to no good to themselves or others. ²⁷ Their lack of wit reduces them to the utmost meanness and misery, which make them groan and sigh like a blacksmith's blowing bellows. ²⁸ Their continuous motion is of no real good to themselves, but brings on their death like the calm after a storm. They clash and clang like the twang of a bowstring without an arrow to hit the mark.

²⁹ The life of an unintelligent man serves only for his death. His desires of fruition are as false as the fruit of an unfruitful tree in a woody forest. ³⁰ Seeking friendliness in men is like wishing to sleep on a burning mountain. The society of the unintelligent is like associating with the headless trunks of trees in a forest. ³¹ Doing any service for ignorant and foolish men goes for nothing, as worthless as beating a bush or empty air with a stick. Anything given to the senseless is like throwing it in the mud. ³² Talking with the ignorant is like calling dogs from a distance. Ignorance is the seat of evils which never befall the conscious and the wise.

³³ The wise pass over all errors in their course amidst the world, but the ignorant are exposed to constant troubles in their ceaseless intense efforts to thrive in the pleasures of life. ³⁴ As the carriage wheel revolves constantly about the axle to which it is fixed, so the body of man turns continually about the wealthy family to which the foolish mind is fixed for gain. ³⁵ The ignorant fool can never get rid of his misery as long as he is bound to the belief that his body is his soul, and knowing no spiritual soul besides. ³⁶ How is it possible for the infatuated to be freed from their delusion when their minds are darkened by illusion and their eyes are blind-folded by unreal appearance? ³⁷ The man who sees things that entertain his eyes with unrealities is finally deluded by them, like a man moonstruck by fixing his eyes on the moon, or becoming giddy with the profuse fragrance of flowers.

³⁸ As watering the ground favors the growth of grass, thorns and thistles, so fostering the body breeds desires in the heart as thick as reptiles growing in the hollow of trees. They strengthen the mind in the form of a rampant lion or elephant. ³⁹ The ignorant nourish their hopes of heaven on the death of their bodies, just as the farmer expects a bountiful harvest from his well cultivated fields. ⁴⁰ Greedy hell-hounds are glad to look upon the ignorant who are bound in the coils of their serpentine desires, just

as thirsty peacocks are pleased to gaze on the black clouds that form in the rainy season.

⁴¹ Beautiful women with their glancing eyes resembling the fluttering bees of summer, lips blooming like new leaves of flowers, make a showy appearance to catch hold of ignorant men, like poisonous plants displaying themselves to catch ignorant flies. ⁴² The plant of desire which shoots out of the good soil of ignorant minds shelters flying passions under its shady foliage, just as coral plants shelter the coral animals in them.

⁴³ Hatred is like a wildfire. It consumes the tree of the body and lets out the smoke through the orifice of the mouth in the desert land of the heart, exhibits the flower of heat like burning cinders.

⁴⁴ The mind of the ignorant is like a lake of envy covered with the leaves of spite and calumny. Jealousy is its lotus-bed and anxious thoughts are like bees continually fluttering over the lotuses. ⁴⁵ The ignorant man who is subject to repeated births, rising and falling like waves in the tumultuous ocean of this world, is also exposed to repeated deaths. The burning fire that engulfs his dead body is like an undersea fire. ⁴⁶ The ignorant are exposed to repeated births accompanied by the changing fortunes of childhood, youth, manhood and old age, and followed at last by a painful death and cremation of the beloved body on the funeral pyre.

⁴⁷ The ignorant body is like a bucket in a well tied by the rope of reincarnation to the winch of acts, to be plunged and lifted over again in and over the dirty pool of this world. ⁴⁸ This world is a plain pavement or a narrow hole to the wise because they are unconsciousness of it. However, this world appears like a boundless and unfathomable sea to the ignorant owing to their great concern about it.

⁴⁹ The ignorant are unable to see beyond their limited circle, just as birds long confined in their cages have no mind to fly out. ⁵⁰ The revolution of repeated births is like the constant rotation of a chariot wheel. There is nobody able to stop the motion of rebirths by restraining his earthly desires, ever turning like spokes affixed to the center of the heart.

⁵¹ The ignorant wander at large about the wide extended earth like hunters roving the forest in search of their prey, until they become a prey at the hand of death and make their bodies as morsels for the vultures of their sensual desires. ⁵² The ignorant mistake the sights of these mountainous bodies, these material forms made of earthly flesh, for realities, just as they mistake figures in painting for real persons.

⁵³ How flourishing is the tree of this delusion, filled with the endless objects of our false imagination, which has stretched out these innumerable worlds because of our ignorance of them. ⁵⁴ How flourishing is the wish-fulfilling kalpa tree, the all fruitful tree of delusion, which is ever filled with endless objects of our imaginary desires and stretches out infinite worlds as its leaves for our false conception. ⁵⁵ Here our restless craving minds, like birds of variegated colors, rest and remain and sit and sport in and all about this tree. ⁵⁶ Our acts are the roots of our repeated births, just as the trunk of the tree is of its shoots. Our posterity and properties are the flowers of this tree, and our virtues and vices are its fruits of good and evil. ⁵⁷ Our wives are like tender plants that thrive best under the moonlight of delusion and are the most beautiful things to behold in this desert land of the earth.

⁵⁸ As the darkness of ignorance prevails over the mind soon after the setting of the sunlight of reason, there rises the full moon of errors in the empty mind, with all her changing phases of repeated births.

⁵⁹ Under the influence of the cooling moonlight of ignorance, our minds foster fond desires of worldly enjoyments and, like the chakora birds of night, drink their fill of delight as ambrosial moonbeams.

⁶⁰ Under this delusion men view their beloved ones as buds of roses and lotuses, and their loose glancing eyes as the black bees fluttering at random. They see black clouds in the braids and locks of their hair, and a glistening fire in their glowing bosoms and breasts.

⁶¹ It is delusion, O Rama, that depicts damsels with the beams of fair moonlight nights. The wise view them in their true light as being as foul as the darkest midnight. ⁶² Rama, know the pleasures of the world are like the destructive fruits of ignorance: at first pleasant to taste, but prove to be full of bitter gall at last. It is therefore better to destroy this harmful tree than to lose life and soul by the mortal taste of its fruits.

Chapter 7 — Condemnation of the Ignorant View of Creation

¹ Vasishta continued:—

These young ladies, so decorated with precious gems and jewels and embellished with strings of brilliant pearls, are like the playful waves of the moonbeams of our fond desires in the Milky Ocean.

² The side looks of their beautiful eyes look like a cluster of black bees setting on the center of a full blown lotus.³ To the enslaved minds of deluded men, these beauties appear as charming as spring flowers scattered on the ground in forest lands.⁴ Their attractive bodies, which fascinated minds compare with the moon, the lotus flower, and sandal paste for their coolness, are viewed indifferently by the wise as by the unconscious beasts which make prey of them.

⁵ The wise view ladies' swollen breasts, often compared to lotus-buds, ripe pomegranates and cups of gold, as a lump of flesh, blood and nauseous liquor.⁶ Their fleshy lips, distilling impure saliva and spittle, are said to exude with ambrosial honey and to bear resemblance to ruby and coral and bimba fruits.⁷ Their arms with crooked joints of wrists and loins, composed of hard bones inside, are compared with creeping vines by their infatuated admirers and erotic poets.⁸ Their thick thighs are like the stems of thick plantain trees, and the decorations of their protuberant breasts are compared to strings of flowers hung upon the towers of temples.⁹ Women are pleasant at first, but become quarrelsome afterwards, then fly away in haste, like Lakshmi the goddess of fortune. Yet they are desired by the ignorant.

¹⁰ Ignorant minds are subject to many pains and pleasures in this life. The forest of their misdeeds shoots forth in a thousand branches, bearing only sorrowful fruits of misery.¹¹ The ignorant are bound in the net of their folly. Their ritual functions are the ropes that lead them to the prison-house of the world. The words from their lips, like the mantras and musical words of their mouths, are more for their bewilderment.¹² The covering mist of ignorance stretches out a maze of ceremonial rites and envelopes the minds of common people in utter darkness, just as the River Yamuna overflows its banks with its dark waters.¹³ The lives of the ignorant, so pleasant with their tender affections, turn out to be as bitter as hemlock juice when the affections are cut off by the strong hand of death.¹⁴ The senseless mob is driven and carried away like withered and shattered tree leaves by the ever blowing winds of their pursuits. They scatter them all about like the sediments of earth, and splash them with the dirt and dust of their sins.

¹⁵ All the world is like a ripe fruit in the mouth of death, whose hungry belly is never filled with all its devastations, for millions and millions of kalpa ages.¹⁶ Men are like the cold bodies of creeping reptiles of the earth. They crawl and creep continually in their crooked course by breathing the vital air, like snakes living upon the currents of air.

¹⁷ The time of youth passes like a dark night without the moonlight of reason. It is infested by the ghosts of wicked thoughts and evil desires.¹⁸ The talkative tongue in the mouth becomes faint with cringing flattery, just as the pistil rising from the seed vessel becomes weak under freezing frost.

¹⁹ Like the thorny salmali tree, poverty branches out in a thousand branches of misery, distress, sorrow, sickness and all kinds of grief to human beings.²⁰ Concealed covetousness, like the unseen owl of night, is hidden within the hollow cavity of the human heart resembling the stunted chaitya

trees of mendicants. Then it shrieks and hoots out during the dark night of delusion which has spread over the sphere of the mind.²¹ Old age lays hold on youth by the ears like an old cat seizing and devouring a mouse after playing with it for a long while.

²² The accumulation of unsubstantial materials, which causes the formation of the stupendous world, is taken for real substantiality by the unwise, just as foaming froths and icebergs in the sea are thought to be solid rocks by an ignorant sailor.²³ The world appears like a beautiful tree glowing with blooming blossoms of divine light displayed over it. The belief of its reality is the plant filled with the fruit of all our actions and duties.

²⁴ The great building of the world is supported by the great pillar called Mount Meru under the great dome of heaven. The sun and moon are the great gateways to this pavilion.²⁵ The world resembles a large lake over which vital breaths are flying like swarms of bees on the lotus-beds of the living body, exhaling the sweets that are stored in the cell of the heart.²⁶ The blue roof of heaven appears as a spacious and elevated dome to the ignorant who think it contains all the worlds enlightened by the light of the sun situated in the midst. But it is an empty sphere, and so are the other worlds beyond the solar system to which sunlight never reaches.

²⁷ All worldly minded men are like old birds tied down on earth by the strong ropes of their desires (*vasanas*). Their hearts move about the confines of their bodies, and their heart strings throb with hopes in the confines of their bodies, like birds in cages hoping to gain their release.²⁸ The lives of living beings are continually dropping down, like withered leaves of trees, from the fading trees of their decayed bodies, by the constant breathing of their breath of life.

²⁹ Respectable men, happy with their worldly grandeur for a short time, are entirely forgetful of the severe torments of hell awaiting them afterwards.³⁰ But godly people enjoy their heavenly delights like gods in the cooling orb of the moon, or range freely under the blue sky like heavenly cranes about clear lakes.³¹ There they taste the sweet fruits of their virtuous deeds on earth and inhale the fragrance of their various desires like bees sipping the sweets of an opening lotus.³² All worldly men are like little fishes swimming on the surface of this pool of the earth, while sly and decrepit death pounces upon them like a kite and bears them away as his prey without any delay or remorse.

³³ The changing events of the world pass by every day like the gliding waves and foaming froths of the sea, and the ever changing digits of the moon.³⁴ Time, like a potter, continually turns his wheel and makes an immense number of living beings as his pots, breaking them every moment like the fragile playthings of his own whim.³⁵ Innumerable kalpa ages have been constantly rolling over the shady stillness of eternity. Multitudes of created worlds have been burnt down like thick woods and forests by the all desolating conflagrations of desolation.³⁶ All worldly things are undergoing constant change, appearing and disappearing in turns. The changing fortunes of our circumstances, from pleasure and prosperity to pain and misery and vice versa, proceed in endless succession.

³⁷ In spite of the instability of nature, the ignorant are bound by the chains of their desires (*vasanas*) which are not to be broken even by a thunderbolt from heaven.³⁸ Human desires are like the invulnerable body of the god Indra which, being wounded on all sides by the demons of disappointment, resumes fresh vigor at every stroke.³⁹ All created beings are like dust particles in the air flying with the currents of wind into the mouth of serpent-like death who draws all things to his

bowels by the breath of his mouth.⁴⁰ As all the impure matter of the earth, its raw fruits and vegetables, and the froth of the sea and other marine productions, are carried by currents to be consumed by undersea heat, so all existence is carried to the devouring fire of death to be dissolved into nothing.

⁴¹ It is by a fortuitous combination of qualities that all things present themselves to us with their various properties. It is the nature of these which exhibits them with those forms as they present to us. She gives the property of vibration to the elementary bodies which show themselves in the forms of water and air unto us.

⁴² Death like a ferocious lion devours mighty and opulent men, just as a lion kills a big elephant with his fangs.⁴³ Ambitious men upon earth are like greedy, hungry vultures on the tops of high hills, born to live and die in their aerial exploits on the wings of clouds in search of their prey.⁴⁴ Their minds are like painter's paintings on the canvas of their intellects, showing all the variegated scenes of the world with various pictures of things perceptible by the five senses.⁴⁵ But all these moving and changing scenes are breaking up and falling to pieces at every moment, producing our vain sorrow and grief upon their loss in this passing and aerial city of the world.

⁴⁶ Animal creations and the plant world stand like passive spectators witnessing and meditating upon the marvelous acts of time, sparing them from time's destruction of others.⁴⁷ Every moment moving creatures are subject to the recurrent emotions of passions and affections, and to the alterations of affluence and want. They are constantly decaying under age and infirmity, disease and death from which their souls are entirely free.⁴⁸ Reptiles and insects on the surface of the earth are continually subjected to their tortuous motions by their fate of which they are capable in their underground cells, owing to their want of quiet inaction.⁴⁹ But all these living bodies are eaten every moment by all destructive time in the form of death, which like the deadly and hungry serpent lies hidden in his dark den.

⁵⁰ Trees, however, are not affected by any of these accidents because they stand firm on their roots. Though suffering under heat and cold and the blasts of heaven, yet they yield their sweet fruits and flowers to support and delight all living creatures.⁵¹ Meek yogis who dwell in their secluded and humble cells are also seen to move about the earth, imparting the fruits of their knowledge to others, just as bees living in lotuses distribute their stores of honey after the rains are over.⁵² They preach lectures, like bees chanting their buzzing sounds all about, saying that the earth is like a big warehouse that supplies the wants of the needy in order to make them a morsel in the mouth of the goddess of death.

⁵³ The dreaded goddess Kali, wearing the veil of darkness over her face and eying all, as bright as the orbs of the sun and moon, gives all beings all that they want in order to grasp and gorge them in herself.⁵⁴ Her protuberant and exuberant breasts, bountiful as the bounty of God, suckle the gods and men and all beings on earth and hills and in the waters below.⁵⁵ The energy of Divine Consciousness is the mother of all and assumes the forms of density and thinness and also of motion and mobility. The clusters of stars are the rows of her teeth, and the morning and evening twilights are the redness of her two lips.⁵⁶ Her palms are red like lotus petals and her face is as bright as the paradise of Indra. She is decorated with the pearls of all the seas and clad with a blue covering all over her body.

⁵⁷ Asia forms her middle and the woods and forests form the hairs of her body. She appears in many shapes and again disappears from view. She plays her part in all three worlds as the most veteran sorceress. ⁵⁸ She dies repeatedly and is reborn again, then passes into endless transformations. She is now immersed in the great ocean or bosom of Kala or Time (Death) her consort, and rises up to assume other shapes and forms again.

⁵⁹ The great kalpa ages are like passing moments in the infinite duration of eternity, and cosmic eggs are like passing bubbles upon the unfathomable ocean of infinity. They rise and last and are lost by turns. ⁶⁰ Creative powers rise and fly about at the will of God like birds in the air. It is also by his will that risen creation becomes extinct like the burning flash of lightning. ⁶¹ In the sunshine of the Divine Consciousness and under the canopy of everlasting time, creations are continually rising and falling like the fog owls of forestlands, flying up and down under the mist of an all encompassing cloud of ignorance.

⁶² As a tall palm tree lets its ripened fruits fall constantly upon the ground, so the towering tree of time perpetually drops down created worlds and the lords of gods into the abyss of destruction. ⁶³ The gods also are dying away like the twinkling of their eyes. Old time is wearing away all its ages by its perpetual ticking. ⁶⁴ There are many Rudras existing in the essence of Brahman and they depend on the twinkling of that god for their existence. ⁶⁵ Such is Brahman, the lord of gods, under whom these endless acts of evolutions and involutions are forever taking place in the infinite space of his eternal Consciousness and omnipotent will. ⁶⁶ What wonderful powers are there that cannot possibly reside in the Supreme Spirit? His unchanging will gives rise to all positive and possible existences. Therefore it is ignorance to imagine the world as a reality of itself.

⁶⁷ Therefore all that appears to you as the changing fortunes of prosperity and adversity, and as the changes of childhood, youth, old-age and death, and also the occurrences of pain and pleasure and of sorrow and grief is the display of the deep darkness of ignorance.

Chapter 8 — Allegory of the Spreading Tree of Ignorance

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Rama, listen to me explain how this poisonous tree of ignorance has come to grow in this forest of the world and be situated by the side of consciousness, and how and when it came to blossom and bloom.

² This plant encompasses all the three worlds and has all of creation for its rind and mountains for its joints ³ It is filled with its leaves, roots, flowers and fruit by the continuous births, lives, pleasures, pains, knowledge and errors of mankind. ⁴ Prosperity gives rise to our ignorance of desiring to be more prosperous in this or our next lives, which produce future welfare also. So adversity leads us to greater error of practicing many bad deeds to get rid of it, but which on the contrary expose us to greater misfortunes. ⁵ One birth gives rise to another and that leads to others without end. Hence it is foolish to wish to be reborn again.

⁶ Ignorance produces greater ignorance and brings on unconsciousness as its effect. So knowledge leads to higher knowledge and produces self-consciousness as its result. ⁷ The creeping vine of ignorance has passion for its leaves and desires for its fragrance. It is continually shaking and shuffling the leafy garment on its body. ⁸ Sometimes this plant grows in the way of the elephant of reason. Then it shakes with fear and the dust that covers its body is blown away by the breath of the elephant's trunk. Yet the vine continues to creep on byways according to its accustomed habit.

⁹ Days are its blossoms and nights are the swarms of black bees that cast shadows over its flowers. The continuous shaking of its boughs throws down the dust of living bodies from it, both by day and night. ¹⁰ It is overgrown with its leaves of relatives and overloaded with the shooting buds of its children. It bears the blossoms of all seasons and yields the fruits of all kinds of flowers. ¹¹ All its joints are full of the reptiles of diseases and its stem is perforated by the seabirds of destruction, yet it yields the luscious juice of delight to those who are deprived of their reason and good sense.

¹² Its flowers are the radiant planets that shine with the sun and moon every day in the sky. Space is the medium of their light and rapid winds are vehicles that bear their rays to us like odors.

^{12a} Ignorance blossoms every day in the clusters of bright planetary bodies that shine with the sun and moon by day and night. Winds playing in the air bear their light to us like perfume. ^{12b} Ignorance blossoms in clusters of stars and planets shining about the sun and moon every day, and breathes in the breezes blowing at random amidst the empty firmament. ¹³ O son of Raghu's race, the innumerable stars that you see scattered in the dome of heaven are the blooming blossoms of this tree of ignorance.

¹⁴ The beams of the sun and moon and the flames of fire that are scattered about us like the crimson dust of flowers resemble red paint on the fair body of ignorance with which this delusive lady attracts our minds to her. ¹⁵ The wild elephant of the mind ranges at large under the tree of ignorance, and the birds of our desires are continually hovering and warbling upon it, while the serpents of sensual desires are infesting its stem and greed settles like a huge snake at the root. ¹⁶ It stretches its head to the blue dome of the sky, forming a canopy over it like black tamara trees. The earth supports its trunk and the sky covers its top, making it a garden of the universe. ¹⁷ It is deeply rooted underneath the ground and is watered with milk and curds in the canals of the milky and other oceans dug around its trunk.

¹⁸ The rituals of the three Vedas flutter like bees over the tree blooming with the blossoms of beautiful women and shaking with the turnings of the mind while it is corroded inside by sore-making worms of cares and actions. ¹⁹ The tree of ignorance, blossoming like the flowers of the garden of paradise, exhales the sweet odors of pleasure around. The serpent of vice twining round it perpetually leads living souls to evil deeds to support their lives.

²⁰ It blooms with various flowers to attract the hearts of wise. It is filled with various fruits distilling their sweets all around. ²¹ With water about, it invites the birds of the air to drink. Being smeared with the dust of its flowers, it appears to stand like a rock of red earth or granite. ²² It shoots out with buds of mistakes and is beset by the briars of error. It grows luxuriant in hilly districts with the exuberance of its leafy branches.

²³ It grows and dies and grows again, and being cut down it springs out again. So there is no end of it.

²⁴ Though past and gone, yet it is present before us. Though it is all hollow within, it appears as thick and sound to sight. It is an ever fading and an evergreen tree. The more it is lopped and cropped, the more it grows and expands itself.

²⁵ It is a poisonous tree whose very touch benumbs the senses in a moment. But being pressed down by reasoning, it dies away in an instant. ²⁶ All distinctions of different objects are dissolved in the crucible of the reasoning mind. But they remain undissolved in their crude forms in the minds of the ignorant, who are employed in differentiating the various natures of men and brutes, and of land and sea animals. ²⁷ They distinguish one world as the nether world and the other as the upper sky. They make distinctions between the solar and lunar planets, and the fixed starry bodies. ²⁸ Here there is light and there is darkness on the other side. This is empty space and that is the solid ground. These are the scriptures and those are the Vedas. All such distinctions are unknown to the wise.

²⁹ The same spirit flies upward in the bodies of birds or remains above in the form of gods. The same spirit remains fixed in the forms of fixed rocks or moves in continuous motion with flying winds.

³⁰ Sometimes it resides in the infernal regions, and at others it dwells in the heavens above. Sometimes it is exalted to the dignity of gods, and somewhere it remains in the state of mean insects and worms. ³¹ In one place it appears as glorious as the god Vishnu, and in another it shows itself in the forms of Brahma and Shiva. Now it shines in the sun and then it brightens in the moon. Here it blows in winds, and there it sways in the all-subduing Yama.

³² Whatever appears as great and glorious and all that is seen as mean and ignoble in their form, from the biggest and bright sun down to the most contemptible grass and straw, are all pervaded by the Universal Spirit. Ignorance dwells upon the external forms, but knowledge that looks into the inner soul sees the reality.

Chapter 9 — Three Gunas; Gods are Pure Sattvic; No Such Thing as Ignorance

¹ Rama said, “Sage, you said that all forms are representations of illusion or ignorance. How do you account for the pure bodies of Vishnu, Shiva and other gods who are of pure essence in their embodied forms, and which cannot be the creation of our error or delusion? Please, sage, explain these clearly to me and remove my doubts and difficulties on the subject.”

² Vasishta replied:—

The perceptible world represents the manifestation of the one quiescent and all inherent soul, and exhibits the glory of being-consciousness-bliss (*sat-chit-ananda*) which is beyond conception or thought.³ This gives rise to the shape of a partial aspect or essence, or there arises of itself principles resembling the rolling fragment of a cloud appearing as a watery substance or filled with water.⁴ This fragment is also conceived in its three different lights or phases of rarity, density and rigidity or grossness, resembling the twilight, midday light, and darkness of sunlight. The first of these is called the mind or creative will, the second the Brahma Hiranyagarbha or the creative power, and the third is known as Virat, the framer of the material frame, and is identical with creation itself.⁵ These are also called the three qualities (*gunas*) of reality, brightness and darkness (*sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, the qualities of preservation, creation, and destruction) which are also called the triple nature of things or their *swabhavas* or *prakriti*.⁶ All nature is characterized by ignorance of the triple qualities of creation, preservation and destruction which are inbred in all living beings, except the Being that is beyond them and which is the supreme one.

⁷ Each of the three qualities of balance, activity and passivity (*sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*) has its three subdivisions of the same names.⁸ Thus original Ignorance becomes nine kinds by the differences of its several qualities. Whatever is seen or known here below is included under one or the other in various degrees.

⁹ Now Rama, know the positive (*sattvic*) quality of ignorance includes several classes of living beings known as the rishis, munis, spiritual masters, naagas, vidyadharas and suras.¹⁰ Again this quality of positive goodness comprises the Suras or gods Shiva and others of the first class who are purely and truly good. The sages and spiritual masters forming the second or intermediate class are endued with a less share of goodness in them, while naagas or vidyadharas making the last class possess it in the least degree.¹¹ The gods born with the pure essence of goodness and remaining unmixed with the properties of other natures have attained the state of purity like the divine Vishnu, Shiva and others.

¹² Rama, whoever is filled with the quality of goodness (*sattva*) in his nature and is acquainted with divine knowledge in his mind is said to be liberated in this life and free from further reincarnation.

¹³ For this reason, O high minded Rama, the gods Shiva and others who possess the properties of goodness in them are said to continue in their liberated state to the final end of the world.¹⁴ Great souls remain liberated as long as they continue to live in their mortal bodies. After they drop their frail bodies, they become free as their disembodied spirits and they reside in the Supreme Spirit.

¹⁵ The part of ignorance is to lead men to perform acts which, after their death, become the roots of producing other acts in all successive states of reincarnation.¹⁶ Ignorance rises from knowledge like

a hollow bubble bursting out of water, and ignorance likewise sets and sinks in knowledge like the bubble subsiding to rest in the same water.¹⁷ As there is no such thing as a wave, only a word coined to denote the heaving of water, so there is nothing as ignorance but a word fabricated to express the lack of knowledge.¹⁸ As water and waves are identical in their true sense, and there being no material difference between them, so both knowledge and ignorance relate to the same thing, expressing either its presence or absence. There can be no essential difference in their meaning.

¹⁹ Leaving aside the sights of knowledge and ignorance, there remains that which always exists of itself. Only the contradiction of adverse parties has introduced these words.²⁰ The sights of knowledge and ignorance are nothing. Therefore be firm in what is beyond these, and which can neither be known nor ignored by imagination of it.

²¹ There is something which is not anything, except that it exists in the manner of the intellect and consciousness. There is no way to describe this, therefore that being (*sat*) is said to be unknowable (*avidya*).²² That one existent Being is said to be the destroyer of ignorance. Lack of knowledge gives rise to the false conception of ignorance.²³ When knowledge and ignorance are both lost in oblivion within the one consciousness, it is like when both sunshine and its shadows are lost in the shade of night.²⁴ Then there remains only the One that is to be gained and known, and thus the loss of ignorance likewise tends to the dissipation of self knowledge, just as the lack of oil extinguishes the lamp.²⁵ What remains afterwards is either emptiness or the whole fullness of space in which all these things appear to exist, or it is nothing at all.

²⁶ As the minute seed of the banyan tree contains the future tree in its undeveloped state, so the almighty power of omnipotence is lodged in the minute receptacle of the spirit before its expansion into immensity.²⁷ The Divine Spirit is more rarefied than subtle air, and yet is not an emptiness because it has consciousness (*chit*). It is like the sunstone with its inherent fire, or like milk with the latent butter unborn in it.²⁸ All space and time reside in that spirit for their development, just as the spark proceeds from the fire and light issues from the sun in which they are contained.²⁹ So all things are settled in Supreme Consciousness and show themselves to us as like waves on the sea or the radiance of gems. Our understandings are also reflections of Divine Consciousness³⁰ which is the storehouse of all things and the reservoir of all consciousness. The divine essence pervades the inside and outside of everything.

³¹ The Divine Soul is as imperishable as the air within a pot which is not destroyed when the pot is broken, but mixes and continues forever with its surrounding air. Know also the lives and actions of living beings are dependent upon the will of God, just as the movement of iron depends upon the attraction of the loadstone.³² The action of the inactive or quiescent spirit of God is to be understood in the same manner as the motion of iron is attributed to magnetic attraction. The inert bodies of living beings are moved by force of the conscious soul.

³³ The world is situated in that mundane seed of the universe which the wise know by the name of consciousness. The world is as void and formless as empty air. It is nothing and has nothing in it except consciousness. It represents all and everything by itself, like the playful waves of the boundless ocean.

Chapter 10 — Inert Is Not Realized; Ignorance Is of the All-Pervading God

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Therefore this world with all its moving and unmoving beings is nothing. There is nothing that has its real being or entity except the one true Being that you must know.² O Rama, seek him who is beyond our thought and imagination and comprises all entity and non-entity in himself. Cease to seek any living being or anything in existence.

³ I would not have my heart be enticed and deceived by the false attachments and affections of this world. They are all as delusive as our misconception of a snake in a rope.⁴ Ignorance of the soul is the cause of our error of conceiving distinctions between things. Knowledge of the identical soul and the reality of things put an end to all distinctions. Distinctive knowledge of existences (*bheda jnana*) is false, but their generalization leads to right reasoning.⁵ They call it ignorance (*avidya*) when the intellect is weakened by its acceptance of phenomena, but phenomena being left out, the intellect comes to know the soul which is free from all attributes.

⁶ All this illusion is caused by the mind. If the mind vanishes, the illusion will also vanish. The embodied soul (*purusha*) is said to last as long as there is consciousness in the body, like the air (*ghatambare*) in the pot lasts with the lasting of the pot and vanishes upon the pot being broken.⁷ The wandering intellect sees the soul wandering, and calm understanding thinks it to be stationary, just as one perceives his breath of life to be slow or quick according to whether he is sitting still or running about. In this manner, bewildered understanding finds the soul to be distracted.⁸ The mind wraps the inner soul with the cover of its various desires, just as the silkworm twines the thin thread of its desires (*vasanas*) round about itself, which its lack of reason prevents it from understanding.

⁹ Rama said, “I see, sage, that when our ignorance becomes too gross and solid, it becomes as dull and solid as stone. But tell me, O venerable sage, how does consciousness become a fixed tree or any other inert substance?”

¹⁰ Vasishta replied:—

They have abandoned the capability of thinking which is inherent in human consciousness, so they remain like a living and immoveable plant or an inert material substance.¹¹ The liberation of no mind is impossible for those whose organs of eight senses lie dormant, dumb, blind and inert as in any dull and dirt matter. If they have any perception, it is only pain.

¹² Rama replied, “O sage, who best knows what is knowable, but if consciousness remains as unshaken in a fixed tree, with its reliance in unity and without knowledge of duality, does that not approximate perfection and approach liberation?”

¹³ Vasishta replied:—

Rama, perpetual liberation of the soul follows upon rational investigation into the natures of all other things, their false appearances, and the realization of one common entity.¹⁴ A man only reaches his state of singleness (*kaivalya*) when he understands that all existence dwells in the unity and when he forsakes his desire for this thing and that.¹⁵ One inclined towards spiritual contemplation, who has investigated divine knowledge in the scriptures, and who has discussed the subject in the company of

the learned sages is said to rest in Brahman.

¹⁶ One who is dormant in his mind and has the seed of his desires lying latent in his heart resembles an unmoving tree bearing the vegetative seed of future transmigrations within its bosom. ¹⁷ All those men are called blocks who, like blocks of wood or stone, lack brains and whose desires are gone to the rack. Men possessing the property of dullness like dull matter are subject to the pains of repeated births, recurring like the repetitions of their remaining desires. ¹⁸ All stationary and inert things are endowed with the property of dull matter and are subject to repeated reproductions.

¹⁹ Know, O pure hearted Rama, that the seed of desire is as inbred in the heart of plants as flowers are inborn in seeds and earthenware is contained in clay. ²⁰ The heart that contains the fruitful seed of desire can never have its rest or realization even in its dormant state. But this seed being burnt and fried to unproductiveness produces sanctity, though it may appear fully active. ²¹ The heart that preserves the slightest remnant of any desire can again be filled with its full, luxuriant growth, just as a little remainder of fire or the enemy, or of a debt and disease, and also of love and hatred, is enough to involve one in his ruin, just as a single drop of poison kills a man.

²² He who has burnt away the seed of his desire for anything and everything and who looks upon the world with an even eye of detachment is said to be perfectly liberated both in his embodied state in this earth and in his disembodied or spiritual form of the next world, and is no more subjected to any trouble.

²³ Intellectual power enveloped by the seed of mental desire supplies moisture for it to germinate everywhere in the forms of animals and plants. ²⁴ This inherent power resides like productive power in the seeds of living beings, and in that of inertness in dull material bodies. It is of the nature of hardness in all solid substances and that of softness in soft and liquid things. ²⁵ It exhibits ash color in ash and shows particles in the dust of the earth. It shows darkness in all swarthy things and flashes in the whiteness of a glittering blade. ²⁶ Spiritual power assumes the form and figure in which it resides in the community of material things, such as a picture, a pot and the like. ²⁷ In this way the Divine Spirit fills the whole phenomenal world like a cloud filling the sky in rainy season.

²⁸ I have explained the true nature (*swarupa*) of the unknown almighty power according to my best understanding, and as far as it had been determined by the reasoning of the wise. It fills all and is not the all itself. It is the true entity appearing as no entity at all. ²⁹ Our inability to see this invisible spiritual power leads us to the false conception of the external world, but a slight sight of this Almighty Being removes all our pains in this scene of vanity.

³⁰ The wise call our dim vision of Almighty Power blindness or ignorance. This ignorance give rises to the belief in the existence of the world and thereby produces all our errors and misery. ³¹ Who is free of this ignorance and beholds the glorious light of God finds darkness disappear from his sight, just as the icicles of night melt away at the appearance of sunlight. ³² A man's ignorance flies off like the dream he tries to remember after he wakes from his sleep. ³³ Again, when a man ponders well the properties of the object before him, his ignorance flies away like darkness at the approach of light.

³⁴ Darkness recedes from a man who advances to explore into it with a lamp in his hand. Butter is melted down by application of heat. In the same way, one's ignorance is dispelled and dissolved by application of the light of reason.

³⁵ One in darkness with a lit torch in his hand sees only a blaze of light before him and no shadow of darkness about him. In the same way, one who seeks truth perceives the light of truth shining in his face with no trace of the darkness of falsehood behind him. ³⁶ Ignorance flies away and disappears with the light of reason. Although an unreal nothing, illusion appears as something real wherever there is lack of reason. ³⁷ The great mass of thick darkness disappears into nothing at the advance of light. In the same way, the substantiality of gross ignorance is dissolved into insubstantiality at the advance of knowledge.

³⁸ Unless one examines a thing, it is impossible to distinguish it from another. But upon examination, he comes to detect the fallacy of his pre-judgment. ³⁹ He who considers whether the flesh, blood or bones of his bodily frame constitutes his personality will at once understand that he is none of these and all these are distinct from himself. ⁴⁰ Nothing belonging to a person makes the person. Something beyond forms one's personality. Nothing in the world from its first to last is that spirit which has neither beginning nor end and is the eternal and Infinite Spirit. ⁴¹ Ignorance being overcome, there remains nothing except the one eternal soul which is the adorable Brahman and substantial whole.

⁴² The unreality of ignorance is evident from the negative term of negation and ignoring its essentiality, and requires no other proof to disprove its essence, just as the taste of a thing is best proved by the tongue and no other organ of sense. ⁴³ There is no ignorance or inexistence except the consciousness and existence of God who pervades all visible and invisible natures, to which the names existence and inexistence are attributed.

⁴⁴ Ignorance (*avidya*) is not of knowledge but of Brahman. The dispersion of this ignorance brings us to the knowledge of God. ⁴⁵ Ignorance of Him is the belief that all things in the world are distant and distinct from Brahman. The belief that all things visible in the world are the manifestation of omnipresence causes the removal of ignorance by presenting the presence of God.

Chapter 11 — The Supreme Truth: Knowledge of Brahman

¹ Vasishta said:—

I tell you again and repeatedly, O pious Rama, for your understanding. You can never know the spirit without a constant habit of contemplating on it.² Gross ignorance becomes compact by the accumulated false knowledge of previous births and past lives.³ The perceptions of external and internal body senses, both in the states of consciousness and unconsciousness, cause the great errors of embodied beings.⁴ Spiritual knowledge is far beyond the perception of the senses and can only be attained after controlling the five external organs of sense and the mind, which is the sixth organ of sensation.

⁵ How is it possible to know the spirit whose essence is beyond the reach of our faculties of sense and whose powers transcend those of all our sensible organs?⁶ If you want to be an adept in divine wisdom, you must use the sharp sword of your knowledge to cut off this creeper of ignorance which has grown up in the hollow of the tree of your heart.

⁷ Rama, conduct the practice of your spiritual knowledge like King Janaka with his full knowledge of all that is knowable to man.⁸ Janaka remains certain in his knowledge of the truth when involved in active duties, in his waking state, and when he remains quiet at his leisure.⁹ Vishnu was led to perform his various acts in his repeated incarnations through his reliance on this certain truth.¹⁰ May you, Rama, be certain of the main truth which conducted the three-eyed god Shiva in the company of his fair consort, and which led the dispassionate Brahma to the act of creation.¹¹ It was the assurance of this eternal truth which led the teachers of the gods and demons, even Brihaspati and Bhargava, in their duties, and which guide the sun and moon in their courses, and even directs the elements of fire and air in their wonted ways.¹² This truth was well known to the host of rishis, including Narada, Pulastya, Angira, Pracheta, Bhrigu Krutu, Atri and Suka, as it is also known to me.¹³ This is the certainty which has been arrived at by all other learned brahmins and sages, and this is the firm belief of everybody who has been liberated in his lifetime.

¹⁴ Rama said, “Tell me truly, O venerable sage, the true nature of the truth upon which the great gods and wisest sages have grounded their belief and became freed from their sorrow and grief.”

¹⁵ Vasishta replied:—

O worthy prince who is great in arms and in your knowledge of all things, hear me tell you the plain truth in reply to your question, the certainty arrived at by all of them.

¹⁶ All these spacious worlds that you see spread all about you is situated in the immensity of Brahman.¹⁷ Brahman is consciousness and this world and all its animate and inanimate creatures. Brahman is me, Brahma, you, and all our friends and enemies.¹⁸ Brahman is the triple times of past, present and future, all of which are comprehended in his eternity like waves and surges in the immensity of the ocean.¹⁹ This same Brahman appears to us in all the various forms of our perception, and in the different shapes of the actor, action and its act, as those of the feeder, feeding and food, and of the receiver, reception and the thing received.

²⁰ Brahman expands in himself by his power of evolution, unfolding himself by his expansion power.

Hence he would be our enemy if he would do anything unfavorable into us.²¹ Thus Brahman being situated and employed with himself, does nothing either good or evil to any other. The attribution of passions to him is like planting a tree in empty air.

²² They who are dead to their desires are very delighted to reflect on this truth, that they are continually living and moving in the all pervading Brahman.²³ All things are full of Brahman and there is nothing of pleasure or pain. Brahman resides in his identical all and is pleased with all in himself.²⁴ The Lord is manifest in his Lordship, and I am no other person beside himself. This pot, that painting, and I myself are full with the identical Brahman.²⁵ Hence it is in vain to speak of our attachment or aversion to worldliness since we bear our bodies and dare to die in Brahman only.²⁶ Our bodies being the abodes of Brahman, it is false to think of our bodily pains or enjoyments, like thinking a rope to be a snake.

²⁷ How can you say that this or that is your doing when you have no power to do anything? Waves on the surface of the sea cannot move the waters deep below.²⁸ You, me, he and all others are only breaths of the Universal Spirit. We heave and then subside like waves in the sea, but the spirit of God, like the waters of the deep, does not rise or fall at anytime.

²⁹ All persons returning to Brahman after their death have their bodies and their personal identities reduced into Him and retaining in Him, just as moving and still waters rest alike in the sea.³⁰ All moving and inert souls and bodies rest alike in the supreme Brahman, just as the individual soul (*jiva*) and its form reside in God, and whirling and still waters remain in the same sea.³¹ The soul and the body are the two states of the likeness and unlikeness of Brahman. One is the living soul of bodies and the other is the gross body itself.

³² Irrational souls who are ignorant of this truth are truly subject to delusion. Rational souls are not so, but enjoy their full bliss on earth while the other is ever doomed to misery.³³ The blind see the world as all dark, while the clear sighted find it fully bright and shining. So the wise are blessed with the knowledge of the one soul of the whole, while the ignorant are immersed in misery by their lack of such knowledge.³⁴ As the darkness of night presents its demons and ghosts only to the sight of children, and not those of grown up adults, so the world presents its delusions to the ignorant and never to the wise who behold only one Brahman in all things before them.³⁵ There is nothing here that lives of itself or dies away to nothing. All exist equally in God at all times. Nothing is doomed to be born or perish here to happiness or misery.³⁶ All beings are situated in the Universal Soul just like waves in the vast expanse of the ocean. Therefore it is false to say that one resides in the spirit and another is beside it.

³⁷ As there is an inborn light in crystal which is capable of reflecting a variety of rays, so the spirit of God dwells in his own spirit in the form of the universe showing various shapes to view by the inner light of the spirit.³⁸ As water particles fly from waves, fall into the sea, and mix with its water, so the bodies of dying people fall into the body of Brahman where they existed during their lifetimes.³⁹ There is no being beside the being of Brahman, just as there is no wave or foam or froth of the sea beside the water of the deep.⁴⁰ As waves, surges, whirling currents, and their froth, foam, and bubbles and minute particles are all formations of water in the great body of waters, so are all beings only productions of the spirit in the Infinite Spirit.

⁴¹ All bodies with their various modes and organs of sense and their several functions, and all visible objects and their growth and decay, together with everything conducive to our happiness and misery, and all other energies and their gains, are the works of Brahma in himself. ⁴² The production of these various beings in existence is from the essence of Brahman, just as the formation of different ornaments is from the substance of gold. There is no cause of form or formation other than Brahma, and the distinction between cause and creation is the false conception of the ignorant.

⁴³ Mind, understanding, egoism, the elemental atoms, and the organs of sense are all the various forms of Brahman, which is the cause of our joy or grief. ⁴⁴ The words "I", "you", "he", "this" and "that", as also the terms of "mind" and "matter" all describe the identical Brahman in the same manner as the roaring of a cloud in the hills resounds in a hundred echoes through their caverns. ⁴⁵ Brahman appears as an unknown stranger to us through our ignorance of him, like visions in our minds' dreams appear futile to us.

⁴⁶ Ignorance of Brahman as what he is makes men reject divine knowledge altogether, just as our ignorance of the quality of gold causes us to throw it away as waste. ⁴⁷ Brahman is known as the Supreme Spirit and sole Lord by those who are acquainted with divine knowledge. But He is said to be unknown and involved in ignorance by those who are ignorant of Him. ⁴⁸ Brahman being known as Brahman becomes manifest as such in a moment, just as gold when known as such is taken in due esteem. ⁴⁹ Those who are versed in divine knowledge know Brahman to be without cause and causing nothing by himself, and that he is free from decay and is the Supreme Spirit and sole Lord of all.

⁵⁰ He who can meditate on the omnipotence of the Supreme Spirit of Brahman comes to behold him as such in a short time, even without a teacher to guide him in his spiritual knowledge. ⁵¹ The lack of divine knowledge is called the ignorance of the ignorant. The knowledge of God constitutes the true knowledge which removes the ignorance. ⁵² As an unknown friend is no friend at all until he is recognized as such after removal of one's forgetfulness, so God is no god to one as long he continues in ignorance of Him.

⁵³ We can only know God when the mind comes to perceive the soul unconnected with the body, whereby it alienates itself from all worldly connections in disgust. ⁵⁴ When the mind is freed from its knowledge of duality, then we come to know the one true God. By the mind's distaste of dualism, it abandons its attachment to the world. ⁵⁵ We come to the knowledge of God when we come to know ourselves to be other than our bodies and when we get rid of our personal egoism and forsake our affection for this un-kindred world. ⁵⁶ The thought of God arises in our minds when we come to the true knowledge of thinking ourselves the same with Brahman, and when the mind is absorbed in meditation of the divine truth in one's self.

⁵⁷ God being known as the all of everything and comprising the whole fullness of space, we come to believe the same as Brahman. Losing our egoism and references to others, we come to know the sole entity that comprises the entire universe. ⁵⁸ When I come to know this true and all-form Brahman as all in all and forming the entire whole, I become released from all my sorrows and grief. I am set free from all my delusions and desires and the responsibility of my duties. ⁵⁹ I am quite calm and at ease, without any sorrow or grief, by my knowledge of the truth that I am no other than Brahman himself. I am as cool as the moon without her spots and phases in me. I am the all entire, without any disease,

decay or diminution in me.

⁶⁰ It is true that I am the all pervading Brahman. Therefore I cannot wish to have or leave anything from me, because I am also the blood, bones and flesh of my body. ⁶¹ It is true that I am Brahman the Universal Soul, and therefore my intellect, mind and physical senses also. I am the heaven and sky with their luminaries and quarters and the nether worlds also. ⁶² It is true that I am Brahman composing this pot and painting, these bushes and brambles, these forests and their grass, and also the seas and their waves.

⁶³ The unity of Brahman is a certain truth. It is the Self which manifests in seas and mountains and all living beings, and in the qualities of reception and emission, and of extension and contraction in all material bodies. ⁶⁴ All things of extended forms are situated in the intellectual spirit of Brahman who is the cause of the growth of seeds, vines and other plants. ⁶⁵ The Supreme Brahman resides in his sheath of the intellectual soul like flavor in the cup of the flower, and thence diffuses itself on all sides in the form of everything everywhere.

⁶⁶ He who is called the Supreme Spirit is known as the only soul of all. He is called the intellectual soul, Brahman the great, the only entity and reality, the Truth and Intelligence and apart from all. ⁶⁷ He is said to be the all-inherent element and Consciousness only without anything intelligible in it. He is the pure light that gives every being its consciousness of itself. ⁶⁸ To the spiritual man God appears to exist everywhere as the tranquil and intelligent Brahman, and contains in himself the powers of all the faculties of the mind and body, such as the understanding and the organs of sense. So the scriptures say, "He is the mind of the mind, the sight of the eye."

⁶⁹ Give up the thought of you being different from Brahman by knowing yourself as the reflection of the conscious soul which is the cause of the causes of the existence of the world, just like air is cause of sound caused by empty spirit of God. ⁷⁰ The consciousness of Brahman is the transparent receptacle of all essences. My ego is of the same essence, which exudes continually like a shower of rain from the transparent spirit of God. ⁷¹ I am that light which shines in the souls of yogis. I am that silent spirit supported by the ambrosial drops of Divine Consciousness which continually distils its nectar juice into our souls so that we may feel in ourselves. ⁷² I am a wheel or a circle without beginning or end because I have the pure consciousness of Brahman in me. I am quiet in my deep sleep of samadhi meditation and I perceive that holy light shining within me.

⁷³ The thought that "I am Brahman" affords a far greater delight to the soul than the taste of any sweet meat, which gives but a momentary delight. So the scriptures say, "God is all sweetness."

⁷⁴ One who knows his soul and intellect knows the indestructible Brahman and himself to be identical with Brahman, just as one whose mind is possessed with the image of his beloved sees her bright face in the shining orb of the moon. ⁷⁵ As the sights of earthly people are fixed on the ethereal moon, so the sight of intellectual beings is fixed on the supreme and indestructible soul, which he knows to be identical with himself. ⁷⁶ The intellectual power situated in the emptiness of the heart is truly the truth of pure Brahman himself. Its pleasure, pain, mutability and divisibility are attributed only through ignorance.

⁷⁷ The soul who has known the truth knows himself as Supreme Consciousness, just as the pilgrim on

the way sees only his saint before him and no intermediate object besides.⁷⁸ The belief that I am the pure and all pervading Consciousness is attended with purity and holiness of the soul. Knowledge of the divine power as the cause of the union of earth, air and water in the production of the germ of creation is the main creed of all creeds.

⁷⁹ I am that intellect of Brahma which is inherent in all things as their productive power. I am that soul which causes the sweetness of honey and the bitterness of nimba fruits.⁸⁰ I am that Divine Consciousness which inheres alike in all flavors, which is devoid of pain and pleasure, and which I perceive in my mind by my consciousness.⁸¹ I am the consciousness of Brahman without decay. I consider my gain and loss in an equal light of detachment while I view this earth, sky, sun and moon displayed before my eyes in all their glory.⁸² I am that pure and serenely bright Brahman whose glory is displayed alike in all of these, and which I see shining vividly before me whether I am awake or asleep, dreaming or in deep sleep.⁸³ I am that Brahman who is without beginning or end, who is known by his four-fold essences, and who is ever indestructible and without decay. He resides in the souls of men through all their reincarnations like sweetness in sugarcane.⁸⁴ I am that intellect of Brahman which, like sunshine, equally pervades in the form of transparent light in and above all created beings.⁸⁵ I am that all pervasive intellect of Brahman which, like charming moonlight, fills the whole universe, and which we feel and taste in our hearts as the delicious drink of nectar.⁸⁶ I am that intellect of Brahman which extends undivided over the whole and all parts of the universe, and which embraces all existence as the moving clouds of heaven encompasses the sky.

Chapter 12 — Qualities of the Self-Realized

¹ Vasishta said:—

Great minded men who are certain of these truths are purified from their sins. Finding their tranquility in reliance on truth, they enjoy the delight of the even balance of their souls, both in prosperity and adversity. ² So the wise men of perfect understanding, being evenly dispassionate in their minds, do not feel happiness or sadness in the enjoyment or deprivation of their lives. ³ They remain as unseen and marvelously mighty as the arms of Vishnu, and as straight and firm and yet as low and fragile as the body and broken rocks of Mount Meru. ⁴ They roam about at pleasure in woodlands and over islands and in cities also. Like the gods of paradise, they wander about the beautiful gardens and sceneries of nature. ⁵ They rove in flowery gardens shaken by playful breezes and in romantic forests on the foothills and tops of mountains.

⁶ They conquer their enemies and rule their kingdoms with the royal symbols of the chowry fly-whisk and umbrella. They enjoy the various produce and wealth of their kingdom and observe the various customs and usages of their country. ⁷ They follow all the rules and rites established by the laws of their countries and inculcated as duties for the observance of all. ⁸ They do not disdain to taste the pleasures that would make beauties smile, nor are they adverse to the enjoyment of luxuries that they can rightly use and enjoy. ⁹ They smell the fragrance of mandara flowers and taste the sweet juice of mango fruit. They regale themselves with the sweet songs of apsara nymphs and revel in the trees of Nandana pleasure garden.

¹⁰ They never disregard the duties that bind all mankind to them, or neglect to perform the sacrifices and observe the ordinances that are imperative in domestic life. ¹¹ But they are saved from falling into dangers and evils of all kinds, escape the danger of falling under the feet of murderous elephants, and avoid the uproar of trumpets and the imminent death in battlefields.

¹² They live with those who are afflicted in their hearts and among the marauding plunderers of the country. They dwell among oppressed cowardly people and among their oppressors. Thus they are conversant with the practices of all opposing parties without mixing with any one of them.

¹³ But their minds are clear of doubts and free from errors. They are unaffected by passions and affections and unattached to any person or thing. They are quite discrete and disengaged, free and liberated, tranquil and serene, inclined to goodness reclining and resting in Supreme Spirit. ¹⁴ They are never immersed in great dangers, nor are they ever involved in very great difficulties. They remain like the boundary mountains that are not immersed in the water they surround.

¹⁵ They are never elated with joy at the fluctuating favors of fond and fascinating fortune, nor are they swollen, like the sea, with the increasing digits of the moon. ¹⁶ They do not fade away under sorrow or sickness, like plants under the scorching sun, nor are they refreshed by refreshments, like medicinal plants under the refreshing dews of night. ¹⁷ Calmly and without anxiety, they are employed in the discharge of their duties and in the acts of fruition. They neither long for nor relinquish the results that are attendant upon their acts.

¹⁸ They are neither elated with the success of their undertakings, nor are they depressed by the mishap of their efforts. They are not joyous at their joy and exultation, nor do they under danger and difficulty.

¹⁹ They do not droop down under despondence, nor are they dejected in despair. They are not merry in their prosperity, nor do they wail and weep in their adversity. ²⁰ They discharge their customary duties as prescribed by law and usage, but their minds remain as firm and unmoved as a mountain against all the efforts of the body.

²¹ Now Rama, remove your sight from your own egoism and keep it fixed on the true Ego which is a destroyer of all sins. Then go on with your ordinary course of conduct as you may like. ²² Look at these creations and their various creatures as they have existed in their successive stages and phases, but remain as firm as rock and as deep as the sea, and get rid of your errors. ²³ Know this grand hole as the reflection of one sole Consciousness beside which there is nothing as a reality or unreality, or as something or nothing.

²⁴ Rama, have your greatness as the great Brahman and preserve the dignity of human nature about you. Reject all that is unworthy of you. With an unattached heart to everything, manage yourself with gentleness everywhere and thus pass the days here. ²⁵ Why do you weep with your heart full of sorrow and grief? Why do you lament like the deluded? Why wander with your wandering mind like a bit of straw carried by whirling currents?

²⁶ Rama replied, "Truly sage, my questions are now erased from my mind. My heart is awakened to its good senses by your kindness, just as the lotus is enlivened by rising sunlight. ²⁷ My errors are dispersed like morning fog in autumn. My doubts are set down by your lectures, which I will always follow. ²⁸ I am now set free from the follies of pride, vanity, envy and unconsciousness. I feel lasting spiritual joy rising within me after the subsidence of all my sorrows. And now if you are not tired, please deliver your lectures with your clear understanding, and I will follow and practice them without fear or hesitation."

Chapter 13 — The Two Yogas of *Pranayama* and Self Inquiry Lead to Meditation

¹ Rama said, “I am truly calmed and set at ease, O brahmin, by renouncing all my desires, by my full knowledge of their impropriety, and by my being staid in the state of the liberated, even in this my present life. ² But tell me, sage, how can a man have his liberation by restraining his breathing for a time? How can restraining the breath restrict the desires that reside and rise from the mind? The breath belongs to the body and comes in and out of the heart and lungs.”

³ Vasishta said:—

O Rama, the means of crossing the ocean of this earth is known by the word yoga. Yoga means pacifying the mind in either of the two ways. ⁴ One is the acquisition of religious instruction, leading to the knowledge of the soul and of the Supreme Soul. The other is restraining breath (*pranayama*), which you will learn from the lecture that I am about to deliver.

⁵ Here Rama interrupted and said, “Tell me, sage, which of the two is easier and less painful?”

⁶ Vasishta replied:—

Rama, although I have mentioned two kinds of yoga, yet in common usage the word refers to the restriction of breathing. ⁷ True yoga is the concentration of the mind in God, which is the only means of our salvation in this world. This is achieved in either of two ways: regulation of breathing and perfection in learning. Both tend to the one and same effect, of fixing the attention in divine meditation.

⁸ Yoga practices appear too arduous a task to some people, while proficiency in knowledge seems to be too difficult to others. But to my understanding, the ascertainment of truth by theoretical knowledge seems far better than practice. ⁹ Ignorance is ever ignorant of truth, which does not lend its light to us in either our walking or sleeping states. So the ignorant practitioner is always in ignorance both when he is meditating or otherwise. But knowledge is always knowing, both when the knower is awake or asleep. ¹⁰ Yoga practices require fixed attention, painful postures, and proper times and places. It can be impossible to practice owing to the difficulty of getting all these advantages at all times.

¹¹ I have described both kinds of yoga propounded in the scriptures and the superiority of pure knowledge which fills the intellect with its unfading light. ¹² The regulation of breath, the firmness of the body, and dwelling in sequestered cells are helpful to reach the goal. But tell me, which of these can give knowledge to understanding, which is the greatest perfection in human nature?

¹³ Now Rama, if you think it is possible for you to sit quietly with utter suppression of your breaths and thoughts, then you can attempt to sit in your calm posture of meditation without uttering a single word.

Chapter 14 — Bhushunda, the Ancient Crow; and Description of Mount Meru

¹ Vasishta related:—

The vast universe, O Rama, is only an evolution of the will of the Infinite Brahman, just as the various representations in a mirage are only variations of sunlight.² Here the divine Brahma, born of the lotus-form navel of Vishnu, takes the title of the creator and preserver of all that has been produced by the Supreme Spirit. He is called also the great father of all because he produces the prime progenitors of mankind.

³ This divine being brought me forth from his mind. Therefore I am called mind-born (*manasaputra*), a child of the mind of this holy person. He made me settle first in the fixed polar circle of the starry frame where I watched the revolutions of the planetary spheres and the successive Ages of Manu (*manvantara*) before me.⁴ Once when I lived in the imperial court of Indra, the lord of gods, I heard sage Narada and other messengers of the gods talk about many long lived persons.⁵ Among those talking was sage Salatapa, a person of great understanding and a man of honor restrained in his speech. He said by way of conversation⁶ that on the northeast summit of Mount Meru there was a place full of sparkling gems. There was a wish-fulfilling kalpa tree of the mango kind there which yielded its fruit in all seasons of the year.⁷ The tree was covered with fresh and beautiful vines, and a branch extending towards the south had a large hollow in its top that contained the nests of birds of various kinds.

⁸ Among them there was a nest belonging to an old crow named Bhushunda who lived quite happy with himself, just as the god Brahma dwells content in his lotus bed.⁹ There is no one in the womb of this world who is as long lived as Bhushunda. Not even the gods in heaven can boast of a greater longevity than he among the feathered group, and it is doubtful whether there may be another as old as he in times to come.¹⁰ This old crow was beautiful even in old age. He had become passionless and great-minded by his long experience. He remained quiet with the tranquility of his mind and was graceful as he was full of knowledge of all times.¹¹ If anyone may have the long life of this crow, his life becomes meritorious and his old age is crowned with wisdom.

¹² In this manner, sage Salatapa related the virtues of the bird in full at the request of the gods in heaven. He did not utter anything more or less before the assembly of the gods who knew all things.

¹³ After the gods were satisfied with the story of the veteran crow, I felt a great curiosity in me to see and know more about this old aged bird.¹⁴ With this desire, I hastened to where the crow was said to rest in his happy nest. In a short time I reached the summit of Meru, shining with its precious stones.

¹⁵ The peak of the mountain was flaming like fire with the glare of its gems and red earth, and these painted the upper sky with the bright color of flowery honey and sparkling wine.¹⁶ The mountain shone as brightly as if it were burning with the blaze of the last conflagration. The sky was reddened by their reflection with shades of clouds appearing like the smoke of fire or the blue luster of sapphire.¹⁷ The mountain appeared to be formed by a collection of all kinds of colors on earth, giving it the appearance of the western sky at sunset.

¹⁸ The flame of fire proceeding from its crater and emitted through the crevice on its top seemed like the fire of the yogi in yoga, carried up from his bowels to the crown of the head.¹⁹ The reddish peaks

and heights of Sumeru resembled his arms and fingers painted with scarlet lac-dye in order to lay hold of his consort, the fair moon, by way of play.²⁰ The lurid flame of wildfire on this mountain seemed like the burning blaze of sacrificial fires rising to heaven, fed with clarified butter.²¹ The mountain with its elevated summit seemed to kiss the face of the sky, raising its fingers in the form of its peaks, their blazing gems resembling the nails of the fingers, in order to count the scattered stars.

²² The clouds roared on one side with the loud noise of drums. On the other, young plants and vines were dancing in happy trees, clusters of flowers were smiling like blooming beauties, and swarms of humming bees were hovering over them.²³ Here the lofty palm trees seemed to be smiling, showing their teeth in their denticulate leaves on seeing the giddy groups of apsara nymphs swinging and loosely strolling about in their amorous dalliances under their shade.²⁴ There celestials went in pairs to their caves in the mountain in order to relieve themselves of the trouble of trudging over the rugged paths of the craggy mountain. They were clothed in the white vest of the open, and having the stream of the Ganges falling from high for their sacred thread.

²⁵ The white mountain stood like a grey headed hermit, holding reeds as canes in his hand. The celestial inhabitants of the mountain rested under the cover of vines, being lulled by the sleep by the gurgling sound of waters falling from precipice to precipice.²⁶ The mountain king was crowned by full blown lotuses that grew on its top, regaled by the sweet fragrance which the breezes bore from them. It was decorated with gems of the starry sky on its crown and charmed with the sweet songs of gandharvas playing their tunes on it.²⁷ His hoary head pierced the silvery region of heaven and was one with the home of the gods.

²⁸ The many colored tops of Meru, emitting the various colors of red, white, black, blue, yellow and gray stones that are embodied in its body, lent the sky its variegated colors in the morning and evening, while the various color blossoms on its tops invited heavenly nymphs to their rambles and sports over them.

Chapter 15 — Vasishta's Visit & Description of Meru and Bhushunda

¹ Vasishta continued:—

I saw the kalpa tree on the top of one of these peaks, surrounded by its branches on all sides and covered with flowers appearing like tufts of hairs on its head.² This tree was covered with the pollen of its flowers which shrouded it like a thick mist or cloud. Its flowers shown as bright as brilliant gems. Its great height reaching the sky made it look like a steeple standing upon the peak.³ Its flowers were twice as many as the stars in heaven, and its leaves doubled the clouds in their bulk and thickness. Its filaments were more shiny than flashes of lightning, and its flower pollen was far brighter than the surrounding sunbeams.

⁴ The songs of the gandharvas dwelling on the branches of this tree played to the buzz of humming bees. The nimble feet and waving palms of apsara nymphs, dancing and playing on every leaflet, were double the number of leaves.⁵ The spirits of the aerial spiritual masters and gandharvas hovering on this tree far out-numbered the birds that flocked and fluttered about it. The grayish frost which wrapped it like a shiny covering outshone the glossy rind that served for its raiment of fine linen.

⁶ The top of this tree touched the moon and by deriving its moisture from that humid planet, yielded its fruits of larger size than the orb of the moon itself. The clouds gathering about its trunk had doubled the size of its joints.⁷ Gods rested on the trunk of this tree and kinnaras reclined on its leaves. Clouds covered its trees and asura demons slept under its branches.

⁸ The apsaras repelled their mates by the sound of their bracelets, as bees put beetles to flight by their buzzing, and sucked the honey from the flower cup to their fill.⁹ The tree of desire extends on all sides of the sky and fills the space of the whole world by embodying the gods and demigods and men and all kinds of living beings in it.¹⁰ It was full of blooming buds and blossoms and covered with its tender leaves and leaflets. It was filled with flourishing flowers and graced the forest all around.¹¹ It flushed with its filaments and abounded with its shining small flowers. With its radiant coverings and ornamented trappings, it was full to provide to the needs of its devotees, and it was ever in a flurry with the playful dance of tender plants and vines all around it.¹² It was fully laden with flowers on all sides and abundant with fruit on all its branches. Covered with copious pollen from its flowers, which it lavished and scattered on all its sides, it became charming and attractive to all hearts.

¹³ I saw a flock of feathered birds fluttering about the happy covered shelter and resting about the broad branches of the tree. Some were resting within the covering of the leafy tree. Others pecked at the flowers and fruit with their bills.¹⁴ I saw the storks and swans that are the vehicles of Brahma, resembling the digits of the bright moon in whiteness, feeding on fragments of lotus stalks and picking the bulbous roots of arjuna and lotus plants in the lakes.¹⁵ The swans of Brahma muttered the sacred sound of Om, the initial syllable of the Vedas, as they were addicted to it by their teacher, the god Brahma himself.

¹⁶ I saw parrots with their blue wings resembling the blue clouds of heaven, their red beaks shining like the flashes of lightning, and uttering their shrill sound like the swaha of the Veda.¹⁷ I also saw the green parrots of the god of fire scattered all about like green kusa grass lying scattered on the sacrificial altar of the gods. I saw young peacocks with their crests glowing like the glistening flames of fire.¹⁸ I saw groups of peacocks fostered by the goddess Gauri, and also the big peacocks that

belong to the god Kumara. I also saw the vehicle of Skanda, the peacocks that are versed in knowledge.

¹⁹ I saw many heavy and huge bodied birds born to live, breed and die in their natal air, never descending to the ground. These were as white as the clouds of autumn and nestled with their mates in the air. They are commonly known under the name of aerial birds. ²⁰ I saw the goslings of the breed of Brahma's geese and the younglings of the brood of Agni's parrots. I saw the peacocks forming the vehicles of the war god Skanda. ²¹ I saw bharadwaja birds and many other kinds of big charui sparrows. I also saw kalavinca sparrows, little cranes, pelicans, cuckoos, vultures, cranes and cocks. ²² I saw a great variety of other birds such as bhushus, chushus and partridges of many kinds, whose numbers are no less than all the living animals of this earth taken together.

²³ Then I began to peer from my ethereal seat, through the thickening leaves of the tree to the nests of the birds, amidst the hollows of far distant branches towards the south. ²⁴ After some time I spied a body of crows at a distance, sitting in rows like leaves of branches, resembling streaks of dark clouds on either sides of the Lokaloka horizon. ²⁵ After a while, I noticed there a lonely branch with a spacious hollow in it. It was scattered over with various flowers and smelling with a variety of perfumes. ²⁶ It was the happy home of virtuous women in heaven who are perfumed with sweet scenting clusters of flowers. There were crows sitting in rows. They were perfectly freed from all cares and sorrows. ²⁷ Their great group appeared like the big body of a cloud separated from the tumultuous air of the lower atmosphere and resting on the calm firmament of the upper sky. There I saw the venerable Bhushunda sitting quietly with his exalted body.

²⁸ He sat there like a sapphire shining prominently among fragments of glass. He appeared to have a brave heart and mind, and of a dignified and graceful appearance. ²⁹ Being heedful of the rule of the restriction of his respiration and suppression of his voice, he was quite happy with his long longevity and was renowned everywhere as a long lived seer. ³⁰ He witnessed the course of ages and aeons, marking their advent and exodus in repeated succession, and thereby was known as the time-worn Bhushunda in this world, being of stout and unflinching mind. ³¹ He was weary with counting revolutions of kalpa cycles and the returns of the preserving divinities of the world, such as the Shivas, Indras, the gods of the winds, and others. ³² He was the chronicler of all antiquity, the recorder of the wars of the gods and demons and the hurling of high hills in heaven. Yet he was of a clear countenance and profound mind. He was complacent to all and his words were as sweet as honey.

³³ This old seer had direct experience of all that was unknown and indistinct to others. He had no egotism or selfishness. He was the lord over all his friends and children, and his servants and their seniors. He was the true narrator of all things at all times. ³⁴ His speech was clear and graceful, sweet and pleasing. His heart was tender like a cooling lake and as soft as a lotus flower. He was acquainted with all usages and customs, his knowledge was deep and profound, and he was ever the serene in appearance.

Chapter 16 — Vasishta and Bhushunda Meet; Vasishta's Question

¹ Vasishta continued:—

I then came before the veteran crow with my brilliant ethereal body, like a bright meteor falling from the sky on the top of a mountain. My sudden appearance startled the assembly, as if they were disturbed by my intrusion.² The assembly of the black birds trembled like the lotuses of a lake at the shaking of the gentle breeze. The agitation of the air at my slow descent troubled them as much as an earthquake troubles the waters of the deep.³ But Bhushunda, who was a seer of the three times, was at not all disturbed at my arrival. He knows me as Vasishta, now in attendance upon him.

⁴ He rose from his leafy seat and advanced slowly before me. With sweet sounds like honey, he said, "I welcome you, great sage, to my humble cell."⁵ Then he stretched both hands to me, holding clusters of flowers that he had at his will and then scattered them in handfuls upon me like a cloud scattering dewdrops over the ground.⁶ "Take this seat," said he, and stretched a newly shorn rind of the kalpa tree with his hand. This he had plucked with his own hand. He did not need the help of his attendant crows for this happy task.

⁷ On the rising of Bhushunda, the menials also arose from their seats. Then on seeing the sage seated on his seat, they again took their respective seats and posts.⁸ Having refreshed myself with the sweet scent of the kalpa vines all about me, all the birds gathered around me sitting face to face with their chief.⁹ Having offered me water and honey for my refreshment, together with the *arghya* worthy of me, the high minded Bhushunda felt the cheer of his mind, then approached me with a pleasing disposition and words as sweet as honey.

¹⁰ Bhushunda said, "O lord, after so much time you have favored me with your kind visit, which by its ambrosial influence has resuscitated our tree and ourselves.¹¹ O great muni who is honored of the honorable, I think that my long earned virtues have brought you here to this place. I would like to know from where your course is bent to my humble abode.¹² You sage, who has long wandered amid the great gloom of this world and know its errors by your infallible experience, must have your peace of mind.¹³ What I wish to know is what makes you take this trouble today. We who await your answer will consider it a great favor.¹⁴ By the sight of your holy feet, O venerable sage, we are given knowledge of everything. Yet my obligation at this uncalled for visit emboldens me to ask this further favor from you."

¹⁵ "I know that your knowledge of us as among the long lived has directed your attention towards me and made your holiness sanctify this place by your gracious visit to us.¹⁶ Although I know this is the reason for your visit, yet it is my desire to satisfy myself with the sweetness of your nectar words. That has prompted me to propose this question to you."

¹⁷ In this manner did the long-lived crow, clear sighted with his knowledge of the three times, deliver his question by way of formality.

¹⁸ Vasishta answered, "Yes, O king of birds! It is true as you say that I have come here to see your long lasting self.¹⁹ You are truly very fortunate with your serenity, and your wisdom has fortunately saved you from falling into the dangerous snares of this world.²⁰ Now sage, consent to answer my questions regarding to your great age. Tell me truly. Of what family were you born and how did

you come to know what is worth knowing? ²¹ Tell me sage, if you remember the length of life that you have passed and if you recollect by your long clear vision how you came to be settled in this lodging.”

²² Bhushunda replied, “I will relate to you all that you ask of me, O great sage. Your great soul shall have to hear it attentively without any inadvertence of your mind. ²³ It is certain, O venerable sage, that the topics which deserve the attention of great minded souls like yourselves will prove effective to destroy the evils of the world, just as the influence of the clouds and their propitious rains remove the heat of the sun.”

Chapter 17 — Description of Bhushunda

¹ Vasishta said:—

Now Rama, this Bhushunda, whose complexion was as black as a cloud heavy with water in the rainy season, had a face which was neither merry nor sorry and a mind free from deceit or cunning.² His voice was grave and mild and his words were accompanied by a gentle smile. He spoke of the three worlds as if he balanced three bel fruit in his hands.³ He looked upon all things as if they were mere straws before him. He weighed the lives of men in proportion to their enjoyments and by the ratio of their rations on earth. He had the knowledge of what could be known and the unknowable One.⁴ He was big bodied, grave and quiet, and calm as Mount Mandara. His mind was full and clear as the calm ocean after a storm.⁵ His mind was perfectly tranquil and quite at ease, full of joy within itself. He was acquainted with the appearance and disappearance of all beings born in this world.⁶ His face was delightful with his inner delight and his voice was as sweet as the melody of a sweet song. He seemed to have taken a new born form on himself, and his joyfulness dispelled the fears of men.

⁷ After he had respectfully received and approached me with his pure and sweet words, he began to tell me his own story, just as the rumbling of a rainy cloud delights the hearts of the thirsty world.

Chapter 18 — Bhushunda's Matrika Background, Alambusha; the Matrikas Overpower Parvati

¹ Bhushunda related:—

In this world there is the god of gods, Hara (Shiva) by name, who is chief among the gods and honored by all the gods of heaven.² He had his consort Gauri (Parvati) who is the better half of his body and by whom he is embraced like an ivy clings to a young amra tree. Her bosom resembled a cluster of blooming blossoms and her eyes resembled the lines of black bees fluttering in the summer sky.³ The hoary locks of hair Hara's matted head were like white lace made by the snow-white stream of the Ganges, whose waves were like clusters of flowers on a hair-band.⁴ The crown of his head was decorated with the shining milk-white disc of the crescent moon which sprung from the bosom of the Milky Ocean and spread her bright radiance and ambrosial dews about his body.⁵ The constant flow of ambrosial nectar from the moon on his crest made him immortal by reducing the heat of the deadly poison which he swallowed. That poison marked his throat with the bluish color of sapphire or lapis lazuli, for which he is named blue-throated, Nilakantha.

⁶ The body of the god is smeared with ash symbolic of the dust to which the world was reduced by the flame of his all destructive fire. The stream of water flowing from the Ganges on his head is typical of the current of his clear knowledge of all things.⁷ His body is decorated with strings of bleached bones far brighter than the silvery beams of the fair moon. These serve as necklaces of silver and pearly gems decorating his body.⁸ His vest is the open sky with its plates of folded clouds washed by milk-white moonbeams and studded with the many colored spots of the stars.

⁹ He is surrounded by prowling jackals devouring burnt carcasses on funeral grounds. He lives beyond the habitations of men, in cemeteries and mortuaries in the outskirts of cities.

¹⁰ The god is accompanied by the Mother Goddesses, the Matrikas who are decorated with strings of human skulls about their necks and girt with the threads of entrails on their bodies. The fat and flesh of dead bodies and the blood and moisture of putrid carcasses form their delectable food and drink.

¹¹ Their bodies are soft and shining like gold. They move about with sparkling gems on their heads and bracelets of snakes curled round their wrists.

¹² The acts of this god Shiva are dreadful to relate and strike terror in hearts of gods and demons, and all others beings beside. One glance of his eye is enough to set mountains on fire and his hunger grasps the whole world in one morsel.¹³ The perpetual rest of his meditative mind in holy samadhi trance has restored the world to rest, and the movement of his arms at intervals is attended with the destruction of demons.¹⁴ His forms of the elements are intently bent on their fixed purposes without being deterred by the impulses of his anger, hatred or affection. The wind of his breath makes mountains tremble and turns the humid earth to arid ground.¹⁵ His playmates are devils with their heads and faces resembling those of bears, camels, goats and serpents. They have heads for hoofs, hoofs as their hands, hands that serve as their teeth, and faces and mouths set in their bellies and breasts.

¹⁶ His face shone brightly with the rays of his three eyes, and the Matrikas were dependent on him as were his dependent demonic bands of deity attendants (*ganadevata*, the gods of categories).

¹⁷ The Mother Goddesses, together with bands of demons, dance about Shiva lowly at his bidding and

feed upon living bodies born and dying in all fourteen regions of creation.¹⁸ These Matrikas, having faces like asses and camels, passed at great distances from Shiva. They are fond of feeding on flesh and fat and drinking the red hot blood as their wine. They have fragments of dead bodies hanging around their bodies like strings of pearls.¹⁹ They live in the hollows of hills, in the open sky, and other regions also. They also dwell in holes under the ground, and they like to live in cemeteries and in the pores of human and brute bodies.

²⁰ There are the goddesses known under the names of Jaya, Vijaya, Jayanti, Aparajita, Siddha Rakta and Alambusha, and another bearing the name of Utpata.²¹ These eight are called the leaders of the whole body of Matrikas. The others are subordinate to these, and there are others again subordinate to them.²² Among all these venerable Matrikas, there is one named Alambusha who is the source of my birth. I revealed this to you on account of your great favor to me, by your kind call to my cell.

²³ She had the crow named Chanda for her vehicle, which had its bones and bills as strong as the bolts of Indra's thunder. Chanda was as dark as a mountain of black blue agate. He served her goddess like Garuda served the consort of Vishnu.

²⁴ Once this group of eight Matrika goddesses assembled and bent their course in the ethereal firmament on some of their malevolent purposes.²⁵ They made their merry makings and religious revels in the air, then turned their course to the left side where they halted at the shrine of Tumburu which was sacred to Shiva.²⁶ There they worshipped the forms of Tumburu and Bhairava, which are adored in all the worlds, then entertained themselves with a variety of discourses seasoned with drinking and singing.²⁷ They look up the topic, among other subjects of their conversation, whether they were slighted and disliked by their paramour (Shiva) who had given one half of his body to his spouse, Uma (Parvati).²⁸ "We shall now show him our prowess so that he may never think of despising our great powers even by a contemptuous look. For though the god feigns to be single and naked, yet we know he is divided in two parts with his consort Uma forming his better half."

²⁹ Thus determined, the goddesses overpowered Uma by one of their potent charms and by sprinkling a little water upon her, as they do to distract a beast about to be sacrificed before the alter. By this spell they succeeded changing the fine features of Durga (Parvati), and weakening her body.³⁰ By their power of enchantment, they managed to detach Uma from the body of Hara (Shiva) and bring her before them with an intent to curse her by converting her fair form to their own dark form.

³¹ There was great rejoicing on the day they cursed Parvati. All the Matrikas joined dancing and singing and making their giddy revelries before her.³² The shouts of their great joy and loud laughter resounded in the sky, and the jumping and hopping of their big bodies laid open their backs and bellies to sight.³³ Some laughed so loudly with deafening claps of their hands that the sound rebounded in the sky like the roaring of lions and clouds. Their bodies moved in their warlike dances and the sound of their singing rang through the forests and reached the mountains,³⁴ sounding loudly echoing in mountain caves and running to the depth of the ocean which swelled with surges like the full moon tide.³⁵ Others drank their bowels and daubed their bodies from head to foot with liquor, muttering their drunken chatters that chattered in the sky.

³⁶ They drank again and sang louder and louder. They spun around like tops, uttering and muttering

like drunkards. They laughed and sipped and chopped and fell down and rolled and prattled aloud. Thus they reeled in fits and chewed pieces of their flesh meats until these drunken dancing goddesses did all their orgies in their giddy revels.

Chapter 19 — Bhushunda's Birth with Twenty Brothers, Blessings of Brahmi, His Father's Advice to Live in the Kalpa Tree on Mount Meru

¹ Bhushunda continued:—

While the goddesses were making merry, their attractive vehicles, their carrier birds, also caught the infection and indulged themselves in giddy jigs and giggles, drinking the red blood of their victims for liquor. ² Giddy from their drink, the chattering swans that were fit vehicles for Brahma's consorts danced and frolicked in the air in company with the crow Chanda, the vehicle of Alambusha. ³ Then as the swans darted down, dancing and drinking and chattering on the banks of streams, they felt impassioned and inflamed by lust, because the borders of waters excite desire. ⁴ The swans excited by their carnal desires dallied with that crow in their state of giddiness, which is often the cause of unnatural desires. ⁵ Thus that single crow, Chanda by name, mated with seven swans at once on that bank, one by one with everyone of them according to their desire. ⁶ The swans became pregnant after gratification of their lust, and the goddesses being satisfied by their merry dance became quiet and took rest.

⁷ Then these goddesses of great delusion went to their consort Shiva and presented his favorite Uma to him for his food. ⁸ The god bearing the crescent moon on his forehead and holding the trident in his hand, came to know that they had offered his beloved for his meat. He became highly enraged at the Mother Goddesses. ⁹ Then these Matrikas brought out parts of Uma's body which they had swallowed in their bodies as their food and presented her entire for her remarriage with the moon-headed deity. ¹⁰ At last the god Hara and his consorts, being all reconciled to one another together with their dependents and vehicles, retired to their respective quarters with gladness of their minds.

¹¹ Brahma's swans, perceiving their pregnancy, returned to the presence of their goddess (Brahmi, the spouse of Brahma) and described what had happened, as I have, O chief of sages, already described to you. ¹² On hearing their words, the goddess spoke kindly and said, "You my servants, cannot now be capable of bearing my car in the air as before. You must be allowed to move about at your pleasure until you have delivered of your burdens." ¹³ After the kind goddess said these words to her swans who were ailing under the load of their unborn, she returned to her customary meditation and remained in her irreversible rest with the gladness of her mind.

¹⁴ The swans, big with the burden of their unborn, grazed in the lotus bed of Vishnu's navel which had been the birth place of the great Brahma. ¹⁵ The swans matured in their pregnancy by feeding upon the lotus-like navel of Vishnu. They brought forth their tender eggs in time, as calm vines shoot out sprouts in the spring. ¹⁶ They laid twenty-one eggs in their proper time, which afterwards cracked apart like so many cosmic eggs in the lake located in Vishnu's navel.

¹⁷ It was these eggs, O great sage, that gave birth to twenty-one brothers, all of whom are known under the name of the fraternity of Chanda crows. ¹⁸ Born in the lotus bed of Vishnu's navel, we were fostered and brought up in that place until we were fledged and able to fly and flutter in the air. ¹⁹ Then we joined our mother swans in the service of our Matrika goddess, who after our long services unto her, was roused from her intense meditation at last.

²⁰ Now sage, it was in course of time that goddess Brahmi, inclined of her own wish to please,

received us into her good graces and favored us with the gift (of foresight), whereby we are quite liberated in this life.²¹ We thought of remaining in peace and in the tranquility of our minds. Being determined to take ourselves to solitary contemplation, we went to our father, the old crow Chanda, for his advice.²² We were received by our father's embraces and favored with the presence of his goddess Alumbusha. They looked on us with kindness and allowed us to remain near them with our self-restricted conduct.

²³ Chanda said, "O my darlings! Have you obtained your release from weaving the web of your desires? You are then set free from the snare of this world which binds fast all beings in it.²⁴ If not so, then I will pray to my goddess, who is always generous to her devotees, to confer on you the blessing of complete knowledge."

²⁵ The crows replied, "O sir, we have known whatever is knowable by the good grace of the goddess Brahmi. Now we seek only a good solitary place for the sake of undisturbed meditation."

²⁶ Chanda returned. "I will point it out to you. It is in the high mountain of Meru in the polar region, which is the seat of all the celestials and the great receptacle of all the treasures and gems on earth.

²⁷ This mountain stands like a lofty pillar of gold in the middle of the great dome of the universe. It is lit by the luminous orbs of the sun and moon as its two lamps, and it is the home of all kinds of animals.²⁸ This lofty mountain stands like the lifted arm of this orb of the earth, its shining peaks and heights resembling its fingers and their jewels and having moonbeams as a golden canopy raised over its head and the main islands for its bracelets."

²⁹ "Mount Meru is situated as the sole monarch in the middle of Asia. It is surrounded on all sides by boundary mountains as its chieftains. With its two eyeballs, the rolling sun and moon, it glances over the surrounding hillocks like a king seated in the center looking upon his courtiers sitting around him.

³⁰ Clusters of stars in the sky hang like wreaths of malati flowers around his neck. The bright moon that leads the retinue of stars forms the crowning jewel over its head. The sky on ten sides girds it as its vest, and the naagas of both kinds are the guards at its gates.³¹ The apsaras of heaven are employed fanning it with breezes from all quarters, flapping their fly-whisk fans of passing clouds, their hands decorated with the many colors of heaven as their ornaments.³² Its huge body is stretched over a huge distance, and its feet are rooted fast many fathoms underneath the earth where they worshipped by naagas, asuras and large serpents."

³³ "It has thousands of ridges and steeps, crags and cliffs below its two eyes of sun and moon. These are praised as celestial regions by the gods, gandharvas and kinnaras who inhabit them.³⁴ There are fourteen kinds of superior beings inhabiting the supernatural world of this mountain. These dwell there with their households and relatives in their respective circles without ever seeing the others' cities."

³⁵ "On the northeast corner of this mountain there is a large ridge with its shining summit rising as high and bright as the shining sun.³⁶ There stands a large wish-fulfilling kalpa tree on the outside of that ridge. This tree is peopled with living beings of various kinds and presents a picture of a whole world in miniature.³⁷ The southern stem of this tree has a protruding branch with golden leaves. Its blossoms bloom like clusters of brilliant gems. Its fruit are bright and luscious to view, like the bright and cooling orb of the moon."

³⁸ "Formerly I had built my nest on that branch and decorated it with all sorts of shining gems. There it was, O my children, that I played and enjoyed myself while my goddess sat in meditation.³⁹ My nest was hidden under shining flowers and stored with luscious fruits. Its door was fastened with bolts of precious gems.⁴⁰ It was full of young crows who knew how to behave properly with one another. Its inside was scattered with flowers and was cooling at all times and seasons.⁴¹ Therefore, my children, go to that nest which is inaccessible even to the gods. By remaining there, you will obtain both your livelihood and liberation without any molestation."

⁴² Saying so, our father kissed and embraced everyone of us and presented us with meat food he had received from his goddess.⁴³ After taking our meal, we prostrated ourselves at the feet of our father and his goddess, then flew in the air from the Vindhyan range which is sacred to the goddess Alumbusha.⁴⁴ We passed over the nether sky, entered the region of the clouds, then coming out of their hollow caves, we flew on the wings of winds to the empty void of the ethereal gods to whom we paid our homage.⁴⁵ Having passed the solar world, we arrived at another sphere of the fixed stars above where we saw the heaven of the immortals. From there we reached the highest heaven of Brahma.⁴⁶ There we bowed down to the goddess Brahmi and our mother (the swan) which was her vehicle, and described in detail what our father had told us to do.⁴⁷ They endeared and embraced us with kind affection, then bade us to do as we were bid by our father. At this we bowed down to them, then departed from the seat of Brahma.

⁴⁸ We directed our flight to Meru where we found this kalpa tree and our appointed nest. Here, apart and remote from all, we hold our silence in all matters.⁴⁹ We passed the region of the rulers of the skies which shone to a great distance with the blaze of solar rays. We fled through empty air with the speed of winds.

⁵⁰ I have told you in length in answer to your question regarding the manner of our birth and how we are settled in this place. I have also told you how we came to the knowledge of truth, whereby we have come to this state of undisturbed peace and tranquility. Now bid us, O great sage, what more can I say to satisfy your curiosity about me?

Chapter 20 — Bhushunda's Survival of the Ends of Ages

¹ Bhushunda continued:—

This world has existed in the previous kalpa in the very same state as it does at present. There is no variation in the formation or location of anything in any way.² Therefore, O great sage, I am accustomed to look to the past and present with an equal eye. I will relate the events of my past life and bygone ages for your information as if they exist with me even now.³ Today, O great sage, I find the fruits of my past lives' pious acts have rewarded me with your blessed presence in this, my humble cell.⁴ My nest, this tree branch, this kalpa tree, and I myself are all blessed by your propitious presence in this place.⁵ Sage, consider to accept of this seat and this gift offered to you by a suppliant bird. Having purified us by your kind acceptance of our poor offerings, please command what other service we can render to you.

⁶ Vasishta said:—

Rama, after Bhushunda had again presented the seat and gift to me, I offered another request to him in these words.⁷ I said, "Tell me, O senior among birds, why don't I see your brothers here? They must be equally old and strong in their bodies and intellects as you show yourself to be."

⁸ Bhushunda answered and said:—

I am destined to remain here alone, O muni, to witness the continuous course of time and to count and recount the revolutions of ages as they reckon the succession of days and nights.⁹ During this length of time, I had the misfortune to witness all my younger brothers give up their mortal frames as trifling straw and find their rest in the blessed state.¹⁰ O great sage, I have seen the very long lived, the very great indignant, the very strong, and very wise all be gorged in the unconscious bowels of bodiless death.

¹¹ Vasishta said, "Say, O venerable father, how did you remain unmolested by the world-ending flood, the great storm which outstripped the winds in its velocity and bore the great bodies of the sun, moon and stars like jewels hanging about its neck.¹² Say, O primeval seer, how did you escape unscathed by the burning flame of solar rays which melted mountains and consumed forests in one all-devouring conflagration.¹³ O venerable sage, how did you remain unfrozen under cold moonbeams that froze clear water into hard stone? How did you flee unhurt from the showers of hail which poured in profusion from great flood clouds?¹⁴ Tell me, O ancient bird, why were you not crushed under snow that fell from flood clouds as thickly as huge trees felled by axes from the tops of high hills.¹⁵ Say, why this kalpa tree, which rises higher than all other forests, was not broken down when all other trees on earth were leveled to the ground by the universal tornado?

¹⁶ Bhushunda replied:—

O brahmin, my station in the open and empty air is quite unsupported, without any solid or fixed support. It is either unnoticed or looked upon with disregard and contempt by all. My living and livelihood are the most despicable among all living beings.¹⁷ Thus has the Lord of beings appointed these aerial beings to remain free from disease and death in these forests, or fly about in empty air in their aerial course.¹⁸ O venerable sage, then how can any sorrow or sickness befall us here? We are born to be immortal and rove freely in open air. We are free from those pains and sorrows which take

the birds bound in traps of their own desires, hopes and fears.

¹⁹ Sage, I have always placed my reliance on the peace and contentment of my soul. I never allow myself to fall into the error of taking the unsubstantial for substantial. ²⁰ I am quite content with what simple nature requires and affords. I am entirely free from those cares and endeavors that are attended with pain. I live only to pass my time in this, my lonely lodging. ²¹ I neither wish to entirely wallow in my bodily enjoyments nor desire death to avoid the retribution of my acts. I live as long as I have to live and will die when death comes upon me.

²² I have seen the changeful states of mankind, witnessed many examples of the changing fortunes of human affairs, and thereby have banished all sorts of restlessness from my body and mind. ²³ By the constant light of my internal spirit, I am kept from the sight of all sorrow and grief. From my seat on the height of this kalpa tree, I clearly see the course of the world and the changes of time. ²⁴ Though the changes of days and nights are not visible on the high heights of our heavenly mountain, yet I am not ignorant of the changing fortunes of the times and events in the solar and lunar worlds rolling constantly below us. ²⁵ Though my home in the cell of this kalpa tree is always illuminated by the light of gems inlaid in it, yet I can know the course of time by the respirations of my breath, which like a chronometer informs me of the regular course of time.

²⁶ Knowing what is real from all that is unreal, I have refrained from pursuing unrealities and settled in my knowledge of the true reality. By forsaking its natural unsteadiness, my mind is practiced to rest at all times in its perfect peace and tranquility. ²⁷ I am not led to the snare of false worldly affairs, nor frightened like earthly crows in our yearning after food by the hissings of men. ²⁸ By the serene light of the supreme joy of our souls and by the virtue of the unalterable patience of my mind, I look into the errors and delusions of the world without falling in them myself.

²⁹ Great sage, know that our minds remain calm even under the shock of those dangers and perils which ruffle the tempers and understandings of ordinary people, just as pure crystal remains unstained by the blackest colors that surround it. ³⁰ The course of the world appears very smooth and pleasant upon first glance, but as one goes on in it and upon mature consideration, it proves to be frail, unsteady and false. ³¹ Thus all living beings are seen to pass away. Whether they return here again or not, nobody can tell. Then what is it that we must fear?

³² As the course of streams runs continually to the ocean, so the progress of life tends constantly to the depth of eternity. But I, who stands on the border of the great ocean of eternity, have escaped from being carried away by the current of time. ³³ I neither cling to my life nor fling it away, but bear it as well as I may. I remain like airy orchids, lightly touching and unattached to their supporting tree.

³⁴ Moreover, the good of the best sort of men who are beyond the reach of fear, sorrow and pain, like yourself, has set us free from all sorts of malady. ³⁵ From the examples of such persons, my mind has become cold and unconcerned about the affairs of busy life. It is employed only in scanning truth and the true nature of things. ³⁶ My soul find its rest in its unchangeable and unperturbed state. It has the fullness of its light and delight, just as the sea has its floodtide at the rising of the full moon upon its bosom.

³⁷ Sage, I am as highly pleased at your presence here at this time as the Milky Ocean overflowed

when it was churned by Mandara Mountain.³⁸ Sage, I do not account anything as more precious and more favorable than holy saints who have nothing to desire should take pains to pay their kind visit to my humble cell.³⁹ What do we gain from our enjoyments that are pleasant for the time being, then lose their zest the next moment? Only the company of the great and good gives the best gifts like the philosopher's stone.⁴⁰ You sage, who is cool and grave in your nature, and soft, sweet and slow in your speech, are like the beneficent bee that sits and sips the juice from the flowers in the three worlds and converts it into the sweet balm of honey.⁴¹ I think, O spiritual sage, that all my sins are removed at your blessed sight. The tree of my life is blessed with its best fruit of spiritual bliss which results from the society of the virtuous whose taste removes all diseases and dangers.

Chapter 21 — Explanation of Bushunda's Longevity; His Memories of the Past

¹ Bhushunda continued:—

This kalpa tree where we live remains firm and unshaken amidst the revolutions of ages and the blasts of all destroying cyclones and hurricanes.² This tree of desire is inaccessible to other people dwelling in all worlds. Therefore we reside here in perfect peace and delight without disturbance of any kind.

³ When Hiranyakha, the gigantic demon of the antediluvian race, strove to hurl this earth with all its seven continents into the lowest abyss, even then did this tree remain firm on its roots on the summit of this mountain.⁴ When the mountainous home of the gods trembled with all other mountains of this earth, even then this tree remained unshaken on its firm basis.⁵ When Narayana held the seat of the gods with two of his arms and lifted Mandara Mountain with the other two, even then this tree remained unshaken.

⁶ When the sun and the moon shook with fear at the tremendous warfare between gods and demons, and the whole earth was in a state of commotion and confusion, even then this tree stood firmly on its root.⁷ When mountains were uprooted by hailstorms blowing with tremendous violence, sweeping away the huge forest trees of this Mount Meru, even then this tree was unshaken by the blast.⁸ When Mount Mandara rolled into the Milky Ocean and gusts of wind filling its caves bore it afloat on the surface of the water, and great masses of flood clouds rolled about in the dome of heaven, even then this tree remained steadfast as a rock.

⁹ When this Mount Meru was under the grasp of Kalanemi who was going to crush it by his gigantic might, even then this tree remained steady on its roots.¹⁰ When the spiritual masters were blown away by the flapping wings of Garuda, the king of birds, in their warfare with each other for this ambrosial food, even then this remained unmoved by the wind.¹¹ When the snake that upholds the earth was attacked by Rudra in the form of Garuda, who shook the world by the blast of his wings, even then this tree was unshaken by the wind.¹² When the flame of the last conflagration threatened to consume the world with its seas and mountains, and made the snake which supported the earth on his hoods throw out living fire from all his many mouths, even then this tree was neither shaken nor burnt down by the gorgeous and all-devouring fire.

¹³ Such being the stability of this tree, O sage, there is no danger that can take us here, just as there is no evil that can ever befall the inhabitants of heaven. How can I, O great sage, ever be exposed to any danger when I am situated in this tree which defies all casualties? I am out of all fear and danger as those who are situated in heaven.

¹⁴ Vasishta replied, “But tell me, O sagely bird who has borne the blasts of dissolution, how could you remain unhurt and unimpaired when many suns, moons and stars have fallen and faded away?”

¹⁵ Bhushunda said:—

The order of the world and the laws of nature are broken and dissolved at the end of a kalpa period. Then I am compelled to forsake our nest as an ungrateful man alienates his best friend.¹⁶ Then I remain in the air freed from my fancies, the members of the body become defunct of their natural functions, and the mind is released from its acts of willing.¹⁷ When the zodiacal suns shine in their

full vigor and melt down the mountains by their intense heat, I remain with my understanding under the influence of the power of the Varuna mantra.¹⁸ When the doomsday flood winds blow with full force, shattering and scattering huge mountains everywhere, then by remembering the Parvati mantra I remain as fixed as a rock.¹⁹ When the earth with its mountains is dissolved in water and presents the face of a universal ocean over its surface, then by virtue of the flying power of the Vayu mantra I keep myself aloft in the air.

²⁰ Then I convey myself across this visible world and rest in the holy state of the spotless spirit. I remain in a state of profound sleep without any agitation of body or mind.²¹ I remain in this mentally tranquil state until the lotus-born Brahma is again employed in his work of creation. Then I reenter into the limits of the re-created world, where I again settle on this tree of desire.

²² Vasishtha said, "Tell me, O lord of birds, why don't other yogis remain as steady as you by the fixed attention of your dhyana meditation?"

²³ Bhushunda replied:—

O venerable sage, the inseparable and overruling power of destiny that nobody can prevent or set aside dooms me to live this way, as it does others in their own particular modes of life.²⁴ None can oppose or remodel what must come to pass on him. It is nature's law that all things must be as they are ordained to be.²⁵ Because of my firm desire things are so fixed and allotted to my share that they must so come to pass as my fate at each kalpa and over again, that this tree must grow on the summit of this mountain, and that I must have my nest in its hollow.

²⁶ Vasishtha said, "Sage, you are as long-lived as our salvation is lasting. You are able to guide us in the paths of truth because you are wise in true wisdom and calm in your purpose of yoga of deep meditation.²⁷ Sage, you have seen the many changes of the world, and have been experienced in all things in the repeated course of creations. You must be best able to tell me the wonders that you have witnessed during the revolution of ages."

²⁸ Bhushunda replied:—

O great sage, I remember that the earth beneath this Mount Meru was once a desolate land without a hill, rock, trees, plants or even grass upon it.²⁹ I also remember the earth under me was full of ashes for a period of numberless centuries of years.³⁰ I remember a time when the lord of day, the sun, was unproduced, when the moon was not yet known, and when the earth under me was not divided by day and light but was lit by the light of this Mount Meru.³¹ I remember this mountain throwing the light of its gems on one side of the valley below and leaving the other in utter darkness. It resembled Lokaloka Mount presenting its light and dark side to people on either side of the horizon.

³² I remember seeing war between gods and demons and the flight and slaughter of people on all sides of the earth.³³ I remember witnessing the revolution of the four yuga ages of the world, and the revolt of the haughty and giddy asuras all along. I also have seen Daitya demons driven back to the wall.³⁴ I remember the spot of the earth carried beyond the boundaries of the universal flood, and I recollect how the cottage of this world had only the uncreated three (Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva) left in it.³⁵ I remember seeing no other creature on earth except plants for the long duration of half of the four yuga ages.³⁶ I also remember this earth full of mountains for the space of four full yugas when there were

no men on earth and their customs and usages had no ground in it.

³⁷ I remember seeing this earth filled with the bones of dead Daityas and other fossil remains rising in heaps like mountains and continuing in their dilapidated and crumbling state for myriads of years. ³⁸ I remember the formless state of the world when darkness prevailed over the face of the deep, when the serpentine support of the earth fled for fear, the celestials left their ethereal courses, and the sky presented neither a bird or a tree top. ³⁹ I remember the time when the northern and southern divisions (of India), were both included under the one boundary mountain (of Himalaya). I remember also when the proud Vindhya Hills contended as equals with the great Mount Meru.

⁴⁰ I remember these and many other events which will be too long to relate. But what is the use of long narrations if you listen to me describing the main substance in brief?

⁴¹ I have seen innumerable munis and primogenitors (*manvantaras*) pass away before me. I have known hundreds of the quadruple yugas glide away, one after the other, all of which were full of great deeds and events but which are now buried in oblivion.

⁴² I remember the creation in this world of one sole body named Virat, when the world was entirely devoid of men and asuras. ⁴³ I remember that age of the world when brahmins were addicted to wine and drunkenness, when the shudras (the lowest caste) were cast out by the suras (gods), and when women had the privilege of marrying many men, ⁴⁴ when the surface of the earth was one great sheet of water entirely devoid of any vegetation, and when men were produced without men knowing women. ⁴⁵ I remember that age of the world when it was a void. There was no earth or sky or any of their inhabitants. No men and no mountains were in existence, nor were there the sun and moon to divide the days and nights.

⁴⁶ I remember the sphere of heaven shrouded under a sheet of darkness when there was no Indra or other king to rule in heaven or earth, which had not yet its high and low and middle classes of men.

⁴⁷ It was after that when Brahma thought of creating the worlds and divided them into the three spheres of upper, lower and intermediate regions. Then he settled the boundary mountains and distinguished Asia from the rest. ⁴⁸ Then the earth was not divided into different countries and provinces, nor were there distinctions of caste and creed or institutions for the various orders of its people. Then there was no name for the starry frame or any name for the polar star or its circle. ⁴⁹ It was then that the sun and moon had their birth and the gods Indra and Upendra had their dominions. After this occurred the slaughter of Hiranyakashipu and the restoration of the earth by the great Varaha, the boar-like incarnation of Vishnu.

⁵⁰ Then there was the establishment of kings over the peoples on earth and the revelation of the Vedas given to mankind. After this Mandara Mountain was uprooted from the earth and the ocean was churned by the gods and giant races of men. ⁵¹ I have seen the birth of the garuda bird of heaven that bore Vishnu on his back. I have seen the seas breaking in bays and gulfs. I remember all these events as if they were the latest occurrences in the course of the world, like the memories of my youngsters and yourself likewise. ⁵² In former ages I have known the god Vishnu with his vehicle of garuda to have become Brahma with his vehicle of the swan, and the same transformed to Shiva having the bull for his vehicle, and vice-versa.

Chapter 22 — Further Memories of Past Ages, Gods and Scriptures

¹ Bhushunda continued:—

Moreover sage, I will tell you many other things that I remember occurred in the course of the world in bygone times. I remember the births of the seers Bharadwaja, Pulasta, Atri, Narada, Indra, the Marichis and you also.² I bear in my mind the venerable Pulaha, Uddalaka, Kratu, Bhrigu, Angiras, Sanatkumara, Bhringi, Ganesha, Skanda and others in their retinue who were known as the Master Rishis of yore.³ I retain the memory of Gauri, Saraswati, Lakshmi, Gayatri and many more who are reckoned as the female personifications of divine attributes.

I have seen the mountains Meru, Mandara, Kailash, Himalayas and the Dardura hills.⁴ I carry in my memory the exploits of the demons Hiranyaksha, Kalanimi, Hayagriva, Hiranyakashipu, Vati and Prahlada and many others of the Danava and other demonic races.⁵ I keep in my mind the memories of the renowned Sibi, Nyanku, Prithu, Vainya, Nala, Nabhatta, Mandhata, Sagara, Dilipa and Nahusa, kings of men and rulers of earth.⁶ I know by heart the names of Atriya, Vyasa, Valmiki, Sukadeva, Vatsyayana and other sages, and the names of Upamanyu, Manimanki, Bhagiratha and other pious princes of old.

⁷ So there are many things of remote past times, and others of later ages, and some relating to the present time, all of which are imprinted in the memory. It is needless to recount them over again.

⁸ O sagely son of Brahma, I remember your eight births in the eight different epochs of the world. This is your eighth birth in which you have come as a guest to my nest.⁹ At one time you were born of air, and at another of heavenly fire. One time you were produced from water, and at others from emptiness and of solid rock.

¹⁰ The constitution of created bodies conforms us to the nature of the principle elements of which they are formed. The positions of heavenly bodies have a great influence on their production. I have witnessed three such formations of the world composed of fiery, watery and earthly substances at different times.¹¹ I remember ten repeated creations in which the usages of people were uniform and alike and the gods were settled in their homes. They were contemporary with the asuras whom they braved in battle and were located in their homestead.¹² I saw the earth sinking five times under, and lifted up as many times from the ocean by the divine Kurma Manvantara, the incarnation of Vishnu in the form of the tortoise.

¹³ Twelve times I have witnessed the great battle of gods and demigods, uprooting and uplifting Mandara Mountain to churn out the last ambrosia from underneath the ocean.¹⁴ Thrice I have seen the tyrant Hiranyaksha levy his tax upon the gods in heaven, hurling the fruitful earth with all her healing and medicinal plants underneath the ocean.¹⁵ I saw Hari (Vishnu) come down six times in the shape of Renuka's son, Parashurama, and remove the kshatriya warrior caste for very long periods.¹⁶ O sage, I remember the return of a hundred Kali Yuga ages and a hundred incarnations of Hari in the form of Buddha and as the son of royal Suka or Suddhadana in the land of Kirata.

¹⁷ I bear in my memory the overthrow of the demon Tripura by Shiva thirty times, and the disruption of King Daksha's yagna more than once by the angry Hara (Shiva). I recall the downfall of ten Indras by the offending god who bears the crescent moon on his forehead.¹⁸ I recollect the battle fought eight

times between Hari and Hara, and the first appearance of Vishnu and Shiva, and the cold typhoid fevers in these conflicts.

¹⁹ I remember, O silent sage, the difference in the intellects of men at every succeeding age and the various readings of Vedas at the ceremonial observances of mankind. ²⁰ O sinless saint, the Puranas, though they agree in the main substance, are so full of interpolations that they have been greatly multiplied in successive ages. ²¹ I remember also many historical works composed in succeeding ages by authors learned in the Vedas.

²² I remember the wonderful composition of legendary accounts under the title of the Maharamayana, a work comprising one hundred thousand couplets (*slokas*) full of sound wisdom. ²³ This work presents the conduct of Rama for the imitation of men and sets the misbehavior of Ravana as an example for the reproach of mankind. This teaching contains the essence of all wisdom and serves as the luscious fruit of the tree of knowledge placed in the hands of all people. ²⁴ This work is composed by Valmiki, who in time will compose some others also. These you will come to know when they are presented to the world in time. ²⁵ This work, whether it is a composition of Valmiki or of some other person, has been published twelve times and is now going to be almost forgotten by men.

²⁶ The other work of similar importance is known under the name of Mahabharata. I remember it was first written by Vyasa, but it is becoming obsolete at present. ²⁷ Whether it is the composition of a person known by the name of Vyasa or a compilation of some other person, up to this time it has undergone its seventh edition and is now quickly being forgotten.

²⁸ I remember also, O chief of sages, many tales and novels and other scriptures composed in every age and yuga which have been written in a variety of styles and diction. ²⁹ O good sage, I also remember having seen many new productions and inventions following one another in succeeding ages. It is impossible to enumerate this innumerable series of things.

³⁰ I remember Lord Vishnu descending many times on earth to destroy ferocious rakshasa demons, and is now to appear here the eleventh time under the name of Rama. ³¹ I know Lord Hari (Vishnu) has come down three times in his form of the half lion half man Narasimha to thrash the demon Hiranyakashipu as many times like a lion killing an elephant. ³² Vishnu is yet to be born in his sixteenth incarnation at Vasudeva's abode for the purpose of rescuing the earth from the burden of the oppression of its tyrant lords and despots.

³³ This cosmic phenomenon is no reality, nor it is even in existence. It is only a temporary illusion. It appears like a bubble of water to disappear in the next moment. ³⁴ This temporary illusion of phenomena rises and sets of its own accord in the conscious soul, just as boisterous waves rise and subside of themselves in the bosom of waters.

³⁵ I have known the world to be sometimes uniform in its course and in its state of things. At others, there is a partial difference in their nature and order. At other times also, I observed total change take place in the constitution of things. ³⁶ I remember the former nature and state of things, and the manner and actions of former people and the customs of those times. I saw them give room to others in their turn, and those again to be displaced by others.

³⁷ O brahmin, every revolution of time (*manvantara*) is attended with a reversion in the course of the

world. A new generation is born to supplant the old men of renown.³⁸ Then I have a new set of friends and a new retinue of relatives. I get a new batch of servants and a new house for my dwelling.

³⁹ Sometimes I had to remain in my solitary retreat by the side of the Vindhya range, and sometimes on the ridge of Sahya Mountain. At other times I had my residence on the Dardura Hills, so my lodging is ever shifting from one place to another and never fixed in any spot forever.⁴⁰ I often have been a resident of the Himalayas, of Malaya Mountain in the south of India, then led by destiny, as I described before, I found my last abode on this Mount Meru.⁴¹ By getting to it, I built my nest on the branch of a mango tree and continued to live there, O chief of the munis, for ages and time without end.

⁴² It is by my pristine destiny that this tree has grown here for my residence. Therefore, O sage, I can have no release from my body to come to my desirable end.⁴³ By appointment of predestination, the same tree has grown here in the form of the wish-fulfilling kalpa tree. It preserves its beauty even now as it did when my father Chanda was living.

⁴⁴ Being thus preordained by destiny, I settled in this place when there was no distinction of the quarters of heaven as north or east, nor of the sky or mountain.⁴⁵ Then the north was on another side and this Meru was in another place. I was then one and alone, devoid of any form or body and bright as the essence which is never shrouded by the darkness of night.⁴⁶ After awaking from the unconsciousness of my trance, I saw and recognized all the objects of creation. I knew the locations of Meru and other hills and valleys from the positions of the stars and the motions of heavenly bodies.

⁴⁷ The site of the polar circle of Meru and the course of the planets being changed in different creations, there follows an alteration of the points of the compass and a difference in the sides of the quarters. Therefore there is nothing as a positive truth except our conception of it as such and such.

⁴⁸ The vibration of the soul displays these wonderful conceptions in the mind and excites the various phenomena in nature. It converts a son to a father and makes a son of the father. It represents friend as foe and again shows a foe in the light of a friend.⁴⁹ I remember many men became effeminate and many women grew quite masculine. I have seen the good manners of the Satya golden age prevail in the Kali Yuga iron age, and those of Kali gaining ground in its preceding ages.⁵⁰ I also have seen many men in the Treta and Dwapara Yugas ages of the world who were ignorant of the Vedas and unacquainted with their precepts. They followed the fictions of their own invention which led them to heterodoxy.

⁵¹ I also remember, O brahmin, the laxity of manners and morals among the gods, demigods and men since the beginning of the world.⁵² I remember, after the lapse of a thousand cycles of the four yuga ages, that Brahma created from his mind some aerial beings of unearthly forms. These spiritual beings occupied a space extending over ten cycles of creations.⁵³ I remember likewise the varying positions and boundaries of countries, and also the very changing and diverse actions and occupations of their people. I remember too the various costumes and fashions and amusements of men during the ceaseless course of days and nights in the endless duration of time.

Chapter 23 — Bhushunda's Fate to Survive Creations; Nothing Is as Precious as Knowing the Soul

¹ Vasishta replied:—

I then besought the chief of the crows, sitting on one end of a branch of the kalpa tree, to tell me how he avoided falling into the hands of death when all other animals moving about the expanse of the world are doomed to be crushed under its all-devouring jaws.

² Bhushunda replied:—

Sage, you know all things. Yet you would ask me to say what you know full well. Such bidding of my master emboldens your servant to speak out where he should otherwise hold his tongue.³ Yet when you desire me to tell, I must do it as well as I can because it is considered the duty of a dependant to carry out the commands of their kind masters.

⁴ Death will not demolish the man who does not wear the pearl necklace of vicious desires on his chest, just as a robber does not kill a traveler who does not have the destructive chain of gold hanging on his breast.⁵ Death will not destroy the man whose heart is not broken down by sorrows, whose breast is not sawed like timber by the friction of his sighs, and whose body is not ruined by toil like a tree by worms.⁶ Death will not overtake the man whose body is not beset by cares, like a tree with poisonous snakes lifting their hoods above its head, and whose heart is not burnt by its anxieties, like wood by fire.⁷ Death will not prey upon the person who is not weakened by the poison of anger and hatred, whose heart cave does not foster the serpent of greed in its darkness, and whose heart is not corroded by the sores of cares.

⁸ He is not carried away by the cruel hand of death whose body is not already fried by the fire of his resentment, which like the hidden heat of an undersea fire, sucks up the waters of reason in the reservoir of the mind.⁹ Death will not kill the person whose body is not inflamed by the fiery passion of love, which like a wildfire consumes the hoarded grain of good sense, and like a pair of sharp scissors snips the heart strings of reason.¹⁰ Death does not approach the man who puts his trust in the one pure and purifying spirit of God, and who has the rest of his soul in the refuge of the Supreme Soul.¹¹ Death does not lay hold of the person who is firm and calm in the same posture, who does not wander like a monkey from one tree to another, and whose mind is a foreign to unsteadiness.

¹² Thus, when the mind is settled in the unalterable state of calm repose in its Maker, it is impossible for the evils and diseases of this world to overtake it at anytime.¹³ The fixed and tranquil mind is never overtaken by the sorrows and diseases of the world, nor is it liable to fall into the errors and dangers that befall the restless mob here below.¹⁴ The well composed mind has neither its rising nor setting, nor its recollection or forgetfulness at anytime or other. It has no sleeping or waking state, but has its heavenly revelry which is quite different from dreaming.¹⁵ Distressing thoughts that take their rise from weakened desire and feelings of resentment and other passions, darkening the region of the heart and mind, can never disturb the serenity of those souls who have their repose in the Supreme Spirit.¹⁶ He whose mind is absorbed in holy meditation neither gives away nor receives anything from others, nor does he seek or forsake whatever he has or has not at anytime. He does his duties always by rote as he ought without expectation of reward or merit.¹⁷ He whose mind has found its

repose in holy meditation has no cause to repent of any misdeed for his gain or pleasure at anytime.

¹⁸ He whose mind has met with the grace of God has enough gain, an excess of delight, and a good deal of every good.

¹⁹ Therefore employ your mind to what brings your ultimate good and lasting welfare, in which there is nothing of doubt or difficulty and which is exempt from false expectation. ²⁰ Exalt your mind above the multiplicity of worldly possessions which the impure and unseen demon of evil presents to allure your heart. Settle your mind in the unity of God. ²¹ Set your heart to that supreme joy which is pleasant both in the beginning and end, delectable to taste, pleasant to sight, sweet to taste, and wholesome in its effect. ²² Fix your mind to what is sought by all good and godly people, which is the eternal truth and the best diet of the soul, from its beginning and during its course in the middle and end and throughout its immortality. ²³ Apply your mind to what is beyond your comprehension, the holy light that is the root and source of all in which is all our best fortune and the ambrosial food for our souls.

²⁴ There is nothing more permanent or auspicious among immortals or mortals, or among the gods, demigods, asuras, gandharvas, kinnaras and vidyadharas, or among the heavenly apsara nymphs, than the spiritual bliss of the soul. ²⁵ There is nothing so very graceful or lasting to be found in cities and mountains, in the vegetable creation, among mankind and their kings, or anywhere in earth or heaven as this spiritual joy. ²⁶ There is nothing steady or graceful among the naaga snake or asura demon races and their females, or in the entire infernal region. ²⁷ There is nothing so lovely and lasting in the regions above, below, all around us, and in the spheres of all other worlds as lasting peace of mind.

²⁸ There is nothing blissful or persistent in this world amidst all its sorrows, sicknesses and troubles which encompass all about.

All our actions are for trivial matters and all our gains are only trifles at best. ²⁹ There is nothing of any lasting good in all those thoughts that occupy the minds of men and gladden their hearts, and which serve at best to delude the wise to become unsteady in their spirits. ³⁰ No permanent good is derived from the ever busy thoughts and desires of mankind, which at best tend to trouble their minds, as when the gods and demons used Mandara Mountain to disturb the waters of the deep. ³¹ No lasting good results to anybody from his continuous, various efforts to bring his gain and loss at the edge of the sword. ³² Sovereignty over the whole earth is not so great a boon, nor is one's elevation to the rank of a god in heaven so great a blessing, nor even the exaltation of one to the position of the world supporting serpent is as great a gain as the sweet peace of mind of the good.

³³ It is of no good to trouble the mind with its attention to all the branches of learning, nor is it of any advantage to employ one's wits and enslave his mind to the service of another. It is of no use to anybody to learn the histories of other people when he is ignorant of himself and his own welfare. ³⁴ It is of no good to live long under the trouble of disease and the sorrow of life. Life and death, learning and ignorance, heaven and hell give no advantage or disadvantage to anybody until there is an end of his desires within himself.

³⁵ Thus these various states of the world and all worldly things may freely appear to the ignorant vulgar, but they afford no pleasure to the learned who knows their instability.

Chapter 24 — Bhushunda Describes Vital Air as the Living Principle

¹ Bhushunda continued:—

All things in the view of the wise being unstable, unprofitable and unpleasant to man, there is only one reality which is beyond all error and imperishable, which though present in all things and all places transcends the knowledge of all.² This essence is the Soul or Self and meditation on it removes all sorrow and affliction. It is also the destroyer of the false vision of the world which has affected every man and biased his understanding by long habit of thinking this phantom of his dream to be a sober reality.

³ Spiritual contemplation dawns in the clear atmosphere of an unpolluted mind and traverses the entire mind like sunlight destroying the darkness of all sorrows and false thoughts.⁴ Divine meditation, unaccompanied by any desire or selfish view, penetrates like moonbeams through the darkness of the night of ignorance.⁵ This spiritual light is easily obtainable by sages like you, and too difficult to be retained by brutes like ourselves. Because it is beyond all imaginable resemblance, it is known by the spiritual sages as the transcendent light.

⁶ How can a man of common understanding come to know the clear understanding of the meditative sage?⁷ There is a little resemblance between this spiritual light and the intellectual light of philosophers, whose minds are enlightened by the cooling moonbeams of philosophy, just as the minds of inspired saints are illuminated with spiritual light.⁸ Among the associates of spiritual knowledge, there is one particularly friendly to me which alleviates all my sorrows and advances my prosperity, and thus relates to the investigation of the vital breath which is the cause of life.

⁹ Vasishta said:—

After speaking in this manner the sagely bird Bhushunda held his silence. I calmly spoke and asked my question by way of amusement, though I was full well acquainted with the subject.¹⁰ I addressed him saying, “O you long living bird and remover of all my doubts, tell me truly, my good friend, what you mean by meditation of the vital breath?”

¹¹ Bhushunda replied:—

Sage, you are learned in the knowledge of Vedanta with sure answers for all questions about spiritual science. You are now joking with me, asking this question of me who is only a brute bird and an ignorant crow.¹² Or perhaps you may be testing my shallow knowledge of the subject with an idea to instruct me where my knowledge is imperfect. Either way, I have no objection.

¹³ Listen as I tell you something related to meditation on vital breath, which is the cause of my longevity and the giver of my spiritual knowledge.¹⁴ Sage, this beautiful fabric of the body, supported upon the three strong pillars of the three humors and having nine doorways about it,¹⁵ is the home of its owner, the haughty householder (egoism) who always dwells in it with his favorite consort, the subtle body (*puryashtaka*) and his dependants, the five subtle forms of matter (*tanmatras*).¹⁶ You well know the inside of this house, so I need not describe it.

Its two ears are like its two upper story rooms. The two eyes are as its two windows, and the hairs on the head are like its thatched covering on the top of the house.¹⁷ The opening of the mouth is the great

doorway to the house. The two arms are like its two wings. The two sets of teeth are like strings of flowers hung on the gateway for decoration.¹⁸ The organs of sense are the porters to this house, conveying sights, sounds, flavors and feelings to it. These are enclosed by the great wall of the body, and the two eyes keep watch on the tower of this edifice.¹⁹ The blood, fat and flesh form the plaster of this wall, and the veins and arteries are the strings that bind the bamboo bones together. The thick bones are the big posts that uphold this fabric.

²⁰ There are two tender nerves, the energy channels (*nadis*) called *ida* and *pingala*, which lie and stretch along the two sides of this building.²¹ There are three pairs of lotus-like organs formed of soft flesh and bones, and these stretch up and down vertically in the body, attached to one stalk-like artery connecting them with one another.

²² The ethereal air inhaled through the nostrils supplies these lotus-form organs with moisture, like water poured on their roots, making them shoot out in soft leaflets that shake gently with the breath of air passing constantly through the lungs and nostrils.²³ The shaking leaves agitate the vital energy like moving leaves of the trees in a forest increase the force of air currents in the sky.²⁴ The inflated vital energy then passes in many ways through holes in the entrails inside the body, and extends and fills all the pores and canals of the frame from top to bottom.²⁵ Those who are skilled in *pranayama*, the science of vital energy, give them different names according to their course, such as the fivefold vital energies of *prana*, *apana*, *samana*, *udana*, and *vyana*.

²⁶ All the vital powers reside in the triple lotus-form organ of the heart, and from there extend up and down and on all sides like beams from the moon.²⁷ These vital powers are employed passing in and out, taking in and letting out, rising and falling, and moving throughout the body.²⁸ The learned say that *prana*, the energy or air of life, is situated in the lotus-form organ of the heart and also has the power of moving the eyelids when they twinkle.²⁹ This power sometimes assumes the form of touch or the feeling of perception, and at others it takes the shape of breath by blowing through the nostrils. Sometimes it is seated in the stomach for digestive action, and often it gives utterance to speech.

³⁰ What more shall I say, other than that it is our lord the air that moves the whole machine of the body, just as a mechanic models everything by means of his machinery.³¹ Among these there are two principal airs, by name of *prana* and *apana*, which take their two different courses upward and downward. One is the breath of life and the other is the weakened that is let out.³² It is by watching the course of these airs that I remain quietly at this place and undergo the changing fortunes of heat and cold, as is destined for the feathered tribe.

³³ The body is a great machine and the two subtle energies are its indefatigable mover. It has the sun and moon, fire and moonlight, shining in the midst of its heart.³⁴ The body is a city and the mind is its ruler. The two airs are like the chariot and wheels of the body. Egoism is the monarch of this city, and the eight members are like so many horses attached to the car of the body.³⁵ Thus by watching the motion of those airs, I find the course of my life to be as interminable as the continuity of my breaths.

³⁶ The vital airs serve the body in all its states of waking, dreaming and sound sleep. His days glide on imperceptibly who remains in his state of profound sleep.³⁷ These breaths of subtle energy divide into a thousand threads as they pass through the many canals of the body. They are as imperceptible as

the white fibers inside the stalks of lotus plants.³⁸ By watching the constant course of vital airs, by attending to the continued course of time, by thinking of the interminable course of his breaths and the moments of time and the parade of his thoughts, and by attempting to restrain their course by the habit and practice of *pranayama*, one is sure to lengthen the duration of his life in this world and attain eternal life in the next.

Chapter 25 — Bhushunda on Pranayama: the Inward and Outward Breaths and the States in between (Samadhi)

¹ Vasishta said:—

Listen Rama. When the bird had said this much, I interrupted him and said, “Tell me, O ancient seer, how and what is the nature of the course of vital airs?”

² Bhushunda replied:—

O sage, how is it that you who knows everything should ask this question of me, as if in jest? But as you ask as this of me, I must tell you all that I know.

³ O brahmin, the vital breath by nature is a moving energy. It is always in motion. It pervades both inside and outside the bodies which its animates. ⁴ The *apana* emitting air is also a self motive power that is in constant motion, both inside and outside the living body in its downward or receding direction. ⁵ It is good for living beings to restrain these vital breaths, both in their waking and sleeping states. Now hear me tell you, O learned sage, how it is to be retrained for the best gain.

⁶ The internal vital energy (*prana*) extends from the lotus-like heart to the crevice in the cranium. The wise call its effort to come out (by the mouth and nostrils) exhalation (*rechaka*). ⁷ The meeting of breaths twelve inches from and below the nostrils is called inhalation (*puraka*). ⁸ *Puraka* is also when the breath passes from outside and enters the inner *apana* (downward breath; the abdomen) without any effort, filling the inside from the heart to the head. ⁹ When the *apana* air has subsided in the heart and *prana* breath does not circulate in the breast, it is called the state of holding the breath (*kumbhaka*) which is known only to yogis. ¹⁰ All these three sorts of breaths (inhale, hold and exhale) are perceived at the place where the *apana* takes its rise. This is twelve inches below and outside the tip of the nose.

¹¹ Hear now, O great minded sage, what clear minded adepts have said about the natures of the ever continuing and effortless. ¹² The air inhaled from twelve inches outside of the tip of the nose is called *puraka* (inhalation). ¹³ As the outer part of a pot planted in the earth appears to sight, so the downward breath *apana* stretching twelve inches outside the tip of the nose is perceptible to the yogi and is called *kumbhaka* by the learned. ¹⁴ The exhaling air which rises from the heart and extends to the tip of the nose is called the primary and external *puraka* (taking in) breath by adepts in yoga practice.

¹⁵ There is another (or secondary) external *puraka* air known to the wise which arises at the tip of the nose and extends twelve inches outside of it. ¹⁶ After the *prana* breath sets outside the nostrils, and before the *apana* downward breath has risen, this interval of the entire suspension of both is known as the state of perfect equalization, the external *kumbhaka*. ¹⁷ The air which breathes out in the heart or pulsates within it, without raising the *apana* breath, is called the external *rechaka* (exhalation) in the yoga system. Its knowledge confers perfect liberation to man. ¹⁸ The *rechaka* rising twelve inches is called the strong *rechaka*. ¹⁹ There is another kind of *puraka* (taking in) which is on the outside of the *apana* and when it stretches inside of the navel within, it is known under the names of *kumbhaka* and others. ²⁰ The intelligent man who meditates day and night on the eightfold nature and course of *prana* and *apana*, the inhaling and exhaling airs, is not doomed to be reborn anymore in this

miserable earth.

²¹ I have described the various courses of the vital airs or energies. Restraining this life force in the waking and sleeping states of man, whether sitting or waking, produces his liberation. ²² Though these energies are very fleeting in their natures, yet they are restrained by the good understanding of man, even when he is employed in work or eating. ²³ However, a man who practices suppression of breathing (*kumbhaka*) cannot be employed in any action but must remain calmly in this act of suppression by giving up all external thoughts and actions. ²⁴ A few days practice of this yoga, by renouncing all outward objects from the mind, enables a man to attain the state of his unity with the sole Being that is God.

²⁵ Intelligent men have no fondness for worldly things, but bear an aversion to them like a holy brahmin has against sweet milk contained in a skin bag. They remain regardless of visible objects, their eyes closed against them like a blind man who takes no heed of outward appearances. ²⁶ They are in possession of all, which is the sum total of what is to be had as the best gain. Whether they are awake, asleep, walking or sitting, they never lose sight of that true light which leads them to the other world. ²⁷ Those who have obtained the knowledge of the course of his breathings have rid themselves of all delusion and rest quietly within themselves. ²⁸ Whether intelligent people are employed in a busy life or sit inactive at home, they are always quiet and at rest by following the course of their breathing.

²⁹ O brahmin, I know the exhaling breath rises from its source in the lotus-like heart and stretches twelve inches outside where it sets and stops. ³⁰ The *apana* of inhaling breath is taken from the same distance of twelve inches and is deposited in the cup of the lotus situated in the human heart. ³¹ As the *prana* respiration is exhaled out in the air twelve inches from the heart, so the inhaled *apana* energy is taken into the heart from the same distance in the air.

³² The *prana* or exhaling breath runs towards the open air in the form of a flame of fire. The inhaled breath turns inward to the region of the heart and goes downward like a current of water. ³³ The *apana* inhaled breath is like cooling moonlight refreshing the body from without. *Prana* exhalation resembles sunshine or a flame of fire warming the insides of the body. ³⁴ Every moment the *prana* breath warms the region of the heart, like sunshine inflaming the sky. Then it burns the atmosphere before it by the exhalation of breath through the mouth.

³⁵ *Apana* air is like the moonlight before the moon. Inhaled inward, it washes the sphere of the heart like a flood, then in a moment it refreshes the whole inside. ³⁶ When the last phase of the moon, like *apana* inhaling breath, is swallowed by the sun of *prana* exhaling breath, it sees the Supreme Spirit and has no more cause for affliction. ³⁷ So also when the last portion of the sun-like *prana* exhaling breath is swallowed by the moon-like *apana* inhaling breath, then Brahman visits inside and the soul is emancipated from further reincarnation in this world.

³⁸ The *prana* exhaling breath assumes the nature of solar heat both inside and outside the body. Afterwards it becomes and remains like cooling moonlight. ³⁹ The *prana* expiration forsakes its nature of the cooling moon and in a moment turns to assume the nature of the hot sun that dries and sucks up everything before it. ⁴⁰ As long as the *prana* exhalation is not converted to the nature of the

moon after forsaking its nature of the sun, it is considered unconditioned by time and place and free from pain and grief.

⁴¹ He who sees the seat of his soul in the mind situated within his heart and at the confluence of the sun-moon *prana* and *apana* breathings in the *kumbhaka* retained breath is no longer subject to be reborn and die. ^{41a} He who feels the sun and moon of his *prana* and *apana* breaths ever rising and setting in the *kumbhaka* retained breath with his heart, truly sees the seat of his mind and soul placed at their confluence and is freed from further birth and death. ⁴² He truly sees the soul in its full light who beholds this bright sun (*prana*) shining in the sphere of his heart in conjunction with the rising and setting *apana* moonbeams in his mind.

⁴³ This light never fades or grows faint at anytime, but dispels the darkness of the heart and produces the completion and perfection of the meditative mind. ⁴⁴ As the dispersion of outward darkness presents the world to view, so the disappearance of inward obscurity gives out the light of the spirit before the mental sight. ⁴⁵ The removal of intellectual darkness produces the liberation of the soul and shows the rising and setting sun of the vital breath vividly to view. ⁴⁶ When the moon of the *apana* inspired breath sets in the cavity of the heart, the sun of the *prana* exhalation breath rises immediately to flow out of the heart. ⁴⁷ The *apana* inhaled breath having set in the cell of the lotus-like heart, the exhaling breath of *prana* rises at that very moment to come out of it, just as the shadow of the night is dispersed when the bright sun of day ushers his light.

⁴⁸ As the *prana* expiration expires in the open air, in a moment the inhaling breath rises and rushes, just as light having fled from the horizon is immediately succeeded by deep darkness. ⁴⁹ Intelligent men know that the *apana* downward breath becomes extinct where the *prana* upward breath comes to be born, and *prana* is lost where *apana* takes its rise. ⁵⁰ When *prana* breathing out has ceased and *apana* has its rise downward, then one supports himself upon the *kumbhaka* retained air and does not depend on two other passing breaths.

⁵¹ On completion of the *apana* breath in and before the rise of *prana* breath out, one relying on the *kumbhaka* air within himself is exempt from pain and sorrow. ⁵² By depending on the *rechaka* exhaled breath and practicing the suppression of *kumbhaka* breath sixteen inches from the *apana*, a man has no more to be sorry for anything. ⁵³ By making the *apana* a receptacle of *rechaka*, filling the *prana* inside, and finding himself filled with the *puraka* all within his body, a man has no more to be born on earth. ⁵⁴ When a man finds the perfect tranquility of his soul by subsidence of both *prana* and *apana* within himself, he no longer has to sorrow for anything whatever. ⁵⁵ When a man reflects upon his *prana* breath overcome by *apana* air both inside and outside himself, and loses his thoughts of time and space, he has no more any cause for sorrow. ⁵⁶ He who sees his *prana* breath devouring the *apana* air, both inside and outside himself, together with his sense of space and time, has no more his mind to be reborn on earth.

⁵⁷ When *prana* is swallowed up by *apana*, or *apana* by *prana*, both inside and outside the adept, together with his thoughts of time and place, ⁵⁸ then at that moment the yogi finds his *prana* set down and his *apana* to rise no more. Though the interval between the two is common to all animals, only yogis know it. ⁵⁹ The *kumbhaka* suppression of breath taking place of itself on the outside is known as the divine state, but when it happens to occur inside without any effort on the part of the adept, it is

said to be the state of the most supreme.

⁶⁰ This is the nature of the Divine Soul and this is the state of Supreme Consciousness. This is the representation of the eternal spirit, and one who attains this state is never subject to sorrow. ⁶¹ Like fragrance in the flower, there is an essence dwelling within the vital energies and this is neither *prana* nor *apana* but the conscious soul which I adore. ⁶² As taste dwells in water, so is there an essence immanent in *apana*, and it is neither *apana* nor not *apana* but the intelligent soul which I adore. ⁶³ At the end of the extinction of *prana*, and beyond the limit of the exhaustion of *apana*, and situated in the interval between the extremities of both of these, there is that which I always adore. ⁶⁴ That which forms the breathing of breath and is the life of life, what is the support and bearer of the body, is the intellectual spirit which I ever adore. ⁶⁵ That which causes the thinking of the mind and the reflection of the understanding, as also the egotism of egoism, is the conscious soul which I have learnt to adore. ⁶⁶ That which contains and produces all things, which is all as everything is evolved from itself, and what is changed to all at all times, is that mind which I adore forever. ⁶⁷ What is the light of lights, what is holiness and the holy of holies, and what is unchangeable in its nature, is the consciousness which I adore.

⁶⁸ I adore that ray of pure intellectual light that rises at the juncture of the setting of the *apana* and springing up of the *prana* breath. ^{68a} I adore that consciousness which moves around on the tip of the nose, at the point where the *prana* sets in and the *apana* has not yet taken its rise. ⁶⁹ I adore the consciousness that rises at the time when both *prana* and *apana* breaths have stopped, and when neither of them has taken its rise. ⁷⁰ I adore that consciousness which appears before the yogi and supports him when he has reached the setting of *prana* and *apana* breaths, both within and without himself. ⁷¹ I adore that consciousness which is force of all forces and rides in the car of *prana* and *apana* energy breaths, and when both energies are compressed in the heart of the yogi. ⁷² I adore the lord consciousness which is the *kumbhaka* breath in the heart and the *apana kumbhaka* on the outside, and a part of the *puraka* left behind. ⁷³ I adore the essence of that consciousness which is attainable by concentration upon breath, and which is the formless cause of our intelligence of the natures of the *prana* and *apana* breaths, and also the motive principle of their actions. ⁷⁴ I adore the essence of that consciousness which is the cause of causes and the main spring of the vibrations of vital energies, the giver of the joy derived from the vibrations of breath.

⁷⁵ I adore that prime and Supreme Being Brahman who is worshipped by the gods bowing down before him, who makes himself known to us by his own power, and who is known by the particles of vital energies under the name of Spirit.

Chapter 26 — Bhushunda's Self-Control and Spiritual Knowledge Are the Cause of His Longevity

¹ Bhushunda continued:—

This is the tranquility of the mind that I have attained by degrees through my meditation on the nature and course of vital energy in me. ² I sit quietly at all times, my attention fixed at the movement of my breath. I never stir even for a moment from my meditative mood, though Mount Meru may shake under me. ³ Whether I am awake or asleep, or move about or remain unmoved in my seat, I am never without this meditation even in dream, nor does it slide a moment from my steadfast mind. ⁴ I am always calm and quiet, ever steady and calm in this ever varying and unsteady world. I always remain with my face turned inward in myself, fixed firmly on the object I have at heart.

⁵ The breeze may cease to blow and the waters may stop to flow, but nothing can prevent my breathing and meditation of them, nor do I ever forget to live without them. ⁶ By attending to the course of my inhaling and exhaling breaths, I have come to the sight of the soul and have thereby become freed from sorrow by seeing the prime Soul of all souls.

⁷ The earth has been sinking and rising repeatedly since the great flood, and I have been witnessing the submersion and immersion of things and the destruction and reproduction of beings without any change in the calmness of my soul and mind. ⁸ I never think of the past and future. My sight is fixed only on the present and my mind sees the remote past and future as ever present before it. ⁹ I am employed in the business that presents itself to me. I never care for their toil or their reward. I live as one in sleep and solely with myself.

¹⁰ I examine all that is and is not, and what we have or have not, and consider likewise all our desires and their objects. Finding them to be only frailties and vanities, I refrain from their pursuit and remain untroubled by their cares forever. ¹¹ I watch the course of my inhalation and exhalation and behold the presence of the super excellent (Brahman) at their coming together. By this I rest satisfied in myself and I enjoy my long life without any sorrow or sickness. ¹² I have no such ruinous thoughts of mortal men like “I got this boon now and I will get that beautiful thing later”, so I live long with no discomfort.

¹³ I never praise or disparage any act by me or others. My indifference to all concerns has brought me to this happy state of carefree longevity. ¹⁴ My mind is not elated by success or depressed by adversity, but preserves its self-control at all times, and this is what has brought this happy state on me. ¹⁵ I have relied upon my religious renunciation of the world and upon my apathy to all things at all times. I have also abandoned the desire of sensuous life and the objects of the physical senses, and these have set me free from death and disease. ¹⁶ O great muni, I have freed my mind from its faults of unsteadiness and curiosity, setting it above sorrow and anxiety. My mind has become deliberate, calm and quiet, and this has made me live long without sickness.

¹⁷ I see all things in an equal light, whether it be a beauty or a ghost, a piece of wood or stone, a straw or a rock, or whether it is air, water or fire. My self-control has made me sane and sound in every state of life. ¹⁸ I do not think about what I have done today or what I have to do tomorrow, nor do I become troubled under the fever of vain thoughts regarding past and future. This has kept me forever

sound and sane.¹⁹ I am not afraid of death, disease or old age, nor am I elated with the idea of possessing a kingdom. My indifference to anything good or evil is the cause of my long life and the soundness of my body and mind.²⁰ O brahmin, I do not regard anyone in the light of friend or foe, and this equality of my knowledge of all persons is the cause of my long life and lack of complaint.

²¹ I regard all existence as the reflection of the self-existent One who is all in all and without beginning or end. I know myself as consciousness and this is the cause of my longevity and lack of disease or decay.²² Whether I get or give away anything, or walk or sit, or rise and breathe, or am asleep or awake, I never think of myself as the gross body but its pure consciousness, and this made me long lasting and durable forever.²³ I think of myself as quite asleep, and I believe this world with all its bustle to be nothing in reality, and this has made long-lived without decay.²⁴ I take the good and bad accidents of life occurring at their stated times to be all alike to me, like my two arms both of which are serviceable to me. This has made me long lived and imperishable.²⁵ With my fixed attention and the cool clarity of my mental vision, I see all things in their favorable light. I see all things as even and equal, and this view of them in the same light has made me lasting without any waste.²⁶ I never see my material body in the light of my ego, and this has made me undying and without decay.²⁷ Whatever I do or take as my food, I never take them to my heart. My mind is free from the acts of my body, and my freedom from action has caused my undiminished longevity.²⁸ O sage, whenever I come to know the truth, I never feel proud of my knowledge but desire to learn more about it. This increasing desire of knowledge has increased my life without life's usual infirmities.

²⁹ Though possessed of power, I never use it to do wrong or injure another. Though wronged by someone, I am never sorry. Though ever so poor, I never crave anything of anyone. This has prolonged my life and kept it safe and sound.³⁰ I see in these visible forms the consciousness that abides in all bodies. As I behold all these existent bodies in an equal light, I enjoy an undiminished longevity.³¹ I am so composed in my mind that I never allow its faculties to be entangled in the snare of worldly desires and expectations. I do not allow these to touch even my heart, and this conferred on me the bliss of my unfading longevity.

³² I examine both worlds as two balls placed in my hands, and I find the nonexistence of the visible world as it appears to a sleeping man. The spiritual and invisible worlds appear fully open to my view, as the world does to a waking person, and my sight has made me as immortal as the world of immortality.³³ I behold the past, present and future as set before me. I see all that is dead and decayed, and all that is gone and forgotten as presented anew in my presence. This view of all keeps me alive and fresh to them alike.

³⁴ I feel myself happy at others' happiness and sorry to see the misery of other people. This universal fellow-feeling of mine with the welfare and grief of my fellow creatures has kept me alive and fresh at all times.³⁵ I remain as unmoved as a rock in my adversity and I am friendly to everyone in my prosperity. I am never moved by lack or affluence, and this steadiness of mine is the cause of my undiminished longevity.

³⁶ The firm conviction that has laid hold of my mind, and which has made me live long without feeling sick or sorry for another, is that I am neither related nor belong to anybody, and that none is either related or belongs to me.³⁷ It is my belief that I am the one Ego with the world and with all its space

and time, and that I am the same with the living Soul and all its actions. This faith of mine has made me long lived and undiminished.³⁸ It is my belief that I am the same Consciousness which shows itself in the pot and the picture, and which dwells in the sky above and in the woods below. My firm reliance has been on this full Consciousness and this has made me long abiding and free from disease.

³⁹ It is thus, O great sage, that I live in the receptacle of the three worlds like a bee living in a lotus flower, and am famous in the world as the everlasting crow named Bhushunda.⁴⁰ I am destined to dwell here forever in order to behold the visible world rising and falling in tumultuous confusion in the infinite ocean of the immense Brahman, and assuming their various forms for all eternity like the waves of the sea at their alternate rise and fall.

Chapter 27 — Conclusion of the Story of Bhushunda

¹ Bhushunda added, “O sage, I have described what I am and how I am situated at this place. Only because you commanded was I lead to the arrogance of speaking so much to one of superior intelligence.”

² Vasishta replied, “O sage, it is a wonderful account that you have given of yourself. O excellent! It is a jewel to my ears and fills me with admiration. ³ Blessed are those great souls who have the good fortune to behold your most venerable person, which in respect of antiquity is next to none except the great grandfather of the gods, the lotus born Brahma himself. ⁴ Blessed are my eyes that are blessed this day with the sight of your holy person, and thrice blessed are my ears filled with the full recital of your sacred knowledge and all purifying wisdom.”

⁵ “In my wanderings all about the world, I have witnessed the dignity and grandeur of the great knowledge of gods and learned men, but never have I come to see anywhere so holy a seer as yourself. ⁶ It may be possible by long travel and search to meet with a great soul somewhere or another, but it is hard to find a holy soul like yourself anywhere. ⁷ We rarely come to find the grain of a precious pearl in the hollow of a lonely bamboo tree, but it is rarer still to come across a holy person like you in any part of this world.”

⁸ “I have truly achieved an act of great piety and sanctity having paid a visit to your holy shrine and seen your sacred person and liberated soul this very day. ⁹ Now please enter your cell and go well in this place. It is now the time of midday devotion and the duties of my noontide service call my presence to my heavenly seat.”

Vasishta speaking:—

¹⁰ Hearing this, Bhushunda rose from his seat in the tree and held out a golden twig from the tree with his two fictitious hands. ¹¹ The full knowing crow made a vessel with his beak and hands, filled it with the snow-white leaves, flowers and pistils of the kalpa plant, and put a brilliant pearl in it to be offered as symbol of respect (*arghya*) worthy of a divine sage. ¹² Then the long-born, ancient bird took the *arghya* with some water and flowers and sprinkled and scattered them over me from head to foot with great veneration as when they adore the three-eyed god Shiva.

¹³ Then I said, “It is enough. You need not take the pains to walk after me.” So saying I rose from my seat like a bird stretching its wings to fly in the air. ¹⁴ Yet the bird followed me a few miles in the air, until I hindered his proceeding farther by compelling him to return after shaking our hands. ¹⁵ The chief of birds looked up for some time as I soared upward in my ethereal journey, then he returned with reluctance because it is difficult to part company from the good. ¹⁶ Then both of us lost sight of one another like the sight of the waves is lost after they sink down in the sea.

Full with the thoughts of the bird and his sayings, I proceeded upward to meet the munis there. At last I arrived at the sphere of the seven stars of the Pleiades (the *saptarshi*, the seven rishis) where I was honorably received by my wife Arundhati.

¹⁷ It was two hundred years into the prior golden age (*satya yuga*) when I had been at Bhushunda’s and sat with him upon the tree on the summit of Sumeru. ¹⁸ Now, O Rama, that golden age has gone by and we are in the middle of the silver age (*treta yuga*) when you are born to subdue your enemies.

¹⁹ Only eight years ago I met with him again on the same mountain, and found him as sound and the same as I had seen him long before.

²⁰ Now I have told you the whole of the exemplary character of Bhushunda. As you have heard it with patience, so should you consider it with diligence and act according to his sayings.

²¹ Valmiki says:—

The man of pure heart who well considers the story of virtuous Bhushunda will undoubtedly pass over the unstable gulf of this world full of formidable dangers on all sides.

Chapter 28 — The Body, like Creation, Is a Reflection of the Mind

¹ Vasishta said:—

I have told you, O sinless Rama, the story of Bhushunda who had passed over the perilous sea of delusion by means of his intelligence and wisdom.² Keeping this example in mind and following his practice of breath control (*pranayama*), O mighty armed Rama, you also will pass over the wide ocean of this hazardous ocean.³ As Bhushunda obtained the obtainable One by means of his knowledge and by virtue of his continued practice of yoga, you also strive to gain the same by imitating his example.⁴ Men of understanding may attain the stability of Bhushunda and his reliance on the transcendental truth by practicing *pranayama*, restraining of their breath.

⁵ You have heard me tell you many things about true knowledge. Now it depends on your own understanding and choice to do as you like.

⁶ Rama replied, “Sage who is the luminous sun of spiritual light on earth, at once you have dispelled the thick gloom of unspiritual knowledge from my mind.⁷ I am fully awake and joyful in my divine knowledge. I have entered into my state of spirituality. I have known the knowable and I am seated in my divine state like yourself.”

⁸ “The wonderful life of Bhushunda that you have described fills me with admiration, and it is instructive of the highest wisdom.⁹ In the account you gave of Bhushunda, you said that the body is the abode of the soul and that it is composed of flesh and blood, inner bones and outer skin.¹⁰ Sage, please tell me who made this body and how it came to be formed? How it is made to last and who abides inside?”

¹¹ Vasishta answered:—

Rama, now listen to what I will explain to you for the instruction of supreme knowledge, and also to remove the evils that have taken root instead of true knowledge.

¹² This dwelling of the body that has bones for its posts, blood and flesh for its mortar, and the nine holes for so many windows, is built by no one.¹³ It is a mere reflection. It reflects itself to our vision just as the illusion of two moons in the sky is both real and unreal.¹⁴ It may be right to speak of two moons from their double appearance, but in reality there is only one moon and the other is its reflection.

¹⁵ Belief that the body exists makes it a reality. The unreal seems as real and therefore it is said to be both real and unreal at the same time.¹⁶ Anything seen in a dream is true as a dream, and appears to be so in the state of dreaming, but afterwards it proves to be untrue. A bubble of water is true as a bubble, which comes to be known afterwards as false in reality.¹⁷ The body seems to be substantial as it does its bodily actions, but proves otherwise when we see only the essentiality of the spirit. In the same way, the reflection of the sun on the sandy desert makes a mirage appear like water, whose reality proves to be unreal the next moment.¹⁸ The body existing as a reflection disappears the next moment. It is nothing more than a reflection, and so it reflects itself.

¹⁹ It is your error to think that you are the material body made of flesh and bones. The inner thought of your mind situated in the body makes you think you are “so and so” and “such a one”.²⁰ Therefore

forsake the body that you build for yourself at your own will. Do not be like those who transport themselves to various countries while they are sleeping in their pleasant beds.

²¹ O Rama, see even in your waking state how you transport yourself to the kingdom of heaven in the fanciful reverie of your mind. So tell me then, where is your body situated? ²² Tell me Rama, where is your body situated when your mind wanders on Mount Meru in your dream, and when you dream to ramble with your body about this earth? ²³ Rama, think how you seem to be aimlessly walking about the rich domains in the fancied kingdom of your mind, and tell me whether you are there with your body or if it is left behind. ²⁴ Tell me, where is that body of yours situated when you think of doing many of your bodily and worldly acts in the fancied kingdom of your mind? ²⁵ Tell me, O strong armed Rama, where is your body located when you are thinking about flirting and caressing your loving courtesans in the court of your painful mind? ²⁶ Where is your body with which you seem to enjoy everything?

Enjoyment belongs to the mind and not to the body. Both of them are real as well as unreal owing to their presence at one time and absence at another. ²⁷ The body and the mind are present simultaneously with their actions when they participate with one another in their acts. Therefore it is false to say that, "I am this body situated here and these things are mine," all of which are illusory and caused by illusion. ²⁸ All this is the manifestation of the will or energy of the mind. You must know it either as a long dream or lengthened fallacy of the mind.

²⁹ Know, O son of Raghu's race, that this world is a display of the vast kingdom of your imagination. It will vanish into nothing when you come to good understanding by the grace of your god. ³⁰ Then you will see the whole as clearly as the light of the rising sun, and you will know this would is like a creation of your dream.

³¹ This world is a display of the will of the lotus-born Brahma, as I have said before at length in the book of creation. ³² A willful creation arises of itself in the mind as if it were so ordained by destiny. The mind, being fully possessed of the great variety of forms, becomes lost in the error of taking them for true. ³³ The world is only a creation and a display of the will just like the fancied mental fabrication of being Brahman possessed the minds of the ten sons of Indu.

³⁴ After the soul has passed from its former form, it receives the same form that it had in the fancy of its mind, which is either what it had been long accustomed or what it fondly longed in the mind. ³⁵ The body shows itself in the form shaped by a person's prior acts. By the courageous efforts of some, the body can also be shaped by the intellect. ³⁶ He who thinks he is another is transformed into that nature. The thought that you are this or that, and have this thing or others for yourself, is what actually makes you so in this world. ³⁷ Whatever is thought upon keenly and firmly comes to take place accordingly. Whatever is thought of with intensity and great force must occur in a short time.

³⁸ Every day we see the objects of our desire presenting their fair forms to our view like the attractive faces of our beloved ones, just like sights in a dream and distant objects are recalled in the minds of men with their closed or half-shut eyes. ³⁹ This world is said to be a creation of the thoughts of men. It appears to sight from habitually thinking of it, just like the sights in a dream appear to the mind in daytime.

⁴⁰ The temporary world appears to be as lasting as the river which appears in the sky under burning sunshine.⁴¹ This nonexistent earth also appears as existent in our thought, just as bundles of peacock's feathers appear in the sky to the weakened eye lacking insight.⁴² Only weakened understanding dwells upon the beauties of creation, just as weakened eyesight looks upon the various colors in the sky. But to the clear sighted, understanding the beauty of creation is as fleeting as colors in the sky are to the clear sighted eye.

⁴³ The sharp sighted man is never led away by the display of worldly grandeur, just as even the most timid man is never afraid of a tiger in his imagination.^{43a} This great show of worldly grandeur can never mislead the penetrating sight of the wise, just as a monstrous creature of imagination cannot terrify even the most timid.⁴⁴ The wise man is never afraid of his imaginary world which he knows to be the production of his own mind's nature of self-evolution.⁴⁵ He who has walked in the path of this world need not fear anything in it. He who is afraid of the world for fear of falling into its errors should learn to purify his understanding.

⁴⁶ Rama, know that the soul is free from the false conception of the world, and free from the errors which pervade all over it. Look well into these things and you will have a nature as pure as your inner soul.⁴⁷ The soul is not soiled by impurity, just as a pure gold is not spoiled by dirt. Though gold sometimes may appear tarnished like copper, it soon resumes its color after its dirt is cleansed or burnt away. Thus the world being a reflection of the omnipresent Brahma, it is neither an entity nor a nonentity of its own nature.

⁴⁸ Thus the abandonment of all thoughts other than of the Universal Soul, Brahman, is called the true discernment of the mind. Such abandonment makes thoughts of life and death, and heaven and hell into nothing, and proves all such knowledge to be only ignorance.⁴⁹ The knowledge that everything is only the reflection of Consciousness is called the right discernment of the mind which removes the thoughts of a separate, independent existence of the ego and "you" and also of this world and its ten sides.

⁵⁰ True and right discernment of the mind means knowing all things to be only reflections of the soul. This knowledge is derived from the mind's observation of the true nature of things in this real and unreal world.⁵¹ That nothing rises, sets, appears or disappears in this world is what the mind perceives by its right discernment of things and by its investigation into the true and apparent natures of all.⁵² Right discernment gives the mind its peace and tranquility, its freedom from all desires, its indifference to joy and grief, and its indifference to all praise and criticism.

⁵³ The mind comes to find this truth of mortality as the cooling salve of the heart: that we and all our friends and relations in this world are doomed to die one day or another.⁵⁴ So why should we lament at the death of our friends when it is certain that we must die sooner or later?⁵⁵ When we are destined to die, and we have no power to prevent it, then why should we be sorry for others for something we cannot prevent?

⁵⁶ It is certain that anyone who has come to be born in this world must have some state and property for his support, but what is the cause of rejoicing about it?⁵⁷ All men dealing in worldly affairs gain wealth with labor and pain only for their trouble and danger. Therefore, what is the reason for yearning at its want or lamenting at its loss?

⁵⁸ These spheres of worlds enlarge, expand and rise to our view like bubbles of seawater that swell and float and shine for a time, then burst and subside in the waters of eternity. ⁵⁹ The nature of reality is real at all times. The condition of the unreal world is insubstantial forever and can never be otherwise or real, though it may appear as such for a time. Then why sorrow for what is nothing and unreal? ⁶⁰ I am not of this body nor was I in it, nor shall I remain in it, nor is it anything, even at present, except a picture of the imagination. Then why lament its loss? ⁶¹ If I am something else besides this body, that is a reflection of pure consciousness. Then tell me, what use are these states of reality and unreality to me, and where shall I rejoice or regret?

⁶² The sage who is fully conscious in himself of the certainty of this truth does not feel any rise or fall of his spirits at his life or death, nor does he rejoice or wail at having or losing his life. ⁶³ Because after the loss of his gross body, he gains his residence in the transcendental state of Brahman, spiritual existence, just like a little titter bird builds its new nest of tender blades after its previous grassy home is broken down or blown away. ⁶⁴ Therefore we should never rely on our frail and fragile bodies, but bind our souls to the firm rock of Brahman by the strong rope of our faith, just like they use a strong rope to tie a bull to a post.

⁶⁵ Having thus ascertained the certainty of this truth, place your faith in the reality of your spiritual essence. By giving up reliance on your frail body, manage yourself with detachment in this unreal world. ⁶⁶ Adhere to what is your duty here and avoid whatever is prohibited to you. Proceed on your course with an even course of action your mind. ⁶⁷ He who shuts out the reflections of all worldly objects from his view gets a cool composure of his mind like the coolness at the close of a hot summer day.

⁶⁸ Look on this universe, O sinless Rama, as one common display of Divine light, like the appearance of daylight which is common to all. The mind colors it with various forms like sunbeams reflecting differently off of different objects. ⁶⁹ Forsake all reflections. Be without any impression in your mind. Be of the form of pure intellectual light which passes through all without being contaminated by any.

⁷⁰ You will be quite stainless by your dismissal of all colors and appearances from your mind, and by thinking of yourself as nothing without any true enjoyment in this world. ⁷¹ These phenomena are nothing in reality. They show themselves to us only for our delusion. You also will appear as nothing when you think everything is only a display of Divine Consciousness.

⁷² In addition, the understanding that these phenomena are not false, but they do not lead to our illusion because they are the manifestation of Supreme Consciousness, is also very true and leads to your enlightenment. ⁷³ It is for your good, Rama, if you know either of these (whether the world is real or unreal, it is all a display of the mind) because both of these views will tend equally to your joy. ⁷⁴ Conduct yourself in this manner, O blessed Rama, and gradually lessen all your affections and dislikes in this world for all worldly things. ⁷⁵ You can obtain all that exists in this earth, sky and heaven by renouncing of your eager desires and hatreds.

⁷⁶ Whatever a man endeavors to do with his mind free from his fondness or hatred for it takes place shortly, unlike the attempts of the ignorant. ⁷⁷ No good quality can have its abode in a heart troubled by waves of faults, just as no male deer will set foot on burning sands or in wildfires. ⁷⁸ What is there that cannot be acquired in the heart where the wish-fulfilling kalpa tree grows and which is not

infested by the snakes of ardent desires or dislikes?

⁷⁹ Men who are wise and discreet, learned and attentive to their duties, and at the same time influenced by feelings of love and hatred are no better than jackals in human shape. They are accursed with all their qualifications. ⁸⁰ Look at the effects of these passions on men. They lament others' use of their wealth and having to leave their hard earned money behind them. ⁸¹ All our riches, relatives and friends are as transitory as passing winds. Then why should a wise man rejoice or lament at their gain or loss? ⁸² All our gains and wants and enjoyments in life are mere illusion (*maya*) spread by divine power like a net over creation, entrapping all in it. ⁸³ There is no wealth or any person that is real or lasting to anyone in this temporary world. It is all frail and fleeting, stretched out to sight like a fake magic show. ⁸⁴ What wise man will place his attachment on anything which is an unreality both in its beginning and its end, and is quite unsteady in between? No one has any faith in the tree of his imagination or a castle built in the sky.

⁸⁵ One fancies seeing a fairy in a passing cloud and is pleased with the sight of what he can never enjoy but only passes by his view to be seen by distant peoples. It is the same with this passing world which passes from the sight of some to that of others without anyone fully enjoying or possessing it for any length of time. ⁸⁶ The bustle of these fleeting bodies in the world is like the commotion of a castle in the sky, or the appearance of a city in an fleeting dream and fancy. ⁸⁷ I see the world as a city in my protracted dream, with all its movable and fixed objects lying as quietly and as still as in profound sleep.

⁸⁸ Rama you are wandering in this world like one rolling in his bed of indolence, lulled to the long sleep of ignorance which leads you from one error to another as if dragged by a chain of continuous dreaming. ⁸⁹ Rama, break off your long chain of lazy ignorance. Forsake the idol of your errors. Lay hold of the inestimable gem of your spiritual and divine knowledge. ⁹⁰ Return to your right understanding and, like an unfolding lotus beholds the rising sun, behold your soul in its clear light as a manifestation of the unchangeable luminary of Consciousness.

⁹¹ I repeatedly urge you, O Rama, to wake from your drowsiness, and by remaining ever wakeful to your spiritual concerns, see the un-decaying and un-declining sun of your soul at all times. ⁹² I have roused you from your lazy state of rest and awakened you to the light of your understanding by the cooling breeze of spiritual knowledge and the refreshing showers of my elegant diction. ⁹³ Rama, do not delay enlightening your understanding even now. Attain your highest wisdom in the knowledge of the Supreme Being. Come to the light of truth and shun the errors of the delusive world. ⁹⁴ You will no longer be subject to any more birth or pain, nor will you be exposed to any error or evil, if you will only remain steady in your soul by forsaking all your worldly desires.

⁹⁵ O high minded Rama, remain steadfast in your trust in the tranquil and all-encompassing soul of Brahman in order to attain the purity and holiness of your own soul. Thereby you will be freed from the snare of your earthly desires and get a clear sight of that true reality in which you will rest in perfect security, as if in profound sleep.

Chapter 29 — The World Full with Supreme Soul; Shiva Explains the Best Way to Worship God

¹ Valmiki relates:—

Hearing the sage's discourse, Rama remained calm with his mind unconsciousness, his spirits tranquil, and his soul full of bliss.² The entire audience being quiet, calm and silent, the sage withheld his speech for fear of disturbing their spiritual repose.³ The sage stopped distilling the drops of his ambrosial speech after the hearts of the audience were lulled to rest by their draughts, just as the clouds cease to drop rain after they penetrate the hearts of ripened grains.

⁴ After a while, as Rama and the rest were roused from their mental inactivity, the eloquent Vasishta resumed his discourse to explain his former lecture.

⁵ Vasishta said:—

Rama, now you are fully awakened to light and have attained knowledge of yourself. Hence forward remain fixed to the only true object on which you must place your faith. Never set your feet on the field of the false phenomenal world.

⁶ The wheel of the world is continually revolving round the center of desire. Put a peg in its axis and it will stop from turning about its pole.⁷ If you are slack fastening the hub of your mind by your heroic efforts, it will be hard for you to stop the wheel of the world which runs faster the more you slacken your mind.⁸ Exert your heroic courage with the aid of your mental powers and wisdom. Stop the motion of your heart which is the center of the wheeling course of the world.⁹ Know that everything is obtainable by means of courageous effort joined with good sense and good nature and assisted by a knowledge of the scriptures. Whatever is attained by these cannot be attained by any other means.

¹⁰ Relinquish your reliance on destiny which is a creation of childish imagination. Rely on your own efforts and govern your heart and mind for your lasting good.

¹¹ The unsubstantial mind which appears to have substance has had its rise since the creation of Brahma. It has taken a wrong and false course of its own.¹² The unreal and false mind weaves and stretches out a lengthening web of its equally unreal and false conceptions, which afterwards leads the mind to mistake it for a substantial world.¹³ All these bodies seen to move around us are the products of the fancies and fond desires of the mind. Though these frail and false bodies cease to exist forever, yet the mind and its wishes are imperishable, showing themselves either in the mind's reproductions in various forms, or they become altogether extinct in their total absorption in the Supreme Spirit.

¹⁴ A wise man is not led away by seeing the pain or pleasure of the soul on the face of man. A sorrowful and weeping face is the indication of pain, and a cheerful and tearless face is the sign of pleasure.

¹⁵ You see a man in two ways, one with his body and the other his representation in a picture or statue. Of these the former kind is more frail than the latter because the embodied man is beset by troubles and diseases in his fading, moldering, decaying and dying body, whereby the other is not.

¹⁶ The fleshy body is assuredly doomed to die in spite of all our efforts for its preservation, but a body in a portrait being taken good care of, lasts for ages with its undiminished beauty.¹⁷ As the living body is sure to die despite all your care for it, the pictured body must be considered far better

than the false and fancied fleshy body produced by will of the mind.¹⁸ The quality and stability that abide in a pictured body are not to be found in the body of the mind. Therefore the living body of flesh is more insignificant than its image in a picture or statue.

¹⁹ Think now, O sinless Rama, what reliance is there in this body of flesh, a production of your long fostered desire and a creature of your brain?²⁰ This body of flesh is more contemptible than those ideal forms which our dreams and desires produce in our sleeping and waking states because the creature of a momentary desire is never attended with long or lasting happiness or misery.²¹ The bodies produced by our long desire continue for a longer time and are subjected to a longer series of miseries in this world.

²² The body is a creature of our fancy, neither a reality nor an unreality in itself. Yet ignorant people are fondly attached to it, only to prolong their misery.²³ As the destruction of a man's portrait does no harm to him, and as the loss of an imagined city is no loss to the city, so the loss of anyone's much desired body is no loss to him in any way.²⁴ Again, as the disappearance of the moon's halo is no deprivation of the moon itself, and as the fleeting passing of a dream world does not annihilate the external world,²⁵ and as the disappearance of water from the sunny banks of rivers is no deprivation of the river's water, so the creations of fancy which are not negative in their nature cannot destroy what is positive or do any damage to the machine of the body, and can never injure the disembodied soul.

²⁶ The body is a piece of work created by the architect of the mind in its dreaming sleep walking over the sleeping world. Its decoration or disfigurement is of no essential advantage or disadvantage to the inner soul.²⁷ There is no end of Consciousness in its extent, or any motion of the soul from its place. There is no change in the Divine Spirit of Brahman, nor do any of these decay with the decline of the body.

²⁸ In its delirium, the inner core of the mind sees spheres over spheres revolving in empty air, like an inner, smaller wheel making an outer, larger wheel turn about it.²⁹ By its primitive and causeless error, the mind views the constant rotation of bodies both inside and outside of it. Some are moving forward, others are falling down, and many have dropped below.³⁰ Seeing the rise and fall of these rotating bodies, a wise man must rely on the firmness of his mind and not allow himself to be led away by these repeated successive rotations.

³¹ Fancy forms the body and error makes the unreal appear as real. The formations of fancies and the fabrications of untruth cannot have any truth or reality in them.³² The unreal body appearing as real is like the appearance of a snake in a rope. All the affairs of the world are quite untrue and false, appearing as true only for the time being.

³³ Whatever a person does unawares is never accounted as the person's own action. Hence everything done by senseless bodies is not considered as done by them.³⁴ Will is the active agent of its actions, and this being so, neither the inactive body nor the unchanging soul is the actor of any action.³⁵ The inert body has no will or effort, so it never is the doer of any act desired by its presiding soul. It is only from the perspective of the soul viewing the action that sees it so.³⁶ Like the still flame of a lamp burning in still air, the silent and steady soul dwells as a witness to all things and acts that exist and

go on in the world.

³⁷ The celestial, luminous orb of the day regulates the daily works of the living world from his seat on high. In the same way, O Rama, administer the affairs of your state from your elevated seat on the royal throne.

³⁸ Thinking one's being or ego resides in the body is like children seeing ghosts in empty space.

³⁹ The learned are at a loss to explain how unsubstantial ego, which is like an empty ghost, takes possession of the inner body under the name of mind. ⁴⁰ Never enslave yourself, O wise Rama, to this ghost of your egoism which like a ghostly light leads you to a limbo lake or a bog of hell. ⁴¹ The mad and giddy mind, with its capricious desires and whims, plays its foolish pranks in its home in the body like a hideous demon dancing in a dreary desert. ⁴² The demonic mind, having made its way into the hollow heart of the human body, plays its fantastic parts in such an odd manner that wise men shut their eyes against the sight and sit in their silent contemplation of the secluded soul. ⁴³ After the demon of the mind is driven out, there is no more fear for anyone. All can peacefully dwell in the body as nobody is afraid of living in a deserted and desolate city.

⁴⁴ It is astonishing that men should place any reliance on their bodies or consider them as their own when they have had thousands of such bodies in repeated prior births, and when they invariably were infested by the demon of the mind. ⁴⁵ They who die in the grasp of the cannibal of the mind have minds like those of pisacha cannibals in their future births, and never of any other kind of being.

⁴⁶ The body possessed by the demon of egoism is consumed by the fires of the triple afflictions of local, natural and accidental evils. It is not to be relied upon as anyone's safe or lasting abode.

⁴⁷ Therefore, stop dancing with your mind and cease following the dictates of your individual, selfish ego. Let your mind be extended and elevated by forgetting your individual ego in your magnanimity. Rely only on the Supreme Spirit.

⁴⁸ Hellish people, seized and possessed by the devils of ego, are blinded in their self-delusion and giddiness. They are abandoned by their fellows and friends, just as they are unfriendly to others in this world. ⁴⁹ Whatever action is done by one bewitched by his ego grows up like a poisonous plant and produces the fatal fruit of death. ⁵⁰ An ignorant man elated by his egoistic pride is lost both to his reason and his patience. One who is attached to the former by his neglect of the latter is quickly approaching his destruction. ⁵¹ The simpleton seized by the devil of egoism is made into fuel for the fires of hell. ⁵² When the snake of egoism hisses hard in the hollow heart of the tree of the body, it is sure to be cut down by the relentless hand of death who like a wood cutter fells the harmful tree to the ground.

⁵³ O Rama who is the greatest among the great, never look at the demon of egoism, whether it may reside in your body or not, because the very look of it is sure to delude anyone. ⁵⁴ If you disregard, deride or drive away the demon of egoism from the recess of your mind, there is no damage or danger that it can ever bring upon you in any way. ⁵⁵ Rama, though the demon of egoism may play all its freaks in its abode of the body, in no way can it affect the soul which is quite aloof of it. ⁵⁶ Egoism brings a great many evils upon those who have their minds weakened by its influence. It requires hundreds of years to count and recount their harmful effects. ⁵⁷ Rama, the despotic power of egoism makes men groan under its bondage, constantly uttering piteous exclamations, "We are dying and

burning" and such other bitter cries.⁵⁸ The soul is free to wander everywhere without having any connection with anyone's ego, just as the ubiquity of the all pervading sky is unconnected with anything in the world.

⁵⁹ Whatever is done or taken in by the body in its connection with the airy thread of life, all this is the doing of egoism which empties and impels the body to all its various actions.⁶⁰ The quiet and still soul causes all the efforts of the mind, just as the inactive vacuum is the material cause of the growth of trees.⁶¹ Owing to the presence of the soul, the mind develops itself in the form of the body and all its members, just as the presence of light makes a room display its contained objects to sight.

⁶² Rama, think about the relationship between the ever unconnected soul and mind. It resembles the lack of relation between the disconnected earth and sky, or between light and darkness, or between consciousness and gross bodies.⁶³ Those who are ignorant of the soul see the mind as quiet after its motion and fluctuation are stopped by *pranayama* restraint of respiration.⁶⁴ But the soul is self-luminous, everlasting, omnipresent and super-eminent. The mind is deceptive and the ego is situated in the heart with too much pride and vanity.⁶⁵ In reality you are the all-knowing soul and not the ignorant and deluded mind. Therefore drive away your delusive mind from the seat of the soul because mind and soul can never meet or agree.

⁶⁶ The mind, like a demon, has also taken possession of the empty house of the body. Like an evil spirit, the mind has silenced and overpowered the intangible soul in it.⁶⁷ Whatever you are, remain only quiet in yourself by driving away the demon of your mind, because it robs you of your best treasure of patience and loads all kinds of evils upon you.

⁶⁸ A man seized by the hungry yaksha demon of his own mind has no chance for any release from the demon's grasp, either by the lessons of the scriptures or by the advice of his friends, relatives and teachers.⁶⁹ A man who has appeased the demon of his mind is capable of being released from its clutches by scriptures and friends just as it is possible to free a deer from a shallow quagmire.⁷⁰ All things seen stored in this vacant city, the empty world, are all polluted by the cravings of the mind that licks them from inside the house of its body.⁷¹ Tell me, who is not afraid in this dreary wilderness of the world, infested in every corner by the demonic mind?⁷² There are some wise men in this city of the world who enjoy the abodes of their bodies in peace, having tranquilized the demon of their minds.

⁷³ Rama, all the countries that we hear of in any part of the world are found to be full of senseless bodies in which the giddy demons of delusion reside in the cemetery that is the body.⁷⁴ Let people rely on their patience and reconsider their souls by their own efforts. Otherwise they will wander about in the forest of this world like lost children.⁷⁵ Men wander in this world like herds of male deer in burning deserts. But Rama, take care never to live content grazing on dry grass like a young and helpless deer.⁷⁶ Foolish men graze like a young male deer in their pastures in the wilderness of this world. But you, Rama, must stir yourself to kill the great elephant of ignorance and pursue the courageous course of subduing everything in your way.

⁷⁷ Do not allow yourself, O Rama, to ramble about like other men who wander like senseless beasts in their native forests of Asia.⁷⁸ Do not sink yourself like foolish bullocks in the mud of your

relatives and friends. For a while it appears to you like a cold bath, but then it daubs you with its mud and mire.⁷⁹ Drive away your desire of bodily enjoyments and follow the steps of respectable men. Having well considered the sole object of your soul, attend to your soul only.⁸⁰ It is not proper that you should plunge yourself into a sea of intolerable cares and troubles for the sake of your impure and frail body, which is only a trifle compared to the inestimable soul.

⁸¹ The body of the ignorant is the product of one thing and is possessed by another which puts a third one to the pain of its support and affords its enjoyment to a fourth one, all like a complicated machinery of many powers.⁸² As solidity is the only property of stone, so the soul has the single property of its being. The existence of the soul being common in all objects, it is impossible for anything else to exist beside it.⁸³ As thickness is the property of stone, so the mind and others are only properties of the soul. There is nothing distinct from the common entity of the soul. It is impossible for anything to have a separate existence.⁸⁴ As density relates to the stone and dimension bears relation to the pot, so the mind and all other things are not distinct from one common existence of the soul.

⁸⁵ Hear another view of spiritual light for dispelling the darkness of delusion, as it was revealed to me in a cave of Mount Kailash.⁸⁶ There is a mountain peak, bright as the collected mass of moonbeams and penetrating the dome of heaven, where the god with the crescent moon on his forehead (Shiva) delivered this doctrine to me to ameliorate the miseries of the world.⁸⁷ This mountain peak, famed by the name of Kailash, is the dwelling of the consort of Gauri, the god Hara who wears the crescent moon on his head.

⁸⁸ Long ago I once dwelt on that mountain to worship this great god. I constructed my hermit-cell on the bank of the holy stream of Ganges.⁸⁹ I remained there practicing ascetic austerities and performing my holy tapas. The place had many bodies of adepts discoursing on subjects of the sacred scriptures.⁹⁰ I made baskets to be filled with flowers for my worship and to store my collection of books. I was employed in other sacred tasks in the forest gardens of Mount Kailash.

⁹¹ While I was passing my time discharging the austerities of my penance, it happened on the eighth day of the dark side of the moon of the month of *Sravana*.⁹² After evening twilight was over and sunlight had faded away from the four quarters of the sky, all objects became invisible and stood enraptured in their saint-like silence.⁹³ It was after half of the first watch of the night had passed. A thick darkness passed over the gardens and woodlands that required a sharp sword to cut it.⁹⁴ My intense meditation was broken at this instant, and my trance gave way to the sight of outward objects. I kept looking at them for some time, then I saw a flaming fire suddenly rising in the forest.

⁹⁵ It was bright as a big white cloud and as brilliant as the shining orb of the moon. It illuminated the gardens on all sides. I was struck with amazement at the vision.⁹⁶ As I studied it with the sight of my understanding, the mental vision that was glowing in my mind, I came to see the god Shiva with the crescent of the moon on his forehead, manifest and standing on the tableland.⁹⁷ With his hand clasping the hand of Gauri, he was led onward by his attendant Nandi walking before him.

After telling my pupils about the vision, I proceeded forward with an appropriate offering in my hand.⁹⁸ Led by the sight, I came before the presence of the god with a glad mind. Then I offered handfuls of

flowers to the three-eyed god from a distance, in token of my reverence to him.⁹⁹ After giving the offering (*arghya*) worthy of him, I bowed down before the god and approached him. He cast his kind look upon me from his moon-bright and clear sighted eyes.¹⁰⁰ Being blessed by his gracious look, which took away all my pain and sin from me, I did my homage to the god who was seated on the flowery level land viewing the three worlds lying open before him.¹⁰¹ Then advancing forward, I offered him the *arghya* of flowers and water that I had with me, and scattered on him heaps of the mandara flowers that grew there.¹⁰² Then I worshipped the god with repeated obeisance and praise, then adored goddess Gauri with the same kind of homage, then her attendant goddesses and demigods.

¹⁰³ After my adoration was over, the god having the crescent moon on his head spoke to me, who was seated by him, with speech as mild as the cooling beams of the full moon.¹⁰⁴ “Say, O brahmin, whether your affections are at peace within yourself and have found their rest in the Supreme Spirit. Are your blissful feelings settled in the true object of divine essence?¹⁰⁵ Is your tapas going on unobstructed by the demons of your passions? Does joy attend you?¹⁰⁶ Have you obtained the obtainable One that is alone to be obtained? Are you set above the fears that constantly hunt all mankind?”

¹⁰⁷ After the lord of gods and the sole cause of all created beings spoke in this manner, I replied submissively with the following words.¹⁰⁸ “O Lord, there is nothing unattainable, nor is there anything to be feared by anyone who remembers the three-eyed god at all times, and whose hearts are filled with bliss by their constant thoughts of you.¹⁰⁹ There is no one in the womb of this world, in any country or quarter, or in the mountains or forests, who does not bow down his head before you.”

¹¹⁰ “Those whose minds are entirely devoted to their thoughts of you get the rewards of the meritorious acts of their past lives. They water the trees of their present lives to produce their manifold fruit in future births and lives.¹¹¹ Lord, your remembrance expands the seed of our desire. You are the jar of the nectar of our knowledge. You are the reservoir of patience, just as the moon is the receptacle of cooling beams.¹¹² Your remembrance, Lord, is the gateway to the city of salvation. I consider your remembrance as the invaluable gem of my thoughts.¹¹³ O Lord of creation, your remembrance sets its foot on the head of all our disasters.”

¹¹⁴ Having said this much, I bowed down lowly before the pleasing deity. Then I addressed him, O Rama, in the manner as I shall describe.¹¹⁵ “Lord, it is by your favor that I have the fullness of my heart’s content on every side. Yet as there is one question lurking in my mind. I will ask you to explain it fully to me.¹¹⁶ Tell me, with your clear understanding and without hesitation or weariness, how to worship the gods to remove all our sins and obtain all good confirmed on us.”

¹¹⁷ Shiva replied:

Hear me, O brahmin who is best acquainted with the knowledge of Brahma. I will tell you about the best mode of worshipping the gods, which worship is sure to set the worshipper free.¹¹⁸ But first, O great armed brahmin, tell me if you know at all who is that god whom you make the object of your worship if it is not the lotus-eyed Vishnu or the three-eyed Shiva?¹¹⁹ It is not the god born of the lotus Brahma, or he who is the lord of the thirteen classes of gods, the great Indra himself. It is not the god of winds, Pavana, or the god of fire, Agni, or the rulers of the Sun and Moon.¹²⁰ The brahmin (the

earth god, Bhudeva) is no god at all, nor is the king called the shadow of God any god. Neither I, the ego or you are gods, nor is the body or any embodied being, or the mind or any conception or creation of the mind is the true god.¹²¹ Neither Lakshmi, the goddess of fortune, nor Saraswati, the goddess of intelligence, is a true goddess, nor is there anyone that may be called a god except the one true God who is without beginning or end.

¹²² How can a body that can be measured by form and dimensions be the immeasurable deity? It is the real and unlimited Consciousness that is known as the Shiva or the blissful one.¹²³ That is the meaning of the word god (*deva*) and that is the object of adoration. That is the only existent being out of which all other beings have proceeded and in which they have their existence, and wherein they exist with their forms.

¹²⁴ Those unacquainted with the true nature of blissful Shiva worship the forms of idols and images, just as a weary traveler thinks the distance of a mile to be many miles long.¹²⁵ It is possible to be rewarded for one's worship of the Rudras and other gods, but the reward from meditation of the true God is the unbounded joy of the soul.¹²⁶ He who forsakes the reward of true joy for that of fictitious pleasures is like one who quits a garden of mandara flowers for thorny karanja plants.

¹²⁷ True worshippers know the purely intellectual and blissful Shiva is the only adorable god. Understanding and tranquility and equanimity of the soul, rather than garlands of flowers, are the most acceptable offerings to this god.¹²⁸ Know that the true worship of God the spirit is with the flowers of understanding and tranquility of the spirit.¹²⁹ Worship the Soul as consciousness and forsake the adoration of idols. Those devoted to any form or fictitious cult are subject to endless misery.¹³⁰ Those knowing the knowable One are called saints, but those who slight meditation of the Soul and adore idols are like little children playing with dolls.

¹³¹ Lord Shiva is the spiritual god and the supreme cause of all. He is to be worshipped always and without fail with only understanding.¹³² You should know the soul to be the intellectual and living spirit, without decrease as the very nature herself. There is no other to be worshipped. True worship (*puja*) is of the spirit.

¹³³ Vasishta said, "The soul having the nature of intellectual void, just as this world also is an empty void, please tell me, my lord, how Consciousness could become the living soul, as you have declared."

¹³⁴ Shiva replied:

There being only empty Consciousness in existence which is beyond all limits, it is impossible for an intelligible object to exist anywhere which may continue to all eternity.¹³⁵ That which shines of itself is the self-shining Being. It is the Self, the spontaneous agitation of that Being, which has stretched out the universe.¹³⁶ Thus the world appears like a city in dream before the conscious soul. This soul is only a form of empty consciousness and this world is only a baseless fabric.

¹³⁷ It is altogether impossible for any perceptible phenomena to exist anywhere except in the empty sphere of consciousness. Creation is whatever shone forth in the beginning in the plenitude of Divine Consciousness.¹³⁸ Therefore this world which shows itself in the form of a fairyland in dream is only an appearance in the empty sphere of Consciousness. It cannot be any other in reality.

¹³⁹ Consciousness is human speech and the cosmos that supports the world. Consciousness becomes the soul and the living principle. It forms the chain of created beings.

¹⁴⁰ Tell me, what else could know all things in the beginning and even before creation of the universe, except the Consciousness which saw and exhibited everything in heaven and earth as contained in itself? ¹⁴¹ The words “sky”, “firmament” and the “emptiness” of Brahman and the world all apply to Consciousness, just like the words “tree” and “tree” mean the same thing. ¹⁴² And as both dreams and desires arise in us by our delusion, so only our illusion in the empty space of consciousness makes us perceive the existence of an outer world. ¹⁴³ Our empty consciousness shows the sight of the external world in our dream. The same thing shows us the world in our waking dream.

¹⁴⁴ It is not possible for a city in a dream to be seen anywhere except in the hollow space of our consciousness. In the same way, it is impossible for the waking dream of the world to be shown anywhere except in the emptiness of consciousness. ¹⁴⁵ As it is not possible for anything that can be thought of to exist anywhere except in the thinking mind, so it is impossible for this thinkable world to exist in any place other than the Divine Mind.

¹⁴⁶ The triple world rose of itself at the will and in the empty space of Supreme Consciousness, like a dream rising and setting in the mind, and not as anything other than Supreme Consciousness or any duality beside Supreme Consciousness. ¹⁴⁷ As one sees the diverse appearances of pots and paintings in his dream, all lying within the hollowness of his mind, so at the beginning of creation, the world appears of itself in the emptiness of Divine Consciousness. ^{147a} As there is no substantiality of anything in the fairyland of one’s dreams except his pure consciousness of the objects, so there is no substantiality of anything seen in this triple world, except our consciousness of them. ¹⁴⁸ Whatever is visible to sight, and all that exists or does not exist in the present, past or future, and all space, time and mind are nothing other than appearances in the empty consciousness of Brahman.

¹⁴⁹ Brahman is truly the god of whom I have spoken. Only he is supreme in its transcendental sense. He is all and unbounded and includes me, you and the endless world in Himself. ¹⁵⁰ The bodies of all created beings, whether yours, mine, or others, and of all in this world are all full with the consciousness of the Supreme Soul and no other. ¹⁵¹ As there is nothing, O sage, except the bodies produced from the empty consciousness of Brahman resembling images produced in the fairyland of one’s dream, so there is no form or figure in this world other than what was made in the beginning of creation.

Chapter 30 — Shiva Explains How the Consciousness Forgets Itself

¹ Shiva said:—

Consciousness is all this fullness of space. It is the sole Supreme Soul. It is Brahman the immense and the transcendent vacuum. It is said to be the Supreme God.² Therefore, its worship is of the greatest good and confers all blessings to men. It is the source of creation. All this world is situated on it.³ It is unmade and uncreated, without beginning or end. It is boundless and without a second. It is to be served without external service, and all joy is obtained thereby.

⁴ You are enlightened, O chief of sages. I tell you that the worship of gods is not worthy to the wise, and offering flowers and incense is of no use to them.⁵ Those who are unlearned and have minds as simple as those of children are the ones mostly addicted to false worship and devoted to the adoration of gods.⁶ Such people, not having the quietness of their understandings, are led to ceremonious observances and they falsely attribute the images of their own making to the soul.⁷ It is only for children to remain content with offering flowers and incense to gods they honor and have adopted of their own choice.⁸ Men worship gods in vain to gain the objects of their desires. Nothing that is false of itself can ever give the required fruit.⁹ Adoration with flowers and incense is childish understanding.

I will tell you the worship that is worthy of men enlightened like yourself.¹⁰ O most intelligent sage, know that the God we adore is the true God, the receptacle of the three worlds, the Supreme Spirit and no other.¹¹ He is Shiva, the joy, who is above the ranks of all other gods and beyond all of men's fictions and fictitious images. He is accompanied with all desires and is the enjoyer of neither all or any part of the production of his will. He is full of imaginations of all things, but is neither the all nor any one of the objects in his mind.¹² He encompasses all space and time, and is neither divided nor circumscribed by either. He manifests all events and things, and is nothing except the image of pure Consciousness Himself.¹³ He is undivided consciousness situated in the heart of everything. He produces and absorbs everything in himself.

¹⁴ Know Brahman is situated between existence and inexistence. It is He who called God the Supreme Soul, the transcendental, that which is (*tat sat*), and the syllable Om.¹⁵ By his nature of immensity, he spreads alike in all space. Being the great Consciousness himself, he is said to be transcendent and the Supreme Being.¹⁶ He remains as all in all places, just as sap circulates through the bodies of plants. The great soul of the Supreme Being similarly extends as the common entity of all things.

¹⁷ It is He who abides in the heart of your wife Arundhati, just as He does in yours. He also dwells in the heart of Parvati and in those of her attendants.¹⁸ That reasoning which is the universal mind is one and in everyone in all the three worlds. That truly is the God of the wisest among philosophers.

¹⁹ Tell me, O brahmin, how can idols and images be called gods if they have hands and feet but are devoid of consciousness which is the core of the body?²⁰ Consciousness is the core and foundation of the world containing the sap which supplies everything in it. It is the One and all-ego (*sarvahm*) and therefore all things are obtained from it.

²¹ He is not situated at a distance, O brahmin, nor is He unobtainable by anybody. He resides always in all bodies and abides alike in all places, as also in all empty space and sky.²² He does, He eats,

He supports all, and He moves everywhere. He breathes and feels and knows every member of the body.²³ Know, O chief of sages, that He is seated in the city of the body, directing the various functions it manifests under his direct appointment.²⁴ He is the lord of the cavity of the heart and the several hidden sheaths (*koshas*) contained within the body which He makes and moves as he pleases.

²⁵ The pure soul is beyond the essence and actions of the mind and the six organs of sense. It is only for our use and understanding that we apply the word consciousness (*chit*) to Him.²⁶ That intellectual Spirit is too minute, subtle, pure and all-pervading — and it is his choice and will — to manifest a visible representation of himself or not.²⁷ This consciousness is too fine and pure, and yet manages the whole machinery for beautifying the world, just as the subtle and intelligent season of spring beautifies the vegetable world with freshness and moisture.

²⁸ The beautiful and wonderful properties residing in Divine Consciousness are astonishing to behold in their various displays, such as the sky.²⁹ Some of these take the name of “living soul” and others assume the name “mind.” Some take the general name of space and others are known as its parts and divisions.³⁰ Some pass under the name of substance and others of their action. Some are called the different categories of mode and condition, genus, species and adjuncts.³¹ Some shine as light and others stand as mountains and hills. Some brighten as the sun and moon and the gods above, and others are like the dark yakshas below.³² All these continue in their own states without any option on their part. They evolve of their own nature and the causation of the Divine Spirit, just as the sprouts of trees grow of their own accord under the influence of spring season.

³³ It is Consciousness alone that extends over all the works of nature and fills all bodies spread over the vast ocean of the world, just as aquatic plants swim over the surface of waters.³⁴ The deluded mind wanders like a wandering bee, collecting the sweets of its desire from the lotus of the body. Consciousness sits as its mistress, tasting their essence from within.

³⁵ The world with all its gods, gandharvas, seas and hills rolls about in the circuit of Consciousness just like water in a whirlpool.³⁶ Human minds, like the spokes of a wheel, are bound to the axles of their worldly affairs, turning around and around in the ever revolving world, all within the circumference of Consciousness.

³⁷ It was Consciousness in the form of four-armed Vishnu who destroyed the entire host of demon asuras, just as the rainy season dispels solar heat with its thundering clouds and rainbows.³⁸ It is Consciousness in the form of the three-eyed Shiva, accompanied by his symbols of the bull and the crescent moon, who continues to show affection, like a fond bee, on the lovely, lotus-like face of his consort Gauri.³⁹ It was Consciousness that was born in the form of Brahma, like a bee in the lotus-like navel of Vishnu, and settled in his meditation upon the lotus of the triple Vedas.⁴⁰ In this manner Consciousness appears in various forms, like innumerable leaves of trees, and like different kind of ornaments made of the same gold metal.

⁴¹ Of its own pleasure, Consciousness assumes the paramount dignity of Indra, who is the crown jewel over the three worlds and whose feet are honored by the entire assembly of gods.

⁴² Consciousness expands, rises and falls, and circulates everywhere in the womb of the triple world, just as the waters of the deep overflow, recede and move about in itself.⁴³ The moonbeams of

Consciousness scatter their brightness everywhere to display to full view the lotus lake of all created beings in the world.⁴⁴ The translucently bright mirror of Consciousness shows the reflections of the world and benignly receives the images of all things in its bosom, as if it were pregnant with them.⁴⁵ Consciousness gives existence to the circles of the fourteen great regions of creation above and below. It plants them in the watery expanse of the sea on earth, and in the ethereal expanse of the waters in heaven.

⁴⁶ Consciousness spreads itself like a vine in the empty field of air, and becomes fruitful with multitudes of created beings. It blossoms in the varieties of different peoples and shoots forth in the leaves of their dense desires.⁴⁷ These throngs of living beings are like its pollen flying about. Their desires are like the juice that gives the blossoms their different colors. Their understandings are their covering skins, and the efforts of their minds are buds that unfold with the flowers and fruit of their desires.⁴⁸ The graceful pistils of these small flowers are countless in the three worlds. Their constant quivering in the air express their gay dance with the sweet smiling of opening buds.⁴⁹ Consciousness stretches out all these real and unreal bodies that expand like gentle and attractive flowers for a time, but never endure forever.

⁵⁰ Consciousness produces men everywhere like moon-bright flowers, and these flush and blush and sing and dance about considering themselves to be real bodies.⁵¹ It is by the power of this great Consciousness that the sun and other luminous bodies shine in the sky, just as two lovers are attracted to each other to taste the fruit of their enjoyment as gross bodies.

⁵² All visible bodies seen to move about in this phenomenal world are like flakes of dust dancing in a whirling current.⁵³ Consciousness is like the light of the universe. It manifests all the phenomena of the three worlds to us, just as the flame of a lamp shows us the various colors of things.⁵⁴ All worldly things exhibit their beauty to our sight because they are immersed in the light of Consciousness, just as the dark spot on the moon becomes fully apparent to view by its immersion in lunar beams.⁵⁵ By receiving the gilding of Consciousness, all material bodies are shaded in their various colors, just as different trees receive their freshness, foliage and fruit from the influence of rainy weather.

⁵⁶ Shadow causes the dullness of an object. All bodies are inanimate without Consciousness, just as a house becomes dark without light.⁵⁷ If the wonderful powers of Consciousness are lacking in anything, it becomes a shapeless thing and cannot possibly have any form or figure.⁵⁸ Consciousness is like light from the sky. Its active power or energy is like its consort residing with her children of desires in the abode of the body, ever restless and busy in her actions.⁵⁹ Without the presence of Consciousness, it is impossible for anyone to perceive the taste of any flavor, though it is set on the tip of his tongue.

⁶⁰ Hear me and tell me. How can this tree garden of the body exist, with its branching arms and hairy filaments, without being supplied with the sap of Consciousness?⁶¹ Know hence that Consciousness, by growing and feeding and supporting them all, is the cause of all moving and immovable things in nature. Know also that Consciousness is the only thing in existence. All else is nonexistent without it.

⁶² Vasishta said:—

Rama, after the moon-bright and three-eyed god had spoken to me in his clear intelligible speech, I

asked the moon-bright god again in a clear and audible voice, saying,⁶³ “O lord, if Consciousness alone is all pervading and the soul of all, then I have not yet been able to know this visible earth in its true light.⁶⁴ Tell me. Why do people describe a living person as endued with consciousness as long as he is alive, and say he is devoid of consciousness when he is laid down as a dead and lifeless mass?”

⁶⁵ The god Shiva replied:—

Hear me tell you, O brahmin, all about what you have asked me. It is a question of great importance and requires, O greatest of devotees, a long explanation.

⁶⁶ Consciousness resides in everybody and all things as their inherent soul. The one is viewed as the individual and active Spirit, and the other is known as the unchanging and Universal Soul.⁶⁷ The mind misled by its desires views the inner spirit as another, just as a greedy person takes his consort for another in his dream.⁶⁸ As the same man seems to be changed to another person during his fit of anger, so sober consciousness is transformed to a changeable spirit by one’s mistake of its true nature.

⁶⁹ Consciousness loses its state of purity when it is attributed with many variable qualities and desires. By thinking constantly of its gross nature, consciousness is at last converted to the very gross object of thought.⁷⁰ Then the subjective intellect (*chit*) becomes itself the object of thought (*chetya*), and having assumed the subtle form of a minute ethereal atom, it becomes the element of sound. Afterwards it is transformed into the rudimentary particle of air.⁷¹ Then this aerial particle, qualified by time and place, becomes the vital principle, which next turns into understanding, then finally to the mind.⁷² Consciousness transformed into the mind dwells on its thoughts of the world. Then it is amalgamated with it, in the same manner as a brahmin is changed into a tribal by constantly thinking himself as one.

⁷³ Thus Divine Consciousness forgets its universality by its thoughts of particulars and assumes the gross forms of the objects of its thoughts and desires.⁷⁴ Thus Consciousness being full of endless thoughts and desires grows as dull as the gross objects it thinks upon, until at last the subtle intellect grows as stony dull as pure water frozen into massive hailstones.⁷⁵ The impassive intellect takes the names of mind and sense and becomes subject to ignorance and illusion by contracting a gross impassivity. Restrained from its flight upwards, the intellect has to grovel forever in the regions of sense.

⁷⁶ First the intellect becomes subjected to ignorance, then it is fast bound to the fetters of its desires, and then pinched by its yearnings and angry sufferings, it is tormented by the pleasure of affluence and the pains of privation.⁷⁷ By forsaking the endless joy (of spirituality), the intellect is subjected to the constantly changing fortunes of mortality. It becomes dejected in despair, lamenting over its grief and sorrow, then burning amidst the fires of its sorrows and misery.

⁷⁸ See how it is harassed with the vain thought of its personality that “I am such a one.” Look at the miseries to which it is exposed by its reliance on the frail and false body.⁷⁹ See how worried it is by being pushed to and fro in the alternate swinging beds of prosperity and adversity. See how it is plunged into the deep and muddy puddle of misery, like a worn out elephant sinking in the mud.

⁸⁰ Look at this deep and impassable ocean of the world, all hollow within and rolling with the

eventful waves of causation. It emits undersea fire from within its bosom, just as the human heart flashes forth with its hidden fire of passions and affections.

⁸¹ The human heart staggers between hope and fear like a stray deer in the forest, alternately cheered and depressed at the prospects of affluence and want. ⁸² The mind led by its desire is always apprehensive of disappointment. It coils back for fear of a reverse, just as a frightened girl flies away from the sight of a ghost. ⁸³ Man encounters all kinds of pain to obtain a certain pleasure, just as a camel browses thorny shrubs in hope of honey inside. But the man slips part way and is hurled headlong to the bottom. ⁸⁴ A man meeting with a reverse falls from one danger to another, so he meets with fresh disasters, as if one evil invited the other. ⁸⁵ The mind, captivated by its desires and led onward by its efforts, meets with one difficulty after another and has cause to repent and grieve at every step. ⁸⁶ As a man advances in life, so he improves in his learning. But alas! At best, all his worldly knowledge serves to bind his soul even more to the earth.

⁸⁷ Cowards are in constant fear of everything until they die in their fear, just as little shrimp, being afraid of a waterfall, fall on dry land where they perish struggling. ⁸⁸ The helplessness of childhood, the anxieties of manhood, and the misery of old age are all preliminaries to the sad deaths of men engaged in a busy life.

⁸⁹ The propensities of past lives cause some to be born as celestial nymphs in heaven, and others as venomous serpents in underground holes. Some become fierce demons, and many are reborn as men and women on earth. ⁹⁰ Men's past actions make them born again as rakshasas among savages or as monkeys in forests. Some become kinnaras on mountains and many as lions on mountain tops. ⁹¹ The vidyadharas of the Devagiri Mountains, the naagas of forest caves, the birds of the air, woodland animals with four feet, forest trees and plants, bushes on hills and orchids on trees are all only reincarnations.

⁹² It is the same Consciousness which causes Narayana to float on the surface of the sea and makes the lotus-born Brahma remain in his meditation. It keeps Hara in the company of his consort Uma and places Hari over the gods in heaven. ⁹³ It is this Consciousness which makes the sun make the day and the clouds give rain. It makes the sea breathe out in waves and volcanic mountains blow out in fire and flame. ⁹⁴ It makes the wheel of time continually revolve in the circle of the seasons, and causes day and night to rotate in their cycles of light and darkness. ⁹⁵ Here it causes seeds to sprout and grow with the juice in them, and there it makes stones and minerals lie down in mute silence. ⁹⁶ Sometimes it blooms in fruit ripened by the sun's heat, and at other times matured by burning fuel. Somewhere it gives us cold and icy water, and at other places it gives spring water that cannot be tasted. ⁹⁷ Here it glows in luminous bodies, and there it shows itself as impenetrable thickets and inaccessible rocks. It shines bright and white in one place, and dark and blue in another. It sparkles in fire and dwindle in earth. It blows in air and spreads in water.

⁹⁸ Being the all-pervading, omnipresent, and omnipotent power itself, Consciousness is the one in all and the whole fullness of space. Therefore, it is more subtle and transparent than the rarefied and translucent air. ⁹⁹ As Consciousness spreads out and contracts itself in any manner in any place or time, so it conceives and produces the same within and without itself, just as the agitation of waters produces both little waves and huge surges of the sea.

¹⁰⁰ Consciousness stretches itself in the various forms of ducks and geese, of cranes and crows, of storks, wolves and horses also. It becomes the heron and partridge, the parrot, the dog, the male deer, the monkey, and kinnara likewise. ¹⁰¹ It is the abstract qualities of understanding, beauty and modesty, and of love and affections also. It is the power of illusion and the shadow and brightness of night and moonlight. ¹⁰² It stretches itself in these and all other forms of bodies, and is born and reborn in all kinds and species of things. It wanders and rolls all about the revolving world like straw whirling in a whirlpool. ¹⁰³ It is afraid of its own desires, just as the she-ass is seen to shudder at its own braying, yet it has no one like itself.

¹⁰⁴ I have told you already, O great sage, how this principle of the living spirit becomes weakened by its animal propensities and is later debased to the nature and condition of brute creatures. ¹⁰⁵ The Supreme Soul receiving the name of living soul, the principle of action becomes a pitiable object. It becomes subject to error and illusion and is subjected to endless pains and miseries. ¹⁰⁶ Then the deluded soul is overpowered by its past actions which cause it to choose the wrong unreality for itself. The unreality being frail and perishable makes the active soul perish and undergo countless troubles. Just like the husk born with the rice grain, this consciousness carries its impurity with it. ¹⁰⁷ The soul, degraded from its state of endless joy to the miserable condition of mortal life, laments over its fallen state like a widow wailing over her fate.

¹⁰⁸ Look on the deplorable condition of consciousness (*chit*), which having forgotten its original state of purity, is subjected to impotent ignorance. Ignorance casts the living soul into the miseries of degradation, just like they use rope to cast a bucket in a well, lowering it lower and lower until it sinks to the bottom of the pit.

Chapter 31 — Shiva on Consciousness, Living Soul, Understanding, Mind, Vital Air and the Body

¹ Shiva continued:—

When Consciousness takes the vanities of the world to itself and thinks itself to be a miserable being, it is said to have fallen into error. Then it resembles a dreaming or intoxicated man who is deluded to think he is someone else.² Though immortal, yet Consciousness is deceived to believe itself to be mortal by its infatuated understanding, just as a sick man weeps to think he is dead when he is still alive.³ As an ignorant man sees the revolving spheres to be at a standstill, so the deluded intellect sees the world and thinks its personality as sober realities.

⁴ The mind alone is said to cause the perception of the exterior world, but the mind cannot be the cause because it is impossible for the mind to have a separate existence independent of consciousness.⁵ Thus, it being impossible for the mind to cause, whatever phenomena the mind appears to cause also cannot exist. Therefore consciousness is the only cause of thought, and not the mind or phenomena.⁶ There is no spectacle or spectator of anything anywhere other than a delusion, like that which makes oiliness appear on a rock. There is no matter, making or work of any kind unless it is a mistake like darkness in the moon.

⁷ The terms measure, measurer, and measurable are as non-existent in nature as a forest of plants in the sky. The words consciousness, intellect, reasoning and intelligible are as meaningless in themselves as the absence of thorns and thistles in the Nandana garden of paradise.⁸ The personalities of “I”, “you”, and “it” are as false as mountains in the sky. Differences among persons are as untrue as whiteness in ink.⁹ The Divine Spirit is neither the same nor different in all bodies because it is as impossible for the Universal Soul to be confined in anybody as it is impracticable for Mount Meru to be contained in an atom of dust. It is impossible to express the Divine Spirit using words and their meanings, just as sandy soil is incapable of growing tender herbs.

¹⁰ The saying, “Not this, not that,” is as untrue as the belief that the darkness of night exists in company with daylight. Substantiality and insubstantiality are both as lacking in the Supreme Spirit as heat is lacking in ice.¹¹ It is as wrong to call the Supreme Spirit empty or solid, just as it is wrong to say a tree is growing in the womb of a stone. To call Spirit either the one or the other is to describe it as the infinite vacuum or the full existence.

¹² The sole Unity remains in its state of pure transparency forever. Being unborn from anyone’s thought or mind, it is not subject to misrepresentation by anyone.¹³ However, the thoughts of men attribute many faults and failings to Spirit, but all these imputations and false attributes vanish before the person knowing its true nature.

¹⁴ The learned, devoid of detachment, are employed in many thoughts and things though not even a straw in all this vast world is under anyone’s command.¹⁵ It is in everyone’s power to get rid of his thoughts, but it is very difficult to get the object of his thought. Then how is it possible for one to have that which is impracticable for him to seek?

¹⁶ The one sole and immutable Consciousness that pervades all nature is the supreme One without equal. It is more transparent than the translucent light of a lamp and all other lights.¹⁷ It is this

intellectual light that enlightens everything. It is everywhere and ever translucent. It is ever shining without shade and immutable in its nature and mind.¹⁸ It is situated everywhere and in all things, such as pots and pictures, trees and huts, houses, four-footed animals, demons, devils, men, beasts, the sea, earth and air.¹⁹ It remains as the all witnessing Spirit without any vibration or motion of its own to any place. It enlightens all objects without flickering or doing any action by itself.²⁰ It remains without stained by any connection with an impure body. It continues unchangeable in its relation with the changeful mind. It does not become dull by being joined with the dull body, and it is never changed to anything by its extension over all things.

²¹ The extremely minute and immutable Consciousness retains its consciousness in itself. By rolling itself like a spool of thread, it enters the body in the form of a particle of air.²² Then it is accompanied by the powers of vision and reflection, which are wakeful in the waking state and lie dormant in sleep, which is why these are said to be existent and nonexistent by turns.²³ Then the clear and pure consciousness comes to think of many things in its waking state. Thus it is perverted from its purity, just as an honest man who keeps company with the dishonest ends up turning to dishonesty.

²⁴ The intellect contracting and distracting itself with vicious thoughts is like pure gold alloyed with copper that is restored to purity by removing the copper.²⁵ A good mirror cleaned of its dirt shows a face in clear light. In the same way, the intellect born in a human body attains its divine nature through its good understanding.²⁶ If the intellect lacks knowledge of itself as the All, it presents a false world as a true reality. But upon coming to know its true nature, it attains the divine state.

²⁷ When the mind thinks it is different from Consciousness and separate from the unrealities in nature, it gets the sense of its egoism, then it perishes though originally it is imperishable in its nature.²⁸ As a slight wind scatters the fruit of trees growing on the sides of a mountain, so the consciousness of self drops down at the gust of a slight disease.²⁹ The existence of form, color and other qualities is due to consciousness, just as the position of inferiors depends upon the station of the superior. Through lack of understanding the pure consciousness, infinite and indefinite in itself, is described as a unity, duality or plurality.

³⁰ It is only because of Consciousness that the mind and senses derive their faculties of thinking and perception, just as daylight gives rise to the daily routines of business.³¹ The action of vital energy gives pulsation to the pupils of the eye whose light is called sight and which is the instrument of perceiving the forms and colors of things placed outside it. But perception is the power and action of Consciousness.³² Air and skin are both contemptible and unconscious things, yet their union gives the perception of touch and feeling. The mind becomes conscious of that feeling, but its awareness depends upon and is caused by Consciousness.³³ The particles of scent carried by air to the nostrils give the sense of smell to the mind, but it is Consciousness which perceives the smell.³⁴ The particles of sound are conveyed by the fluctuations of air to the organ of hearing for the mind to perceive, and the Intellect is conscious of this as in its sleep.

³⁵ The mind is the principle of willing action from some desire or to some end and aim of its own. The thoughts of the mind are mixed with foulness, while the nature of the intellectual soul is quite pure and simple.³⁶ Consciousness is manifest by itself and is situated of itself in itself. It contains the world within itself like a crystal stone retains the images of all things in its bosom.³⁷ It is the single

and sole Consciousness which contains the whole, without dividing or transforming itself into parts or forms other than itself. It neither rises nor sets, nor moves nor grows at any place or time.³⁸ It becomes the living soul by fostering its desires, and remains as pure Consciousness by forsaking them forever. Seated in itself, it reflects on its two gross and pure states.

³⁹ Consciousness has the living soul for its vehicle, and the individual ego is the vehicle of the living soul. Understanding is the vehicle of the individual ego, and the mind is the seat of the understanding.

⁴⁰ The mind has vital breath for its vehicle, and the senses are the vehicles of the vital airs. The body is the carriage of the senses, and the organs of action are the wheels of the body.⁴¹ The motion of these vehicles forms the course of this world and the continued rotation of the body until old age and death, which is the dispensation of the almighty power.

⁴² The world is shown to us as an optical illusion of the Supreme Soul, like a scene in our dream. It is a reflection and completely untrue, like water in a mirage.

⁴³ Know, O sage, that the vital breath is called the vehicle of the mind only by fiction because wherever there is the vital breath, there is also the process of thinking going on with it.⁴⁴ Wherever the vital breath circulates like a thread, acting like a spring, the body is made to shake with it, just as the forms and colors of bodies present themselves to view in light.⁴⁵ The mind employed with its desires moves the vital breath and the body like a storm shakes a forest. But when the mind is confined within the cavity of the heart, it stops their motion like winds confined in the upper skies.

⁴⁶ Confinement of the vital breath in the emptiness of the heart stops the course of the thoughts just as hiding a light removes the visibility of objects.⁴⁷ As dust ceases to fly after winds are over, so the thoughts in the mind cease to move when the breath is pent up in the heart.

⁴⁸ As a carriage is driven wherever the driver wishes to drive it, so the mind driven by the vital breath runs from country to country in a moment.⁴⁹ As a stone flung from a sling is lost forever, so the thoughts of the mind are dispersed in the air unless they are fixed upon some object. Thoughts are inherent in the mind and vitality just like fragrance is inherent in flowers and heat in fire.⁵⁰ Wherever there is vital breath breathing, there is the principle of the mind with its trains of thoughts, just as whenever the moon appears it is accompanied by its beams. Our consciousness is the result of the vibrations of vital air, like our perception of phenomena. This air sustains the body by supplying juice from food to all the nerves and arteries.

⁵¹ Mind and intellect both belong to the body, the one residing in the hollow of vital air, and the other is as clear as consciousness and resides in all gross and subtle bodies, like the all pervading and transparent emptiness.⁵² Consciousness remains in the form of conscious self-existence in dull inanimate bodies and appears to be afraid of the vibrations of animal life.⁵³ The mind recognizes the dull body, enlivened by vital breath, as belonging to itself, and plays many parts and sports with it, just like in its prior state of existence.

⁵⁴ The mind no longer vibrates after breathing ceases, then, O sage, pure Consciousness is reflected in the eightfold receptacle of vacuum. [*The eight basic elements are earth, water, fire, air, space, mind, intellect and identity.*]⁵⁵ As only a mirror can reflect an image and not a rock, so only the mind serves as the eightfold receptacle, the agent of all actions, and is called by different names according to the views of different spiritual teachers.

⁵⁶ That which gives rise to the network of our imaginary visible world, and that in which it appears to be situated, and that whereby the mind is made to revolve in various bodies, know that supreme substance to be the Immensity of Brahman, the source of all this world.

Chapter 32 — Shiva on the Preservation and Dissolution of the Body

¹ Shiva continued:—

Listen, holy sage! I will now explain how the active and oscillating principle of consciousness acts on the human body and makes it move, whereby it receives the noble title of its active agent.² But a mind compelled by its former propensities prevails over the intellect. Being hardened in its vicious deeds, the mind pursues its changing wishes and desires.³ The mind strengthened by illusion, the intellect becomes as dumb and hard as a rock. This power of delusion, growing stronger by divine dispensation, displays the universe to view.

⁴ It is by the good grace of this power that consciousness is sometimes allowed to perceive the fallacy of this city-in-the-sky world, and at others times to believe it to be a reality.⁵ The body is as dumb as a rock without the presence of intellect, mind and its individual ego. When these are present, then the body moves about like a stone flung in the air.⁶ As dull iron is made to move by the presence of a magnet, so the living soul acts its parts by the presence of the omnipresent Soul.⁷ The power of the all pervading Soul makes the living principle shoot out into infinity forever, just as seeds sprout into trees everywhere. Just like a mirror receives the reflection of objects situated some distance away, so the living soul reflects the image of the distant Supreme Spirit.

⁸ Forgetting its own real nature, the living soul contracts to become a foul gross object, just as a legitimate twice born man (brahmin), forgetting his birth, mistakes himself for a shudra (low caste).

⁹ By forgetting its own essence, consciousness is transformed into the sensuous mind, just as some great souls are deceived to believe they are miserable by being distracted from their awareness of their consciousness.

¹⁰ The intellect moves the dull and inert body, just as the force of winds shakes the waters of the deep to roll and range about in successions of waves.¹¹ The active mind, always prone to action, randomly leads the body machine together with the passive and helpless living soul, just as the winds blow in different directions carrying inert materials with it.¹² The body is the vehicle, and God employs the mind and vital breath as the two horses or bullocks that drive it.¹³ Others say that the rarefied consciousness assumes a compact form, which becomes the living soul, and this riding on the car of the mind drives it by the vital airs as its racers.

¹⁴ Sometimes consciousness seems like something born and in being, as in its state of waking and witnessing objects all around. At others it seems to be dead and lost as in its state of deep sleep. Again, it appears as many as in its dreaming state. At last it comes to know itself as one when it comes to the knowledge of truth and its identity with the sole unity.¹⁵ Sometimes it seems to be of a different form, without forsaking its own nature, just as milk becomes butter and curds, and just as water appears in the shapes of waves and foam.

¹⁶ As all things depend upon light to display their different forms and colors, so the mental powers and faculties all depend upon the conscious soul for their different actions.¹⁷ The Supreme Spirit situated in the mind within the body gives the animal soul its life and action, just as all things appear to sight while a lamp shines inside the room.

¹⁸ The ungoverned mind gives rise to all diseases and difficulties rising as quickly and thickly as

rough waters rise in waves foaming with thickening froth.¹⁹ The living soul, dwelling like a bee in the lotus bed of the body, is subject to diseases and difficulties like the bee is to rains and flood. The living soul is as disturbed by the casualties of life as calm seawater is disturbed to waves by blowing winds.

²⁰ The idea that “the Divine Soul is omnipotent, and the living soul is impotent and limited in its powers; therefore the human soul is not the same as the divine” is the cause of our grief and serves to darken understanding, just as clouds raised by the sunlight obscure the sun.

²¹ The living soul passes through many incarnations in its ignorance and utter lack of self consciousness, like one subdued to dullness by some sleeping drug that makes him insensitive to the pain inflicted upon his own body.²² But as the living soul comes to know itself through some means or another, it recovers from its dull unconsciousness and regains its state of original purity, just as a drunken or deluded person turns to his duty once he comes to remember himself.²³ The living soul fills the body and is employed in enlivening all its members. It does not strive to know the cause of its consciousness, just as a leper never attempts to use the parts of his body he is incapable of raising.

²⁴ When the soul is devoid of its consciousness, it no longer makes the lotus-like heart beat and vibrate with the breath of respiration. The heart becomes as motionless as a sacrificial vessel untouched by the priest.²⁵ When the action of the lotus-shaped heart stops, the motion of the vital breaths also stops, just as the fanning of the palm leaf being over, there is no more breeze.

²⁶ Cessation of the vital air in the body and its flight to some other form (*i.e.*, death) silences life which recedes into the original soul, just as flying dust settles when the winds die down.²⁷ At this time, O sage, the mind remains in its unstained state without support until it gets another body in which it rests like a seed in soil and water.²⁸ Thus, the causes of life cease, the eight principles of the body become inert and extinct, and the body drops and becomes defunct and motionless.²⁹ Forgetting intellect, the intelligible (truth), and intelligence produces the desires to vibrate. This brings memories of the past, or they are buried in oblivion.

³⁰ The expansion of the lotus-like heart causes the subtle body (*puryashtaka*, astral body) to expand also, but when the organ of the heart ceases to blow and breathe, the body ceases to move.³¹ As long as elements of the subtle body remain in the physical body, it lives and breathes, but when these elementary powers are quiet and still, the body becomes inert and is said to be dead.

³² When the contrary humors, or feelings and passions and conscious perceptions, or outward wounds and strokes cause the inner actions of the heart to stop,³³ then the eight-fold material body forces are pent up in the cavity of the heart, just as the force of winds is lost in the hollow of a pair of bellows.

³⁴ When a living body has its inner consciousness but becomes inert and motionless in its outer parts and members, it is still alive by the action of breathing in the inner organ of the heart.³⁵ Those whose pure and holy desires never forsake their hearts live in a quiet and even state of life. They are known as the living liberated and long living seers.

³⁶ When the action of the lotus-like machine of the heart has ceased and breath no longer circulates in the body, it loses its steadiness and falls unsupported on the ground like a block of wood or stone.

³⁷ As the eight-fold body mixes with the air in the emptiness of the sky, so the mind also is absorbed

in it at the same time.³⁸ But being accompanied by thoughts to which it has been long accustomed, the mind continues to wander about in the air in the regions of heaven and hell where it had long believed it would go upon leaving the body.³⁹ The body becomes a dead corpse after the mind has fled into the air. The body remains like an empty house after its occupant has left.

⁴⁰ The all pervading Consciousness, by its power of reasoning, becomes both the living soul and the mind. Passing from its embodied form, it assumes its spiritual nature.⁴¹ In its heart it fosters the subtle essence of the elemental mind, which later assumes a grosser form like the thoughts of things appear in dream.⁴² Then, as the intensity of its thoughts makes the unreal world appear as real, it comes to forget and forsake its spiritual nature and transforms itself into a gross body.⁴³ By mistake it thinks the unreal body is substantial, the unreal is real, and the real is unreal.⁴⁴ The intellect is only a particle of the all pervading Consciousness that makes the living soul and which reflects itself in the form of the intelligent mind. Then the mind ascends on the vehicle of the eight-fold body and surveys the phenomenal world as a sober reality.

⁴⁵ Consciousness is the prime mobile power that gives force to the eight-fold material body to move itself. The action of the breath in the heart, called life, resembles the spiritual force of a ghost rising up in an inert body.⁴⁶ When the aerial mind flies into the empty air, after its material frame is weakened and worn out, then the lifeless body remains like a block of wood or stone. Then it is called dead by the living.⁴⁷ As the living soul forgets its spiritual nature, becoming decayed in course of time and according to the frail nature of material things, it fades and falls away like withered leaves.⁴⁸ When the vital power forsakes the body and the action of the heart muscles stop, the breath of life becomes extinct and the animated being is said to die.

⁴⁹ All beings, having been born and come to life, fade away in time like all created things in the world. Human bodies also fade and fall away in time, like the withered leaves of trees.⁵⁰ The bodies of all embodied beings are equally doomed to be born and die in their time, just as the leaves of trees constantly grow and fall off in season. Why then should we lament the loss of what is surely to be lost?

⁵¹ Look at these chains of living bodies, indiscriminately and constantly rising and falling like bubbles and waves in the vast ocean of Divine Consciousness. There is no difference between any and another. Why then should the wise make any distinction between objects that are equally frail in their nature, and proceed from and return to the same source?⁵² All-pervading Consciousness reflects itself only in the mind of man, and nowhere else, just as only the mirror receives the reflections of objects and not any other opaque substance.

⁵³ The acts and fates of men are all imprinted in the spacious and clear page of Divine Consciousness, yet all embodied beings cry and complain loudly against the decrees of Heaven which are the results of their own ignorance and tend towards their bitter grief and vain lamentation.

Chapter 33 — Shiva: Resolution of Duality into Unity; Creation Really Exists

¹ Vasishta said, “Tell me, my lord who bears the crescent moon on his forehead. How does the pure and simple essence of Consciousness, which is an infinite unity and ever uniform and immutable in its nature, become transmuted to the finite dualities of the variable and impure soul and mind? ² Tell me, O great god, how this uncaused prime cause becomes diffused in endless varieties. How can we get rid of the plurality of our creeds by our wisdom and put an end to our miseries?”

³ Shiva replied:—

When the omnipotent God remains as one unity of immensity, then of course it is absurd to speak of his duality or plurality, or of any manifestation of a part of himself. ⁴ Taking the single to be double is to ascribe duality to unity. It is futile to ascribe duality to simple consciousness that by its nature is indivisible. ⁵ The lack of the number one means there is neither unity or duality. There can be no dual without the singular, or single unless there be the number two. ⁶ The cause and its effect being of one nature, they are both of the same kind, just as the fruit and the seed contained in it. The difference attributed to cause and effect from the change of one thing to the other is only the mere fiction of imagination.

⁷ The mind itself evolves in its thoughts at its own will. The changes occurring in itself are in no way different from its own nature, just as the seed and fruit are of the same nature. The same fruit produces the same seeds, and these again bring forth the same fruit. ⁸ Many modifications constantly arise in the infinite mind of the almighty Maker as its eternal will. These actually take place in positive existences. In this world, substantive forms bear the relation of causes and their effects. ⁹ These productions are like waves in the sea, or a mirage to the children of a barren woman, or the horns of a rabbit, all which are nothing and not in being. They are all as negative as water on a mountaintop or barley growing on the head of a hare.

¹⁰ If we inquire into the real truth, we must refrain from arguing over words. Though all things tend to establish the unity, yet it is difficult even in thought to do away with differences, such as those between words and their meanings.

¹¹ The essence of divine omnipotence is not divisible into portions or fractions, like sea waves that are broken into foam and spray. ¹² As the leaves, stalks, branches and flowers of trees are nothing other than the same substance, so unity, duality, I, you, and the objectivity of the phenomenal world are not different from the essence of the subjective Consciousness which contains and puts forth itself in all these forms. ¹³ All time and place and variety of forms are only modifications of Consciousness, so it is improper for us to question the reality of those and assert the certainty of this Consciousness.

¹⁴ Time and space and the powers of action and destiny all derive from and are directed by Consciousness and have their own conscious natures. ¹⁵ As the power of thinking, the thought and its object together compose the principle of the mind, so the whole universe and everything that bears a name are all included under the term Consciousness (*chit*) in the same way as water and its rise and fall are all included under the word “wave”. ¹⁶ The thoughts that continually rise and fall in the great ocean of the Intellect are like the waves that heave and settle on the surface of the noisy sea.

¹⁷ This Supreme Consciousness is known by the various names of the Lord, God, Truth, Shiva,

Intellect and others, as it is by the various names of emptiness, unity and Supreme Spirit.¹⁸ Such is the nature of God, whom no words can express and who is called the Ego or the subjective "I am that I am". God is beyond the power of speech to describe.¹⁹ All that is seen is only the leaves, fruit, flowers and branches of the all creeping vine of Consciousness which, being diffused in all, leaves nothing that is different from it.

²⁰ Divine Consciousness (*chit*) being omniscient has the great ignorance underlying it. Then looking at this side of itself, it takes the name of the living soul and beholds this shadowy world stretched outside the Divine Mind, as when we see a second moon in the moon's reflection cast upon clouds.

²¹ Then, the intellect thinking itself to be a living being and other than what it is, it becomes of the same nature as it thinks and forms itself by its own will.²² Being transformed from its perfect and immaculate state to that of an imperfect and impure nature, it is made to wade in the stream of this world without ever thinking.

²³ The intellectual form, being then assimilated with the elemental body (*puryashtaka*, astral or subtle body), receives its vital or mortal life and living soul which lives by reflection of the essence of Supreme Consciousness.²⁴ The spiritual body is transformed into the frail living body, which being joined with quintessence of the five-fold elements, comes to know itself as material substance.²⁵ Next this substance is infused with the vital breath and receives its vigor and strength like the seed of a plant. Then it feels itself to be endued with life and is conceived in the uterus in its own conception.

²⁶ The same false conception of its gross materiality misleads consciousness into the belief of its own ego and personality. It also conceives its state as a moving or inert being, and this conception instantly converts it into that same form.

²⁷ Again, the simultaneous meeting of a person's memories and desires changes its former habitual and meaner form to that of a larger and grosser kind.²⁸ Duality from one's essential identity and unity results from thinking oneself to be other than what he really is, just as a man becomes a devil by thinking he is possessed by a ghost.²⁹ The thought of duality of one identical soul in its two aspects of Supreme Soul and individual souls is driven away by the conviction that I do nothing and the agency of all actions rests in the great God himself.³⁰ The unity is perceived as duality by the dualistic habits of men. Belief in unity destroys the sense of dualism and plurality.³¹ There is no duality or secondary being in the individual soul. The living soul may be regarded as the Supreme Soul because there is only one soul, unchangeable without decay at all times and everywhere.

³² All works of imagination disperse with the dispersion of the fumes of fancy, just as one's aerial castle and fairy city vanish after the frenzied flight of the imaginary dream.³³ It is painful to erect a fabric of imagination, but there is no pain whatever in breaking it down. The mental machinery of imagination is well skilled in building the aerial cities, but not in demolishing them.³⁴ If the fullness of one's desires and fancies fill life with pains and troubles, the lack of such wishes and views must serve to set him free from these pains forever.³⁵ If even a slight desire is enough to expose a man to many cares in life, then its utter privation must afford him complete rest and quiet in his transient state of being.

³⁶ When your mind is loosened from your many serpentine desires, then you will enjoy the sweets of the garden of paradise.³⁷ Drive away and disperse the clouds of your desire by the breeze of your

reason. Come and enjoy your rest under the calm and clear autumn sky of your detachment.³⁸ Dry the impetuous currents of your rapid desires by the charms of amulets and mantras, then restrain yourself from being carried away by the flood and restrict your mind to its dead inaction.³⁹ Place your trust in the conscious soul (*chit atma*) seated in the cavity of your heart, and look upon mankind driven to and fro by the gusts of their desire to be like bits of straw flying randomly in turbulent air.⁴⁰ Wash the dirt of your desires out from your mind by the pure water of your spiritual knowledge. Secure the perfect tranquility of your soul and continue to enjoy the highest bliss of a holy life.

⁴¹ God is all powerful and omnipresent and displays himself in all forms everywhere.⁴² It is thought or imagination that makes the false world appear as true. To make the world vanish into nothing also depends upon thought.⁴³ The network of our thoughts and desires is interwoven with the threads of our repeated births. The winds of our detachment and indifference blow off this web and settle us in the state of supreme joy.

⁴⁴ Greed is a thorny plant that has taken deep root in the human heart. It is fostered under the shade of the tree of desire. Root out this tree of desire and the thorny bush of greed will fade away of itself.

⁴⁵ The world is a shadow, a reflection that rises to view and disappears by turns. An error of the brain presents the sight of the course of nature, like that of a fairyland presented to us in a dream.

⁴⁶ The king who forgets his nature as the Almighty mistakes himself for a prince who has become the ruler of a land. This concept springs from ignorance of his divine nature. It soon vanishes after he comes to the real knowledge of himself.⁴⁷ The king in possession of his present royalty has no memory of his past states, as in the serenity of the autumn we do not remember the foulness of past rainy weather.⁴⁸ The thought that is predominant in the mind naturally prevails over fainter and weaker thoughts, just as the highest pitch in music overcomes the bass tones and takes possession of the ear.

⁴⁹ Think in yourself that you are One. Keep this single reflection before you and holding fast to it, you will become the object of your meditation.

⁵⁰ Such is the spiritual meditation of spiritually minded people like you who aspire to the highest joy of the Supreme Being. The external forms of worship are fit only for ungoverned minds who seek only their temporal welfare. Worship composed of the worshipper, the forms of the ritual, and the offerings are of ignorant minds and are too insignificant to the wise.

Chapter 34 — Shiva: Three Stages of Awakening

¹ Shiva continued:—

Such is the constitution of this world made up of reality and unreality and bearing the stamp of the Almighty. It is composed of unity and duality, yet is free of both.

² Foul ignorance disfigures the conscious intellect so that it views the outer world as distinct from its maker, but to the clear sighted there is no separate outer world. Both inner and outer blend together in unity. ³ The perverted intellect that considers itself to be the body is truly confined in it. But when it considers itself to be a particle of and identical with the divine, it is liberated from its confinement.

⁴ The intellect loses its integrity by believing the duality of its form and sense. Combined with pleasure and pain, it no longer retains its real essence. ⁵ Its true nature is to be free from all designation and application of any name or meaning. The words pure, undivided, real and unreal bear no relation to what is an all pervasive emptiness.

⁶ Brahman the all and full, who is perfect tranquility without a second, equal or comparison, expands himself by his own power as the infinite and empty air, and stretches his mind in the three different directions of the three three-fold functions [*creation, preservation, and destruction; waking, sleeping, and dreaming; supernatural, natural, and material; and rajas, tamas and sattva*].

⁷ When the senses and organs of the mind are curbed in the great soul, a dazzling light appears before it and the false world flies away from it, just as the darkness of night disappears before sunlight. ⁸ The imaginary world recedes from view and falls down like a withered leaf. The living soul remains like a fried grain without power to grow or reproduce. ⁹ The conscious intellect, cleared of the cloud of illusion that hangs over a deluded mind, shines as clearly as the autumn sky. Having renounced all worldly impressions, it is called that which can be seen (*pashyanti*) from supernatural sight.

¹⁰ Consciousness settled in its original, pure and calm state, after it has passed beyond the commotions of worldly thoughts, when it views all things in an equal and indifferent light, is said to have crossed over the ocean of the world. ¹¹ When consciousness is strong in its knowledge of perfect sleep (*susupti*) over worldly matters, it is said to have obtained its rest in the state of supreme joy, and to be freed from the doom of reincarnation.

¹² Now I have told you, O great brahmin, all about curbing and weakening the mind, which is the first step towards the beatification of the soul by yoga. [*The first stage is curbing the mind so it rests in supreme peace beyond rebirth; consciousness of the All. The second is freedom from all vestiges of duality: beyond awake, dream sleep and deep sleep. The next stage, the third that Shiva describes here is turiya, Brahman, and is beyond description.*] Now listen as I tell you about the second step in the edification and strengthening of intellect.

¹³ Unrestricted power of consciousness is when it is filled with perfect peace and tranquility, full of light and clear of the darkness of ignorance, and stretched as wide as the clear dome of heaven. ¹⁴ It is as deep as our consciousness in profound sleep, as hidden as a mark in the heart of a stone, and as sweet as the flavor in salt, like the breath of wind after a storm. ¹⁵ When in course of time the living principle comes to its end at any place, consciousness takes flight in open air, like some invisible force, and mixes with the transcendent vacuum. ¹⁶ It gets freed from all its thoughts, as when the calm

sea is freed from its waves. It becomes as calm as when the winds are still, and as imperceptible as when a flower emits its fragrance.¹⁷ It is liberated from the bonds and ideas of time and place. It is freed from the thought of belonging to or being a part of anything in the world. It is neither a gross or a subtle substance. It becomes a nameless essence.¹⁸ It is not limited by time or space. It is of the nature of the unlimited essence of God. It is a form and fragment of the fourfold state of Brahma, God the Creator, without any stain, disease or decay.¹⁹ It is something witnessing all things with its far seeing sight. It is the all at all times and places. It is full light in itself, and far sweeter than the sweetest thing in the world.

²⁰ What I told you is the second stage of yoga meditation. Now listen, O sage who is true to your vows, and well understands the process of yoga. I will tell you about the third stage.

²¹ Consciousness is without a name because it contains Divine Consciousness and all the objects of thought within its ample sphere, like the great ocean of the world contains all its parts within its spacious circumference. It extends beyond the meaning of the word Soul-of-the-Creator (*brahmatma*) in its extension without limit.²² Through great enduring patience in course of a long time, the soul attains the steady and unstained state of its perfection (*purushartha*). After passing this and the fourth stage, the soul reaches its supreme and ultimate state of joy.²³ After passing successive grades and until reaching the ultimate state, one must practice his yoga like Shiva, the greatest of the yogis. Then he will obtain in himself the unremitting holy composure of the third stage.

²⁴ By long continuance in this course, the pilgrim is led to a great distance which transcends all my description, but may be felt by the holy devotee who advances in his course.

²⁵ I have told you already of the state, which is beyond these three stages. You, O divine sage, ever remain in that state if you wish to arrive to the state of the eternal God.

²⁶ This world which seems to be material, when viewed in its spiritual light, appears infused with the spirit of God. Upon right observation, it is neither the one nor the other, neither springing into being nor ceasing to exist, but ever calm and quiet and of one uniform luster, swelling and extending like an embryo in the womb.²⁸ The non-dualistic unity of God, his motionlessness, and the solidity of his intelligence, together with the unchangeableness of his nature, prove the eternity of the world, although it appears as instantaneous and fleeting.²⁹ The solidity of Consciousness produces worlds like frozen water causes hailstones. There is no difference between the existent and nonexistent, since all things are ever existent in the Divine Intellect.

³⁰ All is good, quiet, and perfect beyond the power of description. The syllable Om is the symbol of the whole, and its components compose the four stages for our salvation.

Chapter 35 — Adoration of the Great God, *Mahadeva*, in the Form of the *Ishtadeva*

¹ Vasishta said:—

Then Hara, who is the lake of the lotus of Gauri, desiring my enlightenment, glanced at me for a minute and uttered his words.² His eyes flashed with light under his heavenly forehead, like two treasure chests of his understanding, which scattered its rays about us.

³ The god Shiva said:—

O sage, call your thoughts home and employ them to think of your own essence and to bring about your ends, just as the breezes of heaven convey fragrance to the nostrils.⁴ When the object long sought for is in one's possession, what else is there to desire? I who have known and come to the truth have nothing to expect as desirable or anything to reject as despicable.⁵ When you have mastery over yourself, both in the states of your peace and disquiet, you should apply yourself to the investigation of your own soul without attending to anything besides.⁶ At first you may depend upon your observations of phenomena, which you will learn from what I have said if you attend to it with diligence.

Vasishta speaking:—

⁷ After saying this, the holder of the trident told me not to rely on my knowledge of the externals, but to attend to internal breathing that moves this abode of the body, just as the physical forces move a machine.

Shiva speaking:—

⁸ The lifeless body without breath becomes dull and dumb as a block. Its power of movement is derived from the vital air (*prana*, subtle energy), but its powers of thought and knowledge are attributed to the consciousness.

⁹ This conscious intellect has a form more rare and transparent than empty air. It is a being which is the cause of all entities. It is not destroyed by destruction of the living body or lack of vital air.¹⁰ The consciousness is more rarefied and translucent than ethereal air and never perishes with the body. It remains as the power of reasoning in the mental and living body.

¹¹ Like a clear shining mirror receives the reflection of external things, so the mind of God reflects all images from within itself and from nothing situated without.¹² As a dirty mirror receives no reflection of outward things, so the lifeless body has no reflection of anything, though it is preserved to our view.¹³ All-pervasive consciousness, formless itself, is yet aware of the movement of sensible objects owing to its sense perceptions. But coming to the pure understanding of its spiritual nature, it becomes the supreme Shiva again.

¹⁴ The sages cultivate this immaculate intellect under the different names of Hari, Shiva, Brahma and Indra, the gods that are the givers of the objects of desire to all living beings.¹⁵ Consciousness is also called the fire and air, the sun and moon, and the supreme lord. The All is known as the Omnipresent Soul and Consciousness, which is the mine of all Consciousness.¹⁶ It is the lord of gods, the source of celestials, Brahma the Creator, and the lord of heaven. Anyone who feels the influence of this great Consciousness in himself is never subject to illusion.¹⁷ The great souls known in this world under the

names of Brahma, Vishnu, Hara and others are all only offspring of Supreme Consciousness endowed with a greater portion of it.¹⁸ They are all like sparks of hot iron or particles of water in the immense ocean of creation. All those who are mistaken for gods have sprung from the source of the Supreme Consciousness.

¹⁹ As long as the seeds of error and the sources of endless networks of imagination exist, the tree of gross illusion continues to sprout in endless ramifications.

²⁰ The Vedas, its exposition and other Vedic literature are only tufts of the tree of ignorance for the bondage of men. These again produce many other clumps to hold men tightly in their ignorance.

²¹ Who can describe the productions of nature in the course of time and place? The gods Hari, Hara, and Brahma are among the number, and they all have their origin in the Supreme Being, their common father.

²² Mahadeva (Great God, Shiva) is the root of all, just as the seed is the source of the branches of trees. He is called the All because He is the essence of all things and the sole cause of our knowledge of all existence.²³ He is the giver of strength to all beings. He is self manifest in all. He is adored and hallowed by all. He is the object of perception to those who know him, and he is ever present in all places.²⁴ There is no need to address invocatory mantras to the lord, who being omniscient and omnipresent, knows and sees all things as present before him at all places and times.²⁵ But being always invoked in the mind, this god who resides in everything is attainable by us in every place. In whatever form one's intellect appears to him, it is all for his good.²⁶ He takes upon himself a visible form according to the thoughts in the mind of the worshipper. This form is to be worshipped first of all with proper homage as the most adorable lord of gods.²⁷ Know this as the ultimate knowledge of the greatest minds

Whoever has seen his identical soul is freed from the fears and sorrows of old age and is released from future reincarnations, like a fried grain which grows no more.²⁸ By worshipping this well known and unborn first cause in one's self and at ease, everyone is freed from his fears and attains his supreme joy. Why then do you bewilder yourselves with the visible vanities of the world?

Chapter 36 — Shiva Describes the Supreme God

¹ The god Shiva added:—

Know now the lord god Rudra (Shiva), who in the form of one identical Consciousness is situated within every form of being, is the self-consciousness in everyone.² He is the seed of seeds and the core and foundation of the course of nature. Know Rudra also as the agent of all actions and the pure gist of Consciousness³ He is the pure cause of all causes, without any cause of himself. He is the producer and sustainer of all without being produced or supported himself by any other.

⁴ He is the sensation of all conscious beings, and the sense of all sensitive things. He is the consciousness of all sensuous objects, the highest object of our sensuousness, and the source of endless varieties.⁵ He is the pure light of all lights and yet is invisible by all of them. He is the uncreated and supernatural light, the source of all sources of light and the great mass of the light of Consciousness.⁶ He is no positive (material) existence but the real entity. He is all quiet and beyond the common concepts of reality or unreality. Among the positive ideas about God, know him only as Consciousness and no other.

⁷ He becomes the color, coloring and the one coloring. He becomes as high as the lofty sky and as low as a lowly hut.⁸ In the expanded mind of this Conscious Intellect there are millions of worlds like grains of sand in the desert, or as many as the blossoms of trees that have blown away, are in full blown, and have yet to come here after.⁹ Like an inextinguishable flame, he is ever burning by his own inherent fire. Though always emitting innumerable sparks of his essence all about, yet there is no end of his light, heat and fire.

¹⁰ His inner parts contain the great mountains like particles of dust. He covers the highest mountains, like the lofty sky hides dust on earth.¹¹ He comprehends the great mahakalpa aeons like a twinkling of the eye, and a kalpa age is contained in his quick twinkling motion.¹² Though more minute than the point of a hair, yet he encompasses the whole earth. The seven oceans that encircle the earth cannot encircle the great Infinity.

¹³ He is called the great creator of the universe though he creates nothing. Though he does all actions, yet he remains calmly as if doing nothing.¹⁴ Though God is included under the category of substance, yet he is no substance at all. Though there is no substantiality in him, yet his spirit is the substratum of all things, the Universal Form (Vishwarupa, body of the universe).¹⁵ He is today and tomorrow, and though the past and future, yet he is always present. Therefore he is not now or then, but everlasting and forever.

¹⁶ He is not in the babbling and prattling of babes and children, nor in the crying of beasts and brutes, nor in the language of savages, but he is equally understood by all in their peculiar modes of speech.

¹⁷ These words are meaningless and yet are true, like the obsolete words in the Vedas. Therefore no words can truly express what is God because they are not what He is.

¹⁸ I bow down to He who is all, in whom all reside and from whom they all proceed, who is in all places and times, and who is diffused throughout all and is called the one and all.

¹⁹ In this excessive use of obscure words, there will be found some fully expressive of the meaning,

just as in a forest of thick wood we happen to find fragrant flowers, which we pluck and carry by the handfuls.

Chapter 37 — Shiva: The Stage Play and the Dance of Destiny

¹ Shiva continued:—

The beauty of the words I have said before is tangible and their meanings all allude to the truth, that the Lord of all is the rich chest of gems of all things in existence.

² How very bright are the rays of the gems contained in the receptacle of the Supreme Consciousness! They shine forth with the collected light of all the luminous worlds. ³ The essence of consciousness flies in the air in the form of the granular dust powder, and becomes the embryonic cell; which in the manner of the vegetable seed, sprouts forth into the germ in its proper time, soil, moisture and temperature.

⁴ This power of consciousness moves like froth and foam and whirling currents and whirlpools in the sea, and rolls its waters against the hard stones of the beach. ⁵ It is settled in the form of flavor in flower clusters. It makes them full blown and carries their fragrance to the nostrils. ⁶ Seated on bodies of stone, it makes them produce un-stone-like substances (trees and flowers) and makes mountains support the earth without actually upholding it.

⁷ Consciousness takes the form of the air, which is the source of all vibrations, and touches the organ of touch with as much tenderness as a father touches the body of his child. ⁸ As the divine power extends itself in everything, so it contracts the essences of all things into a mass within itself. Having absorbed the whole in the divine entity, it makes all nature an empty nothingness.

⁹ It casts the reflection of its own clear image in the transparent mirror of emptiness. It takes upon itself the transparent body of eternity, containing all the divisions of time. ¹⁰ Then there issues the power of Destiny, which predominates over the five principal divinities and determines the ultimate fate of all that “this is to be so, and this other wise.” ¹¹ The picture of the universe presents itself to our sight in the presence of the bright light of the all-witnessing eye of the great God, just as the presence of a burning lamp in the room shows us the light of things contained in it. ¹² The universal emptiness contains the great theatre of the universe in which divine powers and energies are continually playing their parts, and the spirit of God is their witness.

¹³ Vasishta asked, “What are the powers of that Shiva, my lord? Who are they and where are they situated? How many are there and how are they employed? Who is their witness?”

¹⁴ The god replied:—

The god Shiva is the gracious, incomprehensible and tranquil Supreme Soul. He is gracious and formless and of the nature of the pure consciousness. ¹⁵ His essences are volition, emptiness, duration, destiny, infinity and fullness. ¹⁶ Beside these he has the properties of intelligence, action, causality and stillness. There are many other powers in the spirit of Shiva, of which there is no reckoning or end.

¹⁷ Vasishta replied, “Where do these powers come from? How do they get their variety and plurality? Tell me, my lord. From where do they arise and how were they separated?”

¹⁸ The god replied:—

The god Shiva, who is only consciousness of himself, also has endless forms. The powers that I have

said belong to him are small and in no way different from his essentiality.¹⁹ The powers of God are said to be many and different from one another, like the waves of the sea, because God can discriminate among the powers of intelligence, action, passion, vision and others.²⁰ Thus those different powers act their several parts forever on the grand stage of the universe. The ages, years, months, weeks and days play their parts under direction of Time, the stage manager.

²¹ That power that appears as one or the other is called the divine powers of destiny. It is distinguished under various names such as the action, energy or will of God, or the dispensation of his Time.²² That power which determines the states of gods, and those of the great Rudras, and what regulates the conduct of all things from a mean bit of straw to the great Brahma is called predominant destiny.²³ This destiny continues to dance about the great arena of the universe until anxiety and her imaginary source of fear are cleared from the mind through knowledge of truth.

²⁴ The play of destiny is very pleasing to behold owing to the variety of its characters and contrivances, and the quick changes of scenes, and the repeated entrances and exits of its players and actors. It is presented with the music of the drums and trumpets of the roaring *kalpantha* clouds of doomsday.²⁵ The dome of heaven is the canopy over this stage, flowers in season are its decorations, and showers of rain serve as the sprinkling of rose water over it.²⁶ Dark clouds hanging about the heavens are the blue hanging screens around this stage, and the seven oceans of the earth with gems shining in their womb serve as the decorated pits and galleries of this playhouse.²⁷ The shining sky with its sight of the days and watches, and its eyes of twinkling stars, witnesses the continual rise and fall of all beings and the plunging and upheaval of mountaintops at the great deluge.

²⁸ The revolving luminaries of the sun and moon and the rolling currents of the Ganges River appear as the pearly jewels on the body of this actress, Destiny, and the luster of twilight is like the red dye of her palms.²⁹ The constant motion of upper and nether worlds, with the continued jingling of their peoples, resemble the footsteps of this Destiny dancing with ringing trinkets and anklets fastened to her feet.³⁰ Sunshine and moonbeams represent the light of her smiling face, and twinkling stars in the sky resemble drops of sweat trickling down her face.³¹ These many, many worlds are like so many apartments of this great theatre. The beings of the three worlds, oppressed by evil forces, are her flowing robes.³² The two states of pleasure-pain or joy-grief, which are the destined lot of all living beings, are the different comedies and tragedies.

³³ God himself, who is neither distant or distinct from this, nor is this stage play distant or distinct from God, is continually witnessing the changing scenes that always take place in the play of Destiny on the great stage of this world.

Chapter 38 — Shiva on the External and Internal Worship of God

¹ The god Shiva continued:—

This God, the supreme Lord, is the one worshipped by the wise. He is in the form of the intellect and conscious soul. He is the all-pervading and support of all. ² He is situated alike in a pot or a painting, in a tree or a hut, in a chariot, and in all men and brute animals, under the different names of Shiva, Hara, and Hari, and also Brahma, Indra, Agni, and Yama. ³ He is the Universal Soul inside and outside all. He always dwells in spirit and in the soul of every wise person.

This Lord is worshipped in various forms by different people in the many ways described below.

⁴ First, let me tell you, O great sage, how this God is worshipped with outer forms and formulas. Then you will hear me describe the inner form with which he is worshipped in spirit.

⁵ In all forms of worship you must cease to think of your body. You must separate your mind from your body, however purified it may be. Then you must diligently apply your mind to think of the pure and bodiless soul that witnesses the body's operations from inside. ⁶ Worship of God consists only of inner meditation and not in any form of outer worship. Therefore, apply your mind to the adoration of the Universal Soul by meditating only upon God in your soul.

⁷ He has the form of consciousness. He is the source of all light and he is as glorious as millions of suns. He is the light of the inner intellect and the origin of "I" and "you". ⁸ His head and shoulders reach above the heaven of heavens and his lotus-like feet descend far below the lowest abyss of the void. ⁹ His arms extend to the endless bounds of all sides and space. In them he holds the many worlds of infinite space like he is wielding weapons. ¹⁰ Worlds rolling over each another rest in a corner of his spacious chest. His brightness passes beyond the limits of unlimited emptiness, and his body stretches beyond all imaginable bounds. ¹¹ Above, below, in all four quarters, and on all sides of the compass, he extends unspent and without end.

He is surrounded on all sides by the host of gods, Brahma, Rudra, Hari and Indra, and the demigods also. ¹² These series of creatures are to be considered as rows of hairs on his body. The different courses of their actions are like strings that bind the machinery of the worlds together. ¹³ His will and destiny are powers proceeding from his person, his active agencies in nature. Such is the Lord, the Supreme One who is always to be worshipped by the best of men.

¹⁴ He is the intellect and the conscious soul, the all-pervading and all-supporting spirit. He resides alike in the pot and the painting, as in the moving chariot and in living animals. ¹⁵ He is Shiva, Hari and Hara, Brahma, Indra, Fire and Yama. He is the receptacle of endless beings and the aggregate body of all essences, the sole entity of entities. ¹⁶ In himself he contains this mundane sphere together with all the worlds with their mountains and all other contents. All powerful Time which hurls them ever onward is the guard at the doorway of his eternity.

¹⁷ The great god Mahadeva is to be thought upon as dwelling in some part of this body of eternity and infinity, with his body and its members and with a thousand ears and eyes. ¹⁸ Moreover, this figure has a thousand heads and a thousand hands all decorated. It has many eyes all over its body with their powers of sight, and so many ears also with their power of hearing. ¹⁹ His body has the powers of feeling and touch and taste all over its body, as also the power of hearing and that of thinking in its

mind within.

²⁰ However, he is wholly beyond all conception. He is perfectly good and gracious to all. He is always the doer of all things that are done and the one who bestows every blessing on all beings.

²¹ He is always situated inside all beings. He gives strength and energy to all. Having thought upon the Lord of gods in this manner, the devotee is to worship him in the usual ways of rituals.

²² Now listen as I tell you, who is best acquainted with Brahma, how to worship him in spirit, which consists only in adoring him in the conscious soul and not in presenting offerings to him.

²³ It requires no light or incense. It has no need of flowers or decorations, nor does it require sprinkling rice, perfumes or sandalwood paste. ²⁴ It needs no fragrance of saffron or camphor or any painting or anything else. It has no need for pouring water which is easily obtainable everywhere. ²⁵ It is only by pouring the nectar juice of understanding that God is worshipped. The wise call this the best kind of meditation and adoration of God.

²⁶ Pure consciousness, which is known to be always present within one's self, is to be constantly looked into and sought after, heard about, and felt when one is sleeping or sitting or moving about.

²⁷ By constantly talking on the subject and resuming the inquiry after leaving it off, one becomes fully conscious of himself. Then he should worship his Lord in his meditation as identical with his own soul.

²⁸ The offering of the heart in meditation of the Lord is more delectable to him than the sweetest articles of food offered with the most choice and fragrant flowers. ²⁹ Meditation joined with self-consciousness or penitence of the soul is the best *padya* and *arghya* water (washing feet and hands) and offering that is worthy of the Lord. The best meditation is accompanied with the flower of self-offering to the Lord. ³⁰ Without this kind of meditation, it is impossible to please the Supreme Soul in one's self. Therefore spiritual meditation is said to abound with the grace of God and the greatest enjoyment of happiness and prosperity.

³¹ As the animal soul enjoys all its pleasures in the abode of its body, so the rational, spiritual soul derives all its happiness from meditation. ³² An ignorant man who meditates on the Lord, even for a hundred twinkles of the eye, obtains a reward equal to the merit of giving a milk cow to a brahmin.

³³ The man who worships the Lord in his soul for half an hour in this manner reaps the reward of making a horse sacrifice. ³⁴ He who meditates on the Lord in spirit and in his own spirit and presents the offering of his reflections to him, is entitled to the merit of making a thousand horse sacrifices. ³⁵ Whoever worships the Lord in this manner for a full hour receives the reward of making a Rajasuya sacrifice. By worshipping him in this way at midday, a man obtains the merit of making many thousands sacrifices of such kind.

³⁶ The man who worships him in this way for a whole day settles in the abode of God. ³⁷ This is called the superior yoga meditation, the best service of the Lord, and the external adoration of the soul. ³⁸ This mode of holy adoration destroys all sins. Whoever practices it for a minute with a steady mind is certainly entitled to veneration of gods and demigods and is placed in the rank of emancipated spirits like myself.

Chapter 39 — Shiva on the Internal Worship of God

¹ Shiva resumed:—

I will now describe to you the way of inner worship of the spirit in spirit, which is reckoned as the holy of holies and the dispeller of all darkness.² This mode of worship also depends on mental meditation. It is conducted in every state of life, whether sitting, walking, waking or sleeping.³ It requires the supreme Shiva, who is always situated in the body of man and who is the cause of the perception of all things, to be worshipped in spirit and in the spirit of man.

⁴ Whether you think him as sleeping or rising, walking or sitting, or whether you conceive him touching or making intangible contact with anything, or as quite unconnected and aloof from everything about him,⁵ or whether you take him as enjoying the gross objects, or shunning them all by his spiritual nature, or as the maker of all outward objects, and the one who ordains all forms of action,⁶ or whether you consider him as remaining quiescent in all material bodies, or that he is quite apart from all substantial forms, you may worship him in whatever form your understanding presents him to you, or as what you can best conceive of him in your consciousness.

⁷ Whoever has fallen in and is carried away by the currents of his desires, and who is purified from his worldliness by the sacred ablution of his good sense, should worship the Shiva linga as the symbol of understanding by offering whatever is his knowledge of God.⁸ He may be contemplated in the form of the sun, shining brightly in the sky, or that of the moon which cools the sky with its benign moonbeams.

⁹ God is always conscious in himself of all sensible objects, which are ever being brought to his awareness by means of his senses, just as breathing brings fragrance to the nostrils.¹⁰ He gives flavor to all sweets and enjoys the sweetness of his joy in himself. He employs breaths as his horses, and carried in the car of respiration, sleeps in the cave of the heart.¹¹ Shiva is the witness of all sights and the actor of all actions. He enjoys all enjoyments and remembers all of what is known.¹² He is well acquainted with all the members of his body and he knows all that exists and doesn't exist. He is brighter than all luminous objects and is to be thought upon as the all-pervading spirit.¹³ He is without parts and without the totality of all parts. Being situated in the body, he resides in the emptiness of the heart. He is colorless himself, yet he paints all things in their many colors. He is the sensation of every member of the body.¹⁴ He dwells in the faculty of the mind and breathes in the respirations of all beings. He resides within the heart, the throat and the palate of the mouth. He has his seat between the eyebrows and in the nostrils (as conscious intellect and the subtle breath of life).

¹⁵ He is situated beyond the limit of the thirty-six categories of Saivite scriptures, as he is beyond the ten powers (*shakti*) known to the Shaktas. He moves the heart and gives articulation to sounds. He makes the mind fly about like a bird in the air.¹⁶ He resides both in ambiguous words and words with alternative meanings, situated in all things like oil in sesame seeds.¹⁷ He is without blemish or parts, compact with all the parts of the world taken together. He is situated alike in a part of the lotus-like heart of the wise, as well as in all bodies in general.¹⁸ He is as clear as the pure and spotless intellect. The imputation of parts or divisions to him is only the work of mere imagination. He is seen palpably in everything at all places. He is perceptible to us in our inner perception of him.

¹⁹ Though originally of the nature of universal consciousness, yet he appears in the form of individual souls according to the desires of men. Residing in every individual, he is divided into endless dualities. ²⁰ Then this god thinks of himself as an embodied being, endowed with hands, legs, and other body parts with its hairs, nails and teeth. ²¹ He thinks of having various different powers and faculties and he is employed in a variety of actions according to the desires of the mind.

He feels happy when served by his wives and servants. ²² He thinks the mind is the porter at the gate, conducting information of the three worlds to him. He thinks that his thoughts are his chambermaids, waiting at his door with clean clothes. ²³ He believes his knowledge of his individual ego is his greatest power and wife, and his power of action is his mistress. He thinks his knowledge of various ancient beliefs are his decorations.

²⁴ He knows his organs of sense and action are the doors to the house that is his body. He is conscious of being the infinite soul from which he is inseparable. ²⁵ He knows himself to be full of the Universal Spirit, filled by and filling others, and that he has the admirable figure of the body through his dependence on the Divine Spirit. ²⁶ He knows that he is filled with the Godhead within him and therefore he is no contemptible soul himself. He never rises or sets or is glad or displeased at anytime. ²⁷ He never feels fully satisfied or hungry, nor does he long after or forsake anything. He is ever the same and of an even course of action, temper and conduct and form at all times. ²⁸ He retains the gracefulness of his person, the clarity of his mind, and the calmness of his views at all times. He is ever the same since his birth, and the self-composure of his soul never forsakes him at anytime.

²⁹ He is devoted to the adoration of his god for long days and nights. The mind abstracted from his body becomes the object of his worship. ³⁰ This god is worshipped with whatever offerings are available to the devotee. All the powers of the understanding are employed in the adoration of the sole Intellectual Spirit. ³¹ God is to be worshipped with all things suitable for the ritual. No attempt should be made to make any offering which has never been made before. ³² Man being endowed with a body should worship the Lord with his bodily actions and with all things that lead to bodily enjoyment. ³³ So Shiva is to be worshipped with food and drink of the best and richest kind, with beddings and seats and vehicles as one can afford to offer.

³⁴ Men must also entertain their souls, which are the homes of the Divine Spirit in their bodies, with all kinds of things that they think are pleasurable to themselves, such as excellent food and drink and all other things that give enjoyment and pleasure. ³⁵ They must diligently serve the Supreme Soul in their souls regardless of any calamity, difficulty, danger or disease that may befall them, and also when they are overtaken by the illusions of their misunderstandings. ³⁶ The ends of all the efforts of mankind in this world, being no more than life, death and sleep, are all to be directed in the service of the soul of nature.

³⁷ Whether reduced to poverty or elevated to royalty or carried by the currents of casualty, men must always serve their souls with the flowers of their best efforts. ³⁸ Whether overwhelmed by conflict and confusion or buffeted in the waves of mishaps, whether undergoing troubles or enjoying the comforts of domestic life, men must serve their souls at all times.

³⁹ When the gentle beams of feeling fellowship with others spreads over the breast of kind hearted

men, and when the sweet influence of sympathy melts the heart, then we serve the soul seated inside.
⁴⁰ When a man has restrained the turbulent passions of his heart by the power of his right judgment, and he has spread the vest of soft tenderness and sweet content over his heart and mind, then let him worship the serene aspect within himself.⁴¹ Let men worship the soul upon the sudden changes of their fortunes, both when they come into possessions and when they lose their enjoyments.

⁴² The soul should be adhered to and adored, both when you lose and when you abandon your legal or illegal possessions and enjoyments of anything on earth.⁴³ Isha, the lord of wealth, is to be worshipped by renouncing all wealth which one may have collected by his own efforts or otherwise.

⁴⁴ Do not regret what is lost. Make use of what you have and adore the Supreme Soul without any inconstancy in your mind and soul.

⁴⁵ Retain your constancy amidst the scenes of men's wicked pursuits. Maintain your vow of holy devotion of the Supreme Spirit at all times.⁴⁶ Everything appears as good in the sight of the godly who view all things in God. Everything appears mixed with good and evil to the worshipper of material wealth. Therefore look on all things as situated in the Divine Spirit and continue in your vow of the adoration of the Supreme Soul.⁴⁷ Things that appear as pleasant or unpleasant at first sight are all to be taken in an equal light by those who are firm in their vow to worship the one Universal Soul.

⁴⁸ Give up thinking yourself as such a one or not such a one. Forsake all particularities and knowing that all is the universal One, continue in your vow of adoring the Supreme Soul.⁴⁹ Worship the Supreme Spirit always residing in all forms and changes of all things.⁵⁰ Forsake your pursuit after things and your attempt to avoid anything. Remain indifferent to both extremes. Continue in your adoration of the soul at all times.⁵¹ Neither seek nor forsake anything, but receive what comes to you of itself or by your own lot. Enjoy all things as the sea does the streams of water that flow into it of their own accord.

⁵² Placed in this wide world of misery, man should take no heed of the lesser or greater sights of grief that constantly present themselves to his view. They are like fleeting shades and colors that paint the empty dome of the skies and soon vanish into nothing.⁵³ All good and evil befall us by turns at the proper time, place and action. Therefore take them with unconcern and serve your own soul.

⁵⁴ Whatever is mentioned as fit offerings for worship of the Supreme Spirit, the calmness of your soul is considered the best and fittest offering.⁵⁵ Things of different tastes, such as sour, bitter, acid, sharp and pungent, are useless in the service of the spirit. The calm and sweet composure of the soul is delectable to the Supreme Spirit.⁵⁶ Equanimity is sweet to taste. It has the supernatural power of transforming everything to ambrosia.⁵⁷ Whatever a man thinks upon with the ambrosial sweetness of his disposition, the same is immediately changed to ambrosia, just like nectar-like dew drops under moonbeams.⁵⁸ Calmness expands the soul and gladdens the mind, just as sunlight fills the dome of heaven. The unchangeable calmness of the mind is the highest devotion.

⁵⁹ The mind of man must shine with an even luster, like bright moonbeams in their fullness. The mind must blaze with the transparent light of consciousness, like a bright crystal in sunlight.⁶⁰ He who is employed in his outward actions of life with his mind as bright as the clear sky, free of the mist of worldly affections, is said to be the full knowing devotee.⁶¹ The true devotee shines as brightly as the

clear autumn sky when worldly impressions are effaced from the heart and not seen even in dreams, when the cloud of ignorance is cleared away and the fog of egoism is utterly scattered.

⁶² Let your mind be as clear as the moon and as spotless as the blazing sun. Let your mind hide the thoughts of the measurer and measured. Let it have simple consciousness of itself, like a newborn child, perceiving only the steady light of Consciousness, the seed of all intelligence. Then you will attain the state of highest perfection in your lifetime.

⁶³ Living amidst the fluctuations of pain and pleasure, attending on the lot and actions of all living beings occurring at their fixed times and places, remain in the steady service of your soul, the leader of your body, by tranquilizing all the passions and desires of your heart and mind.

Chapter 40 — Shiva on the Worship of God

¹ The god Shiva continued:—

It is of no consequence whether or not a devotee observes formal worship in its proper time and manner. It is enough if he adores the form of Shiva as the consciousness within himself, which is equivalent to worship of the soul (*atma*).² This is attended with a delight that becomes manifest within himself. Full of spiritual light and delight, the devotee is assimilated and becomes the same as his god.

³ The meanings of the words affection and hatred do not belong to the holy soul as its separate properties. Rather, they blend together and die in the soul like sparks in fire.⁴ The knowledge that the dignity and poverty of men, and also their happiness and misery, proceed from God is considered to be worship of the Supreme Spirit which ordains them all.⁵ The consciousness of the world as a manifestation of the Divine Spirit is also reckoned as devotion. A pot or other token for the spirit of God is also worship because God resides in it.⁶ The quiet and lightless spirit of Shiva is manifest in all his works of creation, so the whole sensible world is the form of the Supreme Spirit.

⁷ It is astonishing that every soul forgets its own nature and thinks itself to be a living soul residing in the body, just as they believe the Supreme Soul is confined in a pot or a painting.⁸ It is also astonishing how they attribute false ideas of worship, worshipper and the worshipped to the god Shiva who is the infinite soul of all and a pure spirit.⁹ The ritual of worship and adoration, which applies to the finite forms of gods (idols), cannot be applied to the worship of the infinite spirit of God.¹⁰ The pure spirit of the eternal, infinite and all powerful cannot be the object of ritualistic worship which relates to finite gods or idols.

¹¹ Know, O brahmin, that the spirit of God which pervades the three worlds and is of the nature of pure consciousness, is not to be circumscribed by any form or figure.¹² Know, O wisest of the wise, that we do not regard those who have their god limited by time and place as among the wise.

¹³ Therefore, O sage, retract your sight from idols and idolatrous worship. Adopt your view to spiritual adoration. Be of an even, cool and clear mind. Be dispassionate and free from decay and disease.¹⁴ Continue to worship the Supreme Spirit with an unshaken mind by making him offerings of your desires and of all the good and evil that occur to you at anytime.

¹⁵ O sage who is acquainted with the sole unity, in the one uniform, even course of your soul and mind, you are thereby set above the reach of the miseries attending this frail life, just as a pure crystal is clear of the shades and impurities of all worldly things.

Chapter 41 — Shiva on How to Know God, the Development of Mind, and Desires & Thoughts Cause Misery

¹ Vasishta asked, “What is called god Shiva? What is meant by Supreme Brahman? What is the meaning of soul and what is its difference from the Supreme Soul? ² All that exists is the true entity and all else is non-entity. What is the emptiness that is nothing? What philosophy knows everything? Explain to me these differences, for you Lord know them all.”

³ The god Shiva replied:—

There exists one real being in itself which is without beginning or end and without any appearance or reflection of its own. This entity appears as a non entity because it is imperceptible to the physical senses.

⁴ Vasishta replied, “Lord, if this entity is not perceptible by the organs of sense and unknowable by understanding, then how, O ruler, is it to be known at all?”

⁵ The god replied:—

A man who desires his salvation but sticks to his ignorance is a sage in name only. Such men are subjected to greater ignorance by the scriptures that guide them. ⁶ Let one ignorance remove another, as washerman cleanses one dirt by another (soap). ⁷ When the error of ignorance is removed by opposition of the other, then as a matter of course, the soul appears of itself to be seen. ⁸ A child dirties his fingers by rubbing one piece of charcoal against another, but cleans them by washing his hands. ⁹ As they examine both sides of a question in a learned discussion, and the truth comes out from amidst them both, so the knowledge of the soul appears from midst of the mist of ignorance.

¹⁰ When the soul perceives the soul and scans it by itself, and as it comes to know it in itself, it is said to get rid of its ignorance, which is then said to be utterly destroyed. ¹¹ The paths of learning and the lectures of a teacher are not the proper means to the knowledge of the soul. One comes to know the unity of this thing by his own intuition. ¹² All the teachers of scriptures place the soul among the bodily senses, but Brahma is situated beyond the senses and is known after the sense organs have been subdued. Something obtainable in the absence of something else can never be had in the presence of that other thing.

¹³ However, many things are used as causes for things which they do not cause at all, just as they use a teacher’s lectures as means to attain spiritual knowledge. ¹⁴ Of course, a course of lectures is calculated to throw light on the student’s knowledge of what can be known, but in matters of abstract knowledge and the invisible soul, it is the soul itself that must throw its own light. ¹⁵ No explanation of the scriptures and no lectures of the teacher are calculated to give light on spiritual knowledge, unless they are understood by the intuitive knowledge of the spirit itself. ¹⁶ Again, the soul is always learning and getting lectures, therefore both must combine with inquiry to bring us to the light of the soul. ¹⁷ Therefore a combination of book knowledge with the teacher’s instruction joined with the investigation of the inquirer is calculated to enlighten us on spiritual knowledge, just as the appearance of the day with the rising sun and waking world gives an impetus to the rise of daily duties.

¹⁸ After the physical senses and actions have subsided and the sensations of pain and pleasure have

become imperceptible, we come to the knowledge of Shiva, otherwise known as the soul, the He that is (*tat sat*) and many other names.¹⁹ This infinite entity has existed in its empty form, rarer than the ether, since this matter which fills space was not and existed only in its spiritual or ideal forms.²⁰ He is continually meditated upon by the good discernment of seekers of salvation, and he is variously represented by the pure minded and those of weakened minds.

²¹ There are others who are situated in the sight of and not far from the path of living liberation, who are employed in leading others to salvation and in the exposition of the scriptures.²² Many thinking and learned men have used the words Brahma, Indra, Rudra and the names of the rulers of worlds for God in order to justify the doctrines of the Puranas, Vedas and Siddhantas.²³ Others have applied fictitious titles like consciousness or intellect (*chit*), Brahma, Shiva, the soul or spirit (*atma*), the Lord (*isha*), the Supreme Spirit and God (*ishwara*) to the nameless God that is apart and aloof from all.²⁴ Such is the truth of nature and of you also, called Shiva the blissful, which always confers all joy to the world and to you also.²⁵ The words Shiva, soul, supreme Brahman and others have been coined by the ancients to express the Supreme Being. Though they differ in sound, there is no difference in meaning or what they signify.

²⁶ Know, O chief of sages, that wise men always adore this God whom we serve and to whom we return as the best and ultimate state of all.

²⁷ Vasishta said, "Lord, please explain to me briefly how the ever existent God remains as nonexistent. How can God come into existence from its prior state of nonexistence?"

²⁸ The god Shiva replied:—

Know that the meaning of the word Brahma and other names for God are related only to our consciousness. Though God is as clear as the sky and as minute as an atom, God contains the great bulk of Mount Meru.²⁹ Although this is unintelligible to us, far beyond our conception or comprehension, yet it becomes intelligible when we think of God in the form of our consciousness.³⁰ By taking it objectively, it becomes intelligible to us like our own individual ego. By thinking on its personality, we have the same idea as one has of a wild elephant from seeing one in a dream.³¹ These ideas of God's ego and personality, being limited by time and space, consequently give rise to many aerial forms as attendants upon God.³² Among these is the entity called the living spirit (*jiva*), with its vibration and respiration, in the form of a pencil of air.

³³ After the power of vitality is established and has come into force, there follows the faculty of understanding which at first remains in utter ignorance.³⁴ It is followed by the faculties of hearing, action and perceptions, all of which operate inward by without their development into outward organs.³⁵ All these powers uniting together lead to the excitement of memory, which soon exhibits itself in the form of the mind, the tree of desires.³⁶ What the learned call the spiritual body is the inner power of God in the form of the conscious soul, seeing the Divine Soul in itself.

³⁷ Afterwards the powers in the mind arise which develop themselves in the outer organs, although their powers may be wanting in them.³⁸ These are the essences of air and motion, and of feeling also, together with the senses of touch and heat emitted by the eyes.³⁹ There are the essences of color, water and taste also, and likewise the essences of smell and flavor too.⁴⁰ There are the essences of

earth and gold, and the essences of thick mass, and also the essences of time and space, all of which are without form and shape.⁴¹ The spiritual body contains all these essences in itself as its component parts, just as the seed of a fruit contains in its cell the leaves and germ of the future tree.⁴² This spiritual body contains the eight elementary senses. Therefore it is also called the astral body (*puryashtaka*, subtle or minute body). These elementary senses afterwards develop into the organs of sense.⁴³ The primary or spiritual body which is formed in this manner is actually nobody at all because it is devoid of understanding, intellect, senses and consciousness.⁴⁴ It is only the Supreme Being which contains the essence of the soul, just as the sea contains clear waters.

⁴⁵ The soul possesses its consciousness and knowledge. Everything else is dull and inert matter viewed by the soul like a fairyland in a dream.⁴⁶ Shiva can be known by consciousness and knowledge, and what cannot be known by consciousness and knowledge can be nothing at all.

⁴⁷ The Supreme Soul sees all things within itself as parts of itself. He beholds particles of his atomic self formed into innumerable bodies.⁴⁸ These bodies increased in bulk, became big bodies, and bore the marks of the organs upon them.⁴⁹ Then it became in the form of a man from his thought of being so. This soon grew up in its size of a full grown man,⁵⁰ and this is how our bodies appear to us in our living state, like a fairyland appearing in a dream.

⁵¹ Vasishta said, "I see how appearance of the human body resembles the vision of a fairyland in a dream. I also see the miseries awaiting human life in this world. Now tell me, my lord. How is all this misery to be removed from the world?"

⁵² The god Shiva replied:—

All human sorrow is the result of desires and belief in the reality of the world. The entire world must be known to be as unreal as the waves of water seen in a mirage.⁵³ For what good or use is desire? Why should a dreaming man be deluded to drink the show of water in the mirage?

⁵⁴ The viewer of truth, freed from his views of personal ego and objective reality, who has abandoned deluded and delusive thoughts and in the utter absence of all worldly thoughts from his mind, truly beholds the true existence of God in his presence.⁵⁵ Where there is no desirer or desire or the desired object, but only the thought of the one unity, all error and misery are an end.⁵⁶ He whose mind is free of the true and false imaginary demons of common and imaginary error and is settled in the thought of one unity alone, sees nothing but the unity before him.

⁵⁷ Desires of the mind arise like demons in the midway sky. Thoughts of the world wander about the sphere of the mind like numerous worlds revolving in the sky. Hence there is no peace of the soul unless these desires and thought subside.

⁵⁸ It is useless to counsel a man towards wisdom if he is elated by his own personal ego and deluded by the waters of the mirage of this fleeting world.⁵⁹ Wise men should advise only the prudent and not throw their instruction away to children who wander in error and are shunned by good people. To give good counsel to the ignorant is like offering a fair daughter in marriage to the apparition of a man seen in a dream.

Chapter 42 — Shiva on the Phases and Names of the Supreme Soul; Spiritual Cords

¹ Vasishta asked, "Tell me Lord, what happens to the living soul after its situation in the open air, and after it observes the vanity of the elemental and material body on its first creation?"

² Shiva replied:—

The living soul, having sprung from the Supreme and being situated in the open firmament, views the body formed in the manner I have described, just as a man sees a vision in his dream.³ The living soul, being everywhere, enters and acts in every part of this body according to the command of the embodied intellect, just as a sleeping man acts his parts in a dream yet still bearing his body.

⁴ Before it was the indiscrete infinite soul. Then it became the discrete spirit called the first male. This spirit was the primary cause of creation in itself.⁵ Thus this animated spirit became like Shiva at the beginning of the first creation. It was called Vishnu in another. It became the lotus-born Brahma or the great patriarch in others.⁶ The great progenitor of one creation becomes the intellect in another, then the male agent of will to create afterwards, and at last it looks upon itself as a male form according to its will.⁷ The primary will of ideal creation becoming compact in time, it takes the form of the mind which feels itself able to bring about whatever it wills in itself.

⁸ This creation of the world by Brahma is mere imagination, like the sight of an apparition in the air or in a dream. But it appears as a positive reality to the false sight of one who believes it is real.⁹ The prime male agent who becomes the beholder of his creation retains the power of exhibiting himself in the empty air every moment, or to retract them into himself.¹⁰ To him, a kalpa or great kalpa age is a mere twinkling of his eye. By his own expansion or contraction the world makes its appearance or disappearance.¹¹ Worlds appear and disappear at his will at each moment of time, in each particle of matter, and in every pore of space. There is no end to these successions in all eternity.

¹² Many things are seen to occur one after another in conformity with the course of our desires. But with our sight of the Divine Spirit, we never find anything taking place.¹³ All created things do not occur to the unchanging Shiva. They are like shadowy appearances in empty air that rise of themselves and disappear in air.¹⁴ All real and unreal appearances vanish of themselves, like mountains appearing in dreams. All these creations have no command over their own causation or space or time.¹⁵ Therefore all these phenomena are not real, potential, imaginary or temporary appearances. There is nothing produced or destroyed at anytime.¹⁶ All these are the wonderful phenomena of our ideas and wishes exhibited by the intellect in itself. This world is like the appearance of a castle in the sky in a dream, and subject to its rise and fall by turns.

¹⁷ Visible forms that appear to be moving about in time and space actually have no motion whatever in either. They remain as fixed as an ideal rock in the mind forever.¹⁸ So also, the extension of the unreal world is no extension at all, just as the magnitude of an ideal rock has no dimension.¹⁹ The situation and duration of the unreal world conform exactly to the ideas of its time and place that exist in the mind of the Maker of all.²⁰ In this manner he is instantly changed to a worm from his idea of it, and so are all the four orders of living beings born in this world.²¹ Thus, from his ideas of them, the creative Power becomes all things in an instant, from the great Rudras down to mean bits of straw and the most minute atoms and particles of matter.

²² This is how past and present creations are produced from the memories of the past, which is the cause of the delusion of taking the world for a real existence. ²³ After giving up the thought of any difference between the creator and the created, and by the habit of thinking all as unity, one becomes Shiva in a minute, and by thinking so for a longer period, one is assimilated into the nature of Supreme Consciousness.

²⁴ Individual consciousness proceeds from the original Consciousness and rises without occupying any place. It is of the nature of understanding or the intellect and it resides in the soul like empty air in the middle of a stone. ²⁵ The soul, which is like eternal light, is known under the name of Brahma. The intellect seated in this soul becomes weakened as the creative power increases and strengthens in it.

²⁶ Next the particles of time and place join together to form minute atoms which, by forming the elementary bodies, have the living principle added to them. ²⁷ These then become plants, insects, beasts, brutes and the forms of gods and demigods. These being stretched out in endless series remain like a long chain of being connected by the strong and lengthening line of the soul (*sutratma*, spiritual cord). ²⁸ Thus the great God who pervades all his works in the world connects all things in being and not in being like pearls in a necklace by the thread of his soul.

He is neither near us nor far from us, nor is he above or below anything whatever. He is neither the first nor last but everlasting. He is neither the reality nor unreality, nor is he in the midst of these.

²⁹ He is beyond all alternatives and antitheses. He is not to be known beyond our imaginary ideas of him. He has no measure or dimension or any likeness or form to represent him. Whatever greatness and majesty men attribute to him, they are all extinguished in his glory like fire cooled in water.

³⁰ I have answered all your questions. Now I shall proceed to my desired place. Be happy, O sage, and go your way. Rise, O Parvati, and let us make our way.

³¹ Vasishta said:—

When the god with his blue throat had spoken in this manner, I honored him by throwing handfuls of flowers upon him. Then he rose with his attendants and pierced the emptiness of heaven. ³² For some time after the lord of Uma and master of the three worlds had departed, I remained reflecting on all I had heard from the god. Then having received the new doctrine with the purity of my heart, I gave up the my external forms of worshipping God.

Chapter 43 — Vasishta Exhorts Rama; Rama without Questions

¹ Vasishta said:—

I well understand what the god told me. You too, O Rama, know the nature of this world very well.

² When the false world appears in a false light to the false understanding of man, and everything is proven to be only vanity of vanities, tell me, what is true and good and what is untrue and bad?

³ The alternative of something is not that thing itself, so the form of the soul, though not the soul itself, yet serves to convey some idea of the soul. ⁴ As fluidity is the nature of liquids and fluctuation is that of wind, and as emptiness is the state of the sky, so is creation the condition of the spirit or Divine Soul.

⁵ Ever since hearing Shiva's explanations, I have worshipped spirit in spirit and given up my eagerness for the outward adoration of gods. ⁶ I pass these days of my life under this rule, even when I am peacefully employed performing prescribed and popular rituals. ⁷ I have worshipped the Divine Spirit in all modes and forms and offerings of flowers as they present themselves to me. In spite of interruptions, I have uninterruptedly adored my God at all times, day and night. ⁸ All people in general are concerned with making their offerings acceptable to their receiver, God, but the meditation of the yogi is the true worship of the spirit.

⁹ Having known this, O lord of Raghu's race, abandon the society of men in your heart and walk in your lonely path amidst the wilderness of the world, thereby remaining without sorrow and remorse.

¹⁰ When exposed or reduced to distress or aggrieved at the loss or separation of friends, rely on this truth and think upon the vanity of the world. ¹¹ We should neither rejoice nor regret the acquisition or loss of friends and relations because all things are so frail and unstable in this transitory world.

¹² Rama, you well know the precarious state of worldly possessions and their destructive effects. They come and go of their own accord, but overpower a man in both states (of prosperity and adversity). ¹³ So uncertain are the favors of friends and fortune and so unforeseen is their loss, that it is impossible for anybody to account for them. ¹⁴ O sinless Rama, such is the course of the world, that you have no command over it nor is it ever subject to you. If the world is so insubordinate, then why should you be sorry for something you cannot manage?

¹⁵ Rama, mind your spiritual nature and know you are an expanded form of your consciousness. See how you are cooped up in your earthly frame. Forsake your joy and grief at the repeated entrances and exits of your corporeal body. ¹⁶ Know my boy that you are purely of the form of your consciousness, inherent throughout all nature. Therefore there is nothing in the world that you can assume or reject.

¹⁷ What cause of joy or grief is there in the changing fortunes of things in the world? They are all the results of the mind's revolutions on the pivot of conscious intellect. They resemble the whirling waters of the sea caused by a vortex current. ¹⁸ Rama, take yourself to the fourth stage of deep sleep trance (*susupta*). This even course of action results in *samadhi*. ¹⁹ Be as cold and composed, with your peaceful face and expanded mind, as the quiet spirit of God is diffused and displayed throughout all nature. Remain as full as the vast ocean in the contemplation of that soul, whose fullness fills the whole.

²⁰ You have heard all this already, Rama! You are filled with the fullness of your understanding. Now

if you have anything else to ask with regard to your former question, you can ask.

²¹ Rama said:—

Sage, my former questions are all dispersed at present. I have nothing more to ask you.²² I have known all that is to be known. I have a heartfelt satisfaction at this, and now I am free from the foulness of the objective, of dualism and of fictions.

²³ The foulness of the soul proceeds from ignorance, and this ignorance which had darkened my soul is now removed by the light of spirituality.²⁴ I have now come to understand that I was under error that is neither foul matter nor is it born nor does it die at anytime.²⁵ I am now confirmed in my belief that all this is Brahman diffused throughout nature, and I have ceased from all doubts and questions on the subject, nor do I have any desire to know anything more about it.²⁶ My mind is now as pure as purified water. I have no need to learn anything from the preaching and moral lessons of the wise.

²⁷ I am unconcerned with all worldly affairs, just as Mount Sumeru is unaware of the golden metals in its bosom. Having all things about me, I am quite indifferent to them because I have not what I expect to have, nor do I possess any object of my fond desire.²⁸ I expect nothing that is desirable nor reject anything to which exception can be taken, nor is there a mean between desirable and undesirable in this world. There is nothing that is really acceptable or avoidable in the world, nor anything which is truly good or bad.

²⁹ Thus, O sage, the false thought of these opposites is entirely dispelled from me. I neither care for a seat in heaven nor fear the terrors of hell.³⁰ I am as fixed in the one Spirit as Mount Mandara is firmly seated in the sea. That one Spirit scatters its particles throughout the three worlds just like that mountain splashed water when it churned the ocean.³¹ I am as firm as fixed Mandara, while others wander in their errors of discriminating between positive and negative and the true and false.³² The heart of that man who thinks the world is one thing and the Divine Spirit is another must be entangled with the weeds of doubts.³³ He who seeks his real good in anything in this world never finds it in the unsubstantial material world, which is full of the confused waves of eternity.

³⁴ It is by your favor, O venerable sage, that I have passed over the noisy ocean of this world to the limits of its perilous coasts. I have arrived at the shore of safety and found the path of my future prosperity.³⁵ I am no longer lacking that supreme joy which is the supreme good of all things. I am full in myself as the lord of all. I am quite incapable of being subdued by anybody since I have defeated the wild elephant of my own greed.³⁶ Being loosened from the chain of desire and freed from the fetters of choice, I am rich and blessed with the best of all things. This is the internal satisfaction of my soul and mind which gives me a cheerful appearance in all the three worlds.

Chapter 44 — Vasishta Praises Rama's Understanding; Warns Him to Maintain It

¹ Vasishta said:—

Rama, whatever acts you do with your organs of action and without application of the mind to the work, know such work to be no doing of yours.² Be like one who does not feel a pleasure upon achieving an action which he did not feel a moment before, and in the next moment, is unaware that he has done the work.³ Memory of an experience does not repeat the same delight, therefore it is childish and not manly to take any delight in a momentary pleasure.⁴ Whatever is pleasant during its desire has only that desire as the cause of pleasure. Hence the pleasure of a thing lasting until it becomes unpleasant is no real pleasure. Therefore the wise forsake this frail pleasure together with its temporary cause of desire.

⁵ If you have arrived to that high state, then be careful for the future. Merge yourself no more in the narrow pit of your personality.⁶ You who have found your rest and repose seated in the highest height of spiritual knowledge must not allow your soul to plunge into the deep and dark cave of your egoistic individuality.⁷ Thus seated on the peak of your knowledge, as on the top of Mount Meru, and remembering the glories all around, you cannot choose to fall down into the hell pit of this earth to be reborn in the dark cave of a mother's womb.

⁸ It appears to me that you, O Rama, are of an even temperament. You have the quality of truth fully in your nature. I understand you have weakened your desires and have entirely gotten over your ignorance.⁹ You appear to be settled in your nature of purity. The temperament of your mind appears to be as calm and quiet as the sea when it is full and untroubled by the rude and rough winds of heaven.¹⁰ May your expectations set at ease and your wants end in contentment. Let your madness turn to right-mindedness. Live unconnected with and aloof from all.¹¹ Whatever objects you see placed before you, know them to be full of Divine Consciousness which is consolidated and extended through all as their common essence.

¹² One ignorant of the soul is tightly bound to his ignorance. One acquainted with the soul is liberated from his bondage. Hence, O Rama, learn to meditate constantly and intensely upon the Supreme Soul in your own soul.¹³ Detachment wants to enjoy nothing and refuses the enjoyment of whatever presents itself. Know that being without desire is the cool calm of the mind, resembling the serenity of the sky.¹⁴ Preserve the cold detachment of your mind. Discharge your duties with the cool application of your organs of action. This detachment of your mind will render you as steady as the sky throughout all the accidents of life.

¹⁵ If you can combine the knower, knowable and the knowledge in your soul, then you will feel the tranquility of your spirit and you will no longer feel the troubles of earthly life.¹⁶ The expansion and contraction of the mind cause the display and dissolution of the world. Therefore try to stop the action of your mind by restraining the breaths of your desire.¹⁷ The breath of life conducts and stops the business of the world by its movements and rest. Therefore restrain the breathing of the vital air by your practice of regulating your breathing.

¹⁸ Ignorance gives rise to ceremonious works. Knowledge represses them. Therefore boldly put ignorance down by your own forbearance, the instructions you derive from the scriptures, and your

teachers.¹⁹ As winds flying with dust darken the fair face of the sky, so consciousness sullied with phenomena obscures the clear face of the soul.²⁰ The relationship between vision and what can be seen causes the appearance of the world and its course, just as the relationship between sunlight and forms makes them appear in various colors to the eye.²¹ But the lack of this relationship removes the phenomena from sight, just as the absence of light takes away the colors of things.

²² Fluctuations of the mind cause illusions, just as the heart throbbing raises emotions. They all stop when these organs are suspended. The waves raised by the motion of water and the action of winds subside in the deep where these actions cease.²³ The abandonment of every jot of desire, the suspension of breath, and the exercise of reasoning will contract the actions of the heart and mind, thereby preventing the rise of passions, affections and illusions.

²⁴ The unconsciousness that follows the inaction of the heart and mind when vital breath is suspended is the highest perfection.²⁵ There is pleasure seeing phenomena which is common to all living being. But this being felt spiritually amounts to holy pleasure. The sight of God in one's consciousness, which is beyond the province of the mind, transcends mental pleasure and gives a divine ecstasy called *brahmananda* (bliss of Brahman).²⁶ The true bliss of the soul is known when the mind is dormant and unconscious. Such bliss cannot be found even in heaven, just as it is not possible to have a cooling bath in a sandy desert.²⁷ The inertness of the heart and mind is attended with a delight felt in the innermost soul that cannot be described in words. It is an everlasting joy that neither rises nor falls, nor increases or decreases.

²⁸ Right understanding weakens the sensuous mind, but wrong understanding only serves to increase its irrational sensuousness. Then it sees the thickening mists of error rising like ghosts and apparitions before children.²⁹ Though the sensational mind exists in us, yet it seems to be quite nonexistent and extinct before the light of our rationality, just as copper appears to disappear when melted with gold.

³⁰ The mind of the wise is not sensuous because the wise mind is an essence of purity by itself. The mind of the senses is changed in name and nature to that of the understanding, just as copper is converted to the name and nature of gold.

³¹ But it is not possible for the mind to be absorbed in consciousness all at once. Its errors are removed only by right understanding. Its essence is never annihilated.³² Things taken as symbols of the soul are all as unsubstantial as the mind and vital principle, all of which are as unreal as the horns of a rabbit. They are only reflections of the soul which vanish from view once the soul is known.

³³ The mind exists only for a short time, during its continuance in the world. After it has passed its fourth stage of unconsciousness, it arrives to the state of mental inactivity (*turiya*) which is beyond the fourth stage.

³⁴ Brahman is all even and one, though appearing as many amidst the errors that rule the world. He is the soul of all and has no partial or particular form of any kind. He is not the mind or anything else, nor is He situated in the heart (as a finite being).

Chapter 45 — Parable of the Bael Fruit as Creation

¹ Vasishta said:—

O Rama, listen to a pleasant story, never told before, which I will briefly narrate for your instruction and amusement.

² There is a big and beautiful bael fruit tree, as large as the distance of many thousands of miles, and so solid that it does not ripen or rot in the course of many, many ages.³ Its fruit has a lasting flavor like sweet honey or celestial ambrosia. Though grown old, yet the tree increases with fresh and beautiful foliage day by day like the new moon.⁴ This tree is situated in the midst of the universe, just like the great Mount Meru is placed in the middle of the earth. It is as firm and fixed as Mandara Mountain, immovable even by the force of the winds of the great flood.

⁵ Its root is the foundation of the world and it stretches on all sides to distances of immeasurable extent.⁶ There were millions of worlds within this fruit like its innumerable seeds. These worlds were minute compared to the great bulk of the fruit. They appeared like dust particles at the foot of a mountain.⁷ The bael is filled with all kinds of delicacies that are tasteful and delicious to the six organs of sense. Not one of the six kinds of tasty pleasures is lacking in this fruit.⁸ The fruit is never found in its green or unripe state, nor is it ever known to fall down over-ripe on the ground. It is always ripe of itself, never rotten or dried or decayed at anytime by age or accident.

⁹ The gods Brahma, Vishnu and Rudra are not as everlasting as this tree, nor do they know anything of the origin of this tree or anything about its extent and dimensions.¹⁰ No one knows the germ and sprout of this tree, and its buds and flowers are invisible to all. There is no stem or trunk or bough or branch of the tree that bears this great fruit.¹¹ This fruit is a solid mass of great bulk. There is nobody who has seen its growth, change or fall.

¹² This is the best and largest of all fruits and having no central core or seed, it is always sound and unsoiled.¹³ It is as dense in its fullness as the inside of a stone, and as overflowing with bliss as the disc of the moon drizzling with its cooling beams. It is full of flavor and distils its ambrosial nectar to the conscious souls of men.¹⁴ It is source of delight in all beings. It is the cause of the cooling moonbeams by its own brightness. It is the solid rock of all security, the stupendous body of joy. It contains the core and foundation that support and sustain all living souls, which are the fruits of the prior acts of people.

¹⁵ Therefore that transcendent central core, which is the wonder of souls, is contained in the infinite spirit of God, deposited and preserved in that auspicious fruit, the bael.¹⁶ God is deposited with its wonderful power in that small bael fruit, which represents the human as well as the Divine Soul, without losing its properties of thinness and thickness and freshness forever.

¹⁷ The thought that “I am this” clothes unreality with a gross form. Though it is absurd to attribute differences to nullities, yet the mind makes them of itself, then believes its fictitious creatures as real ones.¹⁸ The Divine Ego contains the essential parts of all things set in their proper order, as the emptiness of the sky is filled with minute atoms out of which the three worlds burst forth with all their varieties.¹⁹ In this manner the power of consciousness grew in its proper form, yet the essence of the soul retains its former state without exhausting itself.

²⁰ The power of consciousness, being thus stretched about, makes it perceive the fabric of the world and its great bustle in its tranquil self. ²¹ It views the great vacuum on all sides and counts the parts of time as they pass away. It conceives a destiny which directs all things and comes to know what is action by its operation. ²² It finds the world stretching as the wish of one, and the sides of heaven extending as far as the desires of men. It comes to know the feelings of love and hatred and the objects of its liking and dislike. ²³ It understands its egoism and non-egoism, the subjective and the objective, and views itself in an objective light by forgetting its subjectivity. It views the worlds above and, being itself as high as any one of them, finds itself far below them. ²⁴ It perceives one thing to be placed before and another to be situated beside it. It finds something to be behind and others to be near or far away from it. Then it comes to know some things as present and others as past or yet to come. ²⁵ Thus the whole world is seen like a play house in the power of consciousness with various imaginary figures blooming like lotuses in a lake.

²⁶ Our consciousness is seated in the center of the lotus of our hearts. It has knowledge of our endless desires budding about it. It sees the countless worlds turning around like a rosary of lotus seeds. ²⁷ Its hollow, cell-like skies are filled with the great Rudras who wander about in the distant paths of the midway sky, like falling comets with flaming tails. ²⁸ It has the great Mount Meru situated in its middle like the bright core in the middle of a lotus flower. The moon-capped summit of this mountain is visited by the immortals who wander about it like bees in quest of ambrosial honey distilled by the moonbeams on high. ²⁹ Here is the tree of the Nandana garden of paradise with its clusters of beautiful flowers diffusing their fragrance all around. There is the deadly tree of the old world, scattering its destructive pollen that makes us chose death and hell. ³⁰ Here the stars are shining like bright filaments of flowery trees growing on the banks of the wide ocean of Brahman. There is the pleasant lake of the Milky Way in the boundless space of emptiness.

³¹ Here roll the uncontrolled waves of ceremonial acts filled with frightful sharks, and there are the dreadful whirlpools of worldly acts that whirl mankind in endless births for ever more. ³² Here runs the lake of time in its meandering course forever with the broad expanse of heaven for its blooming blossom and having moments and ages for its leaves and petals, and the luminaries of sun, moon and stars for its bright pistils and filaments. ³³ Here it sees the bodies of living beings filled with health and disease, teeming with old age, decay and the torments of death. There it beholds the jarring expositions of the scriptures, some delighting in their knowledge of spiritual wisdom, others rambling in the gloom of ignorance.

³⁴ In this manner our inner consciousness represents the wonders contained in the pulp of the bael fruit which is full of the unsubstantial substance of our desires and wishes and the coreless essence of our false imagination. ³⁵ It sees many that are tranquil, calm, cool and dispassionate, who are free from their restraints and desires. They are heedless of both their activity and inactivity. They do not care for works whether done or left undone by them.

³⁶ Thus this single consciousness presents her various aspects, though she is neither alone nor many of herself. She is what she is. She has in reality only one form of peaceful tranquility, though she is possessed of the vast capacity of conceiving in herself all the manifold forms of things at liberty.

Chapter 46 — Parable of a Carved Rock as the Soul

¹ Rama said, “Venerable sage who knows the substance of all truths, I understand the parable of bael fruit, which you just told me, is related to the essence of compact consciousness, which is the only unit and identical with itself. ² The whole totality of existence together with the personalities of I, you, this and that form the fullness of consciousness. There is not the slightest difference between them, such as this is one thing and that another.”

³ Vasishta answered:—

As this cosmic egg, the universe, is similar to a gourd containing mountains and all other things as its inner substance, so does consciousness resemble the bael fruit, the great foundation that contains even the universe as the kernel inside it. ⁴ But although the world has no other receptacle beside Divine Consciousness, yet it is not literally the kernel inside that crust. ⁵ Consciousness resembles the hard coating of the pepper seed, containing inside the soft substance of its central core. It is also similar to a block of stone bearing carved figures peacefully sleeping in it.

⁶ O moon-faced Rama, hear me relate another pleasant story which will appear equally charming and wonderful to you.

⁷ There is a huge block of stone somewhere which is as big as it is thick and solid. It is bright and glossy, and cold and smooth to touch. It never wastes or wears out, or becomes dark and dim.

⁸ Within the bosom of this wonderful stone there are many full blown lotuses and unnumbered buds of water lilies growing in a clear lake of water.

⁹ There are many other plants also growing in that lake, some with their long and broad leaves and others with their alternate and joint thin leaves. ¹⁰ There are many flowers with uplifted and downcast heads, and others with their petals hanging before them. Some flowers grown on a single stalk and others grow separate and apart from one another. Some are concealed and others manifest to view.

¹¹ Some have their roots formed of the fibers of the outer layer and others have their outer layers growing upon the roots. Some have their roots on the tops and others at the foot of trees, while there are many without their roots at all.

¹² There are a great many conch shells about these, and unnumbered diseases also scattered all about.

¹³ Rama said, “All this is true. I have seen this large saligrama stone in my travels. I remember it was placed in the shrine of Vishnu in a bed of lotus flowers.”

¹⁴ Vasishta replied:—

You say truly that you have seen that great stone and know its inside also. But do you know the unperforated and hollow-less stone of the Divine Mind that contains the universe in its hollow receptacle and is the life of all living beings? ¹⁵ The stone of which I have been describing is marvelous and supernatural and contains in its void-less bosom all things as nothing. ¹⁶ The stone-like consciousness contains all these massive worlds within its spacious sphere. It is figuratively called a stone from its solidity, cohesive impenetrability and indivisibility, qualities like those of a block of stone.

¹⁷ This solid substance of consciousness, in spite of its density without any void, contains all the

worlds in itself, just as the infinite space of heaven is filled with subtle and atmospheric air.¹⁸ The mind is occupied with all its various thoughts, just as the world is filled by earth, sky, air and atmosphere, and the mountains and rivers on all sides. There is no hole or hollow that is not occupied by something or another.¹⁹ The solid soul of God resembles this massive stone. It contains all these worlds that are displayed like so many beds of lotuses in their blooming beauty. Yet there is nothing so very pure and unstained as this solid crystalline soul.

²⁰ It is the practice of men to paint blocks of stones with figures of lotuses, conch shells and other images. So it is the tendency of the fanciful mind to picture many fantastic forms on the solid rock of the soul.²¹ All things in the world appear exactly like the various figures carved on a stone, seeming to be separate but carved in relief.²² As a lotus carved in rock is not different from the rock itself, so no part of existence is set apart from the substantiality of Divine Consciousness which represents its subtle ideas in their condensed forms.²³ The forms of creation are as inseparable from the formless intellect of God just as the forms of lotus flowers carved in stone are not separate from the shapeless stone.

²⁴ These endless chains of worlds are all linked together in the boundless intellect of God in the same way as clusters of lotus flowers are carved together in stone, and like seeds are set together inside a long pepper.²⁵ These revolving worlds do not rise or fall in the sphere of the Infinite Intellect, but they remain as firm as the kernel of a bael fruit and as fixed as the fidelity of a faithful wife.²⁶ The revolution of worlds and their changing scenes seen taking place in Divine Consciousness do not prove a change within the all-containing Infinite Intellect because its contents of finite things are so changeable in their nature.²⁷ At last, all these changes and varieties subside in the Divine Intellect, just as waves and water drops sink down in the sea. The only change observable in the Supreme Intellect is its absorption of all finite changes into its infinity.

²⁸ The word that has produced all this causes their changes and their dissolutions in itself. But know that the word "change" is altogether meaningless because it is from Brahman that this divine command and these changes have sprung, and all these and the original divine command are only Brahman.

²⁹ Brahman being both the mainspring as well as the mainstay of all changes in nature, he is neither excluded from or included under any change which occurs in the sphere of his immensity.

³⁰ Know change in one or the other of two senses. Change of the Divine Spirit in the works of creation resembles the change or development of the seed into its stem, fruits and flowers and other parts. The other is change is a display of delusion like the appearance of water in a mirage.

³¹ As the substance of a seed gradually transforms itself into the various states of its development, so the density of Divine Consciousness condenses itself more and more in its production of solid and compact worlds, and this is the course of the formation of the cosmos by slow degrees.³² The union of the seed with the process of its development forms the duality that is destroyed by the loss of either of these. Only imagination paints the world as a dull material thing when there is no such grossness in pure Consciousness.³³ Consciousness and dull matter cannot combine, nor can the one be included within the other. Therefore the ideal world resembles marks carved in stone and in no way different in their natures.

³⁴ As the core and foundation of a fruit is nothing other than the fruit itself, so the cosmos forms the

gist of solid Consciousness and is no way separable from Consciousness which is like a thick stone containing marks and under-marks layered under one another.³⁵ So we see the three worlds lying under one another in the womb of the unity of God, just as we see the sleeping and silent marks of lotuses and conch shells carved in the hollow of a stone.³⁶ There is no rising or setting of the course of the world, but everything is as fixed and immovable in it as an inscription carved in stone.

³⁷ The core and foundation of Divine Consciousness causes the creative power and the act of creation, just as the substance of stone produces and reduces the figures in the stone.³⁸ As the figures carved in stone have no action or motion of their own, so the agents of the world have no action of their own, nor is this world ever created or destroyed at anytime.³⁹ Everything stands fixed in the mind of God as if they were firm and immovable rocks. All have their forms and positions in the same manner as they are ordained and situated in the Divine Mind.

⁴⁰ All things are filled with the essence of God and remain in a state of near sleep in the Divine Mind. The various changes and conditions of things that appear to us in this world are the mere aimless digressions of our false fancy, for everything is as fixed and unchanged in the mind of God as the inert images on a stone.⁴¹ All actions and motions of things are as motionless in mind of God as the carved figures lying asleep in the hollow of a stone. It is the wrong, irrelevant view of things that presents all these varieties and changes to us. Considered in the true and spiritual light, there is no body or any change that presents itself to our sight.

Chapter 47 — The Density of the Intellect; Bael Fruit, Stones and Peahen Eggs

¹ Vasishta continued:—

The great Consciousness, which can be compared to a bael fruit, contains the universe as its own matter and marrow within itself. It broods upon the universe as in its dream.² All space and time and action and motion being but forms of itself, there can be no distinction of them in Consciousness.³ All words and their senses, and all acts of volition, imagination and perception being actions of Consciousness, they can not be unrealities in any respect.

⁴ As the substance contained in a fruit is called different names like kernel, core, pulp and seeds, so the core and foundation of solid Consciousness being only one and the same thing takes many names according to their varied forms.⁵ A thing though the same yet has different names according to its different states and changes of form. As it is with the contents of a fruit, so it is with the subjects included under Consciousness.

⁶ Consciousness reflects its image in the mirror of the world, just as sculptured images are expressed in a slab of stone.⁷ The brilliant gem of Supreme Consciousness produces numberless of worlds in itself, just as the gem of your mind casts the reflection of every object of your desires and imagination.⁸ The casket of Consciousness contains the spacious world set inside it like a pearl of vast size, but the world is only a part of the other, although appearing to be distinct and different.

⁹ Consciousness is like the shining sun that illuminates all things in the world. It brings on the days and nights by turns, showing and hiding things to and from our view.¹⁰ As the waters of a whirling current rotate and hurl down into the turbulent center of the sea, so do these worlds roll and revolve in the cavity of Consciousness. Though its contents are of the same kind, yet they appear different from one another like the pulp and seeds of fruit.

¹¹ The body of a stone, like Consciousness, contains the marks of whatever exists in present creation and the marks of whatever does not presently exist.¹² All real essence is the substance of the apple-like Consciousness, whether it is in being or not in being. All objects whether in being or not being obtain their form and figure according to the core and foundation of that intellectual fruit.

¹³ As a lotus loses its own separate being by being carved in stone, so do all these varieties of existence lose their differences by being engrossed into the unity of intellectual substance.¹⁴ As the diversity of the lotus changes to the identity of the stone by its union with and entrance into its cavity, so the varieties of creation become all one in the solid mass of Divine Consciousness.¹⁵ As a mirage appears to be a sheet of water to a thirsty deer, while the intelligent know it to be a reflection of sunlight on sandy desert, so reality appears as unreal and the unreal appears as real to the ignorant. In truth, there is neither the one nor the other here, only images of the Divine Mind.

¹⁶ As the body of waters fluctuates itself, so there is vibration within the solidity of Divine Consciousness.

¹⁷ The lotuses and conch shells are of the same substance as the stone in which they are carved. But the world and all its contents contained in Consciousness are not of the same substance or nature.

¹⁸ The big block of stone which we are using as a metaphor for Divine Consciousness is itself contained in the Divine Consciousness. While figures on the stone are carved out of its body, those of

Divine Consciousness are eternally inherent in it.

¹⁹ This creation of God is as bright as the autumn sky and as fair as liquid moonbeams. ²⁰ The world is eternally situated in God, like figures in stone which are never erased. The world is as inseparably connected with God as the godhead of God with himself. ²¹ There is no difference in these, just as there is none between the tree and its plant. All the worlds that are seen all about are not different from Divine Consciousness. ²² These worlds as well as Consciousness are neither produced nor destroyed at anytime because they exist in the spirit of God. The spirit of God shows them in their various forms, just as the heat of the sun exhibits a sheet of water in sandy desert.

²³ The world with all its solid rocks, trees and plants dissolves into Divine Consciousness at the sight of the intelligent, just as hard hailstones are seen to melt into pure, liquid water. ²⁴ As water vanishes into air and that again into vacuum, so all things pass away in the Supreme Spirit. Again, it is the consolidation of Consciousness that forms the solid substances of hills, plants and all tangible things.

²⁵ The central core hidden in the minute substance becomes the innermost essence in its enlarged state. So the flavor of things concealed in the atoms becomes perceptible in their density with their growth.

²⁶ The power of God resides in the same manner in all physical things, such as the properties of flavors and moisture inherent in the vegetable creation. ²⁷ The same power of God manifests itself in many forms in things, just as the same light of the sun shows itself in the various colors of things according to the constitution of their component particles. ²⁸ The Supreme Soul shows itself in various ways in the substance and properties of things, just as Divine Consciousness represents the forms of mountains and all other things in the changeful mind.

²⁹ As the soft and liquid yolk of a peahen's egg contains the toughness and various colors of future quills and feathers, so there are varieties of all kinds inherent in Divine Consciousness, requiring time to develop. ³⁰ As the multicolored feathers of a peacock's tail are contained in the moisture within its egg, so the diversity of creation is ingrained in the Divine Mind. ³¹ The judicious observer will find the one self same Brahman is present everywhere before his sight. He will perceive his unity amidst all diversity, as in the yolk of the female peahen.

³² In reality, the knowledge of the unity and duality of God, and that of God containing the world in himself, are all as false as the belief in the entity and nonentity of things. All these are to be considered as the one and same thing, identical with one another. ³³ Know him as the supreme, the source of all entity and nonentity, and on whose entity they depend, whose unity comprises all varieties which appear as virtual and are not real existences. ³⁴ Know the world to be compressed within the category of Consciousness. Consciousness is assimilated within the works of creation in the same manner as the feather is related to the moisture in the egg, the one being the production and the other the producer of another.

³⁵ The cosmic egg resembles the peahen's egg. The spirit of God is as the yolk of that egg. It abounds with many things, like the many colored feathers of peacocks, all of which serve only to mislead us into error. Know therefore there is no difference in outer form or the internal spirit of the world, just as there is none in the outer peacock and the inner yolk.

Chapter 48 — Unity and Identity of Brahma and World; the Realized

¹ Vasishta continued:—

That which contains this wide extended universe within itself without manifesting its form to us is very much like the egg of the peahen. It contains all space and individual bodies in its yolk.² In reality it has nothing in it, yet it appears to contain everything in itself, just as a spotless mirror reflects the image of the moon and a hollow egg bears the figure of a future peacock.³ In this manner gods and sages, saints and holy men, and spiritual masters and great rishis meditate on the true and self-existent form of God, and find themselves seated in their fourth state of bliss above the third heaven.

⁴ These devout persons sit with their half-shut eyes, without any movement of their eyelids, and continue to view the visible glory of God shining in its full light in their inner souls.⁵ Thus enraptured in their conscious presence of God, they are unconscious of any other thought in their minds. Though living, they remain without respiration of their vital breath.⁶ They sit quietly like figures in a painting, without breathing, silent as carved statues without any action of their minds.⁷ They remain in their state of holy bliss without using their minds for any fleeting thoughts. Whenever they have any agitation they can effect anything, just as the Lord God works all things with his slightest nod.⁸ Even when their minds are employed in meditative thoughts, they are usually attended with a charming gladness, like that of charming moonbeams falling and pleasing the leafy branches of trees.⁹ The soul is as delighted with seeing the holy light of God as the mind is delighted at the sight of cooling moonbeams emitted afar from the lunar disc.

¹⁰ Pure consciousness is as clear as the fair face of the bright moon. It is neither visible nor in need of admonition. It is neither too near nor too far from us.¹¹ Only through one's self-reflection can the pure intellect be known, and not through physical organs, the living spirit or mind, or by our desire to know it.¹² It is not the living soul or its consciousness, or the vibrations of the body, mind or breath. It is not the world or its reality or unreality, its emptiness or solidity, or the center of anything.¹³ It is not time or space or any substance at all. It is neither a god nor any other being.

It is whatever is free from all these and unconfined in the heart or any of the sheaths inside the body.

¹⁴ The soul is that in which all things are moving, and which is neither the beginning nor the end of anything, but exists from eternity to eternity. The soul is not characterized by any of the elements of air and the like.¹⁵ The soul is an entity that is never annihilated in this or the next world, though sentient bodies may be born and die away a thousand times here below, like earthen pots.¹⁶ There is no removal of this empty spirit from its seat, both inside and outside of everybody. Know, O you who are the best of the spiritually minded, that all bodies are equally situated in the all pervading Spirit.

¹⁷ The imperfection of our understanding creates the difference between spirit and body. The perfection of our judgment is when we believe the Universal Soul is diffused throughout the universe.

¹⁸ Though warmly engaged in business, yet remain not addicted to worldliness by your indifference to the world and to all moving and unmoving things that exists on earth.¹⁹ Know all these as the great Brahman, the pure soul that is without the properties and attributes of mortal beings. It is without change or beginning or end. It is always tranquil and in the same state.

²⁰ Rama, through your spiritual vision you now know that all things, including time and action and all

causality, causation and its effects, together with the production, preservation and dissolution of all, is composed of the spirit of God. You are freed from your wanderings in the world in your bodily form.

Chapter 49 — Changes in the World Are no Changes; Ignorance Does Not Exist

¹ Rama said, “Sage, if there is no change in the immutable spirit of God, then how do these various changes constantly appear to occur in this world?”

² Vasishta replied:—

Listen Rama. The alteration of a thing that does not revert to its former state is called its change.

Change occurs in the example of milk converted to curds or butter. It never becomes pure milk again.

³ Milk converts to curds, but curds never revert to their former state of milk. Such is the nature of change in the state of things. But such change can never affect the great God who remains the same through the first, intermediate and last states of things. ⁴ There is no change in the immutable Brahman such as with milk or with any other thing.

Brahman, having no beginning or end, has no age or stage of life assigned to him. ⁵ Attributing any state of beginning or end to eternal God is the false imputation of ignorance and error. There can be no change in the changeless one. ⁶ Brahman is not our consciousness or the object of our consciousness. He is as unconnected with us as our soul and intellect are. He is only known to us by the word.

⁷ A thing is said to be the same if it is the same in the beginning and end. The difference that takes place in form is only a mist of error and is not taken into account by the wise. ⁸ Only the soul remains the same with itself, both in the beginning, middle and end of it, and in all places and times. The soul never changes with changes of the body or mind and therefore forms the identity of the person. ⁹ The soul, formless and identical with itself, forms the personality and individuality of a being. Because it is not subject to any pattern or mutation at anytime, it constitutes the essential identity of everybody.

¹⁰ Rama replied, “If the Divine Soul is always the same and perfectly pure in itself, from where does the error of change come? What is the cause of the ignorance that shows these changes to us?”

¹¹ Vasishta replied:—

The concept of Brahman implies that He is all that is, what was, and what will be in future, that he is without change, beginning or end, and that there is no ignorance in him. ¹² The intended meaning of the word Brahman does not include anything that is nonexistent or the negative idea of ignorance. ¹³ You and I, this earth and sky, the world and all its sides, together with the elements of fire and others, are all the everlasting and infinite Brahman. Within Brahman there is not the slightest misunderstanding.

¹⁴ Ignorance (*avidya*) is only a name and an error. It is another word for unreality. Rama, you can never call something a reality which never exists of itself.

¹⁵ Rama said, “Why sage, you yourself talked about ignorance in the chapter on Tranquility (*Upasama*, Book 5) and told me to know all these as products of error.”

¹⁶ Vasishta answered:—

Rama, all this time you have been immersed in your ignorance. At last you have come to your right understanding by your own reasoning.

¹⁷ It is the practice of pundits and men of learning to use words like ignorance, living soul and the like

in order to awaken the unenlightened to their enlightenment.¹⁸ So long as the mind is not awakened to the knowledge of truth, it remains in the darkness of error forever, even though it may travel a hundred miles.¹⁹ When the living soul is awakened to its right sense by the force of reason, it learns to unite itself to the Supreme Soul. Without the guidance of reason, the living soul is successful in nothing despite all its efforts.²⁰ He who tells a vile, unenlightened man that all this world is the great Brahman himself does no more than communicate his sorrows to the headless trunk of a tree.²¹ A fool is brought to his senses by reasoning, and the wise man knows the truth from the nature of the subject. The ignorant never learn wisdom without the persuasion of reason.²² You have been unwise for so long relying upon your own judgment. But being guided by me, you are now awakened to truth.

²³ I am Brahman, you are Brahman, and the visible world is Brahman himself. Know this truth and nothing else, and do as you please.²⁴ God is inconceivable. No conception of God can be true. The visible world is all that is known of him. Know him as the One and the Infinite and you will not be misled into error.

²⁵ Rama, whether when you are sitting or walking, waking or sleeping, constantly think in yourself that you are this Supreme Spirit which is of the form of light and intelligence and pervades all things.

²⁶ Rama, if you are without your individual ego and selfishness, and if you are intelligent and honest, then be as universal and tranquil as Brahman himself who is equally situated in all things.²⁷ Know your self as the pure consciousness situated as one in all, without beginning or end, the essence of light, and the most transcendent of all being.

²⁸ What you call Brahman or the Universal Soul or the fourth, transcendent state, know that they are all the same as matter and nature. It is the inseparable One in all, just as clay is the essential substance of a thousand water pots.²⁹ Nature is not different from the nature of the soul, just as the clay is no other than the pot itself. The divine essence is like the clay, and the Divine Spirit extends as the inner matter of all things.

³⁰ The soul has its pulsation like the spinning of the whirlpool. This force is named matter (*prakriti*) and it is nothing other than an effort of the spirit.³¹ As the different words pulsation and vibration mean the same thing, so the soul and nature express the same substance and are not different in their essence.³² Mere ignorance makes their difference which is removed by their knowledge, just as sheer ignorance represents a snake in the rope which is soon removed by knowledge of their nature.

³³ As the seed of imagination falls in the field of the intellect, it shoots forth in the sprout of the mind, which becomes the germ of the wide spreading tree of the universe.³⁴ The seed of false imagination, scorched by the flames of spiritual knowledge, will be unable to vegetate though it be sprinkled with the water of fond desire.³⁵ If you do not sow the seed of imagination in the soil of your intellect, you will stop the germination of the plants of pain and pleasure in the field of your mind.

³⁶ Rama, you have come to know the truth. You must forsake your false conception of such a thing as ignorance or error existing in the world. Know that there is no duality in the unity of God. Being full with the knowledge of one Supreme Soul, you must repudiate your ideas of pain or pleasure in anything here below. Pain turns to pleasure and pleasure to pain. Know them both as unreal as they are vain.

Chapter 50 — How the Soul Receives Sensations and the Objects of Senses

¹ Rama said, “Sage, I have known whatever is to be known. I have seen all that is to be seen. I am filled with the ambrosial nectar of divine knowledge which you have kindly imparted to me. ² I see the world full with the fullness of Brahman. I know the fullness of God has produced this complete creation. The fullness of God fills the universe. Its size depends on the fullness of the all pervading deity.”

³ “With much fondness I would like to propose another question to improve my understanding. I hope you will not be angry but will instruct me like a kind father does his fondling boy.”

⁴ “We see that the organs of sense, such as ears, nose, eyes, mouth and touch, exist in all animals. ⁵ Why do the dead do not perceive the objects of their senses as well as the living? ⁶ How is it that the dull organs perceive outer objects, like a pot and other phenomena, which are imperceptible to the inner heart, in spite of its natural sensitivity? ⁷ The relation between outer objects and the organs is like that between magnet and iron which attract one another without coming into contact. But how can the small cavities of the organs be able to bring huge objects that surround us on all sides into the mind?”

⁸ “If you well know these secrets of nature, then please communicate them to me in a hundred ways in order to satisfy my curiosity.”

⁹ Vasishta answered:—

Now Rama, I tell you in brief that neither the organs nor the heart and mind, nor the pots and pictures are things in reality because it is impossible for anything to exist apart and independent of the pure and intelligent spirit of God.

¹⁰ Divine Consciousness, purer than air, takes the form of the mind by itself. Then it assumes its elemental form of the physical body and exhibits all things agreeably to the ideas engraved in the mind. ¹¹ The same elements, stretched out into matter and nature, exhibit the whole universe as its ensemble, and the organs and their objects as its parts. ¹² The mind takes the elemental form of its own nature and reflects itself in all the parts of nature in the forms of pots and all the rest of things.

¹³ Rama replied, “Tell me sage, what is the form of that elemental body that reflects itself in a thousand shapes on the face of the eight-fold elemental world, as it were, on the surface of a mirror?”

¹⁴ Vasishta replied:—

This elemental body, the seed of the world, is the Brahman without decay who is without beginning or end. Brahman is of the form of pure light and intellect, devoid of parts and attributes. ¹⁵ Brahman, being disposed to its desires, becomes the living soul. This being desirous of collecting all its desires and the parts of the body together, becomes the beating heart in the middle of all. ¹⁶ It becomes ego from the thought of its egoism. It is called the mind from its minding the many things in itself. It takes the name of understanding (*buddhi*) from its understanding (*bodha*) of things, and the name of sense from its sensation of external objects. ¹⁷ It thinks of taking a body and becomes the same body, just as a potter having the idea of a pot forms it in that manner. Such being the nature of the soul, being and doing all what it likes, it is therefore manifest in its eight different forms.

¹⁸ Consciousness is also called the eight-fold soul because it presides over each person's eight-fold functions, such as those of perception, action, passion, witnessing all things, and the like, and also its inner consciousness and its power of vitality. ¹⁹ The living soul takes different forms at different times according to how it is employed in any one of these eight-fold functions, and also according to how it is moved by the various desires that arise by turns. ²⁰ The eight-fold nature of the soul causes it to expand itself into the same form as it is led to by its varying desires at anytime. It is similar to a seed that shoots forth its leaves according to the quantity of water with which it is watered.

²¹ The soul forgets its intellectual nature and thinks it is a mortal and material being embodied in the form of a living creature or some inanimate being. It remains unaware of itself under the influence of its false belief. ²² In this way the living soul wanders about the world as if dragged back and forth by the rope of desire tied about its neck. Now it soars high and then it plunges below like a plank rising up and sinking below the waves and currents of the sea.

²³ There are some who, being released from imprisonment in this world, come to know the Supreme Soul and attain that state which has neither beginning nor end. ²⁴ There are others who, weary and worried by their many reincarnations after the lapse of much time, come to their knowledge of the soul and thereby obtain their state of final bliss. ²⁵ In this way, O intelligent Rama, the living soul passes through many bodily forms. Now you shall hear how it comes to perceive the outer objects of pots and the like through the external organs of perception.

²⁶ After consciousness takes the form of the living soul and the living soul has received its vitality, the action of the heart sends its feelings to the mind which is the sixth organ of the body. ²⁷ As the living soul passes into the air, it comes in contact with external objects through the sense organs of the body. Then joining with consciousness it perceives external sensations within itself. ²⁸ The union of the living soul with outer objects causes sensations and carries them to the mind. When the soul is defunct and the mind dormant, there is no perception of externals. ²⁹ Whatever outer object is set in the open air, it casts its reflection on the subtle senses of living beings coming in contact with the living soul that feels the sensation. But if the soul has departed, the dead body has no life or feeling of anything in existence.

³⁰ When the form of an object comes in contact with a person's eyesight, it casts its picture on the eyes which is instantly conveyed to the inner soul. ³¹ The image cast on the retina is reflected to the clearer mirror of the soul, which perceives it by its contact with the reflection. Thus outer things come to the knowledge of the living soul.

³² Even babies can know what comes in touch with them, just as brutes and vegetables have the power of feeling the objects they touch. How then is it possible for the sensitive soul to be ignorant of its tangible objects? ³³ The clear rays of eyesight that surround the soul present it with pictures of visible objects carried to the mind's consciousness, whereby the soul comes to know. ³⁴ The process is the same with the other senses, also, whether taste, smell, sound, or touch. The soul contacts through the mind and the sense organ. ³⁵ Sound remaining in its receptacle of air passes into the cavity of the ear, and from there it enters the hollow space of the soul, giving it the sensation of its nature.

³⁶ Rama said, "I see that reflections of things are cast in the mirror of the mind, like images of things

carved on wood and slabs of stone. But tell me sage, how is the reflection of the image cast onto the mirror of the mind?"

³⁷ Vasishta replied:—

O best of those who know spiritual wisdom, know that the gross images of the universal and particular souls which are reflected in the mirror of the mind are as false as the images of God and gods carved in stone and wood. ³⁸ Rama, never rely on the substantiality of this false world. Know it to be a great vortex of whirling waters, and ourselves as the waves rolling upon it.

³⁹ There is no limitation of space or time or any action in the boundless ocean of the infinity and eternity of God. You must know that your soul is identical with the Supreme which is everywhere and omnipresent. ⁴⁰ Remain always with a calm and quiet mind, without addiction to anything in this world. Know the vanity of worldly pleasures and pains and go on with a contented mind wherever you will.

Chapter 51 — One Becomes Many; Ignorance; Consciousness Precedes Sense; Scriptures & Agnostic Doctrines

¹ Vasishta resumed:—

Rama, you have heard me tell you that even the lotus-born Brahma, who was born long before you, at first had no organs of sense.² Brahma, the collective agent of creation, was endowed with only consciousness to perform all his functions. All individual personalities are endowed with only their self-consciousness to discharge all their necessary duties.³ The living soul, dwelling in its body in the mother's womb, reflects on the actions of the senses and finds their proper organs supplied to its body immediately.⁴ The senses and the organs of sense are forms of consciousness. This I have fully explained to you in the case of Brahma, who represents the collective body of all individual souls.

⁵ At first there was the pure consciousness in its collective form in the Divine Intellect. This afterwards came to be diffused in millions of individual souls from its sense of egoism. At first was the Divine Soul "the I am all that I am" and afterwards became many as expressed in the Vedic text *eko 'ham bahu syam* ("I am one. May I be many").⁶ There is no stain in the pure universal, undivided and subjective Divine Spirit from being divided into the infinity of individual and objective souls because the universal and subjective unity is the innumerable objective individualities which it evolves of itself.⁷ The objectivity of God does not imply his becoming either the thinking mind or the living soul, or his assuming an organic body or any elemental form.⁸ He does not become the intelligible or the unintelligible. He is ever existent, appearing nonexistent to the ignorant. This is called the Supreme Soul which is beyond the comprehension of the mind and apprehension of the senses.

⁹ The living soul arises from Him, as well as the thinking mind. For explanation purposes, we can describe them like sparks emitted from fire.¹⁰ From whatever source ignorance may have sprung, you have no need to inquire as to its cause. Taking ignorance as an illness, you should seek the remedy of reasoning for its cure.¹¹ After all forms of things and all false knowledge of particulars are removed from your mind there remains a knowledge of unity in which the whole firmament is lost, like a mountain concealed in an atom.¹² That in which all the actions and commotions of the world remain still and motionless, as if buried in dead silence and nothingness, is the surest rock of your rest after the bustle of worldly business.

¹³ The unreal, or the negative idea that we call ignorance, also has a form as insubstantial as it is nothing. Look at her and she becomes nothing. Touch her and she perishes and vanishes from sight.

¹⁴ Seek after her and what can you find but her nothingness? If by your efforts you can get anything of her, it is like water in a mirage.¹⁵ Ignorance alone creates her reality. Her unreality appears as a reality and destroys the seeming reality at once.

¹⁶ Agnosticism imputes false attributes to the nature of God. The doctrine of agnostics is to misrepresent the Universal Spirit as having the forms of a living soul and a perishable body.¹⁷ Now listen closely as I tell you that scriptures have been invented to propagate agnostic religion and belief in ignorance by setting up the living soul and other phenomena as God instead of the Supreme Spirit.

¹⁸ The scriptures are fond of representing Divine Consciousness in a visible form. People have

stained the pure Spirit with many gross forms, such as the elemental and organic body which is enlivened by the vital Spirit dwelling in it.¹⁹ Whatever they think a thing to be, they believe in that. They make truth out of an untruth and its reverse likewise, just as children make a devil of a doll and afterwards break it into nothing.

²⁰ People take the frail body formed of the five elements as a reality and believe that the body's organ openings are the locations where the sensing soul resides.²¹ They believe the five-fold organs perceive the five-fold objects of the senses, which serve at best to represent objects in a different light from what they are, just as a seed produces leaves of various colors.²² They reckon some as the internal senses, such as the faculties of the mind and the feelings of the heart, and others as external, such as the outer organs of action and sensation. They place their belief in whatever their souls and minds suggest to them to be either as false or true.

²³ They believe the moonlight is hot or cold depending on how their outward perception feels.²⁴ The pungency of pepper and the emptiness of the sky are all according to one's knowledge and perception of them. They do not belong to the nature of things. For sweet is sour to some, and sour is sweet to others. Many think the sky is empty, but it is found to be full of air by others who assert the dogma that nature abhors a vacuum.

²⁵ People have made certain actions and rituals which are in common practice the articles of their creed, and they have built their faith of a future heaven on the observance of those usages.²⁶ The living soul, full of its desires, is led by two different impulses. One is its natural tendency to some particular action. The other is whatever some particular law or another directs. However, natural propensity gets the better of the other.

²⁷ The soul produces all objective dualities from what is only the subjective unity, just as the sweet sugarcane produces candy and the clay of the earth forms water pots.²⁸ In these as well as in all other cases, the changes that take place in the forms of things all result from time and place and other circumstances, but nothing God produces in the universe has any relation to the nature of God.²⁹ As sugarcane produces its leaves and flowers from its own sap, so the living soul produces dualities from the essence of its own unity, which is the Supreme Soul itself.³⁰ It is God seated in all souls that views the dualities of a pot, picture, a cot and personal ego in itself, and so they appear to every individual soul in the world.³¹ The living soul appears to assume the different forms of childhood, youth, and age at different times, just as a cloud in the sky appears as an exhalation, a watery cloud, and the sap of the earth and all its plants at the different times of the hot and rainy seasons of the year.

³² The living soul perceives all these changes as they are exhibited before it by the Supreme Soul in which they are all present. There is no being in the world who is able to alter this order of nature.

³³ Even the sky, which is as clear as a looking glass and is spread all about and within everybody, is unable to represent all the various forms presented to the soul by the great Soul of souls.³⁴ The soul situated in the Universal Soul of Brahman shines as the living soul of living beings. But it amounts to a duality to impute even an incorporeal idea of ignorance to God because the nature of God is pure Consciousness which cannot admit an ignorant spirit.³⁵ Whatever is ordained to manifest in any manner is its nature and stamp (*swabhava*). Though such appearance is no reality, yet you can never undo what is ordained from the beginning.

³⁶ As a golden ornament presents the joint aspects of its reality and unreality at the same time, so are all things only combinations of the real and unreal in their substantial essence and outward appearance. But both of these dissolve at last in the Divine Spirit, just as a gold ornament is melted down to liquid gold in a crucible.³⁷ Divine Consciousness being all pervasive by reason of its intellectuality is also diffused over the human mind, just as the gold of an ornament settles and remains dull in the crucible.

³⁸ The heart, having the passive nature of dull intellectuality, receives fleeting impressions from the active mind and takes the form that it feels strongly impressed upon it at the time.³⁹ The soul assumes many shapes at different times according to the ever changing prospects that various desires always present.⁴⁰ Likewise, the body takes different forms according to its inner thoughts and feelings, just as a city seen in a dream varies considerably from what is seen with open eyes. So we shape our future forms by the even course of our minds.

⁴¹ As a dream presents the shadows of things that disappear on our waking, so these living bodies that we see all about must vanish into nothing upon their death.⁴² What is unreal is doomed to perish, and those who die are destined to be born again. The living soul takes another form in another body, just as it sees itself in a dream.⁴³ This body does not become another, though it may change from young to aged in course of time, because the natural form of a person retains its identity in every stage of life through which it has to pass.

⁴⁴ In his dream, a man sees all that he has seen or heard or thought of at anytime. The whole world being incorporated in the state of dreaming, the living soul becomes the knower of all that is knowable in his dream.⁴⁵ That which a man has not seen awake, but is known to him only by name, can never be seen in dream, such as the pure soul and the intellect of God.⁴⁶ The living soul sees in its dreams the objects that it has seen before. The intellectual part of the soul also sees many things that were unknown to it.

⁴⁷ Subdue your former desires and propensities by your present, courageous efforts. Exert your utmost to change your habitual misconduct in favor of your future good behavior.⁴⁸ You can never subdue your senses or prevent your reincarnation without gaining your liberation. Without liberation, you must continue to rise and plunge in the stream of life forever.⁴⁹ The imagination of your mind causes the body to understand your soul to be like a shark and the desire of your soul like a ghost that lays hold of children in the dark.

⁵⁰ The mind, understanding and personal ego, joined with the five elements, form the body composed of the eight-fold subtle properties.⁵¹ The bodiless or intellectual soul is finer than empty air. The air is its great tree, and the body is its mountain.

⁵² One devoid of passions and affections and exempt from all the conditions of life is entitled to liberation. He remains in a state of profound deep sleep in which gross objects and the desires of life lie wiped out and buried forever.⁵³ The state of dreaming is one in which the dreamer is conscious of his body and self-existence. The dreamer has to wander about or remain fixed in some place until his attainment of final liberation. Such is the state of living beings and plants.⁵⁴ Sometimes the sleeping, and often the dreaming person, have to carry movable bodies (*ativahika*) with them until they obtain

their final emancipation from life.⁵⁵ When some ominous dream awakens the sleeping soul from mental inactivity, it awakens to a fire created by its own misery.⁵⁶ The state of unmoving minerals, including even that of a fixed branch of the wish-fulfilling kalpa tree, exhibits no sign of intelligence, only gross dullness.⁵⁷ When dull, deep sleep (*susupta*) is interrupted by some dream, the dreamer is led to the miseries of life in this world. But he who awakes from his trance with full consciousness finds the perfect joy of the fourth (*turiya*) state open fully to his view.

⁵⁸ The living soul finds liberation by means of its intelligence. It is also through intelligence that the soul recognizes its spirituality, just as copper, cleansed of its rust by some acid, assumes the brightness of pure gold.⁵⁹ A living soul obtains two kinds of liberation through its intelligence. One is called emancipation from life and the other is known as release from the burden of the body (*deha mukta*).⁶⁰ Emancipation from life means the attainment of the fourth state of perfection. Intelligence means the enlightenment of the soul, which is obtainable by cultivation of understanding.⁶¹ The soul acquainted with scriptures and knowing the Supreme Spirit in itself becomes full of God. The ignorant soul sees only horrors rising before it, like the ghosts of his troublesome dreams.

⁶² Horrors arising in man's heart serve only to disturb his inner peace. There is nothing in the heart of man other than a particle of Divine Consciousness.⁶³ Men are truly subjected to misery if they see God in any light other than the divine light that shines in the soul of man, and if they do not understand that there is no other light.

⁶⁴ Look at the world whenever you will and you will find it full of illusion everywhere, just as you find nothing in a pot full of foul water except dirty sediments.⁶⁵ In the same manner you see the atoms of human souls, full with the vanities of this world. Vanities are from the chains of man's worldly desires. Men are released by breaking those bonds of desire.⁶⁶ The soul sleeps under the spell of its desires and sees those objects in its dream. After desires are dispersed, the soul wakes to the state of *turiya* joy.

The spell of gross desire extends over all animate and inanimate creation.⁶⁷ The desires of superior beings are of a pure nature. Those of intermediate natures are less pure. The desires of inferior beings are of a gross nature, and there are others without desires such as pots and blocks of wood or stone.

⁶⁸ The living soul becomes united with an outer object when one perceives and the other is the object of perception. Both, namely the inner soul and the outer object, being pervaded by the all pervasive Intellect of God, become one and the same with God, the common receptacle of all.⁶⁹ Hence the belief in separate perceiver, perception, and the object of perception is as false as water in a mirage. There is nothing we can shun or grasp as desirable or disgusting when they are all the same in the sight of God.⁷⁰ All things internal or external manifest as parts of the one universal and intellectual Soul. All worlds are only the manifestations of Divine Consciousness. It is vain to attribute any difference to them. All of us are displayed in Consciousness which forever contains the inner and outer worlds.

⁷¹ As the ocean is a calm expanse of water after its waves subside, reflecting the sky clearly, so it is that after we lose sight of the diversities presented to our superficial view, the entire universe appears as the reflection of one glorious and everlasting God.

Chapter 52 — Story of Vishnu's Dual Incarnations as Krishna and Arjuna

¹ Vasishta said:—

Rama, know that this world is like a dream that is common to all living beings. It is filled with many agreeable scenes that form the daily romance of lives. The world is neither true nor entirely false.

² Because the living souls of men do not always sleep, their waking state is also considered dreaming.

³ Life is a longer dream than the short ones in our sleep. Intelligent Rama, know that it is as untrue as it is unsubstantial and airy in its nature.

⁴ The living souls of the living world continually pass from dream to dream. It is their nature to view the unrealities of the world as positive realities. ⁵ They ascribe solidity to the subtle and subtlety to what is solid. They see the unreal as real and in their ignorance, they think the dead are the living.

⁶ They think the revolution of all worlds is confined within the solar system. They wander about like dream-walkers or fluttering bees about the living soul, which they distinguish from the Supreme.

⁷ They consider and meditate upon the living soul as a separate reality owing to its omnipresence and immortality and as the source of their own lives.

⁸ Listen as I share the best lesson of detachment, the one which lotus-eyed Lord Krishna taught to Arjuna and whereby that sagely prince became liberated in his lifetime. ⁹ Thus Arjuna, the son of Pandu, will happily pass his life. I hope you will imitate his example if you want to pass your days without grief or sorrow.

¹⁰ Rama said, “Tell me sage, when will this Arjuna, the son of Pandu, come to be born on earth? Who is this Hari (Vishnu) who will deliver this lesson to him about indifference to the world?”

¹¹ Vasishta replied:—

There is only the one Soul to whom a name is applied only by fiction. He remains in himself from time without beginning or end, just as the sky is situated in emptiness. ¹² We behold in him the optical illusion of this extended world, just as we see the different ornaments in gold and many waves in the sea. ¹³ The fourteen kinds of created beings display themselves in him. In him is the network of this universe in which all worlds are suspended, like birds hanging in the net in which they are caught.

¹⁴ In him live the gods Indra and Yama and the sun and moon who are renowned and hallowed in the scriptures. In him abide the five elements of creation and those who have become rulers.

¹⁵ That one thing is virtue and therefore expedient, and another is vice and therefore improper, are both placed in him as his laws which men in their freedom may accept or reject as good or evil. ¹⁶ It is obedience to divine law that employs the gods in their fixed duties with steady minds.

¹⁷ Lord Yama, the god of death, is accustomed to make his penance at the end of every four yugas on account of his greatness destroying God's creatures. ¹⁸ Sometimes he sat in penance for eight years, at others for a dozen years. Often he sat in penance for five or seven years, and many times for a full sixteen years. ¹⁹ On one occasion, as Yama sat observing his austerity, indifferent to his duties, death ceased to hunt living beings in all the worlds. ²⁰ Hence a multitude of living beings filled the surface of the earth and made the ground pathless and impassable by others. They multiplied like filth-born gnats in rainy weather that obstruct the passage of elephants. ²¹ Then the gods sat together in council.

After various deliberations they decided upon exterminating all living beings to relieve the overburdened earth.²² In this way many ages have passed away and many changes have taken place in the customs of people. Unnumbered living beings have come and gone with the revolutions of the worlds.

²³ Now it will come to pass that this Yama, the son of the sun god Surya and the lord of the regions of the dead, will again perform his penance after the expiration of many ages to come.²⁴ He will again resume his penance for a dozen years to atone for his sin of destroying the living. Then he will abstain from his habitual conduct of destroying the lives of human beings.²⁵ At that time, the earth will be filled with deathless mortals. This wretched earth will be covered and overburdened with people like trees in a dense forest.²⁶ The earth, groaning under her burden and oppressed by tyranny and lawlessness, will have recourse to Hari (Vishnu) for her redress, just as a virtuous wife seeks the protection of her husband from the aggression of tribals.

²⁷ For this reason, Hari will be incarnate in two bodies joined with the powers of all the gods. He will appear on earth in two persons of Nara and Narayana, the one a man and the other Lord Hari himself.²⁸ With one body Hari will become the son of Vasudeva and therefore will be called Vasudeva (*i.e.*, Lord Krishna). With the other he will be the son of Pandu and therefore will be named Pandava Arjuna, Arjuna the Pandava.²⁹ Pandu will have another son named Yudhisthira who will adopt the title of Son of Righteousness (*dharma*). Acquainted with politics, he will rule over the earth to its utmost limits of the oceans.³⁰ His rival will be Duryodhana, his cousin by his paternal uncle. There will be a dreadful war between them, like the struggle between a snake and a weasel.³¹ The belligerent princes will wage a furious war for the possession of the earth, armies of eighteen legions on both sides.³² The god Vishnu will cause Arjuna to slay them all with his great bow Gandiva, thereby relieving the earth of her burden of riotous peoples.

³³ The incarnation of Vishnu in the form of Arjuna will comprise all the qualities incident to humanity. He will be filled with feelings of joy and vengeance which naturally co-exist with mankind.³⁴ Seeing the armies on both sides arrayed against each other, friends and kinsmen ready to meet their fate, pity and grief will seize Arjuna's heart and he will not want to participate in the war.

³⁵ Then Hari, in his intelligent form of Krishna, will persuade his ignorant person in the form of Arjuna to perform his part as hero and crown his valor with success.³⁶ Krishna will teach Arjuna about the immortality of the soul by telling him that the soul is never born, nor does it die at anytime. The soul has had no prior birth nor will it be born again on earth. It is unborn and ever lasting, indestructible with the destruction of the body.³⁷ He who thinks the soul kills or is killed by anybody is ignorant of its nature. The soul neither kills nor is ever killed by anybody.³⁸ It is immortal and uniform with itself, more rare and subtle than air and emptiness. The soul is the form of the great God himself. It is never and in no way destroyed by anybody.

³⁹ O Rama who is conscious of yourself, know your soul is immortal and unknown, without beginning, middle or end. It is of the form of consciousness and clear without any stain. By thinking yourself as such, you become the unborn, eternal and un-decaying soul yourself.

Chapter 53 — Krishna Admonishes Arjuna

¹ The Lord Krishna said:—

Arjuna, you are not the killer (of any soul). You must shun your false conceit. The soul is ever lasting and free from death and decay. ² He who has no sense of individual ego in him and whose mind is not moved (by joy or grief) neither kills nor is killed by anybody, though he may kill everyone in the world.

³ Whatever is known in our consciousness, the same is felt within us. Therefore shun your inner consciousness of your individual ego, such as this is “I”, these are mine, and these others are theirs.

⁴ The thought that you are connected with persons and things, the thought that you might be deprived of them, and the resulting joy or grief to which you are subjected, must affect your soul in great measure.

⁵ He who does something with his body and connects even the least amount of his soul’s attention with what he is doing becomes infatuated by his egoism and believes himself to be the doer of his action. ⁶ Let the eyes see, the ears hear, and your touch feel their objects. Let your tongue taste the taste of a thing, but why take them to your soul? Where is your sense of “I” situated in these sensations? ⁷ The minds of even the great are truly employed in what they are doing, but where is your ego in all this that you should be sorry for its pains? ⁸ Your assumption that you are doing any action, actions which result from many, only amounts to a conceit of your vanity and exposes you not only to ridicule, but to frustrate the merit of your act.

⁹ Yogis and hermits do their rituals and their ordinary actions with the attention of only their minds and senses, often only with the physical body, in order to acquire and preserve the purity of their souls. ¹⁰ Those who have not subdued their bodies with the sleep of detachment are employed repeating their actions without ever being healed of their disease (of anxiety).

¹¹ No person is graceful whose mind is soiled with selfishness, just as no man however learned and wise is held in honor whose conduct is blemished with impoliteness and misbehaviors. ¹² He who is devoid of his selfishness and egotism, patient both in prosperity and adversity, is neither affected nor dejected whether engaged in activities or not.

¹³ O son of Pandu, know that this battlefield is the best field for your martial action, worthy of your great good, glory and ultimate happiness. ¹⁴ Though you reckon it as heinous on the one hand and unrighteous on the other, yet you must acknowledge the excellence of the occasion and the imperative of the duties required of your martial race. So do your duty and immortalize yourself. ¹⁵ Even the ignorant stick fast to the proper duties of their race. No intelligent person can neglect or set his duties at nothing. The mind devoid of vanity cannot be ashamed or dejected, even if one fails or falls in the discharge of his duty.

¹⁶ O Arjuna, do your duty with the fixed attention of your yoga on it and avoid all company. If you do your works as they come to you by yourself alone, you will never fail or be foiled in any. ¹⁷ Be as quiet as Brahman. Do your works as quietly as Brahman. Like Brahman, leave the result to Him and by doing so, assimilate yourself into the nature of Brahman. ¹⁸ Commit yourself and all your actions and intentions to God. Remain as unaltered as God himself. Know him as the soul of all and thus be the decoration of the world. ¹⁹ If you can lay down all your desires and become as even and cool

mind as a muni if you can join your soul to the yoga of contemplative renunciation (*sannyasa*). Then you can do all your actions with a mind unattached to any.

²⁰ Arjuna said, “Please Lord, explain to me fully. What is meant by the renunciation of all connections, commitment of our actions to Brahman, dedication of ourselves to God, and abdication of all concerns? ²¹ Tell me also about the acquisition of true knowledge and divisions of yoga meditation, all of which I require to know in their proper order to remove my gross ignorance on those subjects.”

²² The Lord Krishna replied:—

The learned know the true form of Brahman, of which we can form no idea or conception, but which may be known after restraining our imagination and pacifying our desires. ²³ After these, readiness of action constitutes our wisdom, and perseverance in these practices is what is called yoga. Self dedication to Brahman rests in the belief that Brahma is all this world and myself also.

²⁴ As a stone statue is hollow inside and outside, so is Brahman as empty, tranquil and transparent as the sky, which is neither to be seen by us nor is it beyond our sight. ²⁵ Then Brahman bulges out a little from itself and appears as something other than what it is. It is the reflection of the universe, but all as insubstantial as this empty void. ²⁶ What is this idea of your own ego when everything is evolved out of Supreme Consciousness? Of what account is anyone’s personality which is only an infinitesimal part of the Universal Soul?

²⁷ The ego of the individual soul is not apart from the Universal Spirit, although it seems to be separate, because there is no possibility of exclusion or separation of anything from the omnipresent and all comprehensive soul of God. Therefore, a distinct ego is meaningless. ²⁸ As is the case with our egos, so it is with the individuality of a pot or a monkey. Nothing is separate from the universal whole. All existences are like drops of water in the sea. It is absurd for anyone to presume an ego.

²⁹ Things that appear to be different to the conscious soul are to be considered as the various imageries represented in the one soul. ³⁰ Knowledge of particulars and species is lost in the idea of the general and the highest all.

Renunciation of the world means renouncing the results of our actions. ³¹ Without attachment means renouncing all our worldly desires and intensely applying the mind to the one sole God of the many varieties of the creation in His imaginary representations. ³² Dualism is the belief that one’s self-existence is distinct from that of God. Lack of dualism constitutes dedication of oneself to God. Ignorance creates distinctions by giving different names and attributes to the one Intellectual Soul.

³³ The meaning of the term “Intelligent Soul” undoubtedly is that God is one with the universe and that Consciousness is the same with all space and its contents of worlds and their motions.

³⁴ Consciousness is the unity of Eternity, and Consciousness is duality and plurality in the world, and the variety of its many varied productions. Therefore be devoted to the sole Ego of Consciousness, and drown your own individual ego in the universal Ego.

³⁵ Arjuna asked, “There being two forms of God, one transcendent of spiritual and the other transparent or material, tell me, to which of these I shall resort for my ultimate perfection?”

³⁶ Lord Krishna replied:—

Truly there are two forms of the all pervading Vishnu, the ordinary or exoteric and the other supreme or esoteric. The ordinary has a body and hands holding the conch shell, the discus, and the mace and lotus. It is the common form for public worship.³⁷ The other is the esoteric or spiritual form which is undefined and without beginning or end. It is usually expressed by the term Brahman (great).

³⁸ As long as you are unacquainted with the nature of the Supreme Soul and you are not awakened to the light of the spirit, you continue to adore the form of god with four arms.³⁹ By this means you will be awakened to light by your knowledge of the Supreme. When you come to comprehend the Infinite in yourself, then you shall no longer have to be born in any mortal form.⁴⁰ When you are acquainted with the knowledge of the knowable soul, then your soul will find its refuge in the eternal soul of Hari (Vishnu) who absorbs all souls in him.

⁴¹ When I tell you “this is I” and “I am that”, bear in mind that I mean to say “this and that is the consciousness of the Supreme Soul” which I assume to myself for your instruction.

⁴² I understand you to be enlightened to truth and to rest in the state of supreme joy. Now that you are freed from all your temporal desires, I wish you to be one with the true and Divine Spirit.⁴³ See yourself as the soul of all beings and those beings themselves. Think your own self or soul as the microcosm of the great universe, and be tolerant and broad sighted in your practice of yoga.⁴⁴ He who worships the Universal Soul that resides in all beings as the one identical and undivided spirit is released from the doom of repeated births, whether he leads a secular or holy life in this world.

⁴⁵ The meaning of the word “all” is unity and the meaning of the word “one” is the unity of the soul. The phrase “all is one” means that the whole universe is collectively only one soul.

⁴⁶ He who shines as light within the minds of all persons and dwells in the inner consciousness and perception of every being, is no other than the very soul that dwells within me also.⁴⁷ That which is settled in shape of taste in the waters all over the three worlds, what gives flavor to milk, curd and butter, what dwells as taste in salt and imparts its sweetness in sweet foods, that is this savory soul which gives a delight to our lives and a good taste to all the objects of our enjoyment.⁴⁸ Know that your soul is the capacity to perceive which is situated in the hearts of all physical beings. Its subtle rarity eludes our perception of it, and it is quite removed from all perceptible phenomena. Therefore it is omnipresent everywhere in everything.

⁴⁹ As butter is in all kinds of milk and the sap of all sappy substances is inborn in them, so the Supreme Soul is intrinsic and immanent in everything.⁵⁰ As all the gems and pearls of the sea have a luster inherent in them which shines forth both inside and outside, so the soul shines in and out of everybody without being seated in any part of it, whether inside or outside anywhere.⁵¹ As air pervades both inside and outside of all empty pots, so the spirit of God is diffused in and about all bodies in all the three worlds.⁵² As hundreds of pearls are strung together by a thread in the necklace, so the soul of God extends through and connects these millions of beings without it being known by any.

⁵³ He who dwells in the hearts of everybody in the world, from Brahma the Creator to the simples grasses that grow on the earth, the essence which is common in all of them is Brahman the unborn and undying.⁵⁴ Brahma is a slightly developed form of Brahman who resides in the spirit of the great

Brahman. The same dwelling in us makes us mistake the true Ego to be our individual ego.

⁵⁵ The Divine Soul being manifest in the form of the world, tell me what can destroy or be destroyed in it? Tell me, Arjuna, what can be subject to or involved in pleasure or pain? ⁵⁶ The Divine Soul is like a large mirror showing the images of things upon its surface, like reflections on glass. Though these reflections disappear and vanish in time, yet the mirror of the soul is never destroyed but looks as it looked before.

⁵⁷ When I say “I am this and not the other”, I am quite wrong and inconsistent with myself. Similarly it is wrong to say that the human soul is the spirit or image of God, and not that of any other being, when the identical Divine Spirit is present and immanent in all.

⁵⁸ The revolutions of creation, preservation and final dissolution take place in an unvaried and unceasing course in the spirit of God, and so are feelings on the surface of the waters of the sea. ⁵⁹ As stone is the essence of rocks, wood of trees and water of waves, so the soul is the constituent element of all existence. ⁶⁰ He who sees the soul in all substances and every substance in the soul, and who views both as the component of each another, sees the uncreated God as the reflector and reflection of Himself. ⁶¹ Arjuna, know that the soul is the integral part of everything, the constituent element of the different forms and changes of things, just as water is of waves and gold is of jewelry. ⁶² As loud, noisy waves are let loose in the waters and jewelry is made of gold, so all things exist and are composed of the spirit of God. ⁶³ All material beings of every species are forms of the great Brahman himself. Know this one as all, and there is nothing apart or distinct from him.

⁶⁴ How can there be an independent existence or any voluntary change of anything in the world? Where can they or the world be except in the essence and omnipresence of God? Then why do you think of them in vain?

⁶⁵ By knowing all that I have told you, the saints live fearlessly in this world by reflecting on the Supreme Being in themselves. They move about liberated in their lifetime with the inner calmness of their souls. ⁶⁶ Enlightened saints attain their imperishable states by being invincible to the errors of fiction without being subdued by the evils of worldly attachment. They always remain in their spiritual and holy states by being free from temporal desires and the conflicts of jarring passions, doubts and dualities.

Chapter 54 — Krishna Admonishes Arjuna: Do Your Duty with Detachment

¹ Lord Krishna continued:—

Listen moreover, O mighty armed Arjuna, to the enlightening speech which I am about to deliver to you for the sake of your lasting good and welfare.

² Know, O child of Kunti, that the perception of the senses, the feelings conveyed to our minds by the physical senses, such as those of cold and heat and the like, cause our physical pleasures and pains. But as these are transitory, coming to us and passing away by turns, you must remain patient under them. ³ Knowing neither pleasure nor pain to be uniform and monotonous, what is it that you call real pleasure or pain? A thing having no form or figure of its own can have no increase or decrease in it.

⁴ Those who have suppressed the feelings of their senses by knowing the illusory nature of sense perceptions are content to remain quiet with an even course of action their minds, both in their prosperity and adversity. They truly are the men who taste the ambrosial nectar of immortality in their mortal state. ⁵ Knowing the soul to be the same in all states, alike in all places and times, they view all differences and accidents of life with detachment. Being sure of the unreality of unrealities, they retain their endurance under all the varying circumstances of life. ⁶ Never can joy or grief take possession of the one soul which, being universal in its nature, can never be exceptional or otherwise.

⁷ The unreal has no existence. It is not positive or negative at anytime, so there can be nothing that is a positive joy or lack of joy in any place when God himself is present everywhere. ⁸ Abandon the thoughts of joy or lack of joy of the world. Seeing there is no such difference in the mind of God, stick fast in a state of indifference to both.

⁹ Though the intelligent soul and external phenomena are closely situated inside and outside the body, yet the inner soul is neither delighted nor depressed by the pleasures or pains that envelop the external body. ¹⁰ All pleasures and pains relate to the physical body. They touch the mind which is situated in it, but no bodily hurt or debility affects the soul which is seated beyond it. ¹¹ The assumption that the soul participates in the pleasures or pains that affect the gross body is caused only by error arising from our ignorance. ¹² The material is no reality. Its feelings of pain or pleasure are never real ones that touch the intangible soul. Who is so senseless as not to perceive the wide separation between soul and body?

¹³ The full understanding of what I am telling you, O descendant of Bharata, will surely destroy the error arising from ignorance. ¹⁴ As knowledge removes the error and fear arising from one's ignorance of a snake in a rope, so our misconception of the reality of our bodies and their pleasures and pains is dispelled by our knowledge of truth.

¹⁵ Know that the entire universe is identical with uncreated Brahman. It is neither produced nor dissolved by itself. Knowing this as a certain truth, believe only in Brahman as the most supreme source of the tree of all knowledge. ¹⁶ You are only a little wave in the sea of Brahman's essence. You rise and roll for a little while, then subside to rest. You foam and froth in the whirlpool of Brahman's existence, a drop of water in the endless ocean of Brahman.

¹⁷ As long as we are in action under the command of our general, we act our parts like soldiers in the field. We all live and move in Brahman alone, and there is no mistake of right or wrong in this.

¹⁸ Abandon your pride and haughtiness, your sorrow and fear, and your desire of pain or pleasure. It is bad to have any duality or doubt in you. Be good with your oneness and integrity at all times.

¹⁹ Think this about the destruction of these multitudes of forces under your arms, that all these are evolved out of Brahman and you are reducing them to Brahman himself. ²⁰ Do not care for your pleasure or pain, your gain or loss, or your victory or defeat. Rely only on the unity of Brahman. Know the world as the vast ocean of Brahman's existence.

²¹ Being alike and unchanged by your loss or gain, and thinking yourself as nobody, go on in your proper course of action, just as a gust of wind takes its own course. ²² Whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever sacrifices you make, or any gift that you give to anyone, commit them all to Brahman and remain quiet in yourself. ²³ Whoever thinks of becoming anything in earnest, he undoubtedly becomes that in process of time. Therefore, if you wish to become like Brahman himself, learn in all your thoughts and deeds to assimilate yourself to the nature of Brahman.

²⁴ Let one who knows the great Brahman be employed in doing his duties as they occur to him without any expectation or reward. As God does his works without any aim, so should the godly do their works without any object. ²⁵ He who sees the inactive God in all his active duties and sees all his works in the inactive God, that man is called the most intelligent among men. He is said to be the readiest discharger of his deeds and duties. ²⁶ Do not do your works in expectation of their rewards, or engage yourself to do anything that is not your duty or improper for you. Do your duties as your yoga of fixed meditation and not in connection with others or their rewards. ²⁷ Do not be addicted to active duties or decline your inactivity either. Never remain ignorant or negligent of your duties in life, but continue in your work with an even temper at all times.

²⁸ Though employed in business, a man is said to be doing nothing at all who does not foster the hope of a reward for his acts, and who is ever content in himself, even without a patron or refuge. ²⁹ The addiction of one's mind to anything makes it his action, and not the action itself. Ignorance causes this tendency to believe actions are one's own. Therefore ignorance is to be avoided by all means.

³⁰ A great soul settled in divine knowledge, freed from need or desire for anything, may be employed in all sorts of works without being reckoned as the doer of any. ³¹ He who does nothing is indifferent about its result. This detachment amounts to his equanimity, which leads to his endless joy, which is next to the state of Godhead. ³² Believe in the unity of the Supreme Spirit by avoiding the dirt of duality and plurality of beliefs. Whether or not you do your ceremonial acts, you will not be accounted as the doer.

³³ The learned consider a man to be wise whose acts in life are free from desire or some object of desire, and whose ceremonial acts are burned away by the fire of spiritual knowledge. ³⁴ He who remains peaceful, calm, quiet and tranquil in his soul, without any desire or greed for anything in this world, may be doing his duties here without any disturbance or anxiety in his mind. ³⁵ A man who does not argue with anyone but is always settled with calm and quiet rest of his soul, united with the Supreme Soul without ceremonial observances, and who is satisfied with whatever is obtained of itself, such a man is considered as a decoration of this earth.

³⁶ They are called ignorant hypocrites who, having repressed their organs of actions, still indulge

themselves in pleasures of the senses by recalling their memories in their minds.³⁷ He, who by the power of his wise mind has governed his outer and inner senses and employs his organs of action to perform his physical work and ceremonial acts without addiction to them, is quite different from the one described before.

³⁸ As the overflowing waters of rivers fall into the profound and motionless sea, so the souls of holy men enter into the ocean of eternal God where they are attended with a peaceful bliss never to be obtained by those who are greedy and worldly.

Chapter 55 — Krishna: The Soul is Permanent, the Body Perishes; Mind Creates Body

¹ Lord Krishna said:—

You need not abstain from your enjoyments, or hold back your mind from them, or give up their acquisition. Simply remain with an even course of action your mind and be content with what comes to you.² Never be intimately related to your body because it is not intimately related with you. Remain intimately connected with yourself, which is your uncreated and imperishable soul.³ We suffer no loss by the loss of our bodies, but we lose everything by the loss of our souls which last forever and never perish.⁴ The soul is not weakened, like the sentient mind, by loss of the objects of sense enjoyment. Constantly employed in action, yet the soul does nothing by itself.⁵ One's addiction to an action makes it his act, even though in reality he is no actor. Only ignorance incites the mind to action, and therefore this ignorance must be removed by all means.

⁶ A great minded man, acquainted with the superior knowledge of spirituality, forsakes his tendency to action and does everything that comes to him without his being the actor.⁷ Know that your soul is without beginning or end, without decay and imperishable in its nature. The ignorant think the soul perishable. You must not fall into this sad error like them.⁸ The best of men, blessed with spiritual knowledge, do not regard the soul in the same light as the ignorant vulgar who either believe soulless matter to be the soul or think themselves as incorporate, individual souls by the vanity of their individual ego.

⁹ Arjuna said, “If it is so, O Lord of worlds, then I believe that the loss of the body is attended with no loss or gain to the ignorant.”

¹⁰ Lord Krishna replied:—

So it is, O mighty armed Arjuna! They lose nothing by losing the perishable body. But the soul is imperishable and its loss is the greatest of all losses.

¹¹ I see no greater mistake of men in this world than when they say that they have lost anything or gained something that never belongs to them. It appears like the crying of a barren woman for her child which she never had, nor is expected to have at anytime.¹² It is axiomatic truth established by the learned and well known to all men of common sense, though the ignorant may not perceive it truly, that an unreality cannot come to reality, nor a reality go to nothing at anytime.

¹³ That which has spread out this perishable and frail world is imperishable. There is no one that can destroy the indestructible.¹⁴ Finite bodies are said to be the abode of the infinite soul, yet the destruction of the finite, frail body is no loss to the infinite and imperishable soul. Therefore know the difference between the two.

¹⁵ The soul is a unity without duality. There is no possibility of the soul's nonexistence. The eternal and infinite reality of the soul can never be destroyed with the destruction of the body.¹⁶ Leave aside unity and duality and take that which remains. Know the transcendental deity to be that state of tranquility situated between reality and unreality.

¹⁷ Arjuna replied, “Such being the nature of the soul, then tell me, O Lord. What causes the certainty in a man that he is dying? What makes him think that he is either going to heaven above or hell below?”

¹⁸ The Lord replied:—

Arjuna, know that within the body composed of the elements of earth, air, water, fire and ether, and also within the mind and understanding, there is a living soul dwelling.¹⁹ The embodied and living soul is led by its desire, like the young of a beast led by a rope tied around its neck, and it dwells in the recess of the body, like a bird in a cage.²⁰ Then as the body is worn out and becomes infirm over course of time, the living soul leaves it, like moisture from a dried leaf, and flies to where it is led by its inborn desire.²¹ The living soul carries with it the senses of hearing, seeing, feeling, taste, touch and smell from its body, just as the breeze blows the fragrance from flowers.²² The body is the production of one's desire. It has no other assignable cause. It weakens by the weakening of its desire and being altogether weak and wasted, it becomes extinct in its final absorption in the Godhead.

²³ A greedy man, staunch in his desires, passes through many wombs into many births, like a magician is skilled leaping up and down in earth and air.²⁴ The parting soul carries the properties of the senses from the body's sense organs, just as the flying breeze bears the fragrance of flowers in its flight through the sky.²⁵ After the soul has fled, the body becomes motionless, like the leaves and branches of trees remaining still after winds die down.²⁶ When the body becomes inactive and insensitive to wounds inflicted upon it, it is then called dead and lifeless.

²⁷ As this soul, in its form of vital air, resides in any part of the sky, it sees the same form of things manifest before it as was accustomed to desire when living.²⁸ The soul comes to find that all these forms and bodies are as unreal as those it left behind. So must you reckon all bodies after they are destroyed, unless you are so profoundly asleep as to see and know nothing.

²⁹ Brahma, the lord of creation, has created all beings according to the images that were impressed in his mind in the beginning. He sees them still, continuing and dying in the same forms.³⁰ Whatever form or body the soul finds on itself on its first and instantaneous springing to life, the same is invariably impressed in its consciousness until its last moment of death.³¹ The original desire of a man is the root of his present manliness, which becomes the cause of his future success. A man's present effort is able to correct and make up past mistakes and deficits and support him in his old age.

³² Whatever is pursued with ardent exertion and diligence, the same is gained among all other objects of one's former and future pursuit.³³ Whether a man is exposed on the barren rocks of the Vindhya Hills or blown and carried away by the winds, he is supported by his manhood. Therefore at all times, a wise man should never decline to discharge the legal duties required of him.

³⁴ Know that the heaven and hell of which you ask are the creatures of men's old prejudices. They are the productions of human wish existing only in the customary bias of the populace.

³⁵ Arjuna said, "Tell me, O Lord of the world! What cause gave rise to the prejudice of a heaven and hell?"

³⁶ The Lord replied:—

These prejudices are as false as airy dreams. They have their rise from our desires which, waxing strong by our constant habit of thinking them as true, make us believe them as such. Desires mislead us to rely upon the reality of the unreal world. Therefore for our real good, we must shun our desires.

³⁷ Ignorance is the source of our desires. Ignorance is the mainspring of our error of taking what is not-self for the true self. Knowledge of the self combined with right understanding can dispel the error of our desires.

³⁸ You are best acquainted with the self, O Arjuna! You well know the truth, therefore try to rid your error of yourself and not yourself, as this “I” and that “another.” Also rid yourself of your desires for yourself and other.

³⁹ Arjuna said, “I believe the living soul dies with the death of its desires, because the desire is the support of the soul, which must languish and droop down for want of a desire. ⁴⁰ Tell me, what is subject to future births and deaths after the living soul perishes with its body at anytime or place?”

⁴¹ The Lord replied:—

O intelligent Arjuna, know that the yearning soul has the form of desires in the heart, and any other form that one has framed for himself in his imagination. ⁴² A soul is said to be liberated in this life if it is identical with itself, unaltered in all circumstances, never subject to the body or any desire on earth, and freed from all desires by its own discretion. ⁴³ Living in this manner, you must always seek the truth. Being released from the snare of worldly cares, you are said to be liberated in this life.

⁴⁴ The soul burdened with its desires is like a bird in its cage. Though a man may be very learned and observant of all his religious rites and duties, yet he is not said to be liberated as long as he labors under his desires. ⁴⁵ The man who sees the chain of desires glimmering in the recesses of his heart and mind is like a short-sighted man who sees a glittering, colorful peacock tail in the spotless sky.

He is liberated whose mind is not bound to the chains of desires. Release from this chain is called his liberation in this life and in the next.

Chapter 56 — Krishna's Description of the Mind

¹ Lord Krishna continued:—

Arjuna, forsake your sympathy for your friends using the cold detachment that you have acquired from the abandonment of your desires and cares, and using the liberation that you have attained to in this your living state. ² Be dispassionate, O sinless Arjuna, by forsaking your fear of death and decay of the body. Be as clear in your mind as the clear sky by driving away the clouds of your cares and dispelling all your aims and attempts of either good or evil for yourself or others. ³ Discharge your duties as they come to you in the course of your life. Do well whatever is proper to be done so that no action of yours may go to waste. ⁴ Whoever in the course of his life does work that comes to him of itself, that man is called liberated in his lifetime. The discharge of such deeds belongs to the condition of living liberation.

⁵ That I will do this and not that, or accept of this one and refuse the other, are the conceits of foolishness. They are all alike to the wise. ⁶ Those who do works that occur to them with the cool calmness of their minds are said to be the living liberated. They continue in their living state as if in profound sleep. ⁷ He who has contracted the members of his body and curbed the organs of his senses from their outward objects resembles a tortoise that rests quietly by contracting its limbs within itself.

⁸ The universe resides and continues in the Universal Soul in all three times, present, past and future, just as the mind, like a master painter, draws the picture of the world on the aerial canvas. ⁹ The multicolored picture of the world, drawn by the painter of the mind in empty air, is as void as empty air, yet it appears as prominent as a figure in relief and as plain as a pike staff. ¹⁰ Though the formless world rests on the plane of emptiness, yet the wonderful error of our imagination shows it to be conspicuous to view, just as a magician shows his aerial cottage to our deluded sight. ¹¹ As there is no difference in the flat surface of the canvas which shows the swelling and depression of figures in the picture to our sight, so there is no convexity or concavity in the dead flat of the spirit which presents the uneven world to view.

¹² O lotus-eyed Arjuna, know that the picture of the world in the empty vacuum is as void as emptiness itself. It rises and sets in the mind just like temporary scenes that appear in the imagination of a mentally disturbed person. ¹³ Though it appears as real as a city in the air drawn by our imagination because of our long habit of thinking it so, this world is all hollow inside and outside.

¹⁴ Without self reflection, truth appears as false and false as true, as in a delirium. By mental analysis, truth comes to light and the error of untruth vanishes into nothing. ¹⁵ The autumn sky, appearing bright and clear to the naked eye, still has flimsy clouds. The picture drawn over the plane of the empty mind presents the figures of our fancied objects in it.

¹⁶ The baseless and unsubstantial world appearing on the outside is only a fantasy without reality. When there is nothing such as you or I or anyone in real existence, then tell me, who can destroy or be destroyed? ¹⁷ Drive away the false ideas of slayer and slain from your mind. Rest in the pure and bright sphere of the Divine Spirit. There is no movement in the intellectual sphere of God which is ever calm and quiet. All activity belongs to the mental sphere and the action of the restless mind.

¹⁸ Know that the mind contains everything in its clear sphere, such as time and space, the clear sky,

and all actions and motions and positions of things, just like a map of an area presents the sites of all places upon its surface.¹⁹ Know that the mind is more empty and rarified than empty air, and Consciousness has painted the picture of this immense universe upon this canvas of the mind.²⁰ But infinite vacuum being wholly empty, it does not have diversity or divisibility in it as they are exhibited in the mind as it creates and destroys its castles in the sky.²¹ Earthly mortals seem to be born and die every moment, just as the changeful thoughts of the all-engrossing mind are ever rising and existing in it.

²² The false thoughts of the mind, so instantaneous and temporary, have the power to stretch out ideas of length and duration of the world, as they have of producing a new idea of all things from nothing.

²³ Moreover, the mind has power to prolong a moment into a kalpa age, as it does of enlarging a minute speck into a mountain and of increasing a little to a multitude.²⁴ It also has the power to produce a thing from nothing, and of converting one to another in a trice. This capacity gives rise to the false conception of the world, just like it is the nature of the mind to create castles in the air and fairylands in a moment.²⁵ Likewise, the mind has brought this wonderful world into existence, which arose in the twinkling of an eye, as a reflection and not a creation of the mind.²⁶ All these are only ideal forms and shadowy shapes of imagination, though they appear hard and solid as a diamond. They are the mistaken ideas of some unknown form and substance.

²⁷ Whether you desire or dislike your worldly interests, whether you have concern or indifference for the world, show me. Where is its solidity? The mind itself being located in the intellect of the divine contriver, the picture of the world cannot be located anywhere else.

²⁸ O how very wonderfully bright is this prominent picture, drawn without base or coating, so conspicuous before us in various pieces without any paint or color with which it is made.²⁹ O how pleasant is this transparent picture of the world, and how very attractive to our sight. It was drawn on the inky coating of chaotic darkness and exhibited to the full blaze of various lights.³⁰ It is decorated with diverse colors and filled with various objects of our desire in all its different parts. It exhibits many shows pleasant to sight and presents all things to view of which we have notions in our minds.

³¹ It presents many planets and stars before us, shining all about with their different shapes and spheres. The blue dome of heaven resembles a blue lake brightened with the shining sun, moon and stars like blooming lotuses.³² There are multicolored clouds, hanging like many colored leaves of trees on the blue sky, appearing like pictures of men, gods and demons, drawn over the domes of the three regions (earth, heaven and hell).

³³ The unsteady and playful painter that is the mind has sketched and stretched out the picture of the sky as a theater to exhibit the three worlds as its three different stages, where all deluded peoples are portrayed as joyful players, acting their parts under the encircling light of Supreme Consciousness.

³⁴ Here is an actress with her calm body of golden color, her thick braids of hair, and her eyes glancing on the people with flashes of sunshine and moonbeams. The rising ground is her back and her feet reach the infernal regions. Clothed with the robe of the scriptures, she acts the plays of morality, opulence and the farce of enjoyments.³⁵ The gods Brahma, Indra, Hari and Hara form her four arms of action. The property of goodness is her bodice, and the two virtues of discretion and apathy are her prominent breasts. The earth resting on the head of Adisesha, the serpent of the underworld, is her

lotus-like footstool held up by its stalk. Her face and forehead are decorated with the paints of mineral mountains whose valleys and caves form her belly and bowels.³⁶ The fleeting glances of her eyes dispel the gloom of night, and the twinkling of stars are like the erection of hairs on her body. The two rows of her teeth emit the rays of flashing lightning, and all earthly beings are like the hairs on her body, rising like piles about the bulb of a kadamba flower.

³⁷ This earth is filled with living souls that exist in the spacious vacuum of the Universal Soul, appearing like figures painted in it. This skillful artist of the mind has displayed this illusive actress of the universe to show her various features as in a puppet show.

Chapter 57 — Krishna on the Abandonment of Desire and Result of Tranquility

¹ Lord Krishna said:—

Look here, O Arjuna! The great wonder about this subject is that the picture appears before the canvas upon which it is drawn. ² The painting is prominent, but the basis on which it exists does not appear. This is all as wonderful as a block of stone that floats on water or a gourd which sinks, as in a magic play. ³ The universe resting in the emptiness of the Divine Spirit appears like a picture on the tablet of the mind. Say then, how does this ego, the self knowledge of your substantiality, arise from the bosom of the empty nothingness?

⁴ All these are the vacant production of emptiness, so they are equally swallowed up in the empty womb of an infinite emptiness. They are no more than hallow shadows of emptiness stretched out in empty air. ⁵ This empty air is covered with the snare of our desires, stretching as wide as the sphere of these outstretched worlds. The band of our desire encircles the worlds as their great belt. ⁶ The world is situated in Brahman like a reflection in a mirror. It is not subject to partition or obliteration because it is identical with the receptacle in which it exists. ⁷ The nature of Brahman as a permanent emptiness is inseparable from his essence. No one could ever be able to divide empty air in half or remove it from its place.

⁸ Your ignorance of this has made you accustomed to your desires, so although you are filled with every virtue, it is hard for you to get rid of your desires. ⁹ He who has planted the smallest seed of desire in the soul of his heart, though he may be very wise and learned in all things, is confined like a lion in the cage. ¹⁰ Desire which has become a habit grows as rank as a thick wood in his breast unless its seed is burnt away by the knowledge of truth so it cannot sprout anymore. ¹¹ When the seed of desire has been burned, the mind is no longer inclined to anything and one remains untouched by pleasure and pain, like a lotus leaf in water.

¹² Now therefore, O Arjuna, remain calm and quiet in your spirit. Be brave and devoid of all desire in your mind. Melt down the mist of your mental delusion by the heat of your tapas without desire. From all that you have learned from my holy lecture to you, remain in perfect tranquility with your reliance in the Supreme Spirit.

Chapter 58 — Arjuna Understands Krishna's Words

¹ Arjuna said, "Lord! It is by your kindness that I am freed from my delusion and have regained my memory of who I am. Now I am placed above all doubts and I will act as you have said."

² Lord Krishna replied—

Your soul has attained its tranquility and the purity of its nature when you find the feelings and faculties of your heart and mind are fully pacified through your knowledge.³ In this state, the soul becomes unconscious of all mental thoughts. It is full of consciousness in itself. Freed from all inner and outer perceptions, it perceives the one Brahman in itself who is all and everywhere.

⁴ No worldly being can observe this elevated state of the soul, just as nobody can see a bird that has fled from the earth into the upper sky.⁵ A pure soul devoid of desire becomes full of consciousness and spiritual light. It cannot be perceived by even the most foresighted observer.⁶ Unless one has purified his desires, one cannot perceive this transcendental and transparent state of the soul. It is a state as imperceptible to the impure as the smallest particle of an atom is imperceptible to the naked eye.⁷ Attainment of this state drives away knowledge of all objects that can be sensed, such as pots, plates, and other phenomena. What is there so desirable that it is worth having more than the Divine Presence?

⁸ As frost and ice melt when a volcanic mountain erupts, so our ignorance melts away at our knowledge of the conscious soul.⁹ What are these mean desires that we have which blow away like the dust of the earth? What are our possessions and enjoyments but traps for our souls?¹⁰ As long as our ignorance displays herself in her various shapes, we remain ignorant of the pure and modest nature of our inner souls.¹¹ In the inner soul, all outward appearances fade away and appear in their transparent forms. The soul grasps the whole in itself, just as emptiness contains the fullness of all in it.¹² That which shows all forms in it, without having any form of itself, is that transcendent substance which is beyond description and transcends our comprehension of it.

¹³ Now get rid of the poisonous and colic pain of your desire for gain and the permanence of your own existence. Utter inwardly to yourself the mantra of your renunciation of whatever can be desired, and thus prosper in the world without fear for anything.

¹⁴ Vasishta said:—

After the Lord of the three worlds had spoken these words, Arjuna remained before him silent for a moment. Then like a bee sitting beside a blue lotus, Arjuna uttered the following words to the dark bodied Krishna.¹⁵ Arjuna said, "Lord! Your words have dispelled all grief from my heart. The light of truth is rising in my mind like the sun rising to awaken the closed and sleeping lotus."

¹⁶ Vasishta said:—

After saying this, Arjuna being cleared of all his doubts grasped his Gandiva bow and rose with Hari (Krishna) for his charioteer in order to proceed to his warlike exploits.¹⁷ He will transform the face of the earth into a sea of blood flowing out of the bodies of combatants. He will wound their charioteers and horses and elephants. The flights of his arrows and thickening darts will hide the sun in the sky and darken the face of the earth with flying dust.

Chapter 59 — Knowledge of the Latent and Inscrutable Soul

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Keep this lesson in mind, O Rama! Know it as the purifier of all sins. Remain in your renunciation of all attachments and resign yourself to God. ² Know the Supreme Soul in which all things reside, from which everything has issued, and which is everything itself on all sides of us. It is changed through all and is ever the same in itself. ³ It seems to be far away but it is nearest to us. It appears everywhere always situated in everything. It is by that essence that you live and it undoubtedly is what you are.

⁴ Know that the thinking principle, consciousness itself, is the highest state, above whatever can be known by the mind. It is knowledge and intelligence by itself, beyond our thoughts and what we can think about. ⁵ It is the highest consciousness and that supreme joy which surpasses the majesty of majesties and is the most honored of the honored. ⁶ This thing is the soul and its consciousness. Emptiness is the immensity of the supreme Brahman. It is the supreme good which is joy and tranquility. It is full of knowledge and omniscience, the highest of all states.

⁷ The soul abides in the intellect. It has the form of consciousness of all things, feeling and perceiving everything. It exists of itself. ⁸ It is the soul of the universe, like oil in the sesame seed. It is the central core of the tree of the world, the light and life of all animal beings. ⁹ It is the thread that connects all beings like pearls in a necklace suspended on the breast of empty air. It is the flavor of all things, like the pungency of pepper. ¹⁰ It is the essence of all substance, the truth that is the most excellent of all the truths of truths. It is the goodness of whatever is good and the greatest good in itself.

¹¹ By its omniscience, the soul becomes the all that is present in its knowledge and which we take by our misjudgment for real entities in this world. ¹² We are the soul, but we mistake ourselves to be in the world. All these mistaken entities vanish away before the light of reason. ¹³ The emptiness of Brahman, the space occupied by Divine Spirit, is without beginning or end and cannot be comprehended within the limited space of our souls. Knowing this for certain, the wise are employed in their outward duties.

¹⁴ That man is free from ups and downs who always rests in the calm tranquility of his soul, whose mind is never elated or dejected at any event, but always retains the evenness of its course. ¹⁵ He whose mind is as vacant as empty air is called a great soul (*mahatma*). His mind resting in the state of unity remains with the body in a state of sound sleep. ¹⁶ An ideal man with a great soul who preserves the evenness of his mind remains as undisturbed under the pressures of his duties as a reflection in a mirror. They are both the same, being only shadows of reality. ¹⁷ He who retains the impression in his mind like images in a mirror, in their even and unvaried state, is himself a reflection in Divine Consciousness. ¹⁸ So let a man discharge the customary duties of life as they occur to him, with a pure transparent mind, as all the creatures of God perform their various parts like images imprinted in Divine Consciousness.

¹⁹ There is no unity or duality in Divine Consciousness. The application of the words “I” and “you” to one or the other really refers to the same, as they have come to be used from the instruction of our elders.

²⁰ Consciousness which of itself is tranquil in itself, acts its wonders in itself. It is the pulsation of

consciousness that displays the universe as its development, and this pulsation is the omnipotence of God.²¹ If the pulsation of Divine Consciousness stops, the course of the universe ceases. As it is with Supreme Consciousness, so it is with its parts of individual consciousness whose action and inaction spread out and limit the sphere of their thoughts.

²² What is called individual consciousness or its action is a non-entity in nature. The subtle body of Consciousness is a mere emptiness.²³ The world appears as something by our thinking of it as such. It vanishes when we cease to think of it as something objective, disappearing like figures in a picture burnt to ashes.²⁴ The world appears as one with the deity only to one who sees unity in himself. Only the vibration of the intellect causes the revolution of worlds like the turning of a potter's wheel.²⁵ As the measure, shape and form of a gold ornament are not different from the gold, so the action of the intellect is not separate from the world. Intellect forms the world, just as gold becomes the ornament. The world and intellect are the same thing, just as the ornament and its gold.²⁶ Not knowing that the mind is the pulsation of intellect is what frames a separate world, just as ignorance of the gold makes an ornament appear as something else.²⁷ The mind is wholly absorbed in intellect, so pure intellect is all that is.

As we come to understand the nature of one's self or soul, there is an end of worldly enjoyments.²⁸ Disregard of enjoyments is an education of the highest wisdom, therefore no kind of enjoyment is acceptable to the wise.²⁹ Know that another indication of wisdom is that no man who has eaten his fill ever has a craving for any bad food (sensual pleasure) that is offered to him.³⁰ Another sign of wisdom is our natural aversion to craving enjoyments. He knows that the vibrations of his intellect creates the sense of one's perception of all pleasures.³¹ A wise man is one who has this good habit deeply rooted in his mind. An intelligent man refrains from enjoying whatever is enjoyable in this world.

³² Whoever pursues his perfection in order to be admired by others may as well strike the air with a stick or beat the bush searching for perfection because it requires sincerity of purpose to be successful in anything.³³ Sometimes people emaciate and torture the body in order to have a full view of the inner soul.

³⁴ As long as the unconscious spirit flutters in its unsteadiness and goes on wandering from one object to another, the light of understanding do not rise or shine within.³⁵ But as soon as the light of tranquil consciousness appears in its brightness within the inner soul, the fluttering of the unsteady spirit is put to flight, like the flickering of a lamp after it is extinguished.³⁶ There is no such thing as vibration or suspension of the tranquil spirit because the quiescent soul neither moves forward nor backward. It has no motion in any direction.

³⁷ The soul that is neither unconscious of itself nor has any vibration in it, is said to be calm and quiet. As the soul remains indifferent to vibrations and gains its forms of pure transparency, it is no more liable to its bondage in life nor seeks to know its liberation to set it free from rebirth.³⁸ The soul that is settled in Supreme Soul has no fear of bondage or need of its liberation. Consciousness being without its reasoning, or having no object to dwell upon, becomes unconscious both of its existence as well as extinction.³⁹ He that is full with the spirit of God in himself is equally ignorant of his bondage and his liberation. The desire of being liberated indicates a lack of self-sufficiency and perfection.

⁴⁰ “Let me have my equanimity and not my liberation.” This desire is also a bondage in itself. Unconsciousness of equanimity and liberation is reckoned as our chief good. The supreme state is pure consciousness without a shadow.

⁴¹ The restoration of consciousness to its proper form consists in divesting it of all that it cannot perceive. Phenomena are only vibrations of the great Consciousness. ⁴² Only that which is seen and destructible in its nature is subject to bondage and liberation. The invisible soul, which can take the name of ego, is indestructible and has no position or form or figure of itself. ⁴³ We know not what there is to be brought under or loosened from bondage by anyone. It is not the pure desire which the wise form for themselves, and it does not affect the body.

⁴⁴ Therefore, the wise practice the restraint of their breath in order to restrain their desires and actions. Being devoid of these, they become pure Consciousness. ⁴⁵ These being suppressed, the idea of the world is lost in the density of Consciousness because the thoughts of the mind are caused only by the vibration of Consciousness. ⁴⁶ This is the realization of the truth. The world is born of the vibrations of Consciousness. The world vanishes being destroyed by the knowledge of the light of splendid Divine Consciousness. ⁴⁷ There remains nothing, no action of the body or mind, only the vibration of Consciousness. The phenomenal world is nothing but a protracted dream from one sight to another. The learned are not deluded by these appearances which they know to be exhibitions of their own minds.

⁴⁸ Know within yourself in your meditation that hidden soul which gives rise to our consciousness of the essences of things appearing constantly before us. All these fantasies of our brain dissolve in that hidden soul like dirt in the water. All our perceptions and conceptions of the passing world are flowing in a perpetual stream within the soul.

Chapter 60 — The Majesty and Grandeur of God

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Such is the first great truth concerning Divine Consciousness that contains the gigantic forms of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva.² Through the greatness of God, all people in their own separate worlds are as flashy as great princes, ever exulting in their power to float and traverse in the regions of open air.³ By dwelling in the spirit of God, earth born mortals are as happy as the inhabitants of heaven.

⁴ Yes, they live in Him who have found him. They who have taken their refuge under the shade of the Supreme Spirit are not to be restrained by anybody.⁵ He who meditates for a moment on the universal essence of all becomes liberated in an instant and lives as a liberal minded sage, a muni on earth. He does what are his duties in this world and never grieves in discharging them.

⁶ Rama said, “Sage, how is it possible to meditate on the Universal Soul in all things when one has buried his mind, understanding, ego and self in the unity of God? How can the soul be viewed in plurality when all things have been absorbed in the unity?”

⁷ Vasishta replied:—

The God that dwells in all bodies, moves them to their actions, receives their food and drink in himself, produces all things, and annihilates them at last, is of course unknowable to our consciousness.⁸ This indwelling principle in everything without beginning or end and inherent in the nature of all is called the common essence of all because it constitutes the *tattwa* identity (essential nature) of everything in the world.

⁹ It dwells as emptiness in the vacuum and as the property of loudness in sound. It is situated as feeling in whatever is felt and as texture in the objects of touch.¹⁰ It is the taste of all that can be tasted by the tongue. It is the light of all objects that can be seen and the vision of the organs of seeing.

¹¹ It is the sense of smell in the act of smelling and the odor in all odorous substances. It is the plumpness of the body and the solidity and stability of the earth.¹² It is the fluidity of liquids and the breezes of the air. It is the flame and flash of fire and the thinking of the understanding.¹³ It is the thinking principle of the thoughtful mind and the ego of our egoism. It is the consciousness of the conscious soul and it is the conscious heart.¹⁴ It is the power of growth in vegetables and perspective in all pictures and paintings. It is the capacity of all pots and vessels and the tallness of stately trees.

¹⁵ It is the immobility of inert object and the mobility of movable bodies. It is the dull unconsciousness of stones and blocks, and the intelligence of intelligent beings.¹⁶ It is the immortality and Godhead of the immortal gods and the humanity of human beings. It is the curvedness of crooked beasts and the supine proneness of crawling and creeping insects.¹⁷ It is the current of the course of time and the revolution and aspects of the seasons. It is the passing of fleeting moments and the endless duration of eternity.¹⁸ It is the whiteness of whatever is white and the blackness of all that is black. It is activity in all actions and it is stern fixity in the doings of destiny.

¹⁹ The Supreme Spirit is quiescent in all that is calm, and lasting and fleeting in whatever is passing and perishing. He shows his productiveness in the production of things.²⁰ He is the childhood of children and the youth of young men. He shows himself as fading in the decay and decline of beings and as his extinction in their death and death.²¹ Thus the all pervading soul is not apart from anything,

as the waves and froths of the foaming sea are no way distinct from its body of waters.

²² These many forms of things are all unrealities. They are taken for true in our ignorance of the unity which multiplies itself in our imagination, just as children create and produce false apparitions from their unsound understandings.

²³ “It is I,” says the Lord, “who am situated everywhere, and it is I who pervades the whole and fills it with all varieties at pleasure.” Know therefore, O high minded Rama, that all these varieties are only creatures of imagination in the mind of God, and from there are reflected into the mirror of our minds. Know this rest in the calm tranquility of your soul, and enjoy the undisturbed solace and happiness of your high mind.

²⁴ Valmiki said:—

As the sage was saying these things, the day passed away under its evening shade, the sun sank down in its evening devotion, and the assembly broke with mutual salutations to the performance of their evening ablutions, until they reassembled on the next morning.

Chapter 61 — Description of the World as a Passing Dream

¹ Rama said, “O sage, without doubt we are a dream-drawn house, the body of the lotus-born Brahma, the first progenitor. ² If this world is a non-entity (*asat*), we must know our existence to be the same non-entity. Then how is it possible that we have acquired such a firm faith in the reality (*sat*) of this dream?”

³ Vasishta responded:—

We are shining here as a created being by the previous birth of Brahma, but in fact, the reflection of soul shines forever as nothing else. ⁴ Owing to the omnipresence of consciousness, all beings exist as reality everywhere, and if consciousness rises from unreal knowledge, consciousness as real knowledge destroys the unreal one. ⁵ Therefore whatever comes from these five elements is only transitory, but owing to the firm belief of ego, we enjoy a firm faith that it is real.

⁶ In a dream, we see a good many things as reality, but as soon the dream is over, we do not find the things we had dreamed of. As long we remain in ignorance, we see the reality of the world in the same way. ⁷ O Rama, the dreaming man thinks his dream is reality because he has faith in it. In the same way, this world appears as reality to the supreme God who has no beginning or end. ⁸ That which is created by a dreaming man is said to be his own, just as we can say that what is in the seed is in the fruit. ⁹ Whatever comes from non-entity is to be called non-entity. Though the unreal can be workable, it is not reasonable to think that what is unreal is good.

¹⁰ As the thinking result of unreality is to be given up, so the firm faith which arises in the dreaming man that the dream is real must also be given up. ¹¹ Whatever the soul creates in a dream is our firm belief, but that remains only for a short time. ¹² Brahman’s long drawn dream is this world, hence we also think this world is long drawn, but in fact, this world is a moment to Brahman.

¹³ Consciousness is the creator of all elements. She creates everything according to her model, hence creator and creation are one and the same. ¹⁴ As the backward and forward whirling motion of water makes a deep swell, and as a fairy appears in a dream, so all these nothings are in reality. ¹⁵ This entity with its change is nothing. In whatever manner we look at an object, it will appear in the same manner. ¹⁶ The rule of the false dream is not to reproduce because the production is not in the world, but owing to ignorance, it appears so.

¹⁷ In the three worlds we see wonderful objects, such as undersea fire burning in the water. ¹⁸ A good many cities exist in emptiness, and birds and stars remain in the sky. We find a lotus in stone, like trees growing without earth. ¹⁹ One country gives every kind of object to the seeker, like a wish-fulfilling tree that gives all objects to the seeker. We see a stone or rows of jewels like fruit from a fruitful tree. ²⁰ Life like frogs exists within a stone. A moonstone gives water. ²¹ In a dream, many things are made and unmade within a minute, all of which, in fact, are as unreal as one’s death in a dream. ²² The natural water of the elements is suspended in the sky (cloud) when the heavenly Mandakini River remains in emptiness. ²³ A heavy stone or a winged mountain flies in the air. Everything can be obtained through a stone when everything can be secured from the philosopher’s stone. ²⁴ In Indra’s garden of bliss, every desired object can be obtained, but when one is liberated, such kind of desire for objects is lacking. ²⁵ Even dull matter acts like a machine, hence every object

acts like wonderful false magic.²⁶ By magical art we see even impossible objects such as two moons, headless trunks (*kavandhas*), mantras, drugs, and *pisacha* ghosts. All these are the works of wonderful false magic and are, in fact, nothing.

²⁷ We see the impossible as real and possible. Impossibility becomes real only because of our false ideas. ²⁸ Though it appears as real, a false dream is in fact unreal. There is nothing which is unreal and there is nothing which is real. ²⁹ So all worldly beings see this dream of creation as real, just as a dreamer takes his dream as a reality. ³⁰ By passing from one error to another error, from one dream to another, a firm faith in the reality of the dream comes out. ³¹ As a stray deer repeatedly falls into a pit for green grass, so ignorant man repeatedly falls into the pit of this world owing to his ignorance.

Chapter 62 — The Mendicant's Idle Thought: the Story of the Hundred Rudras

¹ Vasishta resumed:—

Rama, let me tell you the story of a certain mendicant who fostered some desire in his mind and wandered through many migrations of his soul.

² At one time, there lived a great mendicant who devoted his life to holy meditation and passed his days observing the rules of his mendicancy. ³ In the intensity of his samadhi, his mind was cleansed of all its desires and became assimilated in the object of its meditation, just as seawater changes in the form of waves.

⁴ Once he was sitting on his seat after finishing his meditation, about to discharge some sacred function of his order, when a thought chanced to pass over his clear mind. ⁵ He looked into the reflection of the thought that arose in his mind of itself: that for his pleasure, he should reflect upon the various conditions of common people and the different modes of their life. ⁶ With this thought, his mind passed from reflecting upon himself and his God to that of another person. He lost the calm composure of his mind, just like when the quiet sea is disturbed by a whirlpool.

⁷ He thought to become an ideal man and in an instant, he became the imagined person, Jivata by name. ⁸ Jivata, the ideal man, wandered about like a dreaming person through the walks of an imaginary city which he had raised in himself, just like a sleeping man dreams and builds houses in the sky. ⁹ Jivata drank his fill at pleasure, just like a giddy bee sips honey from lotus flowers. He became plump and hearty with his sports and enjoyed sound sleep from his lack of cares.

¹⁰ In his dream, Jivata saw himself in the form of a brahmin who was pleased with his studies and the discharge of his religious duties. As he thought of this within himself, he was transformed to that same state, just as in the space of a thought, a man transplants himself from one place to another. ¹¹ One day the good brahmin, who was observant of his daily rituals, fell asleep into a deep trance. He dreamt he was doing the duties of the day, just as a seed hidden in a shell inwardly performs its act of vegetation. ¹² In his dream, the same brahmin saw himself changed to a chieftain who ate and drank and slept as any other man in general.

¹³ The chief, in his own dream, thought himself to be a king who ruled over the earth extending to the horizon surrounded by all kinds of enjoyments, just as a vine is studded with flowers. ¹⁴ Once as this king felt himself at ease, he fell into a sound sleep free from all cares. He saw the future consequences of his actions, as effects are attached to a cause and as flowers issue from a tree. ¹⁵ He saw his soul assuming the form of a heavenly maid, just as a plant produces its flowers and fruit.

¹⁶ As this heavenly maid was lulled to sleep by her weariness and fatigue, she saw herself turn into a deer, as the calm ocean finds itself disturbed by whirling currents and waves. ¹⁷ This frightened fawn with unsteady eyes fell into a sound sleep and saw herself transformed into a creeping plant. ¹⁸ The crooked beasts of the field and the creeping plants of forest also have their sleep and dreams of their own nature. Their dreams are caused by what they saw and heard and felt in their waking states.

¹⁹ This vine came to be beautified with fruits, flowers and leaves forming a covered shelter for the seat of the floral goddess of the woods. ²⁰ Hidden in the vine's heart were its wishes, in the same manner as a seed conceals the would be tree. At last the vine, in its inner consciousness, saw itself

full of frailty and failings.²¹ It had remained long in its sleep and rest, but being disgusted with its drowsy dullness, the vine thought of being the fluttering bee that was its constant guest. Immediately it found itself changed to a fluttering bee.

²² The bee flew at pleasure over the tender and blossoming vines in the forest, landing on the petals of blooming lotuses like a fond lover courting his mistresses.²³ It wandered about the blossoms, blooming like brightening pearls in the air, and drank the flowers' nectar-like juice like a lover sipping nectar from his beloved's red lips.²⁴ The bee became captivated by the lotus of the lake and sat silent upon its thorny stalk on the water. For such is the fondness of fools, even for what is painful to them.²⁵ The lake was often infested by elephants who tore and trampled over the lotus beds, because the base take pleasure destroying God's fair works.²⁶ The fond bee meets the fate of its fondled lotus and was crushed under the tusk of the elephant like rice is ground by teeth.²⁷ The little bee, seeing the big body and might of the elephant, took a fancy of being such. By imagining himself as so, he was instantly converted to the elephant of his imagination.

²⁸ At last the elephant fell into a pit, deep and dry as the dried bed of a bay, just as a man falls into the profound and empty ocean of this world overcast by an impenetrable darkness.²⁹ The elephant became a favorite of the prince for defeating his enemies' armies, and he routed about at random with his giddy might like lawless robbers wandering about at night.³⁰ Afterwards, the elephant fell under the sword of the enemy, his body pierced all over by their deadly arrows, as the haughty egoism of the living body drops down in the soul under the wound of right reason.³¹ The dying elephant, having been accustomed to see swarms of bees fluttering over elephants' trunks sipping the ichor exuding from them, long had cherished the desire of becoming a bee. So now he came to be a bee in reality.

³² The bee rambled at large among the flowery vines of the forest and again rested among the lotus beds of the lake, because it is hard for fools to get rid of their fond desires, though they are attended with danger and peril.³³ At last the playful bee was trampled down and crashed under the feet of an elephant, and, by its long association with one in the lake, became a goose.³⁴ The goose passed through many lives until it became gander sporting with the geese in the lake.

³⁵ It came to pass that the gander fostered the idea of being the swan that serves as the vehicle of Brahma, just as the yolk of an egg fosters a feathered fowl.³⁶ As it was fostering this strong desire in itself, the gander grew old and diseased, like a piece of wood eaten by worms. Then as he died with his consciousness of being Brahma's bird, in his next birth he was born as the great swan of that god.

³⁷ The swan lived in the company of the wise and became enlightened from the views of worldly beings. He continued for ages in his disembodied liberation, caring for nothing in the future.

Chapter 63 — Dream of Jivata: the Hundred Rudras

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Once, this bird that played beside the lotus seat of Brahma went to the city of Rudra (Shiva) with his god on his back. There he saw the god Rudra face to face.² Seeing Rudra, the swan thought himself to be so. The figure of the god was immediately impressed upon his mind, like the reflection of an outer object in a mirror.³ Being full of Rudra in himself, he left his bird body, just as a flower's fragrance leaves its petals, mixes with the breeze, and flies in the open air.⁴ He passed his time happily at that place, in the company of his attendants and the various different classes of Rudra's dependent divinities.

⁵ This Rudra, being full of the best knowledge of divinity and spirituality, looked back into his understanding and the past accounts of his prior lives that were almost countless.⁶ Having clear vision and clairvoyance, he was astonished to see the naked truth that appeared to him like sights in a dream, which he recounted to himself as follows.

Jivata, as Rudra, speaking:—

⁷ O, how wonderful is this illusion stretched all about us. Illusion's magic wand fascinates the world. It exhibits the tangible untruth as positive truth, just as sunbeams spreading over the sterile sands of the dreary desert present the appearance of clear water.

⁸ I well remember my primary state of pure consciousness, its conversion into the state of the mind, and how it was changed from its supremacy and omniscience to the bondage of the limited body.⁹ By its own desire the living soul assumed a material body to itself, formed and fashioned agreeably to its fancy, like a picture drawn in a painting. It became a mendicant in one of its prior births when it was unattached to the objects exposed to view all around.¹⁰ The same mendicant sat in meditation by controlling the actions of his body and began to reflect on outer objects with great pleasure in his mind.¹¹ He buried all his former thoughts in oblivion and thought only of the object that he was employed to reflect upon. This thought so engrossed and worked upon his mind that it prevented the rise of any other thought.¹² The phenomenon that appears in the mind also offers itself to view. As the brown of fading autumn supersedes the spring green of leaves and plants, so the man coming to his maturity forgets the helpless state of his boyhood and is thoughtless of his approaching decay and decline.

¹³ Thus by his fallible and unsteady desire, the mendicant became the brahmin Jivata, making him wander from one body to another, like little ants entering the holes of houses and things.¹⁴ Being reverential towards brahmins in his mind, he became the wished for person in his own body. Reality and unreality have the power of mutually displacing one another according to the greater influence of either.

¹⁵ The brahmin next became a chief because of his strong preference for that, just as a tree becomes fruitful by continuously absorbing moisture from the earth.¹⁶ Being desirous of dispensing justice and discharging all legal affairs, the chief wished for royalty and had his wishes fulfilled by this becoming a king. But as the king was over fond of his courtesans, he was transformed into a heavenly nymph that he prized in his heart above all.¹⁷ But because the celestial dame prized the trembling

sight of a frightened deer above her own heavenly form and station, she soon changed into a deer in the woods, destined to graze as a miserable beast for her foolish choice.

¹⁸ The deer was very fond of browsing tender grass and leaves. At last it became the same creeping plant that had crept into the opening of her craving mind. ¹⁹ The creeper, being long accustomed to dote on the bee that used to be in its company, found in its consciousness to be that insect after the destruction of its own form. ²⁰ Though well aware of being crushed under the elephant, together with the lotus flower in which it lived, yet the vine was foolish to take the form of the bee for its pleasure of wandering about the world. ²¹ Being thus led into a hundred different forms, I have at last become Rudra. It is all because of the capriciousness of my erratic mind in this changing world.

²² Thus have I wandered through the many different paths of life in this wilderness of the world. I have roamed in many aerial regions as if I were treading on solid, substantial ground. ²³ In one of my many births I was named Jivata. In another I became a great and respectable brahmin. I became quite another person again, and then found myself as a ruler and lord of the earth. ²⁴ I had been a drake living in lotus plants and an elephant in the valleys of the Vindhya Hills. Then I assumed the body of a stag, fleet in my limbs.

²⁵ After I first deviated from my state of godliness, I was still settled in the state of a devotee with devotion to divine knowledge, practicing the rites befitting my position. ²⁶ In this state I passed many years and ages. Many a day, night, season and century glided on imperceptibly. ²⁷ But I deviated again and again from my habitual course, often subjected to new births and forms, until at last I was changed to Brahma's vehicle of the swan by virtue of my former good conduct and company.

²⁸ The firmly established habits of a living beings must come out unobstructed, though they may be held back in many intermediate births, even for a millennium. Yet they must come and lay hold of the person some time or another. ²⁹ It is only by accident that one has the blessing of some good company in his life. Then his inborn habit may be restrained for a time, but in the end it is sure to break out with violence in utter defiance of every check and rule.

³⁰ But he who keeps only good society and always strives for his edification in what is good and great is able to destroy the evil propensities that are inbred in him, because the desire to be good is what actually makes one so. ³¹ Whatever a man is accustomed to do or think upon constantly, in this life or in the next state of his being, the same appears as a reality to him in his waking state of daydream, just as unreality appears as real in the dream of a man in sleep. ³² Thoughts that employ our minds appoint our bodies to do their wished for works. These works have some temporary good and evil also. Therefore it is better to restrain and repress these tumultuous thoughts rather than cherish them for our pleasure or pain.

³³ Only the thought in our minds makes us take our bodies for ourselves. Thoughts stretch wide this world of unrealities, like an enclosed seed sprouts forth and spreads itself into a bush. ³⁴ The world is only the visible form of a visible thought and nothing more in reality, a fantasy and illusion of our sight. ³⁵ The illusive appearance of the world presents itself to our sight like the many colors of the sky. Therefore, by ignoring of it, we may wipe those impressions off from our minds. ³⁶ It is an unreal appearance displayed by the Supreme Essence as a real existence only for his pleasure. It cannot do any harm to anybody.

³⁷ I rise and look into all these varieties in nature for the sake of my pleasure and curiosity. I have the true light of reason in me, whereby I discern the one unity quite apart from all varieties.

Vasishta speaking:—

³⁸ After all this reasoning, the incarnate Rudra returned to his former state and reflected on the condition of the mendicant, whose body was now lying like a dead corpse on the barren ground. ³⁹ He awakened the mendicant and raised his prostrate body by infusing his consciousness into it. Then the resuscitated monk came to understand that all his wanderings were only hallucinations of his mind.

⁴⁰ The mendicant found himself to be the same with Rudra standing in his presence, as also with the bygone ones that he recollects in his memory. He was astonished to think how he could be one and so many, though it is no wonder to the intelligent who well know that one man acts many parts in life.

⁴¹ Afterwards both Rudra and the mendicant got up from their seats and proceeded to the home of Jivata situated in a corner of the intellectual sphere. ⁴² They passed over many continents, islands, provinces and districts until they arrived at Jivata's home where they found him lying down with a sword in hand. ⁴³ They saw Jivata lying asleep and unconscious as a dead body. Rudra put aside his bright celestial form in order to enter into the earthly abode of the deceased. ⁴⁴ They brought him back to life and intelligence by imparting to him portion of their spirit and intellect. Thus this one soul exhibited the triple forms of Rudra, Jivata and the mendicant. ⁴⁵ With all their intelligence, they remained ignorant of one another. They marveled to look on each other in mute astonishment, as if they were the figures in painting.

⁴⁶ Then the three went together in their aerial course to the air-built home of the brahmin who had erected his baseless fabric in empty air and which resounded with empty sounds all around. ⁴⁷ They passed through many aerial regions and barren and populous tracts of air until at last they found the brahmin's heavenly residence. ⁴⁸ They saw him sleeping in his house surrounded by the members of his family, his wife's arms around his neck as if unwilling to part with her deceased husband. ⁴⁹ They awakened his drowsy intelligence by means of their own intelligence, just as a waking man raises his own sleeping soul by means of his own awareness.

⁵⁰ From there they went on in their pleasant journey to the kingdoms of the chief and the king mentioned before. These were situated in the bright regions of their intellectual sphere, illuminated by the brightness of their intellect. ⁵¹ Having arrived at that region and that very place, they observed the haughty chief lying on his lotus-like bed. ⁵² He lay with his gold colored body in the company of his golden colored bed-partners like a honey sucking bee lying inside the embrace of a lotus flower's petals. ⁵³ His mistresses hung about him like the tender stalks and tufts of flowers hanging on a tree, surrounded by a belt of lit lamps, as when a golden plate is studded by a circle of brilliant gems. ⁵⁴ They awakened him by infusing their own spirit and intelligence into his body and mind, then they sat together marveling at each other, as an identical man with so many forms.

⁵⁵ Next they went to the palace of the king. After awakening him with their intelligence, they all wandered about the different parts of the world. ⁵⁶ At last they came to the swan of Brahma. Being all transformed into that form in their minds, they all became the one Rudra personality in a hundred persons. ⁵⁷ Thus the one consciousness is represented in different forms and shapes according to the

various inclinations of their minds, like so many figures in a painting. Such is the divine unity represented as different personalities, according to the various tendencies of individual minds.

⁵⁸ There were a hundred Rudras, a hundred forms of the uncovered consciousness. They are acquainted with the truths of all things in the world and the secrets of all hearts. ⁵⁹ There are a hundred and some hundreds of Rudras who are known as very great beings in the world. Among them, only eleven are situated in so many worlds. ⁶⁰ All living beings who are not awakened to reason are ignorant of the identity of each another. They view them in different and not in the same light. They are not farsighted to see any world other than the one that is the closest to them. ⁶¹ Wise men see the minds of others and all things arising in their minds, like waves in the sea. Unenlightened minds remain dormant in themselves, like inert blocks of stone.

⁶² As the waves mix with themselves because of water's fluidity, so the minds of wise unite with one another by the solubility of their understandings, like elastic fluids and liquids. ⁶³ Among all the multitudes of living beings that are presented to our sight in this world, we find the one unchanging element of Consciousness to be diffused in all of them, making unreal appear as real. ⁶⁴ This real but invisible Divine Consciousness remains forever. All the unreal but visible appearances disappear into nothing. An empty space remains after a thing is removed from its place, or a hole is dug in the ground.

⁶⁵ You can conceive of the idea of existence and the five-fold elemental principles in nature. So you can also comprehend the notion of the omnipresence of Divine Consciousness which underlies the elemental principles. ⁶⁶ You see various statues and images carved in stone and wood and set in the hollows of rocks and trees. So also you should be able to see all these figures in the hollow space of the universe, situated in the identical Consciousness of the Omnipresent Deity. ⁶⁷ In the pure Consciousness of the unknown and invisible Deity, the knowledge of the known and visible world resembles the ever-changing, uncaused and unconscious shapes in the sky, the causeless substratum of everlasting and all pervading emptiness.

⁶⁸ Knowledge of phenomena is the bondage of the soul. Ignoring phenomena leads to its liberation. Therefore do as you like; either towards this or that. ⁶⁹ Knowledge and ignorance of the world are the causes of the bondage and liberation of the soul. These also produce the reincarnation and final emancipation of the animal spirit. By your indifference to them, you can avoid both. Therefore do as you may best choose for yourself.

⁷⁰ What disappears is not worth seeking or being sorry for its loss. That which is gained of itself in our calm and quiet without any anxiety or diligence on our part is truly reckoned to be our best gain.

⁷¹ That which exists only in our perception is not true knowledge but mere fallacy. True knowledge is that of the subjective consciousness, to which one must always be aware. ⁷² As a wave is an agitation of water, so this creation is only a vibration of the Divine Consciousness. The only difference between them is that one is the production of the elements in nature and the other is that of the Divine Will.

⁷³ The surging of waves occurs in conjunction with existing elements at certain spots and times, but the production of the world is wholly without the junction of elemental bodies, which were not in existence at its creation. ⁷⁴ The shining worlds shine with the light of Divine Consciousness in which

they are situated. They are thoughts in its consciousness. It transcends the power of speech to define what it is, and yet it is expressed in the Vedas in the words that, “It is the Supreme Soul and perfect joy” (*Shiva Paramatma*).

⁷⁵ Thus the world is the form of consciousness in Divine Consciousness and they are not different from one another, just as words can never be separated from their meanings. It is said that the world is the vibration of the Divine Spirit. Only the ignorant say the wave and water are two different things.

Chapter 64 — The Attendants of God Rudra; How One Soul Becomes Many

¹ Rama said, “Tell me sage. What became of the many forms that the mendicant saw in his dream? Did the different forms of Jivata, the brahmin, the swan and others return to themselves, or did they forever remain as Rudras?”

² Vasishta replied:—

They all remained with Rudra as parts and compositions of himself. Being enlightened by him, they wandered all about the world and rested content with themselves.³ With Rudra, they all saw the magic scenes displayed before them until at last they were dismissed from his company to return to their own states and places.

⁴ Rudra said, “Go you now to your own places, and there enjoy your fill with your family. Return to me after some time having completed the course of your enjoyments and sufferings in the world.⁵ Then you will become parts of me and remain as my attendants to grace my residence until at last we all return to the supreme at the end of time and be absorbed in the last ultimate state of all.”

⁶ Vasishta said:—

So saying, Lord Rudra vanished from their sight and mixed with the Rudras who viewed all worlds in their enlightened intellects.⁷ Jivata and the others returned to their respective homes where they had to share in their domestic joys in the company of their families for their allotted times.⁸ Then, having wasted and shuffled off their mortal coils at the end of their limited periods, they will be promoted to the rank of Rudras in heaven and they will appear as shining stars in the firmament.

⁹ Rama replied, “All those forms of Jivata and others are only creations of the empty imagination of the mendicant. I cannot understand how they could be beings as there is no substance in imaginary things.”

¹⁰ Vasishta replied:—

The truth of imagination lies partly in our consciousness and partly in our representation of the image. An image giving a false shape to anything is as untrue as any nothingness in nature. But what we are conscious of must be true, because our consciousness comprehends everything in it.¹¹ Thus, all that is seen in dream and shown to us by imagination is impressed in our consciousness at all times and forever.

¹² A man traveling from one country to another, and again to some other place, has no knowledge of the distance of his journey unless he is conscious of its length and duration in space and time. So without our consciousness of it in our sleeping state, we are ignorant of the duration of our dream and our passing from one dream to another.¹³ Therefore our consciousness contains all things that are represented to it by the intellect. It is from our reasoning that we have knowledge of everything, because the intellect is full of knowledge and pervades everywhere.¹⁴ Imagination, desire and dream are one and same thing. One produces the other and all are lodged in the intellect. Their objects are obtained by our intense application to them. Desire produces imagination which is the cause of dream. They are phenomena of mind and their objects are the results of deep meditation.

¹⁵ Nothing is to be had without its practice and meditation of it. Men of enlightened minds gain the

objects only through their yoga and meditation of them.¹⁶ These adepts view the objects of their pursuit in all places, such as the god Shiva and other master yogis.

Such was my aim and attempt also, but it was not attended with success.¹⁷ I was unsuccessful because of my lack of fixed resolve, failing in both because attending to both sides. [Vasishta may be referring to something *Shivabalayogi* often related, that even Vasishta, who sat in tapas for many centuries, was unsuccessful so long as he thought his individual ego was God (*aham brahmasya*). TLP.] Only the firm resolution in one point gives a person success in any undertaking.¹⁸ One going in a southerly direction cannot arrive at his house in the north. Such is the case with pursuers and what they pursue, which they well know to be unattainable without their firm determination on it.¹⁹ Whoever resolves to gain his desired object must fix his view on that object. The mind fixed on the object brings it into effect.

²⁰ So the mendicant having Rudra as the sole object in his view became assimilated into the very form of his wish. Because whoever is intent on one object must remove all duality from himself.²¹ The other imaginary forms of the mendicant were all different persons in their different spheres. They had obtained their different forms according to their respective desires from one state to another.²² They did not know or look on one another, but they all had their thoughts fixed on Rudra alone. Because those who are awakened to their spiritual knowledge have their sight fixed on their final liberation, while unenlightened mortals are subjected to repeated births because of their repeated wishes.

²³ It was according to the will of Rudra that he took this one form and many others upon himself, such as he wills to become a *vidyadhara* demigod in one place and a *pundit* scholar in another.

²⁴ This story of Rudra serves as an example of the efficacy of intense thought and practice. All men may become one or another or many more, whether learned or ignorant, according to their thoughts and conduct.²⁵ One may have his manhood and his godhead by courageous and godlike actions at different times and places. Being both at the same time requires much greater ability and energy of the mind and the body.

²⁶ The living soul, being one with the Divine, has all the powers of the Divine implanted in it. The Infinite being grafted in the finite, they are of the same innate nature.²⁷ The living soul expands and contracts in its life and death, just as the Divine Soul has its evolution and involution in its acts of creation and dissolution. But the Divine Soul destroys no soul because it is the soul of souls and the collection of all souls. Therefore anyone who would be godly must refrain from slaughter.

²⁸ Yogis and yoginis continue to discharge their sacred rites, as enjoined by law and usage, and either remain in this world or freely wander about in others at large.²⁹ A yogi may be seen in different forms at once, both in this world and in the next, according to the merit of his actions, just as the great yogi and warrior King Kartavirya Arjuna became the terror of the world as if he were everywhere while he remained quite at home.³⁰ So also does the god Vishnu appear in human forms on earth while he sleeps at ease in the Milky Ocean. The yoginis of heaven hover over animal sacrifices on earth while they reside in their groups in the ethereal sphere.³¹ Indra also appears on earth to receive the offerings of men while he is sitting in his heavenly seat on high, and Narayana takes the forms of a thousand Ramas upon him in his conflict with multitudes of rakshasa demon legions.³² So did one Krishna become a hundred to receive the obeisance of his reverential princes. He appears as a

thousand in the company of many thousands of monarchs in the Kuru assembly.³³ God becomes incarnate in many forms, with parts and particles of his own spirit for the preservation of the world. The one Lord became many in a moment in the company of his mistresses.

³⁴ In this manner did the forms of Jivata and others, which were the creatures of the mendicant's imagination, retire at the command of Rudra to their own particular homes and respective desires.

³⁵ There they enjoyed all their delights for a long time until they entered the home of Rudra where they became the demigod's attendants and remained in his retinue for a great length of time.³⁶ They remained in the company of Rudra, dwelling in the Nandana gardens of evergreen and ever blossoming kalpa vines of paradise, blooming with clusters of shining small flowers, wandering at pleasure to different worlds and to the celestial city of Shiva on Mount Kailash, playing in the company of heavenly nymphs and bearing the crowns of immortality on their heads.

Chapter 65 — Rama's Wonder at the Error of Men

¹ Vasishta continued:—

As the mendicant saw this transient scene of error in his mind, so is the case with all living beings. They look on their past lives and actions apart from themselves and in the persons of other men.² The past lives, actions and deaths of all reflective souls are as deeply imprinted in them as any thought is preserved in the retentive mind and empty intellect.³ Distant and separate things are mingled together in the present sphere of one's soul, and all persons appear as distinct figures in the dream.⁴ The human soul, though it is a form of the divine, but being enclosed in its frail and mortal body, is doomed to misery until its final liberation from birth and body.

Thus I have related to you the fate of all living souls in the example and tale of the mendicant monk.

⁵ O Rama, know now that the souls of all of us are like that of the mendicant. They are vibrated and moved by the impulse of the Supreme Spirit, yet they are fallible in their nature, falling from error to error in every moment.⁶ As a stone falling from a rock falls lower and lower to the ground, so the living soul, once fallen from its height of Supreme Spirit, descends lower and lower to the lowest pit.

⁷ Now it sees one dream and then passes from it to another, and thus rolling forever in its dreaming sleep, it never finds any substantiality whatsoever.

⁸ The soul, hidden under the illusion of errors, sometimes happens to come to the light of truth, either by the guidance of same good instructor or by the light of its own intuition. Then it is released from the wrong notion of its personality in the body and comes to the true knowledge of itself.

⁹ Rama said, “O! the impenetrable gloom of error that spreads over the human soul causes it to believe in the mist of its errors, just as a sleeping man enjoys the scenery of his dreams.¹⁰ The gloom of error is shrouded by the thick darkness of the night of false knowledge and falls into the pit of illusion which spreads over the world.¹¹ O! the remarkable error of taking a thing as our own which in reality belongs to nobody but the lord and master of all.”

¹² “It is necessary for you, sage, to explain to me, from where does this error arise? How could the mendicant, with his share of good and right understanding, fall into error? Tell me also, you who knows all, whether he is still living?”

¹³ Vasishta replied:—

I will explore the regions of the three worlds in my samadhi meditation tonight and tell you tomorrow morning whether the mendicant is living or not, and where he may be at present.

¹⁴ Valmiki said:—

As the sage was speaking in this manner, the royal garrison sounded the trumpet of the departing day with the beating of drums. The sound filled the sky with the loud roar of doomsday flood clouds.¹⁵ Princes and citizens assembled in the court and threw handfuls of flowers at the sage's feet, just like trees dropping their flowers in the ground, blown by a fragrant breeze.¹⁶ They also honored the other great sages. All rose from their respective seats and the assembly broke afterwards with mutual salutations to one another.

¹⁷ All the residents of earth and air went to their respective homes with the setting sun and discharged

their duties of the departing day in obedience to the ordinances of the scriptures.¹⁸ They all performed their services as prescribed in their ceremonial observances, in which they placed their strong faith and veneration.¹⁹ All the mortals and celestials who formed Vasishta's audience now began to reflect on the sage's lecture. The night passed as short as a moment with some, and as long as an age with others.

²⁰ As the morning rose with the returning duties of men, and employed all beings of heaven and earth to discharge their morning services, the court reopened to receive the audience who assembled there with mutual greetings and salutations to their superiors.

Chapter 66 — The Mendicant's Wanderings; Multiple Births with Similar Forms and Personalities

¹ Valmiki related:—

After the sages Vasista and Vishwamitra had taken their seats in the court hall, groups of celestials and aerial spiritual masters entered, together with the monarch of earth and the chiefs of men.² Then Rama and Lakshman came into the court with their companions. They shone like a clear lake of lotus beds unshaken by the gentle breeze, glistening by the bright light of moonbeams.

³ The chief of sages opened his mouth without anyone asking him. He did not wait for anyone to ask because wise men are always kind hearted, ready to communicate their knowledge to others of their own accord.

⁴ Vasista said:—

O Rama who is the moon in the sphere of Raghu's family, last night after a long time I came to see the mendicant with the all seeing eye of my intellectual vision.⁵ I thought in my mind and wandered wide and afar to find out where that man was. I traversed all continents and islands, passing over all hills and mountains on earth.⁶ I had my head running upon the search, but could not find anywhere a mendicant of that description. Because it is impossible to find in the outer world the fictions of our air-built castles.

⁷ Then at the last watch of the night, I ran in my mind and passed over the regions on the north like fleet winds fly over ocean waves.⁸ There I saw the extensive and populous country of Jina, lying beyond the utmost boundaries of Valmika, where there is a beautiful city called Vihara by its inhabitants.⁹ There a mendicant named Dirghadrusa (foresighted) lived whose hair was silver with age and who continues meditation confined in his lovely cottage.¹⁰ He is used to sitting in meditation for three weeks at a time, keeping the door of his cell locked for fear of being disturbed by outsiders' intrusion.¹¹ In this way, even his dependents are kept outside while he is absorbed in meditation.¹² He passed his three weeks sitting in deep, secluded meditation, which in his mind was a thousand years.

¹³ In olden times, there had been a mendicant of his kind, as I have already related to you. This is the second living instance of that sort. We know not where and when a third or another like this may be found to exist.

¹⁴ I was long in quest, like a bee in search of flowers, to find such another in the womb of this lotus-like earth, with all possible inquiry on my part.¹⁵ I passed beyond the limit of the present world and pierced through the mist of future creations. There I met with what I sought, the resemblance of the present mendicant.¹⁶ As I looked into the world lying in the womb of the future, deposited in the mental world of Brahma, I met with a third one resembling Brahma in his conduct.

¹⁷ Passing through many worlds, one after another, I saw many things in various futures which are not in the present world.¹⁸ There I saw sages who are now sitting in this assembly, and many more brahmins who are of the nature of these who are present here, but also different from them.¹⁹ There will be this Narada with his present course of life, but also differing from this Narada. Likewise there

will be many others with their various modes of life.²⁰ This Vyasa and this Suka, and these Saunaka, Pulaha and Krutu, will reappear in future creations with the same natures and characters.²¹ The same Agastya, Pulastya, Bhrigu and Angirasa, all of them and all others, will again come into existence with their very same forms and character traits.²² They will be born and reborn sooner or later so long as they are subject to this delusion of regeneration and resuscitation. They will retain their similar births and modes of life, like all others to be reborn in this or in the future world.

²³ The souls of men revolve repeatedly in the world, like waves rolling forever in the waters of the sea. Some souls retain their same forms, while others very nearly so in their reappearance.²⁴ Some are slightly altered in their figures, and others are entirely different in their forms, never regaining their original likeness. So does this prevailing error of regeneration delude even the wise to repeated births.

²⁵ So what is the meaning of the mendicant's long meditation of twenty days and nights when a moment's thought and the results of bodily actions produce endless births and transformations?²⁶ And where is the reality of these forms that are mere conceptions of the mind? These ideas and reflections, growing ripe with repetition, appear as full blown flowers to sight. They resemble the water lily in the morning, beset by the busy murmur of humming bees.²⁷ Gross form is produced from pure thought, just as a large burning fire is lit by a minute spark or a sunbeam. Such is the formation of the whole fabric of the world.

²⁸ All things are manifest as particles of divine reflection, and each particle exhibits a variety of parts. These neither exist nor are nothing at all, but they all exist in the universal, which is the cause of all causes and the source of all sources.

Chapter 67 — The Unity of God; Religious Differences Are Divisive

¹ Dasharata said, “O great sage, let my attendants go immediately to the mendicant’s cell and, having roused him from his meditation, bring him here in my presence.”

² Vasishta replied:—

Great king, the body of that mendicant is now lying lifeless on the ground. It is pale, cold, covered with dirt, and has not even a bit of its vitality left in it.³ His life has fled from his body, like odor from the lotus of the lake. He is now liberated from the bonds of this life and is no more subject to the cares of this world.⁴ It has been a whole month that his servants have waited to open his door and they will see his emaciated frame.⁵ Afterwards they will take out the body and bathe it in water, then having anointed it, they will place it for their adoration, as they do a defiled idol.⁶ The mendicant being freed from his body cannot be brought back to his senses. They have entirely left their functions in his mortal frame.

⁷ As long as one labors under the darkness of his ignorance, it is hard to evade the enchanting delusion of the world, but it is easily avoided at all times by one’s knowledge of truth.⁸ The fabrication of the world is untrue, just like making ornaments from gold. Creation is caused by the error of taking form as substance.

⁹ This delusion (*maya*) of the world is situated in the Supreme Soul like rows of waves upon the surface of the calm waters of the sea. So it is said in the Vedas that the moving worlds are like the fluctuations of the Divine Soul.¹⁰ The intelligent soul, taking the form of the individual human soul, sees the phenomenal world just like he sees dreams one after another. All these vanish upon waking to sense and right reason.¹¹ As every man of understanding recognizes the original in its image, so the man of reason recognizes the original idea of the Soul in its forms of creation. An ignorant man who sees the world as a thorny bush or a confused jungle can have no idea of the all-designing Framer and his frame work of the universe.

¹² The world is shown to every living being, as it was shown to the dreaming mendicant, in the form of the vibrations of the Supreme Spirit, like the fluctuation of waves on the surface of the sea.¹³ The world first appears in the universal, collective mind of the creator Brahma, and in the same way those shadowy forms appear in the minds of all individuals who lack enlightenment.¹⁴ To the clear mind this world appears like a fleeting dream, as it first appeared to Brahma. The multitudes of worlds that are discovered one after the other are no more than the successive scenes of passing dreams in the continuous sleep of ignorance.

¹⁵ All living beings in their various forms are subject to the error of believing the unreal world to be a reality, though they well know in their being that the world is no better than a continuous dream or delusion.¹⁶ The animal soul, though possessed of intelligence, is yet liable to transgress from its original nature, thereby becoming subject to decay, disease, death and all kinds of woe.¹⁷ The godlike intellect, at its pleasure, frames the celestial and infernal regions in our dreams by the slight vibrations of the mind, then takes delight in rambling over and dwelling in them.¹⁸ Divine Consciousness by its own impulse takes the form of living souls upon itself. It wanders from itself to ransack over the false objects of the deceptive senses.

¹⁹ The mind is also the Supreme Soul. If it is not so then it is nothing. The living embodied is also the Supreme Soul, an expression of the Supreme Soul like a shadow of the substance. ²⁰ So the Supreme Brahman is said to reside in the universal Brahman according to how men conceive of the one Brahman in whom all attributes unite, like water with water and sky with air. ²¹ Men live in this apparent physical form of Brahman, yet they think it is other than a reflection of God. It is like a child seeing his own reflection in a mirror and being startled thinking that another person is standing there.

²² Wavering understanding causes these differences which disappear of themselves after the mind resumes its steadiness in the unity of God. In that steadiness, differences are lost like offerings of butter are consumed in sacred fire. ²³ After the true knowledge of God is gained, there is no more vacillation or dogmatism, no unity or duality. All distinctions dissolve in an indistinct Consciousness, which is as it is and is all in all. ²⁴ When from the sum and substance of all reasoning it is understood that there is only the one Consciousness, which is the subject of all the many names that are applied to it, then there remains no more differences of the various religious faiths in the world. ²⁵ Differences of faith create differences in men. Eliminating distinctions in creeds destroys all differences and unites all in one common faith in the Supreme Being.

²⁶ Rama, you see differences because of your lack of understanding. You will get rid of them as you come to your right understanding. Ask anyone and you will find the truth of what I am saying and you will be fearless of any sectarian feeling or hatred. ²⁷ In that state of fearlessness, the knower of Brahman finds no difference in the states of waking, dreaming, sound sleep or the fourth stage of meditation. He sees no difference in his earthly bondage or his liberation from it. All is equal to him.

²⁸ Tranquility is another name of the universe. God has given his peace to everything in the world, therefore all religious divisions are the false creations of ignorance. No religious advocate has ever seen the invisible God.

²⁹ The action of the heart and the motion of vital air cannot move the contented mind to action when the mind is devoid of desire, indifferent to the vibrations of breath and the heart. ³⁰ The intellect freed from ideas of unity or duality, rid of its anxious cares and desires, has approached a state that is next to that of God. ³¹ The pure desire that exists in consciousness, like a stain on the moon, is no impurity but the solidification of condensed consciousness.

³² Rama, remain always in the state of your collected intellect because it concentrates everything in itself, and leaves nothing beyond it. This is the most faultless, perfect form of faith. ³³ The moon-like consciousness, having the mark of no desire on it, is a vessel of ambrosia. A drink of that ambrosia drowns the thoughts of all that is and all that is not into oblivion. ³⁴ Refer your thoughts of whatever you have or want to the region of your intellect. Taste your inner delight as much as you like. ³⁵ Rama, know that the words vibration and inaction, desire and no desire, and such other spiritual or theological terms, only serve to burden and misled the mind to error. Keep yourself from thinking on these. Remain in your peace and quiet, whether you attain your perfection or otherwise.

Chapter 68 — Four Types of Silence (*Mouna*), the State of Sleep-Silence

¹ Vasishta said:—

Rama, remain as inwardly quiet as in your silent sleep. Keep the thinking of your mind at a distance. Get rid of the wanderings of your imagination and remain firm in the state of Brahman.

² Rama said, “I know what is meant by restraint of speech, quietness of the sense organs, and the muteness of a block of wood. But tell me. What is sleep-like silence, which you know well by your practice?”

³ Vasishta replied:—

The sages of old (*munis*) describe two kinds of practices of silence (*mouna*). The one silence is that of the rigid ascetic, like a wooden statue of a saint. The other is the silence observed by those who are liberated in their lifetime.⁴ The wood-like devotee is the austere ascetic who does not meditate in his mind, but is firmly employed in the discharge of the rigorous rites of religion. He practices painful restraints of his bodily organs and remains speechless like a wooden statue.⁵ The other kind is the living, liberated yogi who looks at the world with unconcern, who delights in his meditation of the soul, and who passes as any ordinary man without any distinctive mark of religious order or secular rank.⁶ The difference between these two kinds of saintly and holy men is in the fixedness of their minds and the calmness of their souls, and is what passes under the title of silence and saintliness.

⁷ Thus silent sages describe four kinds of silence (*mouna*): silence in speech, silence of the sense organs, wood-like speechlessness (violent restraint), and the silence that is like one’s sleep.⁸ Silence in speech consists of keeping one’s mouth and lips closed. Silence of the senses implies keeping the organs of sense under strict control. Rigorous muteness means the abandonment of all actions, and sleepy silence is as silent as the grave.⁹ There is a fifth kind of dead-like silence which occurs in the austere ascetic in his state of unconsciousness, in the profound meditation of the tranquil yogi in samadhi, and in the mental abstraction of the living liberated.¹⁰ All the first three states of silence occur in the devotee who practices austerities. The fourth, the sleep-like silence, is the only silence that is conducive to attaining living liberation.

¹¹ Though speechlessness is called silence, yet it is not a complete restraint of speech. The mute tongue may brood evil thoughts in the mind which lead to the bondage of men.¹² An austere devotee practices restraint without being mindful of his own egoism, or seeing phenomena, or listening to others’ speech. Seeing nothing beside him, he sees all in himself, like living fire covered under ashes.

¹³ The mind being busy in these first three states of silence, but freely indulging in its fancies and reveries, makes silent sages (*munis*) in appearance only, but none like this understands the nature of God.¹⁴ None of these has any of that blessed divine knowledge which is so very desirable to all mankind. I state freely that they do not know God, be they angry with me or not as they may.

¹⁵ The inactive, meditative silent sage who is liberated from all bonds and cares in his lifetime is never to be born in any shape in this world. It is interesting to know more about them, as I will tell you.¹⁶ He does not need to restrain his breathing or vital airs, nor does he need the triple restraint of his speech. He does not rejoice at prosperity, nor is he depressed in adversity, but preserves his equanimity and the evenness of his senses at all times.¹⁷ His mind is under the guidance of his reason,

neither excited by nor restrained from its fancies. His mind is neither restless nor dormant. It exists as much as it does not exist.¹⁸ His attention is neither divided nor dammed but fixed in the infinite and eternal one. His unconfined mind thinks and reasons about the nature of things. Such a one is said to be the sleeping silent sage.

¹⁹ The sleeping silent sage knows the world as it is. He is not led to error by its deluding varieties. He scans everything as it is without being led to skepticism.²⁰ The sleeping silent sage places his faith and trust on the one endless and ever blissful Shiva as the collection of all knowledge and the display of this universe.²¹ The sleeping silent sage sees emptiness as fullness and views this all as nothing. His mind is even and tranquil.²² The best state of silence is in he who views the universe as neither reality nor unreality, but as an empty vacuum without foundation, but full of peace and divine wisdom.

²³ The mind that is unconscious of effects and is unconscious of the different states of prosperity and adversity is said to rest in its highest state of rest and quiet.²⁴ The source of unimpaired restraint is perfect equanimity of the mind and evenness of temper that is not liable to change or fluctuation, with a clear conscience and unflinching self-consciousness.²⁵ The real source of silence is the consciousness that "I am nothing, nor is there anything besides" and that the mind and its thoughts are not reality.²⁶ The state of sleepy silence means knowledge that the Ego pervades this universe and the Ego's essence is displayed equally in all things, which is the meaning of the expression, "The one that is."

²⁷ Now, if Consciousness constitutes all and everything, how can you conceive your distinction from others who are moved by the same power that dwells alike in all? This knowledge is called everlasting sleep and forms the groundwork of every kind of silence.²⁸ This is the silence of profound sleep. Because it is an endless sleep in the ever wakeful God, this sleep is like being awake. Know this as the fourth stage of yoga, or rather, the stage that is above it.²⁹ This profound trance is called the fourth state of entranced meditation. The tranquility which is above this state may be had in one's waking state.³⁰ He who is situated in his fourth stage of yoga has a clear conscience and quiet peace attending on him. The adept who is established in this state may or may not meditate, and may be embodied or without body.

³¹ Yes, O Rama, desire to be settled in this state! Know that neither I nor you nor any other person is any real being in this world. The world exists only as a reflection of our minds, and therefore the wise man should only rely upon the heart of empty consciousness which comprehends all things in it.

Chapter 69 — Samkhya & Jnana Yoga; Mind (Desires) and Vital Breath Linked

¹ Rama said, “Tell me, O chief of sages, how was it that the Rudras came to be a hundred in number? Are the attendants of Rudra also Rudras?”

² Vasishta replied:—

The mendicant saw himself in a hundred forms in a hundred dreams which he dreamt one after another. This I told you before, although not in detail.³ All the forms that he saw in the dream became so many Rudras, and all these hundred Rudras remained as so many attendants on the principal Rudra.

⁴ Rama asked, “But how could the one mind of the mendicant be divided into a hundred in so many bodies of the Rudras? Was it undivided like a lamp that lights a hundred lamps without any diminution of its own light?”

⁵ Vasishta answered:—

Know Rama, that disembodied or spiritual beings of pure natures, because of the liquid-like nature of their souls, are capable of assuming any form they fancy.⁶ The soul, being omnipresent and all pervading, takes any form whatever upon itself, whenever and wherever it likes, by virtue of its consciousness.

⁷ Rama replied, “But tell me sage, why does Lord Shiva wear a string of human skulls about his neck and smear his body with ashes, stark naked? Why does he dwell in funeral grounds, lustful in the greatest degree?”

⁸ Vasishta replied:—

Gods and perfect beings such as the spiritual masters are not tied down by laws which weak and ignorant men have devised for their own convenience.⁹ The ignorant, on account of their uncontrollable minds, cannot go on without the guidance of law. Otherwise they are subject to every danger and fear, like poor fishes.¹⁰ Intelligent people are not exposed to the evils in life that ignorant people of ungoverned minds and passions experience with their restless and vagrant habits.¹¹ Wise men discharge their business as it occurs to them at times. They never undertake to do anything of their own desire. Therefore they are exposed to no danger.

¹² The god Vishnu engaged himself in action and incarnated because of an impulse of the occasion. So did the god Shiva with the three eyes, as well as the lotus-born god Brahma.¹³ The acts of wise men are neither to be praised nor blamed because they are never done from private or public motives.

¹⁴ As light and heat are the natural properties of fire and sunshine, so the actions of Shiva and other gods are ordained from the beginning, like the caste customs of the twice born, three higher *dvija* castes.

¹⁵ Though the nature of all mankind is the same, as ordained in the beginning, yet the ignorant have created differences among themselves by instituting distinctions among castes and customs. Their institutions are of their own making, so they are subjected by them to the evils of future retribution and reincarnation.

¹⁶ Rama, so far I have told you about the four types of silence of embodied beings, but I have not spoken about the nature of the silence of disembodied souls.¹⁷ Now hear how men obtain this chief

good by knowledge of the intellectual souls in the clear sphere of their own consciousness, which is far clearer than the ethereal sphere of the sky.

¹⁸ Men became renowned as Samkhya yogis or categorical philosophers through their knowledge of all kinds of knowledge and by constant devotion to meditation, and by the study of the numerical philosophy of particulars in the Samkhya system. ¹⁹ Yogis pursuing the path of knowledge are those who meditate on the form of the eternal one without decay by suppressing their breath and union with that state which presents itself to their mind. ²⁰ Some obtain the unpretentious and undisguised state of joy and tranquility, desired as the most desirable thing by all, through Samkhya yoga, others through jnana yoga. ²¹ The result of both forms of yoga is the same. This is known to anybody who has experienced it because the state arrived at by the one is the same as that of the other.

²² In this supreme state, the actions of the mental faculties and vital breath are altogether imperceptible, and the network of desires is entirely dispersed. ²³ Desire constitutes the mind, which again is the cause of creation. Therefore by destroying desires and mind, one becomes motionless and inactive.

²⁴ The mind forgets its inner soul, never bothering to look at it even for a moment. It is solely occupied with its body and looks at the phantom of the body like a child sees at a ghost. ²⁵ The mind itself is a false apparition and an unsubstantial appearance of our mistake. The mind can show itself in dream as dying, which is found to be false upon waking. ²⁶ The world is the production of the mind. What am I and who is mine or my children? Custom and education have caused the imaginary demons of our bondage and liberation, which in reality are nothing.

²⁷ There is one thing, however, on which both systems are based. That is the suppression of breath and the restriction of mind, which form the sum and substance of what they call their liberation.

²⁸ Rama replied, "Now sage, if suppression constitutes the liberation of these men, then I may as well say that all dead men are liberated, and all dead animals also."

²⁹ Vasishta replied:—

Of the three practices of the restriction of the breath, body and mind, I believe the repression of the mind and its thoughts to be the best because it is easily practiced. I will tell you how it is to be done for our good.

³⁰ When the vital breath of a soul quits its mortal frame, it perceives the same in itself and flies in the shape of a particle into the open sky, mixing at last with ethereal air. ³¹ The parting soul is accompanied by its elementary principles, which are the desires of its mind and which are closely united with breath, and nothing besides. ³² As the vital breath quits one body to enter into another, so it carries with it the desires of the heart, just as the winds of the air bear the fragrance of flowers. These reproduce in the future body to cause it only misery. ³³ As a water pot thrown into the sea does not lose its water, so the vital breath mixing with the ethereal air does not lose the desires of the mind which it bears with it. They are as closely united as sunbeams with the sun. ³⁴ The mind cannot be separated from the vital breath without the aid of the knowledge, just as a titteri bird cannot be removed from one nest without its mate.

³⁵ Knowledge removes desires. Disappearance of desires destroys the mind. This produces the

suppression of breath, and from that proceeds the tranquility of the soul.³⁶ Knowledge shows us the unreality of things and the vanity of human desires.

O Rama, hence know that the extinction of desires brings on the destruction of both the mind and vital breath.³⁷ The mind without its desires, which form its soul and life, can no longer see the body in which it took so much delight. Then the tranquil soul attains its holiest state.³⁸ Mind is another name for desire. When desire is eradicated, the soul discriminates the truth which leads to knowledge of the supreme.³⁹ In this manner, O Rama, we came to the end of our false knowledge of the world, just like we use reason to detect the error of seeing a snake instead of a rope.⁴⁰ Learn this one lesson: that restraining the mind and suppression of breath mean the one and same thing. If you succeed in restraining one, you succeed in restraining the other.⁴¹ When the waving of the palm-leaf fan is stopped, the movement of air in the room is stopped. In the same way, when breathing vital breath is stopped, thoughts are stopped.

⁴² When the body is destroyed, the vital breath passes into empty air where it sees everything according to the desires that have blown along with it from the cells of the heart and mind.⁴³ As living souls find the bodies in which they are embodied and act according to their different natures, so the departed and disembodied spirits see many forms presented before them according to their desires. They enter into those forms and act agreeably to the nature of that being.⁴⁴ As the fragrance of flowers ceases to be diffused in the air when the breezes have ceased to blow, so the vital breath ceases to breathe when the action of the mind is at a stop.⁴⁵ Hence the course of the thoughts and the respiration of all animals are known to be closely united with one another, just as fragrance is inseparable from the flower, and oil inseparable from oily seeds.

⁴⁶ Breath is the vacillation of the mind, just as the mind is the fluctuation of the breath. These two go together forever, like the chariot and its driver.⁴⁷ Without any one, the two perish together, just as the container and the contained are both lost at the loss of either. Therefore it is better to lose them for the liberation of the soul than to lose the soul for the sake of the body.⁴⁸ Keeping only one object or unity in view will stop the course of the mind. The mind being stopped, then as a matter of course, an utter suppression of the breath follows.

⁴⁹ Investigate well into the truth of the immortality of your soul. Try to assimilate yourself into the eternal spirit of God. Having absorbed your mind in the Divine Mind, be one with it.⁵⁰ Distinguish between your knowledge and ignorance. Lay hold of what is more suitable for you. Settle yourself on what remains after both mind and vital breath disappear. Live while you live relying on Consciousness alone.⁵¹ Continue to meditate on the existence of all things in one firm and ever existent entity alone, until by your constant habit of thinking so, you find all outward existence disappear into nonexistence.

⁵² The minds of the abstinent, their bodies and their vitality, for lack of food and enjoyments, are unconscious to worldly pleasures. There remains only the consciousness of the transcendent One.

⁵³ When the mind is of one even course and habituated to it by constant practice, then there is an end to the thoughts of endless varieties and particulars. They naturally disappear of themselves.⁵⁴ There is an end of our ignorance and delusion as we gain wisdom and reason. We gain our best knowledge by learning, but only by practice can we have the object of our knowledge.

⁵⁵ The mirage of the world will cease to exist after the mind has become calm and quiet in itself, just as the darkness of the sky is dispersed when rain clouds disappear. ⁵⁶ Know that only your mind causes your delusion. Therefore strive to weaken its force and action. But Rama, you must not weaken it so much as to lose the sight of the Supreme Spirit which shines as the soul of the mind.

⁵⁷ Know that the mature state of your mind is when the mind is settled with the Supreme Soul, even for a moment. It will soon yield the sweets of its ripeness. ⁵⁸ Whether you attain tranquility through Samkhya or Vedanta yoga, it is the same if you can reduce yourself to the Supreme Soul. By doing so even for a moment, you are to be reborn in this lower world no more.

⁵⁹ The term “divine essence” means the mind devoid of its ignorance which, like a fried seed, is unable to reproduce the tree of the world and has no interruption in its meditation on God. ⁶⁰ The mind without ignorance, freed from its desires and settled in its pure essence, in an instant comes to see a full blaze of light filling the sphere of the firmament in which it rests and which absorbs it completely.

⁶¹ Then the mind is in its pure essence, unconscious of itself, and settled in the Supreme Soul. It never relapses into the foulness of its nature, just as copper mixed with gold never becomes tarnished again.

Chapter 70 — A Vetalā Ghost Questions a Prince

¹ Vasishta resumed:—

As soon as the cloud of ignorance is dispersed by the bright sunbeams of right reason, then life becomes no life and the mind turns to no mind immersed in the soul. This state is called liberation by the wise. ² The mind and its sense of personal “I” and “you” appear as water in a mirage, but all these unrealities vanish when we come to our right reason.

³ Let me tell you about the questions of a vetalā ghost which I happen to remember now. They concern our false and dreaming conceptions of the phenomenal world, and they will serve as examples for the subject of our previous lecture.

⁴ In the vast wilderness of the Vindhya Hills lived a gigantic vetalā who happened to come out on an excursion to the adjoining districts in search of his prey of human beings. ⁵ Previously he used to live in the neighborhood of a populous city where he lived quite happily and well satisfied with the victims that were offered to him daily by the good citizens. ⁶ Although he wandered through the city afflicted by hunger and thirst, he never killed a human being without some cause or harm. He walked in that place in the ways of honest and fair men.

⁷ It came to pass that he went out of the city to reside in his woody retreat where he never killed any man unless pressed by excessive hunger, and when he thought it was equitable for him to do so.

⁸ There he happened to meet a ruler of the land, strolling about in his nightly rounds. The vetalā cried out him in a loud and appalling voice. ⁹ The vetalā exclaimed, “Where are you going, O prince? Now you are caught in the clutches of a hideous monster. Now you are a dead man, my ration for this day.”

¹⁰ The prince replied, “Beware, O night demon! If you attempt to unjustly kill me for your food, I will break your skull into a thousand pieces.”

¹¹ The vetalā replied, “I will not kill you unless you deserve it. You are a ruler. It is your duty to attend to everyone’s petitions. ¹² I ask you, O prince, to answer the questions that I propose to you. I believe you are best able to give a full and satisfactory answer to each one of them.”

¹³ “Who is that glorious sun, the particles of whose rays are seen to glitter in the surrounding worlds? What is that wind which blows these dusts of stars in the infinite space of emptiness? ¹⁴ What is that identical thing which passes from one dream to another and assumes different forms by hundreds and thousands, yet does not forsake its original form? ¹⁵ Tell me what is that core particle in bodies that is covered under a hundred sheaths, laid over and under one another like the layers of a plantain tree?”

¹⁶ “What is that minute atom which is imperceptible to the eye, yet produces this immeasurable universe, with its stupendous worlds and skies, and prodigious planets on high and mountains below, and which are the minutest parts of that minute particle? ¹⁷ What is that shapeless and formless atom which remains as the core and foundation under the rocks of huge mountains, and which underlies the triple worlds of heaven, earth and infernal regions?”

¹⁸ If you, O sinful soul, fail to answer to these questions, then you will be the killer of yourself, becoming my food this moment. And at the end, I will devour all your people, just as the lord of death destroys everybody in the world.

Chapter 71 — Prince's Answers to the Vetalā's First Question

¹ Vasishta related:—

The prince smiled at hearing these questions from the vetalā. As he opened his mouth to reply, the luster of his pearly teeth shed a brightness on the white dome of the sky.

The prince speaking:—

² This world was at first an undeveloped grain. Afterwards it was covered by a dozen elemental sheaths, like thin skin or bark. ³ The tree that bears thousands of such fruit is very tall with equally long, out stretched branches and similarly very long and broad leaves. ⁴ This great tree is of a huge size and very astounding to see. It has thousands of huge branches spreading wide on every side. ⁵ There are thousands of such trees, and a dense forest of many other large trees and plants in that person. ⁶ Thousands of such forests stretch over it, abounding in thousands of mountains with their high peaks. ⁷ The wide extended lands that contain these mountains also have very large valleys. ⁸ These widespread lands also contain many countries with their adjacent islands, lakes and rivers. ⁹ These thousands of islands also contain many cities with varieties of buildings and works of art. ¹⁰ These thousands of tracts of land, which are sketched out like so many continents, are like so many earths and worlds in their extent.

¹¹ That which contains thousands of such worlds as the cosmic egg is as unlimited as the spacious womb of the sky. ¹² That which contains thousands of such eggs in its chest also bears many thousands of seas and oceans resting calmly in its large heart. ¹³ That which displays the loud noisy waves of seas is the lively and playful soul, heaving as the clear waters of the ocean. ¹⁴ That which contains thousands of such oceans, with all their waters in his unconscious womb, is the god Vishnu who filled the universal ocean with his all pervasive spirit. ¹⁵ That which bears thousands of such gods, like a string of pearls about the neck, is the great god Rudra. ¹⁶ That which bears thousands of such great gods like hairs on his body is the supreme Lord God of all.

¹⁷ He is that great sun that shines in a hundred of such gods, all of whom are only frictions of the rays of that great source of light and life. ¹⁸ All things in the universe are only particles of that uncreated Sun.

I have explained to you that it is the Intellectual Sun who fills the world with his rays and shows them light. ¹⁹ The all knowing soul is the supreme sun that enlightens the world and fills all things in it with particles of its rays. ²⁰ The omniscient soul, that surpassing sun, produces the rays that show everything to light. Without that soul, like without sunlight, nothing would grow or be visible in the outer world.

²¹ All living beings who have their souls enlightened by the light of philosophy see the sphere of the universe is a blaze of the shining sun of Consciousness. In that Consciousness, there is not the slightest stain of the false conceptions of the material world in it. Know this and hold your peace.

Chapter 72 — The Prince's Answers to the Vetalā's Remaining Questions

¹ The prince replied:—

The essences of time, space and force are all of intellectual origin. Pure Consciousness is the source of all, just as air is the receptacle of odors and dust.² The Supreme Soul is like the universal air that breathes out particles contained in consciousness, just as the ethereal air bears fragrance from flowers.³ The great Brahman of the conscious soul passes through the dreaming world.

⁴ The trunk of a plantain tree is made up of thin layers of skin folded and intertwined over one another. Its central core is hidden inside. In the same way, everything in the world presents its exterior appearances to the view, while its substance of Brahman is hidden deep inside.⁵ The words "entity," "soul" and "Brahman" used to describe God do not signify his nature. God, like the empty void, is devoid of all designations and qualities, indescribable by any words.⁶ Whatever essence one perceives is the product of another, like the outer layers of the trunk of a plantain tree produced by the inner ones. All such coatings are only developments of Divine Consciousness lying at the bottom.

⁷ The Supreme Soul is said to be a minute atom because of its subtlety and the imperceptibility of its nature. It is also said to be the base of mountains and all other bodies owing to its unlimited extent.

⁸ The endless being, though similar to a minute atom, is also large, containing all these worlds as its minutest particles. These worlds are as evident to us as the many aerial scenes appearing in our minds in dreams.⁹ This being is similar to an atom owing to its imperceptibleness. But it is also described as being like a mountain because it fills all space. Though it is the foundation of all formal existence, yet it has no form or figure of its own.

¹⁰ The three worlds are like the fatty bulb of that concentrated consciousness. Know, you righteous soul, that it is that Consciousness which dwells in and acts in all the worlds.¹¹ All these worlds are filled with the design of Intelligence which is quiet in its nature and exhibits endless kinds of beautiful forms of its own. Know, O young vetalā, that irresistible power. Reflect on this and keep quiet.

Chapter 73 — Conclusion to the Story of the Vetal

¹ Vasishta resumed:—

After hearing these words from the prince, the vetal remained quiet, reflecting on what the prince had said, his mind capable of reasoning.² Being quite calm in his mind, he reflected on the pure doctrines of the prince. Being quite absorbed in his fixed meditation, he immediately forgot his hunger and thirst.

³ I have told you, Rama, about the vetal's questions and the manner in which these worlds are situated in the atom of consciousness, and nowhere else.⁴ The world resides in the cell of atomic Consciousness. It ceases to exist by itself upon right reasoning, just like the body of a ghost exists only in the imagination of children. In the end, nothing remains except the everlasting one.

⁵ Curb and contract your thoughts and heart from everything. Enclose your inner soul within itself. Do what you have to do at anytime without desiring or attempting anything of your own will. Thus you will have peace of mind.⁶ Employ your mind, O silent sage, to keep itself as clean as the clear sky. Remain in one even and peaceful even course of your soul. View all things in one and the same light.

⁷ A steady and brave mind, with its promptness in action, is successful in the most difficult undertakings, as was King Bhagiratha with his steady perseverance.⁸ It was by his perfectly peaceful and contented mind, and by the lasting joy of the equanimity of his soul, that this king succeeded to bring down the heavenly Ganges on earth, and the kings of Sagar's line were enabled to perform the difficult task of digging the Bay of Bengal.

Chapter 74 — King Bhagiratha Tires of the World, Seeks the Counsel of Sage Tritala

¹ Rama said, “Please sage, tell me the wonderful story of King Bhagiratha and how he succeeded bringing down the heavenly Ganges River on the earth below.”

² Vasishta replied:—

King Bhagiratha was a person of outstanding virtues. He was distinguished as a crowning mark over all countries of this earth and its seas.³ All his suitors received their desired boons, even without asking. Their hearts were as happy at the sight of his moon-bright face as if they were gazing upon a precious and brilliant gem.⁴ His charities were always profusely lavished upon all good people for their maintenance and support. He carefully collected even things of small worth, prizing them as if they were gems.⁵ He was bright in his person, like blazing fire without smoke, and never weak, even when he was tired from attending to his duties. He drove away poverty from the homes of men, just as the rising sun dispels the darkness of night from within their houses.⁶ All around him he spread the brightness of his courage like burning fire scattering its sparks. He burned like the blazing midday sun to those who were hostile towards him.

⁷ Yet he was gentle and soft in the society of wise men, cooling their hearts with his cooling speech. He shone amidst the learned like the moonstone glistens under moonlight.⁸ He decorated the world with the triple strands of the sacred thread by stretching out the three streams of the Ganges along the three regions of heaven, earth and hell.⁹ He filled the ocean, dried up by sage Agastya, with the waters of Ganges, just as a generous man satisfies a greedy beggar with unbounded generosity.¹⁰ This benefactor of mankind took up his ancestors from the infernal region and led them to the heaven of Brahma by way of the sacred Ganges.¹¹ By his unfailing perseverance, he overcame numerous obstacles and troubles, alternating in his propitiations of the gods Brahma and Shiva and the sage Jahnu, in order to change the course of the heavenly river.

¹² Even though he was still in the vigor of his youth, he seemed to feel the decay of age coming quickly upon him. He was constantly thinking about the miseries of human life.¹³ His mental reflections on the vanities of the world produced a philosophical apathy in him. This cold heartedness in the prime of his youth was like a tender sprout suddenly shooting forth in a barren desert.¹⁴ In his private moments, the king thought about the impropriety of his worldly conduct. He reflected on the daily duties of life in the following silent monologue.

¹⁵ “I see days and nights returning in endless succession, one after the other. Repeating the same acts of giving and taking, and tasting the same enjoyments, have all grown tiresome and tasteless to me.¹⁶ I think that the only thing worth seeking and doing is that which, being obtained and done, leaves nothing else to desire or do in this passing life of troubles and cares.¹⁷ It is shameful for a conscious person to be employed in the same round of business every day. Is it not laughable to be doing and undoing the same thing day after day like silly children?”

¹⁸ Being troubled with the world and afraid of the consequences of his worldly course, Bhagiratha silently went to the solitary cell of his teacher Tritala. Bhagiratha spoke to him in the following manner.¹⁹ “My Lord, I am completely tired and disgusted with the long course of my worldly career. I find it all to be hollow and empty within and a vast wilderness without.²⁰ Tell me, lord. How can I

get over the miseries of this world? How can I free myself from my fear of death and disease and from the chains of errors and passions to which I am so tightly bound?"

²¹ Tritala replied, "It is through the continued evenness of one's disposition, the uninterrupted joyfulness of his soul, knowledge of the knowable true one, and by self sufficiency in everything.

²² By these means a man is released from misery, his worldly bonds are relaxed, his doubts are dispelled, and all his actions tend to his wellbeing in both worlds."

²³ "That which is called the knowable is the pure soul of the nature of consciousness. It is always present in everything in all places and is eternal."

²⁴ Bhagiratha replied, "O great sage, I know that the pure conscious soul is perfectly calm and tranquil, incapable of decay and devoid of all attributes and qualities. The pure soul is not the embodied spirit, nor the animal soul, nor the indwelling principle that is the material body. ²⁵ Sage, I cannot understand how I can be that consciousness when I am so full of errors. If I am the identical soul, why does it not manifest in me as the pure Divine Soul itself?"

²⁶ Tritala replied, "Only through knowledge can the mind know the truly knowable one in the sphere of one's own consciousness. Then the animal soul finds itself to be the all-pervading spirit and is released from future birth and reincarnation. ²⁷ Our lack of attachment to earthly relations, whether our wives, children or other domestic concerns, together with the self-control of our minds, regardless whether confronted with what is advantageous or disadvantageous to us, serve to widen the sphere of our souls and realize their universality."

²⁸ "What also widens the scope of the soul is the union of our souls with the Supreme Spirit and our continual communion with God, as well as our seclusion from society and remaining in retirement.

²⁹ Our true knowledge is said to be the continued knowledge of spirituality and insight into the sense of the unity and identity of God. Everything else is mere ignorance and false knowledge. ³⁰ The only remedy for our sickness of worldliness is the abatement of our love and hatred. The extinction of our egoistic feelings leads to the knowledge of truth."

³¹ Bhagiratha responded, "Tell me, O reverend sage, how is it possible for anybody to get rid of his egoism? It is deeply rooted in our nature and has grown as big with our bodies as the lofty trees on mountain tops."

³² Tritala replied, "All egoistic feelings subside of themselves with the abandonment of worldly desires. This is accomplished with very great effort by exercising the virtues of self-denial and self-control, and by the expansion of our souls to universal benevolence. ³³ We have been subject to the rule of our small egos for so long that we lack the courage to break down the painful prison house of shame at our poverty, and we fear being exposed to other's ridicule. ³⁴ Therefore, if you can renounce all your worldly possessions and remain unmoved in your mind, then you may get rid of your ego and attain the state of supreme bliss."

³⁵ "If you can remain deprived of all honors and titles, freed from the fear of falling into poverty, devoid of every effort to attain, poor and powerless among horrible enemies, living in contemptible beggary among them, without egoistic pride of mind or vanity of the body, in utter destitution of all, then you are greater than the greatest."

Chapter 75 — Bhagiratha Renounces All and Lives as a Wandering Beggar

¹ Vasishta related:—

Having heard these admonitions from his religious teacher, Bhagiratha decided upon what he was about to do and set about the execution of his determination.² He passed a few days devising his plan, then commenced his sacred fire sacrifice (*agnishtoma*) to consecrate his all for the sake of obtaining his sole spiritual object.³ He gave away his cattle and lands, his horses and jewels, and his money without number to the twice born classes of men and his relatives, without regard to their merit or demerit.⁴ Over three days he gave away all what he had until at last he had nothing for himself, except his life and flesh and bones.⁵ When his inexhaustible treasures were all exhausted, he gave up his great kingdom to his neighboring enemies as if it were a piece of straw, to the great mortification of his subjects.⁶ As enemies overran his kingdom and seized his royal palace and properties, he clothed himself in a loin cloth and went away beyond the limits of his kingdom.

⁷ He wandered far through distant villages and desert lands until at last he settled where he was quite unknown. Nobody knew his person or face or his name and title.⁸ He remained there in seclusion for some time, becoming quite composed and blunt to all feelings within and outside himself. He obtained his rest in the serene tranquility of his soul.

⁹ Then he wandered about different countries and went to distant islands until at last he unknowingly returned to his native land and city, which was in the grasp of his enemies.¹⁰ There, while he was wandering door to door begging for alms led about by the currents of time, he was seen by the citizens and his former ministers.¹¹ They all recognized their former king Bhagiratha, whom they honored with due homage. They were very sorry to see him in that miserable state.¹² His enemy came out to meet him and implored him to take back the kingdom and property he had abandoned, but he slighted all their offers as worthless straws, except taking a meager meal from their hands.

¹³ He passed a few days there, then bent his course another way. The people loudly lamented at his sad condition crying, “Ah, what has become of the unfortunate Bhagiratha!”¹⁴ Then the king walked away with the calmness of his soul, his mind content and his face placid. He amused himself wandering and thinking until he chanced to encounter his teacher Tritala.¹⁵ They welcomed one another, then joining together, they both began to wander about the lands of men, passing over hills and deserts in their holy wanderings.

¹⁶ Once when the dispassionate pupil and his teacher were sitting together in the cool calmness of their dispositions, their conversations turned on the interesting subject of human life.¹⁷ “What good is there in bearing our frail bodies? What do we lose by our loss of the body? We neither gain or lose any real advantage, whether having or losing the body, yet we should bear with it as it is and discharge the duties that have come down unto us by custom of the country.”

¹⁸ They remained quiet with this conclusion and passed their time traveling from one forest to another without feeling any joy other than their inner bliss, and without knowing any sorrow or the intermediate states of joy and grief.¹⁹ They spurned all riches and properties, the possession of horses and cattle, and even the eight kinds of supernatural powers as worthless straws before the contentedness of their minds.²⁰ This body, which is the result of our past acts, must be borne with

fortitude as long as it lasts, whether we wish it or not, with continued conviction while discharging their ascetic duties.²¹ Like silent sages, they welcomed with detachment whatever good or evil, or desirable or undesirable happened as their lot as the unavoidable results of their prior deeds. They had their repose in the heavenly joy to which they had assimilated themselves.

Chapter 76 — Bhagiratha's Tapas Brings the Ganges River down to the Earth

¹ Vasishta continued:—

One time as Bhagiratha was passing through a large city, he saw the ruler of that land, who was childless, snatched away by the hand of death, like a fish seized by a shark for its prey.² The people were afraid of anarchy and lawlessness without a ruler, so they searched for a proper person with noble qualities and auspicious signs to be made their future king.³ They encountered the silent and patient king in the act of begging alms, and knowing him to be the former King Bhagiratha himself, they took him escorted by regiments of soldiers and installed him on the throne as their king.

⁴ Bhagiratha instantly mounted an elephant and was led by a large body of soldiers who assembled about him as thick as drops of rainwater falling and filling a lake.⁵ The people shouted "Here is Bhagiratha our lord! May he be victorious forever!" The noise of their shouts reached the farthest mountains and filled their hollow caves.

⁶ Bhagiratha remained to rule over that kingdom. Then the subjects of his own former kingdom reverently came to him and thus prayed to their king saying,⁷ "Great king, the person you appointed to rule over us has recently died, eaten by death like a little fish by a large one.⁸ Therefore consent to rule over your kingdom. Please do not refuse to accept an offer which comes to you unasked."

⁹ Vasishta said:—

The king being asked in this way accepted their prayer, and thus became the sole ruler of the earth, bounded by the seven seas on all sides.¹⁰ He continued to discharge his royal duties without the least dismay or disquietude. He was quite calm and serene in his mind, quiet in his speech, and devoid of passions and envy or selfishness.

¹¹ Then he thought of the redemption of his ancestors who had excavated the coast of the sea and had been burned alive underground. He thought of redeeming them by washing their bones and dead bodies with the waters of the Ganges River, which he heard had the merit of purity and saving all souls and bodies.¹² Until that time, the heavenly stream of the Ganges did not run over the land. It was Bhagiratha who brought it down in order to wash the remains of his ancestors with its holy waters. It was after that that the stream was known by his name as Bhagiratha.

¹³ King Bhagiratha resolved to bring down the holy Ganges of heaven to the earth below.¹⁴ The pious king resigned his kingdom to the charge of his ministers and went to a remote forest with the resolve of making his austere tapas for the success of his undertaking.¹⁵ He remained there for many years and under many rains, worshipping the gods Brahma and Shiva and sage Jahnu in turns, until he succeeded in bringing the holy stream onto the earth below.¹⁶ It was then that the crystal waves of the Ganges flowed out of the basin of Brahma, the lord of the world, and rushed onto the moon crest of Hara (Shiva). Falling on earth below, it took a triple course, like the meritorious acts of great men.

¹⁷ In this way, the three-pronged Ganges River came to flow over this earth, a channel to bear the glory of Bhagiratha to distant lands. Behold her running fast with her heaving waves, smiling all along with her foaming froths. She sprinkles purity all along with the drizzling drops of her breakers and scatters plenty over the land as the reward of the best deserts of men.

Chapter 77 — The Story of Chudala and Sikhidhwaja

¹ Vasishta related:—

Rama, keep your view fixed to one object, like Bhagiratha. Pursue your calling with a calm and quiet understanding, as was done by that steady minded king in the accomplishment of his purpose! ² Give up your thoughts of this and that and confine the flying bird of your mind within your bosom. Remain in full possession of yourself following the example of the resolute King Sikhidhwaja of old.

³ Rama asked, “Who was this Sikhidhwaja, sage? How did he maintain the firmness of his purpose? Please explain this to me fully in order to enlighten my understanding.”

⁴ Vasishta replied:—

In a former Age of Bronze (*dwapara yuga*) there lived a loving pair of consorts who are again to be born in a future period, in the same manner and at the same place.

⁵ Rama replied, “Tell me, O great preacher! How can the past be the same as now? How can these again be the same in the future?”

⁶ Vasishta replied:—

Such is the irreversible law of destiny and course of nature that the creation of the world must continue in the same manner by the unchanging will of the creator Brahma and others. ⁷ As those which had been plentiful before come to be at plentiful again, so the past appears at present and also in future. Many other things come to being that had not been before, and many others become extinct in course of time. ⁸ Some reappear in their former forms and some only resemble them. Others change their forms, and many more disappear altogether. ⁹ These and many other things are seen in the course of the world. The character who is the subject of this story bears an exact resemblance to the past king of the same name.

¹⁰ But let me also tell you that there is yet to be born another king as valiant as the one that had been in the former Dwapara Yuga of the past seventh Manvantara period. ¹¹ It will be after the four yugas of the fourth creation, past and gone, that he will be born again of the Kuru family in the vicinity of the Vindhyan Hills in the continent of Asia.

¹² There lived a king named Sikhidhwaja in the country of Malava who was handsome and endowed with firmness and magnanimity in his nature and had the virtues of patience and self control in his character. ¹³ He was brave but silent and ever inclined to good acts with all his great virtues. He was engaged in the performance of the religious sacrifices and also defeating competitors on the field of archery. ¹⁴ He did many public acts and supported the poor people of the land. He was of a graceful appearance and self-satisfied in his countenance. He loved all men with his great learning in the scriptures. ¹⁵ He was handsome, quiet and fortunate, equally brave and virtuous. He was a preacher of morality and bestowed all benefits to his suitors. ¹⁶ He enjoyed all luxuries in the company of good people and listened to the lessons of the Sruti scriptures. He knew all knowledge without any boasting on his part, and he hated to touch women.

¹⁷ His father departed for the next world, leaving him a lad of sixteen years, yet at that tender age he was able to govern his kingdom and defeated his adversaries on all sides. ¹⁸ He conquered all other

regions of the country using the resources of his empire. He remained free from all fear by ruling his subjects with justice and keeping them in peace.¹⁹ He brightened all by his intelligence and the wisdom of his ministers, until with the course of years he came to his youth in the colorful spring of the year.

²⁰ It was spring and he saw blooming flowers glistening brightly under bright moonbeams. He saw budding blossoms hanging down the trees in the inner apartments.²¹ The doorways of the covered shelters were overhung with intertwined branches decorated with small flowers scattering their fragrant pollen like white camphor powder. Rows of guluncha flowers blew their scents all around.

²² There was the loud hum of bees buzzing with their mates upon flowery bushes. Gentle warm breezes blew the sweet scent upward amidst the cooling showers of moonbeams.²³ He saw banks decorated with kadali shrubs glistening with their shining blossoms under the dark shade of plantain leaves.

All this excited his yearning after a dear one who was seated in his heart.²⁴ Giddy with the intoxication of the honey draughts of fragrant flowers, his mind was fixed on a beloved. He did not depart from his thoughts, just as spring is unwilling to quit the flowery garden.

²⁵ "When shall I swing in the cradles of my pleasure garden, sport in this lake of lotuses, and play with my love-smitten maid with her budding breasts resembling two buds of golden lotuses?²⁶ When shall I embrace my beloved to my bosom on my bed daubed with the dust of powdered frankincense? When shall we on cradle among lotus stalks, like a pair of bees sucking honey from flowers?²⁷ When shall I see that maiden lying relaxed in my arms, her slender body like a tender stalk, fair as a string of milk-white kunda flowers, or a plant formed of moonbeams?²⁸ When will that moonlike beauty be inflamed with her love for me?"

With these and similar thoughts and ravings, King Sikkidhwaja wandered about the garden looking at the variety of flowers.²⁹ Then he rambled among flower gardens and outskirts of forests, straying from one forest to another by the sides of swirling lakes blooming with full blown lotuses.³⁰ He entered gardens formed by twining vines and walked over avenues of many garden grounds and forest lands, seeing and hearing the descriptions of woodland sceneries from his friends.³¹ His mind was distracted and he took much delight in hearing discourses on erotic subjects. The only idol in his heart was the bright form of his garlanded and painted beloved.³² He adored the maiden in his heart, her breasts resembling two golden pots on her bosom, and this purpose was soon discovered by the wise ministers of that state.

³³ The business of ministers is to dive into matters by their signs and prognosis, so these officers met together to deliberate on his marriage.³⁴ They proposed the young daughter of the King of Saurastra for his marriage. She was coming to the full age of puberty, so they regarded her as a proper match for him.³⁵ The young king was married to a worthy image of himself, the fair Princess Chudala, known all over the land.

³⁶ She was joyful in having him like a lotus bud opening with the rising sun. He made the black-eyed maid bloom like the moon opens the bud of the blue lotus.³⁷ He delighted her with his love as if making the white lotus bloom. Each inflamed the other's passions by abiding in the other's heart.

³⁸ She flourished with her youthful enticements and dalliance, like a new grown vine blooming with flowers, and he was happy and careless in her company, leaving the affairs of state to the management of his ministers. ³⁹ He played in the company of his lady love like a swan paling in a bed of lotuses in a large lake. He indulged his frolics in his swinging cradles and pleasure ponds in the inner apartments. ⁴⁰ They delighted in the gardens and covered arbors of vines and flowering plants. They amused themselves in the woods walking under sandalwood and gulancha vine shades. ⁴¹ They played by rows of mandara trees and beside the lines of plantain and kadali plants. They regaled themselves wandering in the harem and by the sides of the woods and lakes on the outskirts of the town. ⁴² They wandered far in distant forests and deserts, and in jungles of jam and jambira trees, passing by paths bordered by jasmine plants. In short, they took delight in everything in each other's company.

⁴³ Their attachment to each another was as delightful to the people as the union of the raining sky with the cultivated ground. Both are productive for the general welfare of mankind. ⁴⁴ Both were skilled in the arts of love and music. They were so united by their love for each other that one was the counterpart of the other. ⁴⁵ Being seated in each other's heart, they were like two bodies with one soul. They shared and taught each other his learning of the scriptures and her skill in painting and fine arts. ⁴⁶ Since childhood, Chudala had been instructed in every branch of learning, and she taught Sikkidhwaja the arts of dancing and playing musical instruments. ⁴⁷ They learned and became learned in the respective arts and parts of one another, just as when the sun and moon are in conjunction, they partake of each other's qualities. ⁴⁸ Each dwelling in the other's heart, they became one and the same person sharing the same inclinations and pursuits and becoming more and more endeared to one another. ⁴⁹ They were joined in one person, like the earthly equivalent of the androgynous body of Uma and Shiva. They were united in one soul, just like the different fragrances of flowers are mixed up in the same air. Their clarity of understanding and their knowledge of the scriptures led them both in the one and same way.

⁵⁰ They were born on earth to perform their roles as if they were the god Vishnu and his consort Lakshmi. They were equally frank and sweet in their affections for each other, and as eager to share their learning with others. ⁵¹ They followed the course of laws and customs and attended to the people's affairs. They delighted in the arts and science, and also enjoyed their sweet pleasures. They were like two moons shining brightly. ⁵² They tasted all the sweet enjoyments of life in the quiet and solitary recesses of their private apartments like a couple of giddy swans playing merrily in the lake of the blue sky.

Chapter 78 — The Self Realization of Chudala

¹ Vasishta continued:—

For many years the happy pair enjoyed the pleasures of their youth, tasting with greater zest every new delight that day by day came their way.² Years repeated their revolutions over their protracted revelries until by and by their youth began to give way to the decay of age, just as a broken pitcher lets its waters leak out.³ Then they began to think that their bodies were as frail as the waves on the sea, liable to fall like ripe fruit from trees, and that no one is able to avert death.

⁴ As arrow-sharp snow tears at lotus leaves, so old age is ready to batter and shatter our frames. The cup of our life is drizzling away day by day, like water held in the palm falls away drop by drop.⁵ While our greed is increasing on one hand, like a gourd plant in rainy weather, on the other hand our youth glides away quickly like torrents of waters falling from mountain cliffs.⁶ Our life is as false as a magic play. The body is like a heap of rotting things. Our pleasures are few and painful and as fleeting as arrows flying from the archer's bow.⁷ Afflictions pounce upon our hearts like vultures and kites swooping upon fish and flesh. These bodies are as impermanent as the bursting bubbles of raindrops.⁸ All reasoning and practice are as unsound as the weak stem of a plantain tree, and our youth is as fleeting as the fickle woman in love with many men.

⁹ The taste of youthful pleasure is soon succeeded by a distaste for it in old age. The freshness of plants in spring gives way to the dryness of autumn. Then where in this world is that permanent pleasure and lasting good which never grows stale and is ever sweet and lovely?¹⁰ Therefore we should seek that which will support us in all conditions of life, and which will be a remedy of all the evils that surround us in this world.

¹¹ Being thus determined, they both engaged in the investigation of spiritual philosophy. They thought that knowledge of the soul would be the only balm for healing the choleric pain of worldliness.

¹² Thus resolved, they devoted themselves to their spiritual growth, employing their head and heart, their lives and souls in the inquiry, and placing all their hope and trust in the development of their spirituality.

¹³ For a long time they studied spiritual knowledge together, meditating upon and worshipping the Soul of souls in their own souls.¹⁴ They both enjoyed their studies of divine knowledge, and she took a particular delight in constantly attending to the instructions and sermons of divine teachers.¹⁵ She would listen to explanations of spiritual liberation from scholars who expounded upon the scriptures, and she continued to reflect on the soul day and night.

Queen Chudala's reasoning:—

¹⁶ Whether I am engaged in action or not, I see nothing but the one soul in my enlightened and clear understanding. What then, am I that very Self, and is it my own self?¹⁷ Where does this error of my personality come from? Why does it grow up and where does it exist? It cannot be the gross body which has no knowledge of itself and is ignorant of everything. Surely I am not this body. My egoism lies beyond my physical body.

¹⁸ The error arises in the mind and grows from childhood to old age. One thinks that the self is lean or fat as if he were the body. It is usual to say "I act" and "I see" and the like as if one's personality

consists in his action, but the acts of the physical body are as unconscious and impersonal as the dull body itself.¹⁹ The part is not different from the whole, nor can one thing produce something that is different.²⁰ The mind moves the body just like a bat drives a ball. Therefore the mind also must be dull matter, being a part of the material body, differing from it only in its power of will.²¹ The determination of the mind impels the physical organs to their various actions, just like a sling sends a pebble in any direction. No doubt this firmness of resolution is a property of matter.²² Ego leads the body forward in its action, like a channel carries the waters of a stream in its course. This ego has no essence of its own and therefore is as inert and inactive as a dead body.

²³ The living principle (*jiva*) is a false idea, like the phantom of a ghost. The living soul is the one principle of consciousness and resides in the form of air in the heart.²⁴ Life or the living principle lives by another inner power, finer and more subtle than itself. By means of this internal witness, the soul, all things are known to us and not by means of this gross animal life.²⁵ The living soul lives in its form of vitality by the primordial power of consciousness. The vital soul, misunderstood as an intelligent principle, exists by means of this intellectual power.²⁶ The living soul carries with it power infused in it by consciousness, like wind blowing the fragrance of flowers and a channel carrying water to a great distance.

²⁷ The heart, the seat of consciousness, is nothing essential by itself. It is called the center (*chitta*) for concentrating of the powers of the intellect (*chayana*) and also the heart (*hrid*) for its bearing these powers (*harana*) to the other parts of the body. Therefore it is a dull material substance.²⁸ All these and the living soul also, and anything that appears real or unreal, disappear in the meditation of consciousness. They are lost in meditation like fire immersed in water.²⁹ Only our intelligence (*chaitanya*) awakens us to the knowledge of the unreality and emptiness of gross material bodies.

Vasishta speaking:—

With such reflections as these, Queen Chudala only thought about how to gain a knowledge of the all-enlightening Intellect.³⁰ Long did she reflect and ponder in this manner, until at last she came to know what she sought and then exclaimed, “O! After so long I have come to know the imperishable one, the only one to be known.”

Queen Chudala's thoughts:—

³¹ No one is disappointed in knowing the knowable or what is worth knowing. This is the knowledge of the intellectual soul and our contemplation of it. All other knowledge that the mind may have from understanding and the senses and all other things, are only steps that lead toward that ultimate end.

³² All other knowledge is mere nothing, just like a second moon in the sky. There is only one Consciousness in existence, and this is called the great entity, the sum total of all existence.

³³ It is the one pure, stainless and holy, without equal or personality in the form of pure intelligence, the sole existence and joy and everlasting without decay.³⁴ This intellectual power is ever pure and bright, always on the summit without rise or fall. It is known among mankind under the names of Brahman, Supreme Soul, and other attributes.³⁵ The triple names of the Intellect, Intelligence, and Intelligible do not exactly define his nature because He is the cause of these faculties and the witness of the functions of reasoning.

³⁶ The unthinkable intellect within me is the exact and undecaying copy of Supreme Consciousness. It evolves itself into the different forms of the mind and the senses of perception. ³⁷ The intellect evolves the various forms of things in the world, just as the sea rolls and unrolls the waves in its bosom. ³⁸ This world is truly the appearance of that great Intellect which is like pure crystal stone and is manifest in this form. ³⁹ The same Power is manifest in the form of the world, which has no separate existence except in the mind of the ignorant. It is impossible for any other thing to exist except the self-existing One.

⁴⁰ Gold appears in the various forms of jewelry. In the same way Consciousness appears as everything in the world in the forms in which it sees itself. ⁴¹ As the thought of fluidity in the mind causes us to perceive waves in the water, whether it really exists or not, so thoughts in the Divine Mind show us the picture of the world, whether it is or is not in being. ⁴² As the Divine Soul appears like waves of the sea because of its thoughts fluidity, so am I the same intellect without any personality of myself.

⁴³ This soul has no birth or death, nor does it have a good or bad future state. It is never destroyed because it is a form of consciousness which is indestructible in its nature. ⁴⁴ It neither burns nor breaks. It is the unclouded light of the intellect. By meditating on the soul in this manner, I am quite at rest and peace.

⁴⁵ I live free from error and rest as calm as the untroubled ocean. I meditate on the invisible One who is quite clear to me as the unborn, un-decaying and infinite soul of all. ⁴⁶ It is the empty soul, unrestricted by time or place, stainless by any figure or form, eternal and transcending our thought and knowledge. It is the infinite void. All attempts to grasp it are as vain as trying to grasp empty air in the hand. ⁴⁷ This soul equally pervades over all the sura demigods as well as the asura demon races of the earth. But it is none of those artificial forms which the people make with their images of clay, like children's dolls. ⁴⁸ The essences of both viewer and the view reside together in the unity of consciousness. Only through error do men make distinctions between unity and duality, and between ego and non-ego.

⁴⁹ What error or delusion can remain, and how, when and from where can it overtake me, when I have attained my truly spiritual and immortal form, seated in my easy and quiet state? ⁵⁰ I am absorbed and extinct in eternity. All my cares are extinct with my own extinction in eternity. My soul is in its entranced state between consciousness and unconsciousness. It feels what is reflected upon it. ⁵¹ The soul settled in the great intellect of God, shining with the light of the Supreme Soul just like the sky is illuminated by the light of the day. There is no thought of this or that or even of one's self or that of any other being or non-being. All is calm and quiet and having no object in view, except the one transcendent spirit.

Vasishta speaking:—

⁵² With these reflections, Chudala remained as calm and quiet as a white cloudy spot in the autumn sky. Her soul was awake to the inspiration of divine truth. Her mind was detached from the feelings of love and fear, of pride and pleasure, and quite insusceptible of delusion.

Chapter 79 — King Sikhidhwaja Notices the Change in Queen Chudala

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Thus did the queen live day by day in the bliss of her soul, her sight concentrated within herself, living in her own and proper element.² She had no passion or affection, nor any discord or desire in her heart. She neither coveted nor hated anything. She was indifferent to all, but persistent and vigilant in her course of spiritual pursuit.³ She had passed over the wide gulf of the world and freed herself from the entangling snare of doubts. She had gained the great good of knowing the Supreme Soul that filled her inner soul.⁴ After her weariness of the world, she found her rest in God, her state of perfect bliss and joy. Her name was sounded on the lips of all men as the model of incomparable perfection.

⁵ In this way, Queen Chudala became acquainted with the true God in a short time because of the earnestness of her inquiry.⁶ In the same manner, the errors of the world subside under the knowledge of truth, just as they arise in the human mind by its addiction to worldliness.⁷ She found her repose in that state of perfect blessedness in which the sight of all things is lost in its dazzling blaze. She appeared as bright as a fragment of an autumn cloud that stays steady in its place.⁸ Apart from and not related with anything, she continued meditating on the Spirit in her own spirit, just as an aged bull remains careless on a mountain top where he happens to find a green meadow for his pasture.⁹ By her constant habit of loneliness and the elevation of her soul in her solitude, she became as fresh as a new grown plant, her blooming face shining like a new blown flower.

¹⁰ One time it happened to pass that King Sikhidhwaja noticed her pure beauty. Being struck with wonder at seeing her unusual gracefulness, he addressed her.

King Sikhidhwaja talking to Queen Chudala:—

¹¹ How is it, my dear, that you are again your youthful bloom like a flowery plant of spring? You appear more brilliant than the world illuminated under the bright beams of the full moon.¹² You shine more brightly, my beloved, than one drinking the ambrosia of life, or one obtaining the object of her desire, filled with perfect delight in herself.¹³ You seem quite satisfied and lovely with your graceful appearance. The beauty of your body surpasses that of the bright moon. When you approach me it is like Rati, the goddess of love, approaching her favorite Kama.

¹⁴ I see your mind rejecting all enjoyments and it is stingy of its pleasures. It is tranquil and cool, elated with spiritual intensity, and deep as it is tranquil in its nature.¹⁵ I see your mind spurning the three worlds as if they were bits of straw and as if you have tasted all their sweets to its full satisfaction. You are above the endless conflicts and confusions of the world, and quite charming.

¹⁶ O fortunate queen, there is no enjoyment of earthly possessions that may equal the spiritual joy of your tranquil mind. The one is as dry as a sandy desert compared with the refreshing waters of the Milky Ocean.

¹⁷ Being born with tender limbs resembling the tendrils of young plantains and the soft shoots of lotus stalks, now you seem to have grown strong and stout in your body and mind.¹⁸ Although your features and body are the same as before, you have become like another person, like a plant growing up to a tree under the influence of the revolving seasons.

¹⁹ Tell me, have you drunk the ambrosial nectar of the gods? Have you become the sovereign over an empire? Have you gained immortality by drinking the elixir of life or by the practice of hatha or raja yoga? ²⁰ Have you gotten a kingdom or discovered the philosopher's stone? Have you gained anything that is more precious than the three worlds? Or, O my blue eyed lady, have you obtained something that is not attainable to mankind?

²¹ Chudala responded:—

I have not lost my former form nor have I changed to a new one. I am ever your fortunate lady and wife. ²² I have forsaken all that is untrue and unreal and I have laid hold of what is true and real. In this way I remain your fortunate consort as ever before. ²³ I have come to know that which is something, and also everything that is nothing at all. I know how all these nothings come to appear and ultimately disappear into nothing. In this way I remain your fortunate lady as ever.

²⁴ I am as content with my enjoyments as I am without them, whether long past and gone away. I am never delighted or irritated at anything whether good or bad, but preserve my composure in all circumstances. Thus I remain your fortunate consort forever. ²⁵ I delight only in the one empty entity that has taken possession of my heart. I take no pleasure in royal gardens and sports. I remain your fortunate princess as ever. ²⁶ I rely constantly upon myself only, whether sitting on my seat or walking about in the royal gardens or palaces. I am not fond of enjoyments nor ashamed at their absence, and in this manner I continue as your fortunate wife as always.

²⁷ I think myself to be the sovereign of the world, having no form of my own. Thus I am delighted in myself and appear as your fortunate and beautiful lady. ²⁸ I am equally this and not this. I am the reality yet nothing real of any kind. I am the ego and no ego myself. I am the all and nothing in particular, and thus I remain your charming lady. ²⁹ I neither wish for pleasure nor fear any pain. I desire no riches and do not praise poverty. I am composed with what I get and therefore I seem so very happy to you. ³⁰ I play in the company of my friends who have governed their passions by the light of knowledge and the guidance of scriptures. That is why I seem so very pleasing to you.

³¹ I know, my lord, that everything that I see with my eyes, or perceive by my senses, or conceive in my mind is in reality nothing. Therefore I see something within myself that is beyond the perception of the sense organs and beyond anything the mind can conceive. This bright vision of the spirit has made me appear so very bright to your sight.

Chapter 80 — Sikhidhwaja Laughs at Chudala; Astral Flight; Kundalini to Attain Ends; — the Five-Fold Pattern of Elements

¹ Vasishta related:—

Her husband heard the beautiful lady's words but he did not have the intelligence to dive into the meaning of what she said or to understand what she meant by her reliance upon the soul. Instead, Sikhidhwaja told her jokingly, ² “How hard it is to understand is your speech. How unbecoming it is at your age to speak like a girl about great things, indulging your royal pleasures and sports as you do in your royal state.”

³ “Leaving all things you live in the meditation of the formless. If you have all that is real to sense, then how is it possible for you to be so graceful with an unreal nothing? ⁴ Whoever abandons the enjoyments of life by saying he can do without them can never retain gracefulness. He is like an angry man who refrains from eating and resting, then weakens himself in his hunger and restlessness. ⁵ He who abstains from pleasures and enjoyments and subsists upon empty air is like a ghost without material form living a bodiless shadow in the sky. ⁶ He who abandons his food and clothing, his bedstead and sleep, and all other things, resting devoutly in only the one Soul, cannot possibly preserve his calmness.”

⁷ “That I am not the body or bodiless, that I am nothing yet everything, are words so contradictory that they have no sane meaning. ⁸ That I do not see what I see, but see something that is quite unseen, is so very inconsistent that it suggests no sanity of the mind. ⁹ From these I find that you are still an ignorant and unsteady young lady, my frolicsome playmate as before. I speak this way to you by way of jest in the same way as you have jokingly spoken to me.”

¹⁰ The king finished his speech with a good laugh. Realizing it was noon and time for his bath, he rose up and left his lady's apartment. ¹¹ The queen regretted the situation thinking, “O drat! The king has quite misunderstood my meaning. He did not understand what I meant to say about my rest in the spirit.” Then she returned to her usual daily duties. ¹² After that, the happy queen continued her silent meditation in seclusion, but passed her time in the company of the king in the enjoyments of their royal sports and amusements.

¹³ One day it came to pass that the self-satisfied queen pondered about how to fly in the air. Although she had no desire in her heart, she wished to soar into the sky on an aerial journey. ¹⁴ She retired to a secluded spot where she continued to contemplate her aerial journey, abstaining from food and shunning the company of her companions. ¹⁵ She sat alone, keeping her body steady on her seat and restraining her upward moving breath between her eyebrows (*khechari mudra*).

¹⁶ Rama asked, “All movement of bodies in this world is through the action of bodies and the impulse of their breathing. Then how is it possible to rise upwards by restraining body and breath? ¹⁷ Tell me, sage, how can one fly through the air by breath control and force of will? ¹⁸ How can an adept in spirituality or yoga philosophy accomplish this?”

¹⁹ Vasishta replied:—

Rama, there are three types of attainable goals: effort to obtain the desired object, disdain for the

thing sought, and indifference to the object of desire.²⁰ The first, attainment of the desirable, is secured by employing the means for its success. The second, detestation, hates and slightsthe thing altogether. The third, detachment, is the intermediate way between the two.²¹ All good people seek whatever is pleasant, and everyone avoids whatever is contrary to good. No one seeks or shuns the way in between.

²² As soon as the intelligent, learned devotee comes to the knowledge of his soul and becomes spiritualized in himself, then all these three states vanish from his sight. He feels that they are all the same to him.²³ As he comes to see these worlds full with the presence of God, and his intellect takes its delight in this thought, he remains in the intermediate state of detachment, or he loses sight of even that.²⁴ All wise men remain in the course of neutrality. The ignorant are eagerly and vainly pursuing their objects, but the dispassionate recluse shuns everything.

Now listen as I tell you how to attain something.²⁵ All success is obtained in the proper time and place and through action and its instruments. This makes a person's heart as happy as when spring renovates the earth.

²⁶ Among these four (time, place, action and instruments), preference is given to action because it is of highest importance to bring about a result.²⁷ There are many instruments for flight, such as the use of the gutika Ayurveda pills, application of black powder (collyrium), the wielding of sword and the like. But all of these are attended with many evils that are prejudicial to holiness.²⁸ There are some gems and drugs, and also some mantras, charms and formulas prescribed for this purpose. But when these are fully understood, they will be found harmful to the practice of yoga.²⁹ Mount Meru, the Himalayas, and some other holy places are mentioned as seats of divine inspiration, but a full description of them will tend to violate the aim of yoga meditation.³⁰ Therefore, listen to me tell you something regarding the practice of restraining the breath, which can be used to obtain powers and is related with the story of Sikkidhwaja, the general subject of the present discourse.

³¹ One should practice the yoga described in the scriptures by driving away all desires from the heart except the one object, and by contracting all the body openings and keeping the posture, head and neck erect.³² Moreover, one should have the habit of taking pure food and sitting on clean seats. One should ponder the deep meaning of the scriptures, maintaining the virtues of good manners and right conduct in society and refraining from worldliness and all earthly connections.³³ By refraining from anger and greed, and abstaining from improper food and enjoyments, then over the course of a long time, one must become practiced restricting the breath.³⁴ The wise man who knows the truth and has control over his triple breathing of inspiration, expiration, and retention (*puraka, rechaka, and kumbhaka*) has all his actions under his control, just like a master has all his servants under his complete control.

³⁵ Rama, know that anyone who has control of his vital breath is a sovereign on earth and has secured his future liberation.³⁶ Breath of vital energy circulates through the inner lung of the chest which encircles the intestines. Breath supplies all the arteries with life, and it is connected to all of the intestines as if they shared a common channel.

³⁷ There is a curved artery (*nadi*, subtle channels in the astral body through which the vital energy or life force flows) that looks like the curved shape at the end of a lute's neck, or the whirling currents of

waters in the sea, or the curved half of the letter Om. It is situated in a small circle at the base of the spine (called the *kula kundalini nadi*).³⁸ This kundalini is deep seated at the base of the bodies of gods and demigods, men and beasts, fish and fowl, insects and worms, and all aquatic mollusks and animals at large.³⁹ It continues curved and curbed in the form of a coiled snake in winter until it unfolds its twisted form under the summer heat (intestinal heat), and lifts its hood like the disc of the moon (at the crown of the head).⁴⁰ The wind of the breath extends it from the lower base to pass through the heart cavity, touch the space between the eyebrows, and remain in continuous vibration.⁴¹ A mighty power, like the central core within the soft trunk of the plantain tree, is continually vibrating, like the strings of a sitar, within the kundalini nadi.⁴² This nadi is called kundalini because of its curved shape. Its power is the prime mobile force that sets the physical body into motion.⁴³ It is constantly breathing like the hissing of an infuriated snake. With its open mouths, it continually blows upwards to give force to all the organs.

⁴⁴ The vital energy enters the heart drawn in by the curved kundalini. The kundalini is the seed for the consciousness of the mind and all its faculties.⁴⁵ As the kundalini thrills in the body, like a bee fluttering over a flower, so does our consciousness throb in the mind and has the perception of nice and delicate sensations.⁴⁶ The kundalini nadi stirs quickly to grasp its gross objects, just as our consciousness is roused at the perception of an object of the physical senses. These come in contact with one another like an instrument laying hold of some material.⁴⁷ All the nadis in the body are connected with this grand nadi and flow together like so many cellular vessels into the heart cavity where they rise and fall like rivers in the sea.⁴⁸ The continued rise and fall of this main nadi is the common source of all the sensations and perceptions of consciousness.

⁴⁹ Rama regained, "Sage, how is it that our consciousness, which comes from the infinite intellect at all times and places, is confined like a minute particle of matter within the cellular vessel of the curved kundalini nadi where it rises and falls by turns."

⁵⁰ Vasishta replied:—

It is true, O sinless Rama, that consciousness is the property of the infinite intellect, always present in all places and things with the all pervading intellect. Yet sometimes it is compressed in the form of a minute atom of matter in material and finite bodies.⁵¹ The consciousness of the infinite intellect is, of course, as infinite as infinity itself. But being confined in physical bodies, it is like fluid diffused over a small space. The sunshine that lights up the universe appears to be flush against a wall or other confined place.

⁵² In some bodies, consciousness is completely lost, such as in mineral substances that are unconscious of their own existence. In others it is fully developed, as in gods and humans. In some consciousness is imperfectly developed, as in plants, and in others it appears in a perverted form, as in the inferior animals. So everything is found to have its consciousness in some form or other.

⁵³ Moreover, listen as I explain how consciousness appears in various forms and degrees in the different bodies of animated beings.⁵⁴ As all cavities and empty spaces are grouped under the category of air, so all intelligent and unintelligent living beings are grouped under the general category of the one ever existent intellect which pervades all things like a vacuum.⁵⁵ The same undecaying and unchanging intellect is situated in some places as pure consciousness, and in others in

the subtle form of the five-fold elements (ether, air, fire, water and earth).

⁵⁶ This five-fold element of consciousness is the template for many other five-folds, just as a great many lamps are lit from one lamp. There are the five vital airs, the mind and its five-fold faculties of the understanding, the five internal and the five external senses and their five-fold organs, together with the five elemental bodies. They all have ingrained in them the principles of growth, rise and decay, and the states of waking, dreaming and sleeping.

⁵⁷ All these five-folds abide in the different bodies of the gods and mortals according to their respective natures and inclinations. ⁵⁸ Some take the forms of places, and others of the things situated in them. Some take the forms of minerals, and others of the animals living on earth. ⁵⁹ This world is produced through the action of the five-folds, the principle of intellectual consciousness presiding over the whole and every part of it. ⁶⁰ The union of these five-folds in gross bodies gives them their intelligence. Therefore we see the mobility of some dull material bodies and the immobility of others.

⁶¹ As the waves of the sea are seen to roll in one place and to be still in another, so this intellectual power is in full force in some bodies and quite inactive in others. ⁶² As the sea is calm and still in one place and quite boisterous in another, so the five-fold body is either in motion or at rest in different places.

⁶³ The five-fold body is mobile by means of the vital airs, and the vital life (*jiva*) is intelligent because of its intelligence. Rocks are devoid of both, but trees have the faculty of sense because they are moved by the breath of winds. Such are the varying natures of the triple creation of animals, minerals and plants. ⁶⁴ Different words are used to denote the different natures of things. Fire is the general name for heat and frost is that of coldness in general. ⁶⁵ Differences in the mind's desires, which mature in time, dispose the five-fold elements to the forms of the mind's liking.

⁶⁶ The many different desires of the mind, running in their diverse directions, are capable of being collected by the wise and employed for their best advantage and well being. ⁶⁷ Men's desires, whether for good or evil, can be roused or suppressed by turns and employed to their purposes.

⁶⁸ Man must direct his desires in a way that promises him the objects of his desires. Otherwise, it will be as fruitless as throwing dust at the face of the sky.

⁶⁹ The great mountains are only heaps of the five-fold elements hanging on the tender and slender blade of consciousness. These moving and unmoving bodies appear like worms on the tree of knowledge. ⁷⁰ There are some beings with their desires lying dormant in them, such as the unmoving plants and minerals on this earth. Others have their desires ever active, such as gods, demigods and men. ⁷¹ Some are filled with their desires, such as worms and insects living in soil. Others are without desire and the heirs of salvation, such as liberated yogis.

⁷² Every man is aware that he has a mind and understanding. These and his hands, feet and other body parts are all made up of various combinations of the five-fold elements. ⁷³ Inferior animals have other senses and other types of body parts. In the same way, inert objects also have some kind of sense with other sorts of organs.

⁷⁴ Thus my good Rama, these five-fold elements display themselves in different forms in the beginning, middle and end of all conscious and unconscious and moving and unmoving beings. ⁷⁵ The

slightest desire of any of these, be it as minute as an atom, becomes the seed of aerial trees producing the fruit of future births in the forms of the desired objects.⁷⁶ The organs of sense are the flowers of this tree, the body and the sensations of their objects are like the fragrance of the flowers. Our wishes are like the bees fluttering about the pistils and filaments of our unsteady efforts.⁷⁷ The clear heavens are the hairy tufts resting on the stalks of the lofty mountains. Its leaves are the blue clouds of the sky. The ten sides of the sky are like vines spreading all about it.

⁷⁸ All beings now in being, and those coming into existence in future, are innumerable like the fruit of this tree, growing and blooming and falling off by turns.⁷⁹ The five seeds of these trees grow and perish of their own nature and spontaneity in their proper time.⁸⁰ They become many from their sameness, and come to exhaust their powers after long inertness, then subside to rest of their own accord like the heaving waves of the ocean.⁸¹ On one side they are swelling like huge surges, and on the other they are sinking low into the deep, excited by the heat of dullness on the one hand and hushed by the coolness of reason on the other.

⁸² These multitudes of bodies, the playthings of the five-fold elements, are destined to remain and rove forever in this world unless they come under the control of reason and are freed from further reincarnation.

Chapter 81 — Kundalini, Balance of Vital Breath, Physical & Mental Disorders, Simultaneous & Disjunct Causation; The Sun (Knowledge) and Moon (Ignorance) within

¹ Vasishta continued:—

The seeds of the five elements are contained inside the great kundalini nadi, expanding every moment from the vibration of vital breath in all beings.² The vibration of the kundalini rouses the intellect by its touch, and the rising of the intellect is attended with rising of the intellectual powers as follows.

³ From its vitality, this intellect is the living principle, and from its mental powers, it is the mind. From its volition, this intellect is the principle of will, and from its understanding of all things, it is called understanding.⁴ It becomes egoism with its eight-fold properties called the eight subtle bodies (*puryashtaka*), and it remains the principle of vitality in the body in the form of the kundalini nadi.

⁵ The intellect abides in the kundalini in the form of triple winds. Being deposited in the bowels and constantly flowing downwards, it takes the name of the *apana* wind; moving about the abdomen it is called the *samana* wind; and when seated in the chest it rises upwards, it is known by the name of the *udana* wind.⁶ The *apana* wind passing downward evacuates the bowels. The *samana* wind of the abdominal part serves to sustain the body. The *udana* rising upward and being let out, inflates and invigorates the body. (On account of these forces, there is balance in the system.)

⁷ If the force of the downward wind is excessive and after all your efforts, you are unable to balance that forcible and irrepressible exit of the *apana* wind, then the person is sure to meet his death.

⁸ When one with all his efforts is unable to balance his rising breath of life and it is forced out his mouth or nostrils (the force of the upward force is excessive), death surely follows.⁹ If by continual attention one is able to balance the outward and inward flow of his vital breath and preserve calm quiet of his disposition, he is sure to have longevity accompanied with freedom from all diseases.

¹⁰ Know that the inaction of the smaller arteries is attended with diseases of the body, but the dysfunction of the greater arteries is followed by serious diseases.

¹¹ Rama said, “Tell me, O holy sage! How are health and sickness connected with the organs and arteries of the body?”

¹² Vasishta replied:—

Rama, know that both uneasiness and sickness cause pain to the body. Their remedy is healing by medicine, which is attended with our pleasure, but killing them outright by our liberation is what contributes to our true joy.¹³ Sometimes the body is subject to both uneasiness and sickness, as one cause the other. Sometimes they are both alleviated to give us pleasure, and at other times they come upon us by turns only to cause our pain.¹⁴ Sickness (*vyadhis*, illnesses) is the ailing of the body and what we call uneasiness (*adhi*, psychic disorder) is the trouble of the mind. Both arise because of our excessive desires and our ignorance of the nature of things.

¹⁵ Without knowledge of the natures and virtues of things and without control over our desires, the heart string loses its thinness and even course. It becomes swollen and hurried by the impulse of passions and inordinate desires.¹⁶ Both the excitement of obtaining something and the desire for more boil the blood of the heart, shrouding the mind under a shadow of infatuation like an impenetrable

cloud in rainy weather.

¹⁷ The ever increasing greed of the mind and the subjugation of the intellect to foolishness drive men to distant countries in search of a livelihood,¹⁸ working at improper seasons, doing improper actions, the company of infamous men, and create an aptitude for wicked habits and practices.¹⁹ The weakness and fullness of the intestines, caused by too little food on the one hand and too much on the other, cause the derangement of the humors and the disorder of the temperament.

²⁰ When there is an excess or deficit of humors in the body, a great many diseases grow in it, just as a river becomes foul both when its level is low in the summer heat or swollen in the rains.²¹ As the good or bad inclinations of men result from their prior actions in this and previous births, so the anxieties and diseases of the present state are the effects of the good and bad deeds both of this life as also those of the past.

²² I have told you, Rama, about how diseases and anxieties arise in most bodies of men. Now hear me tell you how to eradicate them from human temperament.

²³ There are two sorts of diseases common to human nature, namely ordinary ones and the essential. Ordinary ones are the occurrences of daily life and the essential is what is inborn in our nature.

²⁴ Ordinary anxieties are removed by balancing that which is lacking. Ordinary mental anxieties are removed by the removing the cares that make us anxious.²⁵ But the essential infirmities of one's disposition, being bred in the blood and bone, cannot be removed from the body without the knowledge of the soul, just as the error of the snake in the rope is removed only by examining the rope.

²⁶ False affections of the mind are the source of all our mental anxieties and physical illnesses. If we dam this main spring, the stream breaks its banks in the rains and carries away the trees that grew by it.

²⁷ Ordinary diseases derived from without can be removed by drugs, the spell of mantras, propitiating and preventative charms, and various treatments according to the prescriptions of medical science and the practice of medical men.²⁸ Rama, you know the efficacy of baths and bathing in holy rivers. You are acquainted with the expiatory mantras and prescriptions of experienced practitioners. As you have learnt the medical scriptures, I have nothing further to direct you in this matter.

²⁹ Rama replied, "But tell me sage, how do intrinsic causes produce external diseases? How are they removed by remedies other than medicinal drugs, such as the muttering of mantra incantations and observance of pious acts and ceremonies?"

³⁰ Vasishta replied:—

A man overtaken by anger, losing sight of whatever is present before his eyes, has his mind disturbed by anxieties and his body disordered in its functions.³¹ He loses sight of the broad way before him and takes a devious course of own, like a stag pierced with arrows flying from the beaten path and running into a thicket.³² The spirit being troubled, the vital airs are disturbed and breathe out in fits and short periods, just as the waters of a river, disturbed by a herd of elephants, rise above its channel and flow over their banks.

³³ When the vital airs breathe irregularly, the lungs, nerves and all the veins and arteries of the body become deranged, just as misrule in government puts the laws of the kingdom into disorder.

³⁴ Irregular breathing unsettles the whole body by making blood vessels empty and dry in some parts, and full and stout in others, resembling the empty and full flowing channels of rivers.

³⁵ The lack of free breathing results in indigestion, the poor digestion of food, and loss of lymph and blood that food produces. These defects in digestion bring a great many sicknesses to the system.

³⁶ Vital breaths carry the essence of the food we eat to the interior organs, just as the currents of a river carry floating wood down its stream. ³⁷ The crude matter that remains in the intestines, for lack of assimilation into the blood and circulation in the body because of improper breathing, in the end becomes the sources of many sicknesses.

³⁸ This is the way that troubled states of mind and spirit produce diseases of the body. They are avoided and removed by lack of mental anxiety. Now hear me tell you how mantra-exorcism serves to drive away the diseases of the body.

³⁹ As haritaki fruit by its nature is a purgative purging impurities from the body, so mental effort into the mysterious meaning of mantras removes crude diseases from the body. ⁴⁰ Rama, I have told you that pious acts, holy service, virtuous deeds and religious observances serve to drive diseases from the body by purifying the mind of its impurities, just as the gold is purified by the touch stone. ⁴¹ Purity of the mind produces a delight in the body, just as the rising of the full moon spreads gentle moonbeams over the earth. ⁴² Vital airs breathe freely from the purity of the mind, and these tend to help the digestive process in the stomach, producing nutrition for the body and destroying the germ of its diseases.

⁴³ I have told you, Rama, about the causes and cures of diseases and distempers in the living body in connection with the subject of the main nadi that is the kundalini. Now hear me tell you about the main point of one's attainment of perfection (*siddhi*, mastery) through the practice of yoga.

⁴⁴ The life of the eight-fold human body is confined in the kundalini nadi, just as the fragrance of a flower is contained in its inner filament. ⁴⁵ When one fills the channel of this great nadi with his inhaling breath, then shuts it at its mouth and becomes as calm as a stone, he is then said to have attained his rock-like fixity and firmness, and his mastery (*siddhi*) of inflation (*garima*). ⁴⁶ When the body is inflated with air this way, then the wind that is confined in the kundalini nadi is carried upwards by the vital breath (of respiration), from its base at the bottom to the crown of the head where it touches the consciousness seated in the brain and drives away the fatigue of the process.

⁴⁷ From there the wind rises upward like smoke in the air, carrying with it the powers of all the nadis attached to it like vines clinging to a tree. Then it stands as erect as a stick, its head lifted upwards like the hood of a snake. ⁴⁸ Then this uprising force carries the whole body, filled with wind from top to toe, into the upper sky, just as an aerosol floats upon the water or an air balloon rises in the air.

⁴⁹ In this way yogis make their aerial excursions, by compressing air in the wind pipes of their bodies. They are as happy as poor people when they feel they have the dignity of the king of gods.

⁵⁰ When the force of the exhaling breath (*rechaka*) compels the kundalini force to stand twelve inches above, outside of the head-gate (Brahma Nadi) between eye-brows, ⁵¹ and as it is held there even for

a moment by preventing its entry into any other passage, then at that instant, one comes to see the supernatural beings before his sight.

⁵² Rama said, "Tell me sage. How can we see the supernatural spiritual masters without seeing them with the light of our eyesight and without having any supernatural organ of our own with which to see?"

⁵³ Vasishtha replied:—

It is true, Rama, as you say, that the aerial bodies of the spiritual masters are invisible to earthly mortals with their imperfect physical organs and without the aid of supernatural organs. ⁵⁴ The aerial and beneficent spiritual masters become visible to us, like appearances in our dreams, through clairvoyance obtained by the practice of yoga. ⁵⁵ Seeing spiritual masters is like seeing people in our dream, with only this difference. Seeing a spiritual master is accompanied by many real benefits and blessings bestowed on the beholder. ⁵⁶ By the practice of holding the exhaled breath twelve inches outside the mouth one may enter into the body of another person.

⁵⁷ Rama said, "But tell me sage. How you maintain the immutability of nature? I know you will not be displeased at this interruption to your discourse because good teachers are kindly disposed to solve even the intricate doubts of their hearers."

⁵⁸ Vasishtha replied:—

It is certain that the power known as nature is manifest in the will of the spirit in its acts of the creation and preservation of the world. ⁵⁹ Nature is nothing in reality other than the states and powers of things. These are sometimes seen to differ from one another, just as autumn fruits are found growing in spring in Assam.

⁶⁰ All this universe is one Brahman. The immensity of God and all its variety is the unity of God. When we talk of different existences and appearances, these are only verbal distinctions for ordinary purposes proceeding from our ignorance of the true nature of Brahman. We do not know why these words attempting to describe divine nature, which are irrelevant to the main subject, are introduced in this place.

⁶¹ Rama asked, "Tell me sage. How do bodies become thinned or thickened in order to enter into very narrow passages or occupy large spaces?"

⁶² Vasishtha replied:—

As wood and a saw rubbed together causes the wood to split, and as the friction of two things produces a fire between them, so friction between the inhaling and exhaling breath divide the two *prana* and *apana* air currents, producing digestive fire in the stomach.

⁶³ There is a muscle in the abdominal part of what is the ugly machine of the internal body. It extends like a pair of bellows above and below the navel, their mouths joined together and shaking to and fro like a willow moved by water and air. ⁶⁴ Under this bladder the kundalini nadi rests in its quiet state, tied like a string of pearls in a casket. ⁶⁵ Here the kundalini string turns and twirls around like a string of beads counted about the fingers. It is coiled and has a head like the hood of a snake, and it makes a hissing sound like a snake that has been stricken by a stick.

⁶⁶ The kundalini thrills in the string of the lotus-like heart, just as a bee flutters over the honey of a lotus flower. It kindles our knowledge in the body like the bright sun over the earth and sky. ⁶⁷ It is then that the action of the heart moves all the blood vessels in the body to their various different functions, just as a breeze shakes the leaves of trees.

⁶⁸ As powerful winds rage in the sky and break down the weaker branches and leaves of trees, so the vital airs coil in the body and crush the soft food that has been taken in the stomach. ⁶⁹ As the winds of air batter lotus leaves, at last dissolving them into its native elements, so the internal winds break down food like the leaves of trees and convert the food ingested in the stomach into chyle (lymph and fat fluids), blood, flesh, skin, fat, marrow and bones one after another. ⁷⁰ The internal airs clash against one another to produce gastric fire, just as bamboo in the woods produces living fire by their friction. ⁷¹ The body is naturally cold and cold-blooded. It becomes heated in all its parts by this internal heat, just as every part of the world is warmed by the sun.

⁷² Ascetic yogis meditate upon this internal fire, pervading and fluttering throughout the body like golden bees or twinkling stars over the lotus-form heart. ⁷³ Reflections of these lights are attended with the full blaze of intellectual light. A yogi meditating upon these lights sees objects in his heart which are millions of miles away from him. ⁷⁴ This digestive fire, continually fed by the fuel of food, continues to burn in the lake of the lotus-like muscle of the heart, just like an undersea fire burns in the waters of the seas.

⁷⁵ But the clear and cold light which is the soul of the body bears the name of the serene moon, *somagni* or the residence of the moon and fire. It is the product of the other fire of the body. ⁷⁶ All hotter lights in the world are known by the names of suns or solar fire, and all colder lights are designated as moons or lunar fire. These two lights cherish the world. ⁷⁷ Know that the world is a manifestation of the combination of intelligence and ignorance, and also a mixture of reality and unreality by the one who has manifest this form. ⁷⁸ The learned use the terms knowledge, sun and fire to refer to the light of intelligence, and the names dullness, darkness, ignorance and the coldness of the moon to describe the unrealities of ignorance.

⁷⁹ Rama said, "I well understand that the product of the air of breath and the like, and that the air proceeds from the moon. But tell me sage, from where does the moon come into existence?"

⁸⁰ Vasishta replied:—

Fire and moon (in the body) are mutual causes and effects of each another, just as they produce and destroy each other by turns. ⁸¹ Their production alternates like the seed and its sprout. Their repetition is like the return of day and night. They last a while and are lost instantly, like the succession of light and shade. ⁸² When these opposites appear at the same time, you see them standing side by side like light and shade in daytime. When they occur at different times, you see only one without any trace of the other, just like daylight and nocturnal darkness follow each other.

⁸³ I have told you about two kinds of causality, namely, one in which the cause is co-existent with its effect and the other in which the effect appears after its cause disappears. ⁸⁴ Synchronous causation is simultaneous with its effect, like the seed is coexistent with its germ and the tree is coexistent with the seed it produces. ⁸⁵ The other, called the earlier cause, disappears before the appearance of its effect,

such as the disappearance of the day causes its subsequent night, and the passing of night causes the following day.⁸⁶ The former kind of united cause and effect is exemplified in the example of the doer and the earthen pot, both of which are in existence. This being evident to sight requires no example to elucidate it.⁸⁷ The succession of day and night is sufficient proof of antecedent causality, the kind of disunited cause and effect in which the effect is unassociated with its cause.

⁸⁸ Rationalists who deny the causality of an earlier cause are to be disregarded as fools for ignoring their own experience, and must be spurned with contempt.⁸⁹ Know Rama, that an unknown and absent cause is as evident as any present and tangible cause that is perceptible to the senses. Who can deny the fact that the absence of fire produces cold? It is quite evident to every living body.

⁹⁰ Rama, see how fire ascends upward in the air in form of fumes which take the shape of clouds in the blue sky, which, being transformed afterwards into fire, becomes the immediate cause of the moon.⁹¹ Again the fire, being extinguished by cold, sends its watery particles upwards. This moisture, as the absent or remote cause, produces the moon.⁹² Similarly, the undersea fire, falling and feeding on the foulness of the seven oceans, swallows their briny waters, disgorging their gases and fumes in the open air. These flying to the upper sky in the form of clouds, drop down their purified waters in the form of sweet milky fluids in the Milky Ocean.

⁹³ The hot sun devours the frigid ball of the moon during the dark fortnight, then ejects her in the bright half of every month, just as the stork throws off the tender stalk of the lotus which it has taken.

⁹⁴ Winds that suck up the heat and moisture of the earth in the spring and hot weather, drop them down as rainwater in the rainy season, which serves to renew the body of exhausted nature.⁹⁵ The earthly water, carried up by sunbeams which are called his hands, are converted into the solar rays which are the immediate cause of fire.⁹⁶ Here the water becomes fire by deprivation of its fluidity and frigidity, which deprivation is the remote cause of the formation of fire and its qualities of dryness and warmth.

⁹⁷ Fire being absent, there remains the presence of the moon. The absence of the moon presents the presence of fire.⁹⁸ Again, the fire being destroyed, the moon takes its place in the same way as the departure of the day introduces the night.

⁹⁹ Now in the interval between day and night, between daylight and darkness, and in the middle of shade and light, there is a middle point and a certain truth which eludes even the learned.¹⁰⁰ That point is neither nothingness nor an empty emptiness. Nor is it a positive entity. It is the real pivot and connecting link between both sides. It never changes its central place between both extremes of this and that or the two states of being and not being.¹⁰¹ All things exist in the universe because of the two opposite principles of the intelligent soul and inert matter, just like the two opposites of light and darkness bring on day and night in regular succession.

¹⁰² The world began with the union of mind and matter, or the mover and the moved, just like the body of the moon was formed by a mixture of water and nectar particles in the air.¹⁰³ Rama, know that sunbeams are made of fiery particles, sunlight is the brightness of the intellect, and the body of the moon is only a mass of dull darkness.¹⁰⁴ The sight of the outer sun in the sky destroys the spreading darkness of night, but the appearance of intellectual light dispels the spreading gloom of the world from the mind.

¹⁰⁵ If you see your intellect in the form of the cooling moon, it becomes as dull and cold as that satellite itself. If you look at a lotus at night, you will not find it blooming as it does in the sunshine.

¹⁰⁶ Fire in the form of sunlight brightens the moon in the same way as the light of the intellect illuminates the inner body. Our consciousness is like the moonlight of the inner soul. Our consciousness is the product of the sunbeams of our intellect.

¹⁰⁷ Consciousness has no action. It is without attribute or name. It is like light on the lamp of the soul and it is known like any common light from the lantern. ¹⁰⁸ The eagerness of this consciousness after the knowledge of phenomena makes it aware of the world of the senses. Its thirst after the unintelligible one brings the precious gain of its oneness (*kaivalya*) with the self same one.

¹⁰⁹ The two powers of fire and moon (*agni-soma*) are united with one another in the form of the body and its soul. The scriptures describe their union as the contact of light with a lighted room, or the reflection of sunshine on a wall. ¹¹⁰ They are also known separately in different bodies and at different times. Bodies addicted to dullness are said to be moved by the lunar influence, and persons advancing in their spirituality are said to be led on by force of solar power.

¹¹¹ The rising breath (*prana*), by its nature hot and warm, is said to be agni or fiery. The setting breath of *apana*, cold and slow, is termed the *soma* or lunar. They abide as light and shade in everybody, the one rising upward and passing through the mouth and the other going down by the anus. ¹¹² The downward breath (*apana*) being cooled gives rise to the fiery hot breath of *prana*, which remains in the body like the reflection of something in a mirror.

¹¹³ The light of the intellect produces the brightness of consciousness, and sunbeams reflect themselves as lunar orbs in the dew drops on lotus leaves at early dawn. ¹¹⁴ In the beginning of creation, there was a certain consciousness. Its thought of the properties of heat and cold, *agni* and *soma*, came to be combined to form the human body and mind.

¹¹⁵ Rama, strive to settle yourself at that position twelve inches outside the mouth where the sun and moon of the body (*prana* and *apana*) meet in conjunction. ¹¹⁶ Remain in that place where the moon has merged with the sun in the heart-space. ¹¹⁷ The sun of pure consciousness is said to be of the form of *agni* or heat, and the moon has the form of cold. Stay firm in the realization that the moon is the reflection of the sun (*prana* and *apana*). ¹¹⁸ Know, O sinless one, that the transit and concurrence of *agni* and moon take place in the body. The other transits and combinations that occur outside in time are worthless.

¹¹⁹ O Rama, you shall shine among the wise if you can appreciate and know and feel that the external transits and combinations like *uttarayana* and *dakshinayana* occur inside the body (by the movements of vital energies). Otherwise, you cannot shine.

Chapter 82 — Instructions for Acquiring Powers

¹ Vasishta, continued:—

Now hear me now tell you how yogis are able to expand and contract their bodies at will, reducing to atomic proportions and expanding to gross dimensions.

² Above the lotus-like partition of the heart, there is a blazing fire emitting its sparks, like gold colored butterflies flirting about it, flaring like flashes of lightning in the evening clouds. ³ The fire is aroused and fanned by the animal spirit that blows over it like a breath of wind. This fire pervades the entire body without burning it. It shines as brightly as the sun in the form of our consciousness. ⁴ It lights into a blaze in an instant, like the early rising of the sun gleams upon morning clouds. The fire melts down the whole body, like a burning furnace melts gold in a crucible. ⁵ Being inextinguishable by water, the fire burns the whole outer body down to the feet. Then it coils inside the body, remaining in the form of the mind in man's spiritual body. ⁶ Having reduced the inner body, it becomes lifeless of itself, as extinct as frost when the winds blow.

⁷ The kundalini force, being reduced to the fundamental nadi at the base of the spine, remains in the emptiness of the spiritual body like a shadow of smoke from fire. ⁸ This shade of smoke parades over the heart like a dark colored maiden and encloses in her bosom the subtle body composed of its mind and understanding, the living principle and its egoism. ⁹ It has the power to enter into the porous fibers of lotuses, to penetrate rocks, to stretch over grass, to pop into houses and stones, to pry in the sky and ply in the ground, and to remain and move about everywhere in whatever manner it likes of its own will. ¹⁰ This power produces consciousness and the physical senses by the sap which it supplies to the whole body. It also is filled with juice, like a leather bag dipped in water. ¹¹ This great kundalini artery, filled with gastric fire, forms the body in any shape it likes, just as an artist draws the lines of a picture in any form pictured in his mind. ¹² It supplies the embryonic seed placed in the fetus of the mother with the power of its evolution into the fleshy and bony parts of its future body, just as the tender sprout of a plant seed grows in time into a hard woody tree.

¹³ Rama, know this certain truth acknowledged by the wise, that the living principle acquires whatever state and stature it desires, be that of a mountain or bit of straw. ¹⁴ Rama, you have heard of certain powers attainable by the practice of yoga, such as the powers of diminishing and increasing the bulk and stature of the body. Now listen as I give you an interesting lecture on how to attain these powers through knowledge (*jnana*).

¹⁵ Know for certain that there is only one intelligent principle of Consciousness which is inscrutable, pure and most charming, more minute than the minutest, perfectly tranquil, and is nothing of the mundane world or any of its actions or properties. ¹⁶ The same Consciousness (*chit*), being collected in itself into an individuality from the undivided whole and assuming the power of will or volition itself, becomes the living soul by transformation of its pure nature to an impure one.

¹⁷ The will is a fallacy and the body is a mistake. Only the ignorant distinguish between the living soul and the Universal Spirit, just like an ignorant child sees a demon in a shadow. ¹⁸ When the lamp of knowledge brings the mind to the full light of truth, then the error of will is removed from the living soul, just as the clouds of rainy weather dissipate in autumn. ¹⁹ The body rests after wishes have

subsided in the mind, just as the lamp is extinguished after its oil is exhausted.²⁰ The soul that sees the truth has no more knowledge of his body than the man awakened from his sleep has his dream appearing before him.²¹ The mistake of the unreal for the real or, what is the same, ascribing reality to unreality is what gives the color of reality to false material bodies. The knowledge of truth removes the error of the physical body and restores the soul to its accustomed splendor and true joy.

²² The error of taking the material body for the immaterial soul is so deeply rooted in the mind that it is as difficult to remove as it is for the strongest sunbeams to penetrate the mental gloom of men.

²³ This impenetrable darkness of the mind can only be seen through the sunshine of knowledge that our soul is the seat of the immaculate and all pervading spirit of God, and that I myself am no other than the pure consciousness which is in me.

²⁴ Those who have known the Supreme Soul meditate on it in this manner in their own souls until they find themselves to be assimilated to Supreme Soul by their intense thought of it.²⁵ Therefore, O Rama, some men convert the deadly poison to sweet ambrosial food, and others change delicious nectar into bitter gall.²⁶ So whatever is thought upon with intensity in any manner and on any occasion, the same comes to take place. We can see many examples of this.²⁷ The body seen in the light of a reality is found to be a real existence, but looked upon as an unreality, it vanishes into nothing.

²⁸ O righteous Rama, you have heard talk about the theory of attaining the powers of magnifying and minimizing one's body at will. Now I will tell you of another method of gaining these powers, to which you shall have now to attend.

²⁹ You can practice exhaling your *rechaka* breath to extract your vital energy from the cell of your kundalini nadi and infuse it into another body, just as the winds of the air carry the fragrance of flowers into the nostrils.³⁰ The former body is left lifeless like a log of wood or a block of stone. Such is the relationship between the body and life, like that of a bucket and its water poured out to enliven plants.³¹ Thus life is infused in all movable and immovable things in order to enjoy the pleasures of their particular states at its pleasure.³² The living soul, having tasted the bliss of its complete state, returns to its former body if it is still in existence, or it goes and settles somewhere else, as it may best suit its taste.

³³ In this way yogis pass into all bodies and lives with their conscious souls and fill the world by magnifying their spirits over all space.³⁴ The yogi who is lord of himself by his enlightened understanding, and through his knowledge of all things and their accompanying evils, in an instant obtains whatever he wants and which is present before the brightness of divine light.

Chapter 83 — Queen Chudala's Powers, the King's Ignorance, and the Story of the Miserly Kirata

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Thus Queen Chudala possessed the powers of contracting and expanding herself into any form, and she became expert in these by her continued practice.² She made aerial journeys and navigated at pleasure over the expanse of waters. She moved on the surface of the earth just as the River Ganges glides on her silent course.³ She dwelt in the bosom of her lord like Lakshmi, the goddess of prosperity, abiding in the heart of Vishnu. With her mind she could travel in a moment over every city and country on the earth.

⁴ This fairy lady flew in the air and flashed like lightning with the flashes of her twinkling eyes. She passed like a shadow over the earth, just as a body of clouds passes over a range of mountains.⁵ She passed without any hazard through grass and wood, stones and clods of earth, and through fire and water and air and vacuum like a thread passing through the hole of a heart.⁶ She lightly skimmed over mountain peaks and pried through the regions of the rulers of all sides of heaven. She penetrated into the cavities of the empty womb of emptiness and had a pleasant trip wherever she directed her flight.

⁷ She conversed freely with all living beings, whether they move or lie on the ground as the beasts of earth or crawl upon it like snakes and insects. She talked with savage pisacha tribes and communicated with men, demigods and the immortal gods.

⁸ She tried much to communicate her knowledge to her ignorant husband, but he was in no way capable of receiving her spiritual instruction.⁹ He understood her only as his young princess, the mistress of his house, skilled only in the arts of attraction and being a housewife.¹⁰ All this time the king remained ignorant of the qualifications of Queen Chudala. He did not know that she had progressed in spiritual science like a young student proficient in the different branches of learning.

¹¹ Also, she was reserved showing her complete learning to her unenlightened husband, just as a brahmin declines to show his secret rites to a vile, low caste shudra.

¹² Rama asked, “Sage, if it was impossible for a seer of complete wisdom to communicate her knowledge to her husband Sikhidhwaja, with all her efforts to enlighten him on the subject, then how can it be possible for others to be conversant in spiritual knowledge by any other means?”

¹³ Vasishta answered:—

Rama, the only way of gaining instruction is through obedience to the rule of attending to the precepts of the teacher, joined with the intelligence of the pupil.¹⁴ Neither hearing a sermon nor observing any religious rite is of any value towards the knowledge of the soul unless one employs his own soul to have the light of the Supreme Soul shine upon it. Only spirit can know spirit, just as only a serpent can trace out the path of another serpent.

¹⁵ Rama replied, “If such is the course of the world, that we can learn nothing without the instruction of our teachers, then tell me, O sage! How can the precepts of the wise lead to our spiritual knowledge?”

¹⁶ Vasishta replied:—

Rama, listen as I tell you a story to this effect. There lived an old Kirata of the past who was miserly in his conduct as he was rich in his possessions of wealth and grain. He dwelt with his family by the side of the Vindhya woods, like a poor brahmin living apart from his friends and relations.

¹⁷ One time, as he happened to pass by his native forest, he dropped a single chowry shell from his purse. It fell in a shrub and was lost under the grass. ¹⁸ He ran on every side, beating the bush for three days to find his lost chowry shell, impelled by his stinginess to leave no fallen leaf unturned.

¹⁹ As he searched and turned about, he turned thoughts in his mind, thinking, "Ah! this single chowry shell would make four by its commerce, and that would bring me eight in time, and this would make a hundred and a thousand, and more and more by repetition, so I have lost a treasure in this." ²⁰ Thus, over and over he counted the gains he would gain, sighing as often at the loss he had suffered and ignoring the rustic peasantry of his foolish cheapness.

²¹ At the end of the third day he came across a rich jewel, as brilliant as the bright moon, which by a thousand fold compensated for the loss of his worthless chowry shell. ²² He happily returned home with his great gain, highly delighted with the thought of keeping poverty away from his door forever.

²³ The Kirata was quite satisfied with his unexpected gain of great treasure while searching for his worthless chowry shell. He passed his days without any care or fear of the changeful world.

²⁴ So the student, in search of worldly knowledge, comes to obtain spiritual knowledge from his teacher. The student's quest of temporal learning is only a trifle compared to his eternal concern.

²⁵ O sinless Rama, it is impossible to attain divine knowledge merely through a teacher's lectures because the lord is beyond the perception of senses. God can not be expressed by or known from the words of the instructor's mouth. ²⁶ Yet it is also true that without the guidance of the spiritual guide, it is impossible to attain spiritual knowledge. No one can gain a rich gem without his search after a chowry shell, like the miserly Kirata. ²⁷ As the search for a chowry shell resulted in the gain of a jewel, so our attendance on the secular instructions of the teacher becomes an indirect cause to our acquisition of the invaluable treasure of spiritual knowledge.

²⁸ Rama, look at these wonderful events of nature that bring about results different from what we were pursuing. ²⁹ It often comes to pass that our attempts are attended with another result from what should have happened. Therefore, it is better for us to remain indifferent with regard to the results of our acts.

Chapter 84 — King Sikkidhwaja Abandons His Kingdom for the Life of a Hermit

¹ Vasishta related:—

King Sikkidhwaja continued in utter darkness without sight of his spiritual knowledge, groping his way in the gloom of the world in utter despair of any glimpse of hope, like a childless man passes his sorrowful days.² His heart, without hope of salvation, burned inconsolably in the flame of his anxieties. His great wealth only served as fuel to feed the fire of his hopelessness. He lacked the cooling shower of spiritual knowledge.³ He found some consolation in lonely retreats in mountain caves and beside waterfalls where he wandered freely, like a beasts of prey running from the arrows of hunters.

⁴ Rama, he became as distracted as you had been before, discharging his daily rituals only at the humble request and repeated solicitations of his attendant servants.⁵ He was as unexcitable and cold blooded as a religious recluse. He avoided the enjoyments of princely pleasures and abstained from his usual food.⁶ He gave his homage to the gods, brahmins and his relatives with large donations of lands and gifts of gold and cattle.⁷ He went on performing the austerities of religious rites and the rigorous ceremonies of chandaryana and others. He travelled through wilds and deserts and inhabited lands to his pilgrimages far and near.⁸ Yet nowhere did he find any consolation for his mind, which is what he was seeking like a miner digging in barren soil in quest of some mineral that is not to be found.

⁹ He was languishing under the intensity of his anxiety, as if suffering under the fiery heat of the sun. He sought some remedy for the worldly cares that haunted him constantly, day and night.¹⁰ Being absorbed in his thoughts, he sought not for anything of the poisonous pleasures of his kingdom. With meekness of spirit and mind, he did not look at the grand estate that lay before him.

¹¹ It happened one day, as he was sitting with his beloved princess reclining on his lap, that he spoke to her in his sweetly flowing speech as follows.

¹² Sikkidhwaja said:—

I have long tasted the pleasures of my kingdom and enjoyed the sweet and bitter of my large property and landed possessions. Now I am grown weary of them as they are both the same and stale to me.

¹³ Know my delighted lady, that a silent sage is exempt from pleasure and pain. No prosperity or adversity can ever befall a lonely hermit of the forest.¹⁴ Neither the fear of loss of lives in battle nor the dread of losing territory in defeat can ever take a lonely hermit of the forest. Therefore I think the helpless state of a hermit is happier by far than the dignity of royalty.

¹⁵ The woodland grounds are as pleasing to me as you are, with clusters of blossoms in spring, ruddy leaves resembling your rosy palms, their twisted filaments like the curls of your hair, and the flimsy white clouds like clean garments.¹⁶ Blooming flowers resemble ornaments and their pollen is the scented powder on their bodies. Seats of reddish stones resemble buttocks.¹⁷ Surrounding, pearly streams flowing in the woods resemble hanging strings of pearls on their necks. Their foaming waves are like clusters of pearls tied like knots on their clothing. Tender vines are their playful daughters and the frisky deer are like their playful darlings.¹⁸ Perfumed with the natural fragrance of flowers, having swarming bees for their eyelids and eyebrows and wearing flowers as their garments, the

woods offer an abundance of fruit for food.¹⁹ The pure waters of the falling cascades are sweet to taste. They cool the body as your company gratifies my senses. Therefore I foster an equal fondness for these woodland scenes as I bear for your company.

²⁰ The calm composure which solitude seems to give to the soul, in my estimation, is far superior to the delight that I derive from cooling moonlight or the bliss that I might enjoy in the paradise of Indra and in the heaven of Brahma himself.²¹ Now my dear one, you should not put any obstacle in the way of my plans, because no faithful wife ever presents any obstruction to the desires of her lord.

²² Chudala replied:—

Work done in its proper time is commendable. It is as delightful to see flowers blossoming in spring as it is pleasant to find ripe fruit and grain in autumn.²³ Retiring in the forest is for the old and decrepit and others broken down in body by age. It is not fitting for a young man like yourself to fly from the world. Therefore I do not approve your choice.

²⁴ Let us remain at home, O young prince, so long as we have not passed our youth. We flourish here like flowers that do not abandon their parent tree until flowering time is over.²⁵ Like flowery vines, let us grow white with grey hairs on our heads, then leave our home together like a pair of fond herons fly away forever from a dried lake.

²⁶ Mind also, my noble lord, the great sin that waits on a disgraceful king of royal race who abandons the welfare of his people during the time of his rule.²⁷ Moreover, keep in mind the opposition you will have to face from your subjects who are authorized to check your unseasonable and unworthy act as you are empowered to check theirs.

²⁸ Sikkidhwaja replied:—

Know my royal lady, that your appeal is in vain. I am determined to go away from here. Know me as already gone from you and your kingdom to a retreat in woods far away from here.

²⁹ You are young and handsome. You should not accompany me to dreary deserts and forests which, in many respects, are dreadful and impassable by men.³⁰ Women, however hardy they may be, are never able to endure the hardships of forest life, just as it is impossible for a tender stem to withstand the stroke of an axe.³¹ Remain here, O excellent lady, and rule over this kingdom in my absence. Take the burden of supporting your dependents, which is the highest and best duty of women.

³² Vasishta related:—

Saying this to the moon-faced queen, the self-governed king rose from his seat to make his daily ablution and discharge his many duties of the day.³³ Afterwards, the king took leave of his subjects, despite all their appeals to detain him. He departed like the setting sun towards his forest journey, which was unknown and impassable by everyone.

³⁴ He set out like the setting sun deprived of his glory and disappeared like the sun from the sight of all. A veil of melancholy covered the face of the queen as she saw her lord leaving the recess of her chamber, just as the face of nature is hidden in the shadow of darkness when daylight disappears below the horizon.³⁵ Now the dark night advanced, veiling the world under her covering of ash-colored dusk, just as when the god Shiva forsakes the fair Ganga and takes the dark Yamuna into his

embrace.³⁶ The sides of heaven seemed to smile all around with teeth-like clumps of evening clouds and the light of moonbeams glittering on the shoots of tamara trees.³⁷ As the lord of the day departed towards the setting mountain of Sumeru on the other side of the horizon in order to wander over the paradise of the gods on the north, so the brightness of the day began to fail as the shade of evening prevailed over the face of the forsaken world.

³⁸ Now dark night accompanied by her lord, the night luminary, advanced on this side of the southern hemisphere to play like a loving couple with this cooling light and shade.³⁹ Clusters of stars were scattered in the ethereal sphere under the canopy of heaven, looking like handfuls of fried rice scattered by the hands of celestial maidens on some auspicious occasion.⁴⁰ The dark colored night gradually advanced to her puberty with the buds of lotuses as her budding breasts. Then she smiled with her moonlike face littered in the opening of the nightly flowers.

⁴¹ After performing his evening services, the king returned to his beloved queen who was drowned in deep sleep, as Mount Mainaka drowned in the depth of the sea.⁴² It was around midnight, when all was still and quiet all about. People were all fast asleep, as if covered in stone.⁴³ He found her fast asleep in her soft and downy bed, resting in the lap of deep slumber like a female bee in a lotus.

⁴⁴ The king started up from his sleep, parted from his cold embrace of the sleeping partner of his bed, all as the ascending point of Rahu slowly lets the eclipsed moon in the east from its mouth.⁴⁵ He got up from his half of the bed while the queen lay on the other half, as when the god Vishnu rises from his bed of the waters of the Milky Ocean, leaving the lonely Lakshmi rolling in the waves after him.

⁴⁶ He walked out of the palace and ordered the guards to stand at their places. Full of confidence in himself, he told them that he was going to arrest a gang of robbers beyond the outskirts of the city.

⁴⁷ "Farewell my royalty," he thought, then passed onward out of his kingdom, passing through inhabited tracts and forest lands, as the course of a river runs to the sea.

⁴⁸ With his firm fortitude in the gloom of night, he passed through thickets of forests beset by thorny bushes, full of heinous beasts and reptiles.⁴⁹ In the morning he arrived at some open land free of woods and jungles. That day he walked from sunrise to sunset when he took refuge under the shelter of a grove.⁵⁰ The sun departing from sight left him to the darkness of night, when he performed his bathing and the daily rite. Having eaten some root or fruit which he could find, he passed the night resting on barren ground.⁵¹ Again and again morning appeared and brought to light many new cities and districts and many hills and rivers which he passed over bravely for twelve days and nights.

⁵² He reached the foothills of Mandara Mountain, covered by a forest so dense and immense that no human foot could penetrate. It was far from the reach of man and the boundaries of human habitation.

⁵³ There he found a place by running streams, set with rows of trees with aqueducts under them, where there were the traces of a dilapidated dwelling, apparently the deserted house of some holy hermit.

⁵⁴ It was clear of all harmful reptiles and small insects and was planted with sacred plants and vines for the sacred purposes of holy spiritual adepts. It was also full of fruit trees that supplied its occupant with plenty of food.⁵⁵ There was a level and pure spot of ground with a water course and green vegetation and trees loaded with luxuriant fruit and stretching a cooling shade all over it.

⁵⁶ It was here that the king built a covered shelter of green vines and leafy branches. Their blooming

blossoms glistened like the blue dome of heaven under the lightning of the rainy season.⁵⁷ He made himself a staff of bamboo and some vessels for his food and drink, and also some plates to put his offerings of fruits and flowers, and a jar to present holy water. He strung some seeds together to make his saintly rosary.⁵⁸ He gathered the hides of dead animals to cover the cold, and a deerskin for his meditation seat, placing them carefully in his holy hermit's cell.⁵⁹ He also collected all other things that were of use in the discharge of his priestly functions. He kept them in his sacred cell just like the Lord of Creatures has stored the earth with every provision required for living beings.

⁶⁰ He performed his morning devotions, then later he turned his beads muttering his mantras. In the afternoon he performed his sacred ablution, offering flowers in the service of the gods.⁶¹ Afterwards he took some wild fruit, ground root, and soft lotus stalks for his food in the evening, then passed the night with his lonely self-possession meditating upon his Maker.⁶² Thus did the King of Malwa pass his days with perfect cheer of heart in the hermitage that he had constructed at the foot of Mandara Mountain. He thought no more of his royal pleasures. They were utterly lost under the influence of his renunciation which had taken full possession of his entire soul and mind.

Chapter 85 — Chudala Appears as a Brahmin Boy to Sikkidhwaja; Narada's Ejaculation; the Outline of Nature as Created by Brahma

¹ Vasishta continued:—

In this manner, King Sikkidhwaja remained in his monastery in the forest in his state of perfect joy. The queen remained at home and did as you shall now hear from me.

² After the king left the palace at midnight, Chudala woke up from her sleep like a frightened deer startled by fear. ³ She found the bed vacated by her husband and thought it as dreary as the sky without sun or moon. ⁴ She rose up with a sad face, her heart full of sorrow. Her limbs were as lank as the leaves of plants deprived of water in summer. ⁵ Sorrow sat heavy in her heart and drove away the charm and cheerfulness of her face. She remained like a winter day, overcast by clouds or covered by a frost.

⁶ For a while she sat on the bedstead sorrowfully thinking, “Ah sorrow unto me that my lord has gone from here and abandoned a kingdom for a retreat in the woods. ⁷ What can I do now? I ought to go to my husband, wherever he is, because it is appointed both by the law of nature and God that the husband is the only resort and support of the wife.”

⁸ Having thought so, Chudala rose up to follow her husband. She fled through a window shutter into the open air. ⁹ She roamed in her aerial course by the force of her breath on the wings of air. To the aerial spirits, the spiritual masters, she looked like a second moon moving in the skies. ¹⁰ As she was passing at nighttime, she happened to see her lord wandering about with a sword in his hand, looking like the ghost of a vetala demon wandering in the lonely forest. ¹¹ The queen, seeing her husband in this manner from her aerial seat, began to reflect on the future state which awaited her husband and which she foresaw by the power of her yoga.

¹² It is certain, O Rama, that whatever is allotted in the book of fate as befalling on anybody at anytime or place or manner, the same is sure to take place at the very moment and place and in the same way.

¹³ The queen, plainly seeing whatever was to take place with her husband and knowing it could not be averted by any means, refrained from going and telling him what was to happen. ¹⁴ “Let my visit to him be postponed to a future occasion when it is destined for me to be in his company again.” ¹⁵ Thinking so, Chudala turned her course away from him and returned to her inner apartment where she reclined on her milk-white pillow like the crescent moon rests on the ancient forehead of Shiva.

¹⁶ The queen told her people that the king had gone on some important occasion. Relieved with the knowledge that he would return, she took command of the government in her own hands. ¹⁷ She managed the realm like her husband according to the established rules of toleration, and with the same care and vigilance as a woman guarding her ripening cornfields. ¹⁸ In this manner they passed their days without seeing one another. The married pair lived separately from each other, one in the royal palace and other in the lonely forest. ¹⁹ Days and nights passed into weeks and fortnights, then months and seasons in regular succession. One counted his days in the woods and the other in her princely palace. ²⁰ What is the use of a lengthy description of all eighteen years that slowly passed over the separated couple, one living in her palatial dome and the other in his woodland retreat?

²¹ Many more years passed in this manner until the hermit King Sikhidhwaja, in his holy retreat in a hut by the great Mandara Mountain, was overtaken by hoary old age. ²² The queen knew that the passions of the king were declining with age and grey hairs. Finding herself not yet too old to overtake him in the distant forest, ²³ and believing that it was the proper time for her to prevail on him and bring him back to the palace, she thought of joining her husband where he was.

²⁴ With these thoughts, she made up her mind to go towards Mandara Mountain. She left her home that night, mounting on the wings of air into the upper sky. ²⁵ As she flew onward on the wings of air, she saw in the upper sky some women who were spiritual masters wearing the thin bark of the kalpa tree and covered with clusters of jewels. ²⁶ These were the inhabitants of the garden of paradise going out to meet their spiritual master husbands, sprinkled with perfumes and shedding their dew like bright moonbeams. ²⁷ She breathed the air perfumed by the flowers of the Nandana garden of paradise and worn by the women masters of paradise. She wallowed in the moonbeams that spread like waves of the Milky Ocean. ²⁸ She felt a purer moonlight as she ascended into the higher atmosphere. She passed through clouds like lightening.

²⁹ She thought to herself, "This lightning, though situated in the bosom of her cloudy spouse, is yet looking at him repeatedly with the winking of her eyes. In the same way I must look for my absent lord as I pass like the lightning through the midway sky."

³⁰ "It is true," she thought to herself, "that it is impossible to avoid one's nature during one's lifetime. Hence it is impossible for my disturbed mind to be calm without the sight of my loving and lion-like lord. ³¹ My mind wanders and runs mad when I think, "I will see my lord" and "When will I see these vines turning round and clasping their supporting tree?" ³² My mind is impatient seeing the close contact of these senseless vines and the superior female masters in quest of their consorts. ³³ How and when shall I, like them, come to meet the man who is in my heart?"

³⁴ "These gentle breezes, these cooling moonbeams, and those plants of the forest all continue to disturb my heart and set it on fire. ³⁵ O my simple heart, why do you throb in vain and thrill within every vein within me? O my faithful mind who is as pure as the air, why do you loose your reason and right discretion? ³⁶ It is you, O faithless mind, that excites my heart to run after its spouse. Better remain with your yearnings in yourself than torment my quiet spirit with your longings."

³⁷ "Or why is it, O silly woman, that you long in vain after your husband who possibly has become too old? He is now an ascetic, too weak in his body and devoid of all earthly desires. ³⁸ I think that any desire to enjoy his royal honors and pleasures have been utterly rooted out of his mind. The plant of his fondness for sensual gratifications is now as dry as a channel that has emptied its waters into a large river. ³⁹ I think my husband, who was fond of me as to share the same soul, has become as indifferent to soft passions like a dried and withered tree."

⁴⁰ "Or I will try the power of my yoga to waken his mind to sense and infuse the eager longings and throbbing of my heart into his? ⁴¹ I will collect and focus the thoughts of the ascetic devotee towards the government of his kingdom where we may settle forever to our hearts' content. ⁴² After such a long time I have discovered the way to my object by infusing my very thoughts into the mind of my husband. ⁴³ The union of minds between a wedded pair and the pleasure of their constant union

contribute to the highest happiness of human beings on earth."

⁴⁴ Revolving in this manner, Queen Chudala continued on her aerial journey, now over mountains and clouds, then passing the boundaries of lands and visible horizons. She reached the sight of Mandara and found the glen and cavern in it. ⁴⁵ She entered the grove as an aerial spirit invisible to sight. She passed like air, revealed only by the shaking of the leaves on trees. ⁴⁶ She saw a leafy hut in one corner of the wood and recognized her husband by the power of her yoga, though he appeared to be transformed into another person.

⁴⁷ She found that his body, previously decorated with royal clothes and jewels glittering like Mount Meru with its gold, had grown lean and thin, dark and dry as a withered, dried leaf. ⁴⁸ He wore a covering of coarse material and looked as if he had been dipped in a fountain of ink. He sat alone in one spot, looking like the god Shiva wholly devoid of all desire. ⁴⁹ He was sitting on the barren ground, stringing flowers to his braided hairs, when the beautiful queen approached before him.

⁵⁰ She was moved to sorrow at the sight of his miserable plight, thinking, "Alas, how painful it is to see this pitiful sight! ⁵¹ O, the great stupidity that rises from ignorance of spiritual knowledge and which has brought on this miserable condition on this self-deluded king."

⁵² "I must not call him unfortunate as long as he is my husband, though the deep darkness of his mind (ignorance) has brought on this miserable plight. ⁵³ I must try my best to bring him to the knowledge of truth. No doubt that will restore him to his sense of enjoyment here and of his liberation hereafter, and change his figure to another form altogether. ⁵⁴ He always treats me like his young and silly wife, but I must get closer to him to instill understanding in his mind or else my words will have no effect on him. ⁵⁵ Therefore, I will assume the form of a devotee in order to admonish my husband. It is possible that if I admonish him in this manner, it will make its effect upon he who is now grown white haired with old age. ⁵⁶ It is possible that good senses may dawn in a clear understanding that is not perverted from its nature."

Thinking in this way, Queen Chudala took the shape of a brahmin boy. ⁵⁷ She reflected a little on the *agni-soma* mantra and changed her form like water turning into a wave, then descended on the earth in the form of a brahmin's lad. ⁵⁸ She advanced toward her lord with a smiling face, and King Sikkidwaja saw the brahmin boy advancing towards him.

⁵⁹ The boy appeared to come from some other forest and stood before the ascetic king in the form of devotion itself. His body, bright as molten gold, was ornamented with a string of pearls. ⁶⁰ The white sacrificial thread graced his neck and his body was covered with two pieces of milk-white vests. He held a sacred water pot on one hand, and with his pupil's staff in the other, he made his approach to the king. ⁶¹ His wrist was entwined by a string of beads and a long, double chain of beads hung from his neck to the ground. ⁶² His head was covered by long and flowing jet black hair, like strings of black bees fluttering about the tops of white lotuses. His radiance shed a brightness on the spot. ⁶³ His face, ornamented with earrings, glowed like the rising sun with his luster of rosy rays. The knotted hair on top of his head, a mandara flower fastened on it, appeared like a mountain peak with the rising moon above it.

⁶⁴ The husband, sitting quietly with his tall body, his limbs and senses under his subjection, ash

rubbed all over his body, appeared like a mountain of ice.⁶⁵ He saw the brahmin boy appearing before him like the full moon rising on the golden mount of Meru. He rose before him respectfully.

⁶⁶ Thinking his guest was the son of some god, Sikkidhwaja stood with his bare feet before him and addressed him saying, "Obeisance to you, O you son of a god! Take this seat and sit yourself here."

⁶⁷ With his hand, Sikkidhwaja pointed to the leafy bed that spread before him and offered a handful of flowers which he poured into the boy's hands.

⁶⁸ The brahmin boy responded saying, "I greet you in return, O son of a king! You look like a dew drop or beaming moonlight sparkling on a lotus leaf." He then received the flowers from his hand and sat upon the leafy bed.

⁶⁹ Sikkidhwaja said, "Tell me, O you heaven-born boy, from where did you come and where are you going? It is a lucky day for me that has brought you to my sight.⁷⁰ Please accept this pure water, fragrant flowers, and this offering also. Receive this garland of flowers that I have strung with my hands. May all be well with you."

⁷¹ Vasishta related:—

So saying, Sikkidhwaja offered the flowers, the garland, and other offerings to the lady who was devoted to him, as is the custom of ceremonial law.

⁷² Chudala (*as the brahmin boy*) said:—

I have travelled far and wide over many countries on the surface of this earth. I have never met with such a hearty reception and such honors as I have now received from you.⁷³ Your humility, courtesy and complacence reveal you to be highly favored of the gods and indicate that you will have a long life on earth.

⁷⁴ Tell me, O devotee. You have abandoned all your earthly desires and practiced magnanimity and tranquility of your soul for a long time. Have you ever applied your mind to attain your final liberation and extinction?⁷⁵ You have vowed to undergo the hardship of this forest life and forsaken the care of your large kingdom. You have, my dear sage, chosen a very painful alternative for your final liberation.

⁷⁶ Sikkidhwaja replied:—

Being a god yourself, I do not wonder how you know these things. You wear this form of a brahmin boy, yet the supernatural beauty of your body says that you are an all-knowing god.⁷⁷ I think that your body is designed and formed with the ambrosial beams of moonlight. Otherwise, how could your mere appearance shed such sweet peace even at first sight?⁷⁸ O handsome boy, I see in your person a great resemblance to the features of my beloved who is now ruling over my kingdom.

⁷⁹ Please, now refresh your fair and fatigued body by wearing these flower garlands from head to foot, just as a white cloud is a garment covering a mountain from its top to bottom.⁸⁰ I see your face as beautiful as the stainless moon. Your limbs are as delicate as tender flower petals, and I see them now waning and fading under the bright sun.⁸¹ Pretty youth, know that I strung these flower garlands in service for the gods. Now I offer and give them to you who is no less a god to me.⁸² My life is crowned today with its best luck by this opportunity to serve a guest like you. The wise say that

hospitality to guests has merit equal to service to the gods.

⁸³ Now please, O moon-faced god, reveal to me, which god are you? From which lineage of gods comes the god who consents to dignify me with this visit? Please tell me all this and remove the questions that disturb my breast.

⁸⁴ The brahmin boy replied:—

Hear me, king, relate all that you want to know of me, for who is there so uncivil as to deceive and not comply with the request of a humble suppliant?

⁸⁵ In this world there lives the well known holy saint, Narada by name. He is the snowy spot of pure camphor on the face of those who are famed for the purity of their lives. ⁸⁶ Once this godly saint sat in meditation in a cave of the golden mountain where the holy Ganges River flows fast with her running current and huge waves dashing against the shore. ⁸⁷ The saint stepped onto a beach of the river to see how it glided on in its course like a necklace of gems torn down from the high mountain. ⁸⁸ He heard the tinkling sound of trinkets and bracelets and a mixed murmur of voices. He was curious to know what it was and from where it came.

⁸⁹ He lightly looked towards the sacred stream and saw a group of young ladies who equaled the celestial nymphs Rambha and Tilottama in their beauty. These damsels were playing and bathing in the clear waters of the holy river. ⁹⁰ They plunged and played in the waters, hidden from the sight of men and all naked with uncovered breasts blooming like buds of golden lotuses in a lake. ⁹¹ They ran to and fro, dashing against each other like ripe fruit on trees, as if intoxicated with flavored liquor, making their observers giddy themselves. ⁹² Their swollen breasts formed the sanctuary of the god of love. They were washed by the pure waters of the sacred river. ⁹³ Their fullness with delicious liquor put to blush the sweet waters of the sacred Ganges River. They were enclosed in the garden of paradise like the wheels of the car that the god Kama rides upon. ⁹⁴ Their buttocks were like the pillars of a bridge in water, obstructing and dividing the free passage of the waters of the Ganges. Their upper bodies gave a luster of the world's beauty. ⁹⁵ The shadows of their bodies were clearly visible to the naked eye on the clear waters of the Ganges, like a kalpa tree in rainy season with all its branches.

⁹⁶ The thick vegetation of spring gave shade from the light of day. The flying dust of flowers filled the forest air with fragrance. ⁹⁷ Water fowls of various kinds were sporting on the banks, as they do by the seaside and watering places round the trees. These ladies' budding breasts made the blooming lotus buds blush. ⁹⁸ They held up their faces, beautiful as lotus buds, while their loosened hair hung like swarms of bees. The loose glances of their eyes played like fluttering black bees. ⁹⁹ Their swollen breasts resembled golden lotuses used by the gods as golden cups to hide their ambrosial nectar for fear of it being seized by demons and demigods. ¹⁰⁰ Now they were seen hiding in secret covered shelters and in mountain caves, like lotuses hidden under foliage, and then they were hastening to the cooling river beach to bathe their lovely limbs in its clear stream.

¹⁰¹ The saint saw the collection of young ladies looking as beautiful as the body of the full moon. His mind was ravished with their beauty. ¹⁰² He lost the balance of his reason and became elated with giddiness. The breath of his life throbbed in his heart from the impulse of delight that raged and

boiled in his breast.¹⁰³ At last the excess of his bliss made his passion pour out, just as the fullness of a summer cloud breaks out in water in rainy weather.

¹⁰⁴ The saint turned as pale as the waning moon, like pale moonlight on frost, like a fading plant torn from its supporting tree.¹⁰⁵ He faded like the stalk of a vine split in two and withered away like a sapling after it has lost its juicy sap.

¹⁰⁶ Sikkidhwaja asked:—

Narada is a pure saint, liberated in his lifetime and acquainted with all knowledge. He is devoid of desires or passions, as pure as the clear air both inside and outside his body.¹⁰⁷ How is it that even holy Narada himself, who always leads his life of celibacy, could lose his patience and composure?"

¹⁰⁸ Chudala (*as the brahmin boy*) replied:—

Know, O kingly sage, that all living beings in the three worlds, not even the gods are exceptions, by their very nature have bodies composed of both good and evil ingredients.¹⁰⁹ Some remain in ignorance and others in knowledge to the end of their lives. Some remain in happiness and others in misery to the end of their days.¹¹⁰ Some thrive in happiness with their virtues of contentment and the like, enlightened in their minds like a room by the light of the lamps, and like the bosom of the sea brightened the light of the stars of heaven.¹¹¹ Some are tormented by their hunger and poverty, involved in misery like the nature under dark clouds.¹¹² The true and pure reality of the soul, once lost to sight, makes its appearance before him like a dark and thick cloud of rainy weather.

¹¹³ Though one may be employed in continuous investigation into spirituality, yet a moment's neglect of his spiritualism is sure to darken his spiritual light, just as the apparition of the world appears to sight.¹¹⁴ As the succession of light and dark makes the course of days and nights, so the return of pain and pleasure indicates the progress of life.¹¹⁵ Thus the two states of pleasure and pain, the results of our prior acts, accompany our lives from birth to death.¹¹⁶ This impression of past life completely dominates the lives of the ignorant, just as red dye forever colors a cloth, but it is not so with the intelligent. Their knowledge of truth wipes off the stigma of their prior acts.

¹¹⁷ The eternal color of a gem, whether it be good or bad, shows on the outside. A crystal stone, however clear it may be, takes the color of the other objects reflected in it.¹¹⁸ But it is not so with the intelligent knower of truth, whose soul is free from all inner and outer impressions in his lifetime, and whose mind is never tinged by the reflection of anything around him, as it is with the ignorant.¹¹⁹ Not only the presence of things and pleasures stain the minds of the ignorant. Their absence and loss also cause great regret from the stain they leave in the memory, just as things are colored not only by new paint, but also various marks and signs.

¹²⁰ Thus the minds of the ignorant are never cleansed from the stain of their favorite objects. They are never free from their bondage in this world, unlike the liberated sage who is free because of his lack of earthly attachment. Reducing our desires contributes to our liberation. Increasing our wishes leads us to continued bondage in this world.

¹²¹ Sikkidhwaja said:—

Tell me my lord, why do men feel sorry or happy at their pain or pleasure, and for things that are far

away from them and to which they are bound by their birth in this world? ¹²² I find your words to be as clear as they are pretty and full of meaning. The more I hear them, the more I thirst to listen to them, just as the peacock is not satisfied with the roaring of clouds.

¹²³ Chudala (*as the brahmin boy*) answered:—

It is pleasant to inquire into the cause of our birth and how the soul with the body derives its knowledge through the senses, thereby feeling a delight which is obvious in babies. ¹²⁴ But the living soul, contained in the heart and running through the kundalini nadi as the breath of life, is subject to pain and sorrow from its birth.

¹²⁵ The living soul, which is the vital energy entering into the lungs breathing with the breath of life, becomes confined in the arterial chains of prison houses that are different bodies. ¹²⁶ The breath of life circulates through the body, touching its different parts and the organs of sense, raising their sensations in the soul. As the moisture of the ground grows trees and shrubs, so does our vitality produce the sensations of pleasure and pain in the soul. ¹²⁷ The living soul, confined in the arteries of different bodies, gives a degree of happiness and steadiness to some which the miserable can never enjoy.

¹²⁸ Know that the living soul is liberated in the same proportion as it manifests its peaceful tranquil state. Know also that the soul is in bondage to the same degree that there is sorrow on the face and breathing is choked. ¹²⁹ Alternating feelings of pain and pleasure also indicate bondage of the soul. The absence of these alternations constitutes its liberation. These are the two states of the living soul.

¹³⁰ As long as the deceptive senses do not bring false sensations of pain and pleasure to the soul, it rests in its state of sweet composure and calm tranquility. ¹³¹ When the invisible soul comes in sight of some transient pleasure or want of pain, it becomes as happy as the cheerful sea reflecting bright moonbeams in its bosom. ¹³² The soul equally exults at the sight of pleasure as it grieves at the knowledge of its unsteadiness, just as a foolish cat rejoices to see a fish even though it does not have the power to catch it. ¹³³ When the soul has the pure knowledge of phenomena and awareness of itself, it comes to know that there is no such thing as actual pain or pleasure. With this knowledge, it remains calm and quietly composed forever and under every circumstance.

¹³⁴ When the soul comes to know that it has no relationship with any pain or pleasure, and that its living has no purpose at all, then it is then said to be awakened in itself and to rest in its stillness of nirvana. ¹³⁵ When the living soul comes to know by its internal intuition that pain and pleasure are unreal in their nature, it is no longer concerned about them but rests quietly within itself. ¹³⁶ When the soul comes to believe that the visible world is nothing but the emptiness of Consciousness or Brahman himself, it gets its rest in its stillness and becomes as cool as a lamp that has gone out because it lacks oil.

¹³⁷ What leads the soul to becoming unconsciousness of pain and pleasure is the belief that all nature is emptiness, that all existence is the one unity, and the thought of an infinite emptiness. ¹³⁸ Thoughts of pleasure and pain are as false as the false appearance of the world. This error is inherited by the living soul from Brahma, the first of living beings in the world. ¹³⁹ Whatever was thought and ordained by the first creative power in the beginning, the same has taken root in the living soul and is

going on even to the present time as its nature.

¹⁴⁰ Sikkidhwaja asked:

Only when one feels some pleasure in his mind does it run in the blood through his veins and arteries. But the holy Narada could not be affected by the sight, or drop his semen because of it.

¹⁴¹ Chudala (*as the brahmin boy*) replied:—

When the animal soul is excited, that excites the living breath of life force (*prana*) into motion. The entire body obeys the dictates of the mind, just as soldiers obey the orders of their commander.

¹⁴² The vital airs being put to motion, they move the internal sap and serum from their seats, just as blowing winds bear the fragrance and pollen of flowers and drop down flowers, fruit and leaves of trees. ¹⁴³ When semen is put into motion, it falls downwards, just as clouds driven together burst into rainwater. ¹⁴⁴ The semen then passes out of the body by the channels of the veins and arteries, just as running waters pass through the channels and canals of a river.

¹⁴⁵ Sikkidhwaja said:—

O you divine boy! Your instructive words indicate that you know both the past and present states of things. Now please instruct me. What do you mean by the nature of things, the power of Brahma?

¹⁴⁶ Chudala (*as the brahmin boy*) replied:—

Nature is the intrinsic character implanted in the constitution of things at the beginning of their creation. This nature continues to this day as the essential part of the pot or painting, as examples, and all other things. ¹⁴⁷ It comes on through an accidental course of its own. The learned compare it with the rise and fall of waves and bubbles in water, or the marks of defects in wood or iron. ¹⁴⁸ Through the power of this nature, all things in the world move about in their various forms with all their properties of change or inertia. Only the indifferent soul without desires is liberated from the influence of nature. Souls with cravings are fast bound with its own chains, wandering with their restless craving nature in repeated reincarnations.

Chapter 86 — Narada's Sperm Gestates in a Pot and Is Born as Kumbha, Who Is the Brahmin Boy

¹ Chudala continues:—

It is the nature of everything in this extensive world to be born of its own kind. All persons and things continue to exist because of their own desires and tendencies, whether it be in the direction of virtue or vice.² When the desires in a man's mind are either diminished or brought under his control, he is no longer subject to the acts of goodness or vice. Utterly indifferent, he becomes exempt from both merit and demerit and from their consequences of reiterated births and deaths.

³ Sikhidhwaja replied:—

O eloquent speaker, your words are as full of sense as they are of great importance to me. They indicate your great penetration into the depths of wisdom.⁴ Listening to the sweet exultance of your speech has given me a satisfaction equal to that of drinking a large dose of ambrosial water.⁵ Now be pleased to give me a brief account of the story of your birth and pedigree. I will listen with all my attention to your words of sound sense and wisdom.⁶ Please sage, tell me what the son of lotus-Brahma, the venerable sage Narada, did with the seminal strength which unconsciously fell from him to the ground.

⁷ Chudala related:—

The muni sage curbed back the infuriated elephant of his beastly mind by the strong bridle of prudence and bound it fast with the iron chain of great intelligence.⁸ His virile strength, hot as fire, resembled the moon melted down by the flame of the final conflagration. It was as liquefied as quicksilver or other metallic solution.

⁹ The sage had by his side a water-pot made of crystal stone. He took that pot and put the fluid semen in it, as if depositing liquid moonbeams into the disc of the moon.¹⁰ On one side of Mount Meru, there was a projected rock with a deep cave inside. Passage into it was not obstructed by the heaps of stones which lay before it.¹¹ The muni sage placed the pot inside that cave as the embryo is situated in the belly. He filled the pot with milk which he produced by his will, just as the lord of creation filled the Milky Ocean with its watery milk.¹² The muni sage neglected his sacred offerings and brooded over the pot, like a bird broods over its egg.

Over the course of a month, the fetus grew up in the pot of milk, just as the reflection of the crescent moon increases in the bosom of the Milky Ocean.¹³ At the end of the month the pot bore a fully formed fetus, just as the orb of the moon becomes full in the course of a month, and as spring season produces lotus buds with their blushing petals.¹⁴ The fetus came out in the fullness of time with its body fully developed, just as the full moon rises from the Milky Ocean without diminution of any of its digits.¹⁵ The body had become fully developed over this time. Its limbs were as beautiful as the horns of the moon shine brightly in the bright fortnight.

¹⁶ After performance of the initiatory ceremonies, the sage instructed him in whatever he knew, as one pours out the contents of one vessel into another.¹⁷ In course of a short time the boy became acquainted with all his father's oral instructions and became an exact copy of the venerable sage.

¹⁸ The old sage became as illustrious with his brilliant boy as the moon shining brightly with its

retinue of resplendent stars.

¹⁹ Once on a time, sage Narada went to the heavenly abode of his father Brahma accompanied by his young boy and there made his obeisance to the first father of mankind. ²⁰ The boy also bowed down before his grandsire. Brahma, knowing the boy to be versed in the Vedas and sciences, took him up and set him on his lap. ²¹ Lord Brahma pronounced his blessings on the boy and knowing him to be born of the pot and acquainted with the Vedas, gave him the name of Kumbha (the pot).

²² O hermit, know that I am that son of the sage Narada and grandson of the great lotus-born Brahma himself. I am known by the name of Kumbha from my birth into the pot. ²³ I have the four Vedas for my companions and playmates. I always delight in their company and in the heavenly abode of my lotus-born grandfather, the divine Brahma. ²⁴ Know that the goddess Saraswati is my mother and the Gayatri hymn is my maternal aunt. My home is in the heaven of Brahma where I dwell as the grandchild of the lord of creatures.

²⁵ I wander at my pleasure throughout the wide extended world. I wander about with a soul full of joy, and not on any errand or business whatever. ²⁶ I walk over the earth without touching it with my feet. Its flying dust does not approach my body, nor is my body ever fatigued from all its travels. ²⁷ It happened this day that I came to see your hermitage in the course of my ethereal journey, so I directed my course this way in order to see you here. ²⁸ Thus O forester, I have given you the whole story of my life as you have heard just now. It is a pleasure for good people to hold conversation with the good and wise.

²⁹ Valmiki said:—

As they were talking in this manner the day past away to its evening service and the sun set down below the horizon. The court broke and everyone left for his evening ceremonial washing, meeting again with the rising sun on the next morning.

Chapter 87 — Chudala, as the Brahmin boy, Criticizes Sikhidhwaja's Withdrawal

¹ Sikhidhwaja said:—

Sage, it appears to me that the hoarded merits of all my former lives have brought you to my presence here today, just as an unforeseen hurricane drives the waters of the sea on dry mountain tops.² I reckon myself as highly blessed among the blessed today to be this favored by your presence and cooled by your speech like ambrosial dew from your lips.³ Never has more sensible speech touched and cooled my soul to such a degree as yours now. Therefore I consider your holy presence more precious to me than the gaining of a kingdom.⁴ The unrestrained delight which is felt free from self-interest and selfish motives is far superior to the self-restricted pleasure of sovereignty, which is delightful only once in imagination.

⁵ Vasishta said:—

As the king was uttering these praises, the brahmin boy Kumbha passed over them in silence and interrupted.

⁶ Chudala (*as the Brahmin boy, Kumbha*) said:—

Sage, please put a stop to your words. Give me an account of yourself as I have given mine to you. Tell me who you are and what you are doing on this lonely mountain.⁷ How long have you been living as a forester like this? What is your main object? Tell me the bare truth, because it is beyond the principles of an ascetic to utter anything but the plain truth.

⁸ Sikhidhwaja replied:—

Lord, as you are the offspring of a god, everything must be well known to you. The gods are fully acquainted with the secrets and circumstances of all people. I have very little to relate to you about me.⁹ My fear of the world has made me abandon it and make a home in this forest. You know this well, but I will briefly tell you the story.

¹⁰ I am Sikhidhwaja, the ruler of a country which I renounced a long time ago for a seat in the forest. Know, O knower of all truths, that my fears of this world's traps and future reincarnations in it have driven me to retire in this wilderness.¹¹ This accursed world is nothing but repeated pain and pleasure and repeated life and death. I have undertaken spiritual austerities in these solitary woods in order to evade all this.

¹² I wander about and perform my rigorous austerities without any rest. I allow myself no rest, but keep my vigils like a miser over his few possessions.¹³ I am without effort or attempt, and so without any fruit or result also. I am lonely and so helpless. I am poor and therefore friendless also. Divine personage, I am wearing out in this forest like a withered tree eaten by worms.¹⁴ I strictly observe all my sacred rites without fail, yet I fall from one sorrow into a sea of sorrows. I have grown too pensive. Even ambrosial nectar is unpleasant to me.

¹⁵ Chudala (*as the boy, Kumbha*) said:—

Once I had my great progenitor, Brahma, tell me which is the more useful and preferable for mankind: the observance of duties or their nonobservance for the sake of knowledge.

¹⁶ Brahma replied, “No doubt knowledge is the supreme good because it leads a man to understand the unity of God and the oneness of himself. But action has been inculcated in man from creation as his duty in life, both for pleasure and for passing his lifetime. ¹⁷ Let those who have not acquired their intellectual light and the sight of the soul be employed in their duties to their offspring and fellow creatures. Who that lacks a silk robe will go about naked instead of wrapping himself with a blanket or coarse cloth?”

¹⁸ “The ignorant who are moved by their desires and live upon their hopes meet with their objects as the reward of their action. The knowing and speculative theorist, having no desire in his mind or action of his body, meets with no reward of either. ¹⁹ An action without its object goes to nothing and for nothing, just as fruit-bearing plants wither and die without being properly watered. ²⁰ As the effect of one season on plants is displaced by that of the succeeding season, so the fruit of an action is frustrated by the lack of desire. ²¹ As it is the nature of kusa grass never to bear fruit, although they bear flowers, so my son, no action can produce any fruit without a desire for the object.”

²² “A boy’s mind, possessed with the idea of a ghost in his mind, sees a ghost before him. A sick man having hypochondria of his illness is soon attacked by it. ²³ Kusa grass presents its fair flowers to view without ever bearing fruit. In the same way, a speculative theorist meditates on the beauty of his theory without producing its results by the practice.”

²⁴ Sikkidhwaja said:—

But it is said that all human desire is vain, and its accompanying egoism is a fallacy, and that they are the creatures of our ignorance, like our error of seeing a sea in the burning sands of a desert. ²⁵ So it is to the sage whose ignorance is completely removed by his knowledge of all things as the Divine Spirit. Of course, such a man has no desire rising in his mind, just as the eyes of the wise see no sea of water in the sands.

²⁶ A person is freed from his bonds of his disease and death by forsaking his desires. When his internal soul becomes as perfect as a god, he is exempt from future birth. ²⁷ But generally, the human mind is filled with desires and only the learned few are exempt. Transcendental knowledge of the knowable one exempts the divinely wise from their rebirth in this mortal world.

²⁸ Chudala (*as the boy, Kumbha*) replied:—

It is true, O kingly sage, that Brahma and other gods, as well as all wise sages, say that knowledge is the chief good. In spite of your knowledge of this, why do you remain in this state of gross ignorance?

²⁹ What is the meaning of these pots and staffs, these wooden stools and those seats of kusa grass? Why is it, O king, that you delight in these false playthings of fools? ³⁰ Why do you not employ your mind to inquire into the questions of what you are, how this world came to be, and how and when it will cease to exist? Instead of inquiring in these solemn truths, you pass your time in foolishness like the ignorant.

³¹ Why don’t you discuss the nature of bondage and liberation in the company of the learned, and pay your homage at their venerable feet? ³² O king, do you want to pass your life in painful austerities, like some insects finish their days boring holes in the stones in which they live? ³³ You can easily obtain the delight you seek if you will only take yourself to the service of holy men and keep company

with the tolerant and wise souls, arguing with them on spiritual subjects.³⁴ Or you may continue to remain in your cave in this forest, living on the simple food of holy men, forsaking the evil propensities of your mind, and living like an insect in a hole under the ground.

³⁵ Vasishta related:—

Being thus awakened to sense by his wife, the divine boy, Sikhidhwaja melted into tears. His face bathed in water, he spoke to the lad.

³⁶ Sikhidhwaja said:—

O divine child, after such a long time you awake me to my senses. Now I perceive that it was my weak-headedness that drove me from the society of respectable to this lonely forest.³⁷ Ah! I find that my mind is today cleansed of its endless sins, which has brought you to me to criticize my past misconduct.³⁸ O beautiful boy, from now on I consider you to be my teacher, my father, and my best friend forever. I acknowledge myself as your pupil, therefore I bow down at your feet and pray you to take pity on me.³⁹ Please admonish me now on the subject of divine knowledge, as you are best acquainted with it, and whereby I may be freed from all my sorrows and settled with perfect peace and bliss of my mind.

⁴⁰ Initially you said that knowledge is the supreme bliss or supreme good of mankind. Now tell me. What is that knowledge which saves us from misery? Is it the knowledge of particulars that leads us to know the specials, or that of the general which brings as to the transcendental?

⁴¹ Chudala (*as the boy, Kumbha*) replied:—

I will tell you prince as much as I know and what may be best acceptable to you. It is best to not throw away my words in vain, like crowing ravens about a headless trunk.⁴² Because words uttered in response to a person's foolish questions are thrown in vain. Unheeded, they are as useless as eyesight in the dark.

⁴³ Sikhidhwaja said:—

Sage, your words are as acceptable to me as the ordinances of the Vedas. Though you utter them without previous meditation, yet I have full faith in them.

⁴⁴ Chudala (*as the boy, Kumbha*) replied:—

As a boy obeys the words of his father, knowing it to be pronounced for his certain good, so must you receive my words.⁴⁵ Believe that my advice is all only for your good. Hear them with proper attention. Listen to my words as you hear music, without inquiring into their reason or rhyme.

⁴⁶ Let me tell you an interesting story of a certain person whose conduct and character in every way resembled yours, and who was brought back to his sense after long going astray. This is a tale to dispel the worldly cares and fears of the intelligent.

Chapter 88 — The Tale of the Rich Man Who Failed to Grasp the Real Philosopher's Stone

¹ Chudala (*as Kumbha*) related:—

Once there lived a rich man who combined the opposite qualities of charity and poverty in his character, just as the sea contains water and undersea fires in its depth.² He was skilled in arts as he was practiced in arms. He was restrained in all dealings as he was expert in business. But his great worldly ambition to which he devoted all his pursuits kept him from the spiritual knowledge of the most high.

³ He employed all his endeavors to obtain the imaginary gem of the philosopher's stone (*chintamani*), just as the undersea fire wants to devour the waters and dry up the sea bed.⁴ After a lapse of a long time, his great enthusiasm and persevering patience succeeded in bringing him the precious gem at last, because there is nothing which may not be produced by man's ardent zeal.⁵ His attempts were successful because of his unwearied labor joined with firm resolution and a well directed plan. Using such means, even the meanest man is favored with fortune.⁶ He saw the stone lying before him, ready to be grasped in his hand, like a hermit sitting on a mountain peak thinks he can easily grab the rising moon with his hand.⁷ He saw the brilliant gem before him, but became mistrustful of his sight and the reality of the object, like a poor man, hearing of his sudden elevation to royalty, mistrusts the report and doubts that it was meant for him.⁸ The rich man was immersed in his thoughts of amazement for a long time. Overlooking and neglecting to lay hold of his great gain, he kept questioning in his mind in the following manner.

The rich man's thoughts:—

⁹ Whether this stone is a gem or not, and if so, whether it be the philosopher's stone or any other, I fear that if I touch it, it will fly away or be soiled.¹⁰ Until this time, no one has obtained the long sought philosopher's stone. If ever anyone obtained it, the Shastra scriptures say it would be in his next life.¹¹ No doubt only my miserliness makes me wrongly see this brilliant gem before me with my eyes, like a short-sighted man seeing a flashing firebrand and deep-laid moon in the sky.¹² How could the tide of my fortune run so high at once that I should succeed so soon to obtain the precious stone that is the splendor and height of perfection and which produces all treasure?

¹³ There must be few, very few indeed, fortunate men who can expect their good fortune to court and wait on them at such little pain in such a short time.¹⁴ I am only a poor and honest man possessed of very little qualification, worth or account among mankind. It is impossible that so miserable a wretch could ever be blessed with this masterpiece of perfection.

*Chudala (*as Kumbha*) continues:*—

¹⁵ For a long time the unbelieving rich man hung in a state of suspense between his certainty and uncertainty. He was so infatuated by his mental blindness that he did not even stretch out his hand to lay hold on the jewel lying openly before him.¹⁶ Hence, whatever is obtainable by anyone at anytime is often missed and lost sight of because of either his ignorance or negligence of it, just as the precious gem in the parable, the sought after object that lay tangible in full view.¹⁷ As the rich man was hanging undecided, frozen by his suspicion, the precious gem flew away and vanished from his sight, just as the deserving man avoids his critic, an arrow flies from its string, or a stone from its

sling-shot.

¹⁸ When prosperity appears to a man, she confers on him her blessings of wisdom and prudence. But as prosperity forsakes her foolish devotee, she deprives him of all his discretion. ¹⁹ The man tried again to invoke and recall the precious gem to his presence, because the persevering spirit is never tired of trying again and again for his expected success. ²⁰ He came to behold before him a brittle piece of glass, shining with its false glare like the former gem. This glass was placed before him by the invisible hands of a spiritual master who had come to tempt him and deride his folly. ²¹ The fool thought this brittle thing lying before him was the real gem, just as an ignorant fool believes sparkling sands to be pure gold dust.

²² Such is the case with the deluded mind. It mistakes eight for six and foe for a friend. It sees a serpent in a rope and views desert land as a watery expanse. It drinks poison as if it was nectar and spies another moon in the sky in the reflection of the true one. ²³ The rich man took up that fraudulent worthless imitation for a real gem. He thought it was the philosopher's stone which would confer on him whatever he desired. With this belief he gave all he had to charity as they were no use to him anymore.

²⁴ He thought his own country was devoid of everything that was delightful to him. He thought the society of its people were debasing to him. He thought his lost house was of no use of him and that his relatives and friends were averse to his happiness. ²⁵ Thinking like this, he determined to remove himself to a distant country and enjoy his rest there. So taking his false gem with him, he went out and entered an uninhabited forest. ²⁶ There his deceptive gem was of no use to him. It loaded him with all imaginable disasters, like the gloomy shadow of a black mountain and the horrid gloom of deep ignorance.

²⁷ The afflictions brought on by one's own ignorance are far greater than those caused by old age or the torments of death. The calamity of ignorance, like black hairs covering the crown of the head, supersedes all other earthly afflictions.

Chapter 89 — The Parable of an Elephant Twice Captured

¹ Chudala (*as Kumbha*) said:—

O holy hermit, let me tell you another very interesting story which well applies to your case, the ruler of a land, and which will serve to awaken your understandings.

² There lived a large elephant in the Vindhya Hills. It was the leader of a great number of elephants, and in its big and elevated head, its understanding was as clear as the lofty summit of the mountain that was humbled down at the bidding of sage Agastya.³ His two tusks were as strong as the thunderbolts of heaven, and as long and stunning as far reaching flashes of lightning. They were as destructive as the flames of the final destruction and so powerfully sharp that they could bore and uproot a mountain.

⁴ The elephant came to be caught in an iron trap laid by elephant catchers. He was fast held by it just like the Vindhya by sage Agastya's charm, and just as the giant Bali was bound by the chains of Vamana.⁵ The captive and patient elephant was tormented by an iron goad in his trunk. He suffered excruciating pains of his torture, like Tripurasura under the burning fire arrow of Shiva.⁶ For three days the elephant lay in this sad plight, watched by his hunter from a distance.⁷ The great suffering of the elephant made him open his mouth wide and utter a loud scream that growled like the loud noise of roaring clouds.⁸ Then he exerted the force of both his tusks and thereby managed to break the iron bar, just as Bali of old broke open the bolts of the gate of heaven.

⁹ From a distance, the hunter saw the infuriated beast breaking his hard fetters, just as Lord Vishnu saw the demon Bali breaking out from his underground cell beneath the mountain in order to invade his heaven on high.¹⁰ The elephant catcher climbed a tall palm tree, then jumped from its top in an attempt to land on the elephant's head, but unfortunately he fell on the ground, just as the demon was hurled down to hell by the victorious Vishnu.¹¹ The hunter missed the head of the huge animal, instead falling headlong at his feet, just as a ripe fruit is dropped by hurrying winds.

¹² Seeing the hunter falling and lying prostrate before him, the great elephant took pity, just as the noble mind is compassionate on others even in their own piteous state.¹³ The noble animal thought that it was no bravery on his part to trample over the self-fallen. Thus he had the magnanimity of sparing the life of his own enemy.¹⁴ He broke only his chains and took his way leaving all obstacles and barriers, just as rushing waters bear down the strongest bridge.¹⁵ His strength broke the strong net, but his piety spared the life of the weak man. He went off just like the setting sun after dispelling evening clouds.

¹⁶ After he saw the elephant had gone away, the hunter got up from the ground. He found that he was as safe and sound after his fall as he had been before it, just as the elephant had been relieved of his pains after breaking his chains.¹⁷ In spite of the great impact of falling from the tall palm tree, the hunter felt no hurt in any part of his body, which is why I think that the bodies of scoundrels are fortified against every harm.¹⁸ The wicked gain greater strength by execution of their repeated crimes, just as rainy clouds gather the more by their frequent showers. Thus the hunter renewed his hunt.

¹⁹ The elephant catcher felt very sorry at his failed attempt to catch the elephant, like the dejection of

one who lost a treasure that had fallen into his grasp.²⁰ He sought about and beat the forest looking for the elephant hiding in the thickets, just as Rahu (the north node of the moon) rises in the sky to lay hold of the moon covered under clouds.²¹ After a long search, he saw the elephant resting under a shady tree, like a warrior returned from the battlefield.

²² The cunning huntsmen collected a great many tools to trap the elephant at his resting place.²³ Near that place in the forest, he dug a round ditch, just as the great creator of the world stretched the ocean to encircle this earth.²⁴ Then he covered the great pit with green branches and leaves, just as autumn covers the face of the empty sky with fleecy and flimsy clouds.

²⁵ One day the elephant was roaming at large in the forest and fell into the pit like a fragment of a rock on the coast falls headlong onto the sea shore.²⁶ The big elephant was caught in the round pit which was deep as the dreadful sea. He lay confined in it like some treasure is shut up in the hollow womb of a chest.²⁷ Trapped in the bottom of that far extending pit, the elephant passed his time in endless trouble and anxiety, like the demon Bali in his dark, underground cave.²⁸ This is the result of the silly elephant letting his cruel hunter go unhurt. Once before the hunter had caught him. If the elephant had made an end of him then, he would not have fallen into the pit to be caught a second time.

²⁹ All foolish people, not having the foresight and precaution to prevent mishaps in the future, are greatly exposed to calamity like the Vindhyan elephant.³⁰ The elephant was happy with the thought of his freedom from the hunter's chains. He did not think about any future mishap far away, and that was the only cause for his entrapment.

³¹ Know, O great soul, that there is no bondage of man except his own ignorance. Not even prisoners in jail are under such bondage as the intellectual servitude of freemen under their errors and prejudice. The greatest freedom of man is enlightenment of the soul and knowledge of the cosmos as one Universal Soul. Ignorance of this truth is the root of the slavery of mankind to the errors of this world.

Chapter 90 — Explanation of the Story of the Philosopher's Stone

¹ Sikhidhwaja said, "O divine boy, please explain the meaning of the parables of the true and false gems, and the unchained and tied up elephant, which you just told me."

² Chudala (*as Kumbha*) replied:—

Listen as I expound on the meaning of my stories and their words. I have stored them in your heart and mind for the sake of enlightening your understanding.

³ That searcher after the philosopher's stone undoubtedly was acquainted with science, but he had no knowledge of the truth. He searched for the gem but he did not know what it was. That man is you.

⁴ You are versed in the sciences like the rich man in the story, and you shine above others like the shining sun on mountain tops. But you do not have the rest and quiet derived from the knowledge of truth. You are immersed in your errors like a block of stone in water.

⁵ O holy man, know that the philosopher's stone is to give up errors. O holy man, try to get that in your possession and with that set yourself above the reach of misery. ⁶ The renunciation of gross objects produces the pure joy of holiness. The abandonment of the world gives one sovereignty over his soul which is reckoned as the true philosopher's stone. ⁷ Abandonment of all is the highest perfection, which you must soon practice, because indifference towards worldly grandeur shows the greatest magnanimity of the soul.

⁸ You, O king, have forsaken your kingdom together with your queen, riches, relatives and friends. You have rested in your renunciation like Brahma, the lord of creatures, rested at night after completing his act of creation. ⁹ You have gone too far from your country to this distant hermitage, like the bird of heaven, the great garuda, flew with his prey, the tortoise, to the farthest mountain of earth. ¹⁰ With your abandonment of all worldly goods, you have renounced your egotism and cleansed your nature from every stain, just as autumn winds disperse clouds from the sky. ¹¹ Know that only by driving away the egoism of the mind and all desires from the heart does one get his perfection, the fullness of the world, and perfect bliss.

But you have been laboring under the ignorance of what is to be abandoned and what is to be retained, just as the sky labors under clouds. ¹² It is not abandonment of the world which gives you that highest joy that you seek. You must seek something else.

¹³ When the mind is infested by its thoughts and the heart is corroded by the sores of its desire, all renunciation flies away like the stillness of a forest flies before a storm. ¹⁴ Of what use is the abandonment of the world to one whose mind is ever infested by his troublesome thoughts? It is impossible for a tree exposed to the storms of the sky to be at rest. ¹⁵ Thoughts constitute the mind, which is only another name for will or desire. So long as these are raging in a person, it is in vain to talk of controlling the mind.

¹⁶ The mind, occupied by its busy thoughts, in an instant finds the three worlds presenting themselves before it. Therefore, what is the use of abandoning this world when the infinite worlds of the universe are present before the mind? ¹⁷ Renunciation flies on swift wings as soon as the mind entertains a desire, like a bird flying away as soon as it hears a noise. ¹⁸ Detachment is the main object for abandoning the world, but when you allow a care to rankle in your breast, you bid a farewell to your

renunciation, just as one bids farewell to his honored and invited guest.¹⁹ After you have let the precious gem of renunciation slip from your hand, you have chosen the false, glossy trifle of austerity for some fond wish that is desirable in your view.

²⁰ I see your mind is fixed upon willful pains of your austerities, just as the sight of a deluded man is fixed upon on the moon's reflection in water.²¹ Forsaking the detachment of your mind, you have followed the cravings of your heart and chosen to live like a hermit, denying bodily passions, which is full of suffering from first to last.²² He who forsakes the easy task of devotion to God, which is filled with infinite bliss, in order to undertake painful austerities is said to make a suicide of his own soul.²³ You took a vow of self-renunciation by renouncing all your earthly possessions. But instead of observing renunciation, you attached yourself to painful asceticism in this dreary wilderness.

²⁴ You broke the bonds of your kingdom and moved away from its boundaries thinking they were too painful for you. But tell me, are you not constrained here to the far more unbearable and strong chains of rigid imprisonment and tiresome struggles of your asceticism?²⁵ I think you are much more involved in the care of defending yourself from heat and cold in this forest, and that you are bound more tightly to your rigors than you had any idea of before you left your kingdom.²⁶ Before you vainly thought to have obtained the philosopher's stone, but at last you must find that your gain is not worth even a glass trinket.

²⁷ Now sage, I have given you a full interpretation of the eagerness of a man to pocket the invaluable gem. No doubt you have comprehended its right meaning. Now store its meaning in the casket of your mind.

Chapter 91 — Explanation of the Parable of the Elephant

¹ Chudala (*as Kumbha*) continued:—

O great king, now hear me explain the meaning of the story of the Vindhyan elephant, which will be as useful to you as it will appear wonderful.

² That elephant of the Vindhyan range is you in this forest. His two strong tusks are no other than the two virtues of reasoning and renunciation on which you lay your strength.³ The hunter who was the elephant's enemy and trapped him is the personification of the great ignorance that has laid hold of you for your misery only.⁴ Even the strong is foiled by the weak, led from one danger to another and from sorrow to sorrow just like the strong elephant was led by the weak hunter, and as you, O mighty king, are led by your imbecilic ignorance in this forest.⁵ As the mighty elephant was caught in the strong iron chain, so you are held tightly in the trap of your desire which has brought all this calamity on you.

⁶ Man's expectation is the iron chain. Expectations are stronger, harder and more durable than the metal. Iron rusts and wastes away in time, but our expectations rise high and hold us faster.⁷ The hunter marked the elephant by remaining unseen in his hiding place. In the same way your ignorance lurks from a distance after you, marking you for his prey.⁸ As the elephant broke the bonds of his enemy's iron chains, so have you broken the ties of your peaceful rule and the bonds of your royalty and enjoyments.⁹ O pious king, it is sometimes possible to break the bonds of iron chains, but it is impossible, O holy prince, to stop our growing desires and fond expectations.

¹⁰ The hunter who caught the elephant in the trap fell from on high to the ground. So was your ignorance also leveled to the ground, seeing you deprived of your royalty and all your former dignity.

¹¹ When a man who is disgusted with the world wants to relinquish his desire of enjoyment, he makes his ignorance tremble, just as a demon who lives in a tree quakes with fear when the tree is felled.

¹² When a self-resigned man remains devoid of desire for temporal enjoyments, he bids farewell to his ignorance, which quits him like the demon leaves his fallen tree.¹³ A man getting rid of his animal gratifications demolishes the abode of his ignorance from the mind, just like a wood-cutter destroys the bird nests in the tree which he has cut down.

¹⁴ No doubt you have put down your ignorance by renouncing your royalty and resorting to this forest. Of course your mind is cast down, but it is not yet destroyed by the sword of your renunciation.¹⁵ It rises again and gains renewed strength. Minding its former defeat, it has at last overpowered you by confining you in this wilderness and restraining you in the painful prison of your false asceticism.

¹⁶ If you can kill your fallen ignorance in any way, it will not be able to destroy you in your rigorous penance, though it has reduced you to this plight by your abdication of royalty.¹⁷ The ditch that the hunter dug to encircle and trap the elephant is this painful pit of austerity which your ignorance has dug to capture you.¹⁸ The many provisions and supplies the hunter placed over the ditch to entice the elephant are the very many expectations of future reward which your ignorance presents as reward for your penitence.

¹⁹ O king, though you are not the ignorant elephant, yet you are not unlike it, being cast in this forest by your incorrigible ignorance.²⁰ The ditch for the elephant truly was filled with tender plants and

leaves for the elephant's fodder, but your cave is full of rigorous austerities which no humanity can bear or tolerate.²¹ You are still caged in this prison house of the ascetic's cell, doomed to undergo all the imagined torments of your penance and martyrdom. You truly resemble fallen Bali confined in his underground cell.²² No doubt you are the empty headed elephant, fast bound in the chain of false rigors and imprisoned in this cave of your ignorance.

Thus I have given a full exposition of the parable of the elephant of the Vindhya Hills. Now from this, pick out the best lesson for yourself.

Chapter 92 — The King Burns His Hermit Possessions

¹ Chudala (*as Kumbha*) continued:—

Tell me king, what made you decline to accept the advice of Queen Chudala, who is equally skilled in morality as well as in divine knowledge? ² She is an adept among those who know the truth. She actually practices all that she preaches to others. Her words are the dictates of truth. They deserve to be received with due deference. ³ You rejected her advice because of over confidence in your own judgment. Yet let me know, why did she not prevent you from parting with everything?

⁴ Sikkidhwaja replied, “But I ask you another question, and I hope you will answer. Why do you say that I have not renounced everything when I have resigned my kingdom, my home and my country, and when I have left my wife and all my wealth behind?”

⁵ Chudala (*as Kumbha*) replied:—

O king, you say truly that you have forsaken your kingdom and home, your lands and relatives, and even your wife and wealth, but that does not make your renunciation complete since none of these truly belong to you. They come of themselves and they go away from man. Only your egoism is yours, and that you have not yet gotten rid of. ⁶ You have not yet abandoned your egoism, which abandonment is the greatest delight of your soul. You cannot get rid of your sorrows until you are quite free from your egoistic feelings.

⁷ Sikkidhwaja said, “You say that my kingdom and possessions were not mine. Now all I have is this forest and these rocks and trees and shrubs. If I am willing to quit all these, would that be complete renunciation?”

⁸ Vasishta said:—

Hearing these words of the brahmin boy Kumbha, the conqueror of senses, King Sikkidhwaja held silence for a while, and returned no answer. ⁹ He wiped off his attachment to the forest from his heart. He made up his mind to move away, just as the current of a stream in rainy weather glides along and carries down the dust and dirt from its shores.

¹⁰ Sikkidhwaja said, “Now sage, I am resolved to leave this forest and bid farewell to all its caves and trees. Tell me, does this renunciation of everything form my absolute renunciation of all things?”

¹¹ Kumbha replied:—

The foot of this mountain with all its woodlands, trees and caverns are not your property but are common to all. Then how can forsaking them be your absolute renunciation at all? ¹² You still have not forsaken your egoism. You must get rid of your ego in order to be freed from the cares and sorrows of this earthly world. ¹³ If none of these things is mine, then how can total renunciation come from resigning my hermit’s cell and grove?

¹⁴ Vasishta said.:—

The self-governed Sikkidhwaja became awaked to his sense by Kumbha’s admonitions. For a moment the king remained silent with the light that shone within him. ¹⁵ His pure consciousness returned to his mind and the blaze of his right knowledge burnt away the impurities of his attachment to the

hermitage, like a gust of wind driving dust from the ground.

¹⁶ Sikkidhwaja said, "Sage, I have taken this hermitage from my heart. I have forsaken my attachment to all its sacred, covered shelters and trees. Therefore consider me as having resigned my all and everything in world."

¹⁷ Kumbha replied:—

How can I consider you as fully resigned by resigning these gardens and trees and everything else belonging to them? None of them belongs to you. You are not their owner and you do not deserve them in any way. ¹⁸ You have another thing that you must forsake, and that is the greatest and best thing that has fallen to your lot in this world. It must be by your renunciation of that thing that you can set yourself free from all.

¹⁹ Sikkidhwaja said, "If even this is not the all that I have and which you want me to resign, then take these earthen pots and basins, these hides and skins, and my cave also. Know that I will renounce all these forever and I will take myself elsewhere."

²⁰ Vasishtha said:—

So saying the dispassionate king rose from his seat, his mind composed and quiet like an autumn cloud rising and dispersing on the top of a mountain. ²¹ Chudala, sitting on her seat as Kumbha, could not help smiling in amazement as she saw the king's motions and movements, just as the sun laughs from above to see the foolish attempts of men on the earth below. ²² Kumbha looked steadily at Sikkidhwaja, sitting silently with the thought, "Ah! let him do whatever he likes. His sanctification and renunciation of the temporal articles of this world do not serve his spiritual edification at all."

²³ Sikkidhwaja then brought out all his sacred vessels and seats from his cave, collecting them all in one place like the great ocean yielding up all her submerged treasures after the great flood was over.

²⁴ Having collecting them in a pile, the king set fire to them with dried fuel like the sunstone or glass igniting the combustible. ²⁵ The sacred vessels and goods were set on fire and burnt down. The king left them behind and sat on a seat beside Kumbha, just as the sun sets on Mount Meru after he had burnt down in the world by the fire of dissolution.

²⁶ The king said to his prayer beads, "You have been a trusted friend to me, your master, as long as I turn you on my fingers, counting beads. ²⁷ And though I have turned you over and over with my sacred mantras in these forests, yet you have been of no service to me at all. ²⁸ And though I have travelled with you, O my sacred casket, and I have seen many holy places in your company, still you have proved to be no good to me. I now resign you to the flames."

²⁹ The burning fire rose in flames and flashes in the sky appearing like glittering stars. Then he took his deerskin seat and threw it on the fire saying, "For so long I have carried you on my back like an ignorant stag. ³⁰ My ignorance made me hold onto you for so long. Now you are at liberty to go your own way. May peace and bliss attend you forever. ³¹ Ascend with the rising fire to heaven and twinkle there like the stars." So saying he took off his hide garment from his body and committed it to the flames.

³² The king's funeral pyre spread like a sea of fire driven about by winds blowing from the mountains.

Then the king thought of also throwing his water pot into the fire.³³ He said to it, “You sage, who bore sacred water for all my sacred functions, O my good water pot, it is true that I do not have the power of properly compensating you for your past services.³⁴ You were the best model of true friendship, good nature, benevolence and constancy, and the best example of goodness and all good qualities in your great bounty.³⁵ O you my water pot, who was the receptacle of all goodness to me, now depart your own way by your purification in the same sacred fire in which I first found you (the potter’s fire). May your ways all be blissful to you!” So saying he cast his water pot into the consecrated fire.

³⁶ “All good things are to be given to the good or to the fire, but all bad things are cast off like the dust of the earth as foolish men fall to the ground by their secret craft.³⁷ It is well for you, my low mattress, to be put to fire and reduced to worthless ashes.” So saying, he took up his mattress and cast it into the flaming fire.³⁸ Soon the seat on which he used to sit in his pure meditation on God was committed to the flames, because it is better to give up something quickly if one has to get rid of it soon anyway.

³⁹ “This, my alms-pot, which contained the best articles of food presented to me by good people, I now commit to this flame with whatever it has in it.⁴⁰ The fire burns a thing only once, until the burnt article ceases to burn anymore. Therefore I shun all the implements of my ceremonial rites in order to set me free from the bondage of all actions for ever more.⁴¹ Be not sorry that I forsake you, for who is there that will bear things that are unworthy of himself?”

⁴² So saying, he threw all his cooking vessels, the plates and dishes of his kitchen, and everything else he needed or used in his hermitage into the fire. All these burned in a blaze like the world burning with all destructive fire of the final dissolution.

Chapter 93 — Chudala Explains the Meaning of Complete Renunciation

¹ Vasishta said:—

Sikhidhwaja then rose up and set fire to his hut of dry leaves and grass. As very often is the case with foolish men, that they demolish the structure of their own fancy and caprice.² Whatever else was left of the hermit possessions, Sikhidhwaja took them all, one after the other, and set fire to them with his composed and unconcerned mind, observing a strict silence all the while.³ He burnt and broke down everything, throwing away his food and preserved condiments, his clothes and everything else with a quite content state of his mind.⁴ The hermitage was desolate, having been a human home awhile before. It resembled what was left of King Daksha's sacrificial pavilion after its devastation by the all-devouring fire of Veerabhadra.⁵ Frightened deer, afraid of the burning fire, left their beds where they had been laying and chewing cud at their ease and fled far away to distant deserts, just as townsmen flee from a burning quarter to distant places.⁶ Seeing all the vessels and utensils burning, fueled by dry wood on all sides, the king seemed to remain quite content and careless amid the scene, retaining possession only of his body.

⁷ Sikhidhwaja said, “Now I am an all-abandoning saint. I have abandoned all desire and every object. I wonder how I have lived for so long before being awakened to my right knowledge by the holy lectures of my heavenly child.⁸ I have now become a pure and perfect unit, quite conscious of the indescribable joy in myself. What use to me are all these attachments and objects of my ever varying desires?”

⁹ “As the knots of the rope that bind the soul to this world are cut and fall off one after the other, so the mind comes to feel its quiet composure until it attains its ultimate rest and inaction.¹⁰ I am quite composed and at perfect ease with the extinction of my desires. I am joyous and rejoice in myself. My ties are all broken and fallen away from me. At last I have fully accomplished the abandonment of all things.¹¹ I have become as naked as the open sky and as roofless as the dome of the void. I see the wide world as an expanse of emptiness and myself as a nothingness within the whole emptiness.”

“Say, O divine boy, is there anything still lacking in my complete renunciation of everything?”

¹² Kumbha replied:—

Yet you must be aware, O King Sikhidhwaja, that you are never released from all the bonds of this life by your renunciation of every physical thing that relates to the mortal and transitory state of your being.¹³ By the abandonment of the innumerable seeds and sprouts of fond desires which constantly rise like thistles and thorns in the human breast, I see the gravity and purity of the nature of your soul is placed far above the reach and knowledge of the common people.

¹⁴ Vasishta said:—

On hearing these words of Kumbha, King Sikhidhwaja reflected on its meaning for a short while. He spoke these words in reply as you, O mighty armed Rama, shall now hear from me.

¹⁵ Sikhidhwaja said, “Tell me, O heaven born child! What else do you see remaining in me, other than the serpentine entrails within me and its supporting body composed of a heap of flesh, blood and bones?¹⁶ If this body is reckoned as an extension of myself, then I will climb to the top of this

mountain and let it fall to be dashed to pieces on the ground. Thus I will get rid of my mortal part forever."

¹⁷ Saying so, as he was proceeding to sacrifice his body on the craggy hill before him, he was interrupted by his teacher Kumbha, who spoke to him as follows.

¹⁸ Kumbha said:—

What are you going to, king? Why do you want to destroy your innocent body leaping from that hideous height like an enraged bull hurling its calf down a cliff? ¹⁹ What is this body but a lump of dull and gross matter, a dumb and poor painstaking thing. It never does you any harm, nor can you ever find any fault in it. Then why do you vainly wish to destroy something so harmless and faultless?

²⁰ The body itself is a dull and dumb thing. It always remains in a torpid meditative mood. It is moved to and fro by other agencies, like a floating plank tossed up and down by the currents and waves of the sea. ²¹ He who hurts or annoys his inoffensive lady deserves to be punished with torture, like a cruel villain who robs and annoys a holy saint sitting in his solitary cell. ²² The body is quite guiltless of all the pain and pleasure that befall the living soul by turns, just as the tree is wholly unconcerned with the fall of its fruits and leaves dropped by the blowing winds. ²³ You see wind gusts blowing down flowers, fruit and leaves from trees. Then tell me, O holy men! How you can charge an innocent tree with the fault of letting its best produce fall?

²⁴ Know for certain, O lotus-eyed king, that even the sacrifice of your body is not enough to completely renounce all things. Renunciation of everything is not an easy matter. ²⁵ You intend to destroy this inoffensive body of yours in vain. Getting rid of your body does not cause your renunciation or freedom.

²⁶ Your body has an enemy which agitates it like an elephant shaking a huge tree. If you can only get rid of this mortal enemy of your body and soul, then you are then said to be free from all. ²⁷ Now king, by avoiding this deep-rooted enemy of yours, you are freed from the bondage of your body and everything else in this world. Otherwise, no matter how you may kill your body, you can never put a stop to its rebirth.

²⁸ Sikkidhwaja replied, "Then what is it that agitates the body? What is the root of our reincarnations and of the doings and sufferings of our future lives? What is it that by avoiding it, we avoid and forsake everything in the world?"

²⁹ Kumbha replied:—

Know, holy king, that forsaking your kingdom or your body, burning your hut and possessions, or all these things taken together, cannot constitute your renunciation of everything. ³⁰ That which is all and everywhere is the one and only cause of everything. One renounces all by resigning everything in that sole existent being.

³¹ Sikkidhwaja said, "You are saying that there is an all existent situated in everything, and to whom all things are to be resigned at all times. Now sage, you who know the all, what is this all or combination of everything?"

³² Kumbha replied:—

Know, O holy man, this all-pervading being is known under various names like the living soul *jiva*, the life force *prana*, and many others. It is neither an active or inactive principle. It is called the mind which is ever liable to error.

³³ Know that the mind is the seat of illusion that by itself makes the man. It is the essential constituent of every person and the mirror of all these worlds in itself. ³⁴ Know the mind is the source of your body and properties. Know also that it is the root of your hermitage and everything else, just as one tree bears the seed of others. ³⁵ Therefore, if you give up this seed of all events, then you really resign everything in the world which is contained in and depends on this primary seed and mainspring, the mind. All possible and impossible renunciation depends upon renunciation of the mind.

³⁶ The man who is subject to his mind is always subject to cares, both when he is attentive to his duties or negligent of them, or whether he rules his kingdom or flies from it to a forest. But the man of a well governed mind is quite content in every condition of life. ³⁷ The mind revolves constantly like the turning world. It evolves itself into the forms of the body and its limbs, just as a minute seed displays itself in the shape of a tree and its branches and leaves. ³⁸ As trees are shaken by winds, as mountains are shaken by earthquakes, and as waves are blown by air, so the animated body is moved about by the mobile force of the mind.

³⁹ These miserable mortals who are born to death and decay, those happy few who live to enjoy the pleasures of life, and the great sages with staunch hearts and souls are alike bound to their minds.

⁴⁰ The mind acts its different roles in all the various forms and figures on the stage that is this world. It shows its gestures in the motions of the body. It lives and breathes in the shape of the living spirit. It thinks and reflects in the form of the mind. ⁴¹ It takes different names like the understanding *buddhi*, consciousness, egoism, life or *prana*, and the intellect according to its different internal functions in the body. It is called the silent soul when it is without any action assigned to it.

⁴² The mind is said to be the all in all. By getting released of the mind, we are released of all diseases and dangers. Then we are said to have avoided and abandoned everything. ⁴³ O you who wants to know what renunciation is, you must know that renunciation of the mind is renunciation of all. If you succeed renouncing your mind, you come to know the truth and feel the true joy of your soul. ⁴⁴ Rid your mind, you get rid of the unity and duality of creeds and come to perceive all diversities and pluralities blend in one universal whole which is transcendental tranquility, transparent purity, and undiminished joy. ⁴⁵ The mind is the field for everyone's career in this world. But if this field is overgrown with thorns and brambles, how can you expect to grow rice in it?

⁴⁶ The mind shows its manifold aspects and plays its many parts at will. It turns and moves in the forms of things, just as waters roll in the shapes of waves. ⁴⁷ Know, young king, that abandonment of all things by renouncing your mind will add to your joy, like gaining a kingdom for yourself. ⁴⁸ In the matter of self-renunciation, you have been on the same footing as other men in that you resign whatever you dislike and want to have something for which you have a liking.

⁴⁹ He who connects all the worlds with himself, like a thread connecting pearls in a necklace, is the man who possesses everything by renouncing all things from himself. ⁵⁰ The soul is unattached to all things, yet it connects and passes through them all like the thread of the Divine Soul connects the

worlds like a string of pearls.⁵¹ The soul with no attachment to the world is like lamp without oil that soon burns out into darkness. But the spirit that is warm with its affections is like lamp with oil that burns with universal love and enlightens all objects around it.⁵² The Lord who lives aloof from all resembles a lamp without oil in darkness, but the same Lord manifesting himself in all things resembles the lamp with oil that lights every object.

⁵³ After you have renounced all your possessions, you still remain by yourself. In the same way, after you have renounced your body, mind and all, you still have your consciousness, which you can never get rid of.⁵⁴ You have burned all your possessions but you have not burned any part of your body. In the same way, by your renunciation of all things, you cannot resign yourself or your soul. That would amount to nirvana or utter extinction.

⁵⁵ Total renunciation means emptying the soul of all its worldly attachments. Then the soul becomes the seat of all knowledge, the ethereal paradise of hosts of celestial beings.⁵⁶ Total renunciation is like the fountain of youth that drives away all fear of disease and death with a single drink. The soul remains untouched by the cares of the world, just as the clear sky is not colored by spots of clouds.

⁵⁷ Again, total renunciation is the complete abandonment of all affections. It gives a man his true greatness and glory. As you get rid of your temporary affections, so you get the stability of your understanding and the firmness of your determination.

⁵⁸ Total renunciation, the abandonment of all, is filled with perfect delight. Its contrary is attended with extreme misery. This is a certain truth. Knowing this, choose what you think is best for you.⁵⁹ He who gives away his belongings in this life comes to possess them again in his future state, just as rivers that pour their waters into the sea are again filled by flood tide.⁶⁰ After complete renunciation in the mind, its emptiness is filled with full knowledge of them, like an empty box that holds rich gems and jewels, which is highly gratifying to the soul.

⁶¹ It was by virtue of his renunciation of all things (in the mind) that Sakyamuni, the Lord Buddha, became brave and fearless amidst the troubles of the Kali Age and sat as firm as a rock.⁶² Total renunciation of all things is equivalent to acquiring all prosperity because the Lord gives everything to he who dedicates and devotes his all to Him.

⁶³ O king, after your abandonment of all things you have become as quiet as the calm atmosphere. Now try to be as graceful as the graceful moon by the pleasantness of your manners.⁶⁴ Now, O high minded king, forget your past abdication of crown and kingdom. Forget your renunciation of all things in this hermitage. Drive away the pride of your total abandonment of all that you had, and be of a clear and pleasing countenance.

Chapter 94 — Kumbha Enlightens Sikhidhwaja Regarding the Mind and Ultimate Causation

¹ Vasishta continued:—

As the disguised boy was admonishing Sikhidhwaja in this manner on the renunciation of mind, the king thought inwardly on its meaning, then spoke as follows.

² Sikhidhwaja said, “I find my mind is always fluttering, like a bird in the open sky of my bosom. My mind is constantly lurking like an ape in the wilderness of my heart.³ I know how to restrain my mind, like they do fish in a net, but I do not know how to get rid of it when it is so engaged with the objects of sense.⁴ Please sage, first acquaint me with the nature of the mind, and then teach me the method of renouncing it forever.”

⁵ Kumbha replied:—

Great king, know that desire is the intrinsic nature of the mind. The word desire is a synonym for the mind.⁶ Abandonment of the mind is very easy, more easily accomplished than stirring it, and is attended with a greater delight than possessing a kingdom can afford, more pleasant than the scent of fragrant flowers.

⁷ But it is very difficult for the ignorant to forsake the desires of their minds. It is as hard for them as it is for a peasant to exercise the powers of a kingdom, or for a heap of grass to be as high as a mountain.

⁸ Sikhidhwaja said, “I understand that it is the nature of the mind to be full of desires. But I find trying to rid the mind to be as impossible as swallowing an iron bolt.⁹ I find the mind to be like a fragrant flower in the great garden of the world, and also like the fire pit of all our grief. It is the stalk of the lotus of the world, and it is the wind that blows the gusts of delusion all over the world. Now tell me how this thing may be removed easily?¹⁰ The mind is the locomotive engine of the body. It is the bee that flutters about the lotus of the heart. Now tell me, how can I easily get rid of this mind?”

¹¹ Kumbha answered:—

Total eradication of the mind consists in extinguishing the entire world from it. The learned and men of long foresight say that this is abandonment of the mind.

¹² Sikhidhwaja replied, “I think extinction of the mind is better than our abandonment of it, on account of securing the success of our purposes. But how can we know the gradual removal of the mind from the hundreds of diseases to which it is subject?”

¹³ Kumbha replied:—

Egoism is the seed and root of the tree of the mind, with all its branches and leaves and fruit and flowers. Therefore root out the mind with its very seed of egoism and you have your breast as clear as the empty and clear sky.

¹⁴ Sikhidhwaja replied, “Tell me, O sage. What is the root of the mind? What are its sprouts and fruit? Tell me also how many stems and branches it has, and how it is possible to root it out all at once.”

¹⁵ Kumbha replied:—

Know, O king, that egoism and all the other words that express the self, such as “mind” or “I” or “me”

and the like are the seeds of the tree of the mind.

¹⁶ The field of its growth is the Supreme Soul, which is the common source of all beings. But that field being filled with illusion, the mind is deluded to believe itself as a first born sprout springing out of this field. ¹⁷ Understanding is the certain knowledge of the mind in its discrete state. Pure understanding is when the germ or sprout of the mind has reached its state of maturity.

¹⁸ Understanding (*buddhi*), when subject to various desires, takes the name of wasteful mind (*chitta*). Such a mind makes the living being, which is as hollow as a carved stone image, a mere false conception. ¹⁹ The body is the stem of this tree of the mind, and it is composed of skin, bones and juicy tissues. ²⁰ The branches of the tree of the mind extend over a great distance all around, and so the sense organs of the body protrude wide about it, perishing in the end trying to seek its enjoyment.

²¹ Now try to cut off the branches of the tree of your mind and root out the harmful tree all at once.

²² Sikkidhwaja said, "Perhaps I can cut off the branches of the tree of mind somehow or another. But tell me, O my sagely teacher, how can I pull out the entire tree all at once?"

²³ Kumbha replied:—

All our desires are the various branches of this tree. They are hanging with loads of fruit and they are cut off with the axe of our reason. ²⁴ He alone is able to cut out the tree of his mind who is unattached to the world, who holds his silence and inner tranquility, who is wise in all discussions, and who does whatever offers itself to him at anytime. ²⁵ He who uses his manliness of reason and discretion to cut off the branches and brambles of the tree of his mind is also able to uproot this tree from his heart all at once.

²⁶ The first thing to be done with the mind is to root it out from the heart all at once. The next process is to lop off its branches. Therefore employ yourself more to uprooting it entirely instead of severing of its branches. ²⁷ You may also burn it as the first step instead of cutting the branches. When the great trunk of the tree of the mind is reduced to ashes, there remains an entire mindlessness at last.

²⁸ Sikkidhwaja said, "Tell me, O my sagely guide, what fire can burn away the seed of the tree of the mind which is covered with the skin of egoism?"

²⁹ Kumbha replied:—

King, the fire that is able to consume the seed of the harmful plant of the mind is the examination of the question, "What am I that bears this corporeal form upon me?"

³⁰ Sikkidhwaja said, "O sage! I have repeatedly considered questions in my own understanding and found that my egoism does not consist in anything of this world, or of this earth, or of the woods that form its ornaments. ³¹ My ego resides nowhere in the hills and forests where I lived, or in the shaking of the leaves before me. It does not lie any part of my gross body or in its flesh, bones or blood. ³² It does not lie in any of the organs of action or in the organs of sensation. It does not lie in the mind or in understanding or in any part of the gross body."

³³ "As we see gold in the form of a bracelet, so do I conceive the intelligent soul in the form of my egoism because it is impossible for any material substance to have anything like intelligence. ³⁴ All real existence depends on the Supreme Soul for its existence. All real entities exist in the supreme

essence. It is impossible for anything to exist in a nothingness, just as there is no possibility for a forest to exist in an emptiness."

³⁵ "Thus sage, knowing full well that my egoism is an aspect or shadow of my eternal soul and worthy to be wiped off from it, yet I regret my ignorance of the intrinsic spirit which is to be wiped clean so that the internal soul can be seen in full light."

³⁶ Kumbha replied:—

If you are none of these material objects, as you say, and if your egoism does not consist in materiality, then tell me prince, what you think yourself to be in reality?

³⁷ Sikkidhwaja answered, "O most learned sage, I feel myself to be that intelligent and pure soul which is of the form of consciousness which acquaints me of all existence and which discriminates their different natures. ³⁸ I perceive my egoism is attached to my body, but I am perfectly ignorant whether it is a caused or causeless principle. ³⁹ I am unable, O sage, to rub out this sense of my egoism as an unreality, as something without essence. That is what I greatly regret in myself.

⁴⁰ Kumbha said:—

Tell me O king. What is that great foulness which you feel is attached to you? What makes you act as a man of the world? Do you think it to be something or a mere delusion?

⁴¹ Sikkidhwaja replied, "The sense of my egoism, which is the root of the tree of my mind, is the great foulness that attaches to me. I do not know how to get rid of it. However I try to shun it, the more it clings to me."

⁴² Kumbha said:—

Every effect is produced from some cause or other, and this is the general law of nature everywhere. Anything otherwise is as false as seeing a second moon in the sky, which is nothing but a reflection of the true moon. ⁴³ The cause produces the effect, whether it is a big one or a small element of it. Therefore explore the cause of your egoism, and tell me what it is.

⁴⁴ Sikkidhwaja replied, "My sagely guide, I know that mere illusion is the cause of the fallacy of my egoism. But tell me sage, how is this error of mine to subside and vanish? ⁴⁵ My mind's inclination towards phenomena makes me suffer all these pains and pangs within myself. Now tell me, O muni sage, how to suppress my thoughts of external objects."

⁴⁶ Kumbha said:—

Tell me whether your thinking and knowing are the cause of whatever you think or know, or whether whatever you think or know activates your thinking and knowing powers. If you can tell me this, then I shall be able to explain the process of cause and effect. ⁴⁷ Now tell me which do you think is the cause and not the cause of knowing and knowable, and of thinking and the thinkable, which are the subjects of my question to you.

⁴⁸ Sikkidhwaja answered, "I think, O sage, that what the body senses is the cause of thinking and thoughts, and of knowing and what is known. ⁴⁹ Our knowledge of things appears only in forms of bodies that can be sensed. Otherwise, a mere abstract thought of a thing is as insubstantial as an airy

nothing.⁵⁰ As I can not conceive the non-entity of a positive entity or the abstract nature of a concrete body, so I do not know how I can ignore my egoism which is the seed of my mind.”

⁵¹ Kumbha said:—

If you rely on your material body as a real existence, then tell me, when your soul is separated from the body, what does your knowledge depend upon?

⁵² Sikkidhwaja replied, “The body, evident to view and a real entity, cannot be taken as unreal by anybody, just as the tangible sunlight cannot be called darkness by any man with common sense.

⁵³ Who can ignore the body? It is full with hands and feet and other parts. It is full of life and activity. Its actions are tangible to sight and evident to our perception.”

⁵⁴ Kumbha said:—

Know O king, that nothing can be said to exist which is not produced by some cause. The knowledge or consciousness that we have of something cannot be produced only by mistake and error.⁵⁵ There can be no product without a similar cause, and no material form can come out from a formless and immaterial agent. How can anything come to existence without having its seed of a similar nature?

⁵⁶ Whatever thing appears to anyone without a true cause is as false an appearance to its deluded observer as a mirage in a desert.⁵⁷ Know that you are no real existence, only a false shape of your error. Whatever earnestness you take to it, you will never get any water from this delusive mirage.

⁵⁸ Sikkidhwaja said, “It is as useless to inquire into the cause of a nonentity, just as it is fruitless to look into the origin of the secondary moon which is only a false reflection of the true one. Believing in a nothingness is like decorating the body of a barren women’s son.

⁵⁹ Kumbha replied:—

The body with its bones and ribs is the product of no assignable cause. Therefore know it to be a non-entity because it is impossible for the frail body to be the work of an everlasting Maker.

⁶⁰ Sikkidhwaja said, “Now tell me sage, why we should not reckon our parents as the causes and producers of our bodies, with all theirs members and parts, since they are known as their immediate causes?”

⁶¹ Kumbha replied:—

The parents can be nothing and no cause without having another cause for them, because whatever is without a cause is nothing in itself.⁶² The causes of all things and effects are called their seeds. When there is no seed in existence, it is impossible for a seedling to be produced.⁶³ Therefore, when you cannot trace out the cause of an event, account the event as no event at all. There can be nothing without its seed, and the knowledge of a causeless effect or event is an utter impossibility and fallacy of the understanding.

⁶⁴ It is an extreme error to suppose the existence of a thing without its cause or seed, such as to suppose the existence of two moons in the sky, of water in a mirage, or the son of a barren woman.

⁶⁵ Sikkidhwaja said, “Now tell me sage, why should not our parents be taken as the causes of our production, who had our grandfathers and grandmothers for the causes or seeds of their birth

likewise. Why should we not reckon our first great grandfather (Brahma) as the first progenitor of the human race?"

⁶⁶ Kumbha replied:—

The first great grandfather, O king, cannot be the original cause, since he also requires a cause for his birth or else he could not come into existence.⁶⁷ Even the great grandfather of creation, Brahma himself, must have a cause, a seed from the Supreme Spirit which produced him, or else the visible form in which he appears is no more than a mere delusion.⁶⁸ The form of the visible world is as great a fallacy as the appearance of water in a mirage. The creation of the great grandfather Brahma is no more than a false misconception.

⁶⁹ I will now wipe off the dark cloud of your error, that our great grandfather Brahma was conceived in the womb of the Supreme Spirit. This will be the salvation of your soul.

⁷⁰ Therefore know, O king, that the Lord God shines forever with his intelligent soul and mind in Himself. It is from him that the lotus-born Brahma and the entire universe are manifest to our view, and that there is nothing which exhibits itself without Him.

Chapter 95 — Sikhidhwaja Understands that God Is No Cause of Anything Separate

¹ Sikhidhwaja said, “If the sight of the entire universe is only a phantom, and our knowledge of me, you, and of this and that is only an error of our minds, then why should be concerned or sorry about anything?”

² Kumbha replied:—

The false impression of the world’s existence has firmly laid hold of men’s minds, just as people believe frozen water is dry land.³ The learned say that knowledge of gross matter is lost with the dispersion of ignorance, and there is no way to get rid of this long contracted prejudice without getting rid of ignorance.⁴ Only acute understanding is the means to know the truth: that the creation and dissolution of the world depend upon the will and causality of the Supreme Being.⁵ He who understands this is sure to lose his rooted prejudice by degrees and come to the knowledge that the material world is a nothing.

⁶ By refining your mind away from its predisposition to assume the existence of gross forms, you will come to realize how the idea of the creator, such as Brahma or the Prime Male, is as false as water in a mirage.⁷ If the great grandfather of the world is a nothingness, then his creation of all creatures (Prajapati, Lord of Creatures) is similarly false and void, as it is absurd for all impossibility to come into being.⁸ The perception of a thing in actual existence is as false as the perception of water in a mirage. A little analysis is enough to remove this error, like the mistake of seeing silver in sea shells.

⁹ Any object that appears to exist without a cause is only a phantom of error and has no essential form whatever in reality.¹⁰ Whatever is done by one’s false knowledge or mistake is of no use, just as the attempt to fill a pot with the water from a mirage proves to be utterly vain.

¹¹ Sikhidhwaja said, “Why cannot we call the Supreme Brahman to be the cause of Brahma, the first creator of the world who is called the son of God, the one unborn and without end, inexpressible and everlasting?”

¹² Kumbha replied:—

God Brahman, being neither the cause nor the effect of any action, is only an unchanging unity and transcendent spirit. He is never the cause or effect of anything.¹³ How can the incomprehensible and unknowable Brahman be designated the creator when he has no property of creator or created or the instrument or cause of anything?

¹⁴ The world has no separate cause. It is not the separate product of any causality whatever. It is no duality but one with unity, without beginning or end, coeternal with the eternal one.¹⁵ He that is inconceivable and unknowable is perfect joy, tranquility and ever without decay. The One can never be the active or passive agent of anything because immutability is his nature.¹⁶ Therefore there is nothing like a creation and the visible world is only a nothing. The Lord God is neither an active nor a passive agent, but quite still and full of bliss.

¹⁷ There being no causal power, the world is not the production of anybody. It is only our error that this world is a production without any assignable cause.¹⁸ The uncaused world is the product of nothing and therefore nothing in itself. For if it be the production of nobody, it is a nothingness like its

cause also.

¹⁹ The nonexistence of anything or the nonexistence of everything is proved as a certain truth. We can have no conception of anything. In the absence of such conception, it is vain to suppose the existence of an egoism or you.

²⁰ Sikkidhwaja said, "Sage, now I perceive the truth. I find all that you have said to be reasonable. Now I see that I am the pure and free soul, quite aloof of any bondage or its liberation from bonds.²¹ I understand Brahman is no cause of anything because he is entirely without any causation. The world is a nothingness for lack of its cause, and therefore there is no being whatever which we reckon as differentiated.²² Therefore there is no such category as the mind or its seed, or growth or decay. Therefore I bow down to myself of which alone I have consciousness in me."

²³ I am only conscious of myself. I only know existence in myself. I have no real knowledge of anything except me. All else appears like fleeting clouds in the womb of the sky.

²⁴ The distinct knowledge of the different categories of time, place, and action in the world is now entirely blended with the knowledge of the unity of the tranquil spirit of Brahman.²⁵ I am tranquil, calm and quiet and settled in the spirit of God. I neither rise nor fall from or move about any of these props on this stage. I remain as you do, in the immovable spirit of God, which is all quiet, holiness, and joy in itself.

Chapter 96 — Kumbha Explains God and Creation Are the Same; Consciousness Depicts Creation (God) According to Its Thoughts

¹ Vasishta said:—

Sikhidhwaja, having found his rest in the spirit of Brahman, remained quiet for some moments, like a steady and tireless candle flame in a calm, windless place.² As he was about to be absorbed in unwavering meditation, he was suddenly roused from his trance by the distraction of Kumbha's voice.

³ Kumbha said:—

O king, I see you are not waking from the sleep of your entranced meditation in which you are situated in perfect bliss. You must neither be absorbed in your contemplation nor be a complete stranger to your abstract meditation either.⁴ The mind undivided in its attention is cleansed from all deceit. Freed from its knowledge of parts and particulars, the mind becomes emancipate in its living state.

Vasishta talking:—

⁵ Being thus enlightened by Kumbha, the king became full of enlightenment. Roused from his trance, he shone as brightly as a rich gem when taken out of its cover.⁶ The king saw the unreality of visible things in his state of quietism. He now perceived them spread all about him, and he spoke about them to Kumbha.

⁷ Sikhidhwaja said, “Though I know full well about all these things, yet I want to propose some questions regarding them. I hope you will give answers for my correct and perfect knowledge of them.

⁸ Tell me, how can we reconcile the impure conception of the Universal Soul representing the universe with the pure idea of the Supreme Soul which is ever calm, quiet and transparent?”

⁹ Kumbha replied:—

You have asked well, O king. This shows the clarity of your understanding. If this is all that you want to know, then hear me explain it fully to you.

¹⁰ Whatever is seen here and everywhere, together with all moving and inert creation, are all perishable and become extinct at the end of every kalpa age.¹¹ At the end of the kalpa age, the true and essential reality remains in an obscure chaotic state, deprived of both light and darkness.¹² This essential reality is Divine Consciousness, pure and quiet and as clear as the transparent air. It is free from all attributes and full of transcendental intelligence.¹³ The one that remains at the end of a kalpa is the Supreme Soul. It extends over all space and is purely bright, transparent and quiet. It is enveloped in light and is pure intelligence.¹⁴ It is inscrutable and unknowable, even and quiet, and full of bliss. It is called Brahman the great, the final extinction of all bodies, full of all knowledge.

¹⁵ It is the smallest of the small and the largest of whatever is large in the universe. It is the greatest of anything that is great and heavy and it is the best of whatever is good and excellent.¹⁶ It is so very small that if you place this sky beside it, the sky will appear as big as the great Mount Meru by the side of a small atom.¹⁷ It is also so very big and bulky that if this stupendous world were placed side by side to it, the world must appear like an atom before it, or vanish into nothing.¹⁸ Brahman is attributed with the name of Universal Soul because it pervades the entire universe and is its intrinsic soul. Its exterior appearance is called by the title of Viraj (All Radiant).

¹⁹ There is no difference between the description and what it describes, just as there is none between the air and the wind, air in motion, and as sky and emptiness are synonyms. The universal Consciousness is the phenomenal world, and the same consciousness is manifested in the forms of "I" and "you." ²⁰ As wind makes water become a wave at a certain time and place, so the world rises and falls at times in the Supreme Soul without any external cause. ²¹ As gold is transformed into bracelets at certain times and place, by some means or another, so the spirit of God is transformed into the visible world at certain times, without any assignable cause whatever.

²² The most glorious God is lord of his kingdom of the world. He is one with his creation, ever pure, quiet, and without decay. He pervades over all these worlds scattered like tufts of grass all around us.

²³ This transcendently good and great God is the only real existence. God comprises all temporary and finite existences within himself. Through our own reasoning, we know that this glorious creation of the universe is all derived from him.

²⁴ Know him, O king, to be the essence of the extended universe, extending his form of complete consciousness over everything, a unity that never admits of a duality. ²⁵ Therefore there is no reason to conceive a duality beside his unity because God's unity is the sole principle of the Supreme Soul, fully manifest in everything in its ever undiminished and everlasting state. ²⁶ The Lord always remains as the all in all, manifest in all various forms, neither visible nor perceptible by us. He cannot be said to be the cause or effect of anything.

²⁷ The Lord, being neither perceptible nor conceivable by us, is something super-eminently good and super-fine. He is all and the soul of all, too fine and transparent and known only by our conceptions of him because he has no conscious perception whatever. ²⁸ Being inexpressible by words and manifest in all without manifestation or appearance of himself, he cannot be the cause of whatever is real or unreal.

²⁹ That which has no name of itself cannot be the seed of another. No nameless nothing can grow anything, nor can a corresponding world spring out of a non-corresponding spirit. ³⁰ Indeed, the inexhaustible mass of Divine Consciousness is no cause or casual instrument or effect of anything. The product of the Divine Soul must be something of the form of the invisible soul, which is everlasting consciousness or intelligence.

³¹ So, O sage, nothing is produced by the Supreme Brahman, nor does anything arise from Him, like waves from water that have wind for their cause. ³² All distinctions of time and place are absent in the uniform and unchanging spirit of Brahman. There can be no creation or destruction of the world from him, and hence the world is uncreated and without any cause.

³³ Sikkidhwaja said, "I know that the waves of water are caused by winds of the air, and so I understand this world and our egoism and the like have their causality in the Supreme Spirit."

³⁴ Kumbha replied:—

O king, now know the positive truth. As I am telling you after all, there is nothing like a separate world or our separate ego existing in Supreme Spirit. The world and the ego exist as one with the Divine Spirit, without bearing any distinct name or personality at all.

³⁵ As subtle ether contains the subtle element of vacuum in its bosom, so the Divine Soul entertains in

itself the fine spun idea of the mundane system without its substance.³⁶ Whether you behold this world in its true form of Divine Consciousness, or in any other form of gross matter, it is to be correctly understood as nothing but a representation of Divine Consciousness.³⁷ The full knowledge of something makes it sweet to the understanding, even though it may be as bitter as gall to taste. Imperfect knowledge of something, such as that of the world, makes it appear as if full of grief, even though there is no such thing in reality.

³⁸ Ambrosia, the water of life, being taken as a poison will act as poison in the patient's constitution. So the Lord of intellect appears in a favorable or unfavorable light according to how knowledge or ignorance represents him to our understanding.³⁹ The blessed Lord God appears to us in a benevolent or non-benevolent aspect, just as our true and false knowledge paints him in our minds, and just as the blinded eye sees many a false sight in the light of the sun.⁴⁰ The essence of Brahman always remains the same in his essential form of consciousness, but because of the depravity of our understanding, he is represented in one form now, then in another at a different time and under different circumstances.⁴¹ In fact, the body and the embodied soul appear as any other sensible object in the world, but when viewed in the abstract light of reality, they blend in the spiritual form of God.

⁴² Therefore it is vain to make any inquiry concerning the nature of the world and our egoism and the like. What is really exists is to be inquired into, and not that which is a nothingness in itself.⁴³ It is vain to ask about an appearance, which being looked into vanishes into nothing. It is equally vain to speak of the essence of gold when it presents us with no form.⁴⁴ Without the existence of God, there is no entity called the world or our egoism. Having no cause, these things are identical with the one self-existent God.

⁴⁵ The world does not appear of itself. It rests like a carving in the spirit of God. It shows itself as separate to us only by illusion.⁴⁶ These existences composed of the five elements produce many other beings, just as males and females mate and produce their offspring in infinity. So Divine Consciousness, being joined with the illusory intelligence, presents endless forms to our view.

⁴⁷ Through God's inherent knowledge, the Divine Soul represents itself in the shapes of the many things that are comprised in his omniscience. He is full in himself and manifests his fullness in himself. He is never wanting in his fullness which always exists in Him.⁴⁸ The fullness of the world is derived from the fullness of God. Yet the Divine fullness remains complete, just as when you deduct from the infinite, the remainder is still infinite.

⁴⁹ Divine Consciousness, though forever the same and serene, appears to shine forth in creation because of our knowledge of creation, which dissolves with our imperceptibility of it. So our egoism, being the same with the Divine Ego, appears to be different from it, just as our fluctuating minds depict it in various lights.⁵⁰ The Divine Self never becomes many and never forsakes its state without decay. It is of a luminous form and its essence has no beginning or end. It assumes as many forms as the ever changing mind imposes upon it.⁵¹ At one time, the identical soul believes itself to be Viraj, lord of the world, and at another, to be a contemptible being. Sometimes it sees itself in its true form of divinity and at another time its thought makes it think it is some other thing.

⁵² The world appears as a vast and extended space, perfectly quiet in its nature, inexpressible by words or their meanings. All its objects are of wonderful shape to view and appear to us according to

our conceptions without showing their real nature to us.

Chapter 97 — Kumbha: How Variety Appears in Unity

¹ Kumbha continued:—

Nothing is ever produced or destroyed by the ever tranquil spirit of God. Everything appears as the panorama of the one all God, just like the various kinds of ornaments are made of the same metal of gold.² Brahman remains forever in his own essence. He never becomes the seed or cause of any other thing. He is ever of the form of our innate conception of him, and therefore never becomes anything other than our simple idea of him.

³ Sikkidhwaja said, “O sagely guide, I grant that there exists no separate world or any other individual ego in the one pure Shiva, except his own essence of omniscience. But please tell me, what is this world and what are these individual egos that seem to be infinite in number and appear as distinct creations of God?”

⁴ Kumbha replied:—

The essence of God is without beginning or end and extends to infinite space and time.⁵ The same is also true of this transparent cosmos, and that is the body of this world which is simply a form of Divine Consciousness and not any void or any separate thing.⁶ The essential property of God is his consciousness, therefore he is said to be of essence of consciousness. Just as fluidity is the property of water, so consciousness is the essential property of everything. There is no reason to suppose that the prime cause of all is an unintelligent principle.⁷ The Lord is infinite in himself. He is situated in his infinitude forever without the grossness of even infinitesimals ever attaching to pure intelligence in the subjective soul.

⁸ We cannot attribute the creation of the impure world to the pure essence of the Divine Spirit. The purity of the Divine Soul cannot admit the impurity of creation, which would amount to a duality of purity and impurity in the Supreme Soul.⁹ The Lord can never be supposed as the seed or cause of the universe. His nature is inscrutable and beyond our conception. He cannot be thought of as the root of anything whatever.¹⁰ There is no creation or production of an effect without its cause or seed, and reason does not suggest any other source of creation.¹¹ Therefore there is no gross creation whatsoever, only the form of the intellect itself. All that is visible to us is nothing other than the solid intellect itself.

¹² The feeling of egoism and the term “world” are meaningless words and mere inventions of men because nothing can be called an effect or product which has no cause assigned to it.¹³ The duality of the world appears in the unity of God in the same manner as sky flowers appear in the hollow vacuum of the sky. All things, being perishable in their nature, can exist only in the intellect in which they live and die.

¹⁴ Destruction is not the giver of life to destruction, nor is it a giver of life to perishable things. Therefore consciousness is the giver of light to all, but you may call it by whatever name you like the best.¹⁵ What difficulty is there, provided all things are to be called one, when all have come from the intellect? What you call duality is only a mystery of consciousness (*chit*).¹⁶ The intellect is the only true entity, and it admits no unity or duality in it. Therefore, O king, you must know that all other entities are nothing beside it.

¹⁷ The feeling of your individual ego is as false as your conception of any other thing. If the idea of individual ego is proved false, what else can there be except the only entity of the intellect? ¹⁸ Thus ego being nothing other than a form of the intellect, there is no difference whatever between them. Hence the words “I” and “you” and the like are mere human inventions to distinguish one form from another.

¹⁹ Whether you remain in your embodied or disembodied state, continue to remain always as firm as a rock by knowing yourself only as the pure intellect, and the nothingness of all other things. ²⁰ By always thinking of yourself as the intellect, you will lose the sense of your individual ego and personality. By reflecting on the meaning of the Vedas, you will be lead to the same conclusion.

²¹ From all these know yourself as the pure essence, which is uncaused and unmade and the same with the first and original principle. You are the same with the free and everlasting Brahman, and multiform in your unity. You are as void as emptiness, having no beginning, middle or end. This world is the intellect and that intellect is the very Brahman himself.

Chapter 98 — Kumbha: Immortal Cannot Produce Material

¹ Sikkidhwaja said, “I understand that there is no such thing as the mind. But as I have no clear and correct knowledge of this subject, I beg of you to tell me, whether it is as I understand or not.”

² Kumbha replied:—

O king, you have truly said that there is no such real entity as the mind at anytime and in any space whatever. That which appears as the mind is nothing other than a faculty of the only one everlasting Brahman.³ Everything else which is fallible or unconscious of itself, such as the mind or anything of this world, can never be a positive or self-existence substance. Therefore the words “I” and “you” and “this” or “that” are only fabrications of our imagination with no existence in reality.⁴ There is no reality of the cosmos or any of its contents. All things that seem to be in existence are no more than various representations of the one self-existent Brahman himself.

⁵ It is said that there was no mind or its personification of Brahma, or any final dissolution of the world, and this proves their unreality. Again it is said that the mind took the form of Brahma and created the world in the beginning, which also proves the mind to be the Divine Mind, represented by the metaphor of Brahma.

⁶ There can be no material object without the prior existence of a material cause. So without a material cause, it is impossible to believe the existence of the many material objects of the senses and of the mind that experiences sensations.⁷ Hence there is no such thing as a dull and unconscious world. All that appears to exist as such is nothing other than a representation of the Divine Spirit, just as gold exhibits itself in the shapes of many ornaments.

⁸ It is completely false to believe that the nameless and formless God does all this. Although the world is visible, yet our subjective knowledge of it offers no proof of its reality.⁹ That the nameless and formless spirit of God, without shelter or support for itself, should make this world as a home others, is a laughable assumption of only the ignorant.

¹⁰ From these reasons it is plain that there is no world in existence, not even the mind which is only a part of it. The world being a non-entity, there can be no mind which is only familiar with the world.

¹¹ The mind means nothing more than a wish. We say that someone has a wish only if there is an object to be wished for. This world which appears to be so very desirable is a nothingness. So how can there be the mind to desire it?¹² That which manifests to us under the name of the mind is nothing other than a manifestation of the spirit of God in itself, although it may be called by various names.

¹³ These visible phenomena which are so desirable to everyone are no productions of anyone. They are an uncaused entity ever existent in the Divine Mind, from before its production by the mind of Brahma the creator.

¹⁴ Therefore the Divine Soul has the form of an intellectual vacuum. It is as empty as the transcendent air. It is full with the light of its intelligence and has no shadow of the gross world in it.¹⁵ The slight light which shines in the Divine Soul is like the twilight that fills the ethereal sphere. It is the reflection of the mirror of Supreme Consciousness. It is neither the dim light of the mind nor any reflection of the phenomenal world.¹⁶ Our knowledge of “I” and “them” and this world is never real or reliable. It is like the appearance of our dreams that serve only to delude us into mistakes.

¹⁷ The absence of the desirable world removes our desire of it, so the privation of our desire displaces the mind which is the seat of our desires.

¹⁸ The ignorant believe that this visible world is the mind, but the unreal and formless mind did not have this visible form before it developed itself into the form of creation. ¹⁹ This world is said to be contemporary with the eternal mind, which is altogether impossible because we read nowhere in the scriptures, nor do we find in the ordinary course of nature, that a visible object has ever come into existence without some cause or other, either in the beginning of creation or at anytime afterwards.

²⁰ How can eternity, un-created-ness and everlastingness be affirmed of this visible world which is a gross material substance subject to decay and dissolution? ²¹ There is no testimony of the scriptures and no visual evidence or any reasonable deduction to show any material thing to be uncaused by some agent or other and which survives the final dissolution of the world. ²² There is no written testimony of the Vedas, any other scriptures, or the Siddhantas to show that any material thing is ever exempt from its three conditions of birth, growth, and decay, and which is not perishable at the last dissolution. ²³ He who is not guided by the evidence and dictates of the scriptures and Vedas is the most foolish among fools, and is never to be relied upon by good and sensible men.

²⁴ It is never possible for anyone to prevent the accidents that are incidental to perishable things, nor can there be any cause to render a material object an immaterial one. ²⁵ However, if we recognize the world as immaterial we identify it with the unchangeable Brahman, exempt from the accidents of action and passion, and of growth and decay. ²⁶ Therefore know this world is contained in the undivided and unutterable emptiness of Divine Consciousness which is infinite and formless emptiness and is forever more in its undivided and indivisible state.

²⁷ Brahman who is having every form and ever tranquil in himself, manifests his own self in this manner in the forms of creation and dissolution all in himself. ²⁸ The Lord now shows himself to our understanding as embodied in his body of the world, and now He manifests himself to us as the one Brahman in his spiritual form. ²⁹ Know after all that this world is only the essence of the one Brahman, beside which there is no separate world or anything else in existence. Only our imagination represents Brahman sometimes in one form and then in another.

³⁰ All this is one, eternal and ever tranquil soul, which is unborn and without any support and situated as it is. It shows itself as various without any variation in its nature. So learn to remain yourself with yourself as motionless as a block of wood, and with your dumb silence in utter amazement at all this.

Chapter 99 — Kumbha Lectures Sikhidhwaja: All Is Brahman

¹ Sikhidhwaja said, “O sage, by your good grace I am freed from my ignorance and brought under the light of truth. My doubts are removed and I am situated with my tranquility of my spirit. ² I have become as one knowing the knowable and who sits silently after crossing over the sea of delusion. I am quiet by quitting my egoism. I am separated of all disquiet by my knowledge of true self.”

³ “O, how I have wandered amidst the confusing depths of the world! After such a long time I have now arrived to the safe harbor of my peace and security. ⁴ Being so situated, O sage, I perceive neither my individual ego nor the existence of the three worlds. It is ignorance to believe in their existence, but I am taught to believe in Brahman alone.”

⁵ Kumbha replied:—

How is it possible for your individual ego or that of anyone else to exist anywhere when this universe and this air and sky do not exist anywhere? ⁶ Sit quietly as usual and be as calm and silent as a sage. Remain as still as the calm ocean without the disturbances of the waves and whirl pools within its bosom. ⁷ Such is the quiet and tranquil state of Brahman who is always one and the same as he is.

The words “I”, “you”, “this” and “that” and the world are as devoid of meaning as the universal emptiness is devoid of anything. ⁸ What you call the world is a thing having no beginning or end. It is the wonder of the Intellect to shine as the clear light which fills the ethereal firmament. ⁹ The changes that appear to take place in the spirit of God are as extraneous as the different colors that paint the dome of heaven and the various pieces of jewelry which are wrought upon gold. These have no intrinsic essentiality and never affect the tranquility of the Divine Spirit, the uniform serenity of the empty sky, or the nature of the pure metal of gold.

¹⁰ As the Lord is self-born, so his eternal will is inherent in and born with himself. What we call free will or fate depends upon the nature of our knowledge of them. ¹¹ Think yourself as something and you become a slave to your desires, but believe yourself as nothing and you are as free and liberated as free air itself. ¹² Your personality, whether you are subject either to bondage or freedom, is the certain knowledge or conviction of yourself as a reality. ¹³ The deprivation of your knowledge of yourself or your egoistic personality leads to your ultimate end. Your knowledge of your personality exposes you to danger. Therefore think yourself as Himself and not yourself, and you are safe from all calamity. ¹⁴ No sooner do you get rid of the conviction of yourself than your soul is enlightened by the light of true knowledge. You lose the sense of your personality and become complete in your knowledge of yourself as one with the Supreme Spirit.

¹⁵ The inscrutable nature of God admits of no cause because causality refers only to what is caused. Causality cannot come to existence without a cause. Causality cannot apply to the uncaused cause of all. ¹⁶ As we have no knowledge of an object which is not in existence, so we cease to have any knowledge of our personality if we cease to consider ourselves as caused and created beings.

¹⁷ What is this world to us if we are unconscious of ourselves and if we are free from our knowledge of the objective world? We see only the Supreme Soul remaining. ¹⁸ Whatever is manifest here before us is all situated in the spirit of the Lord. All these are transcendent and are situated as such and same with the full and transcendental spirit of God. ¹⁹ Therefore all these that are prominent to view are

like figures carved on a rock. The light that pervades the whole is the glory of the great God.²⁰ If the world disappears from view, God's light which is more transparent than that of the transparent sky will vanish away into nothing.

²¹ The unconscious world seems to move about like a shadow or a phantom in the air. Therefore it is called the moving world (*jagrat*). But he alone sees it in its true light who sees it as motionless, without its sense of mobility, perfectly calm and stationary in the spirit of God.²² When the sight of that which can be seen, together with the sense of that which can be sensed and the feelings of the mind, become tasteless to the dormant soul absorbed in divine meditation, then the wise call it nirvana absorption or the full light and knowledge of God.

²³ As the breezeless winds sink in the air and jewelry melts in its gold, so the protruding form of the world subsides in the even spirit of God.²⁴ The sight of the world and the perceptions of the mind which testify the existence of the world to us, are only the representations of Brahman, just as the false mirage represents water in the desert sands.²⁵ Like a vast body of water exists without a wave to disturb its surface, so the spirit of God remains in its state of calmness when it is free from its operation of creation.

²⁶ Creation is identical with Brahman. The Lord is the same with his creation. This is true from the statement of the Veda which says, "All this is Brahman and Brahman is this all."²⁷ The meaning of the word Brahman, immensity, equally establishes the existence of the world, just as the meaning of the word world or cosmos establishes the entity of Brahman.²⁸ The meaning of all words taken collectively expresses a multitude, which is synonymous with Brahman, the great and immense collection of the whole.²⁹ And if we reject the sense of the greatness of God and of the world, as they are usually meant to express, yet the little or minuteness of God that remains is so very minute that words cannot express it.

³⁰ The Lord that remains as the inherent and silent soul of all bodies is only one soul in the collection. He remains as a huge mountain of his intelligence in the form of the whole of this universal cosmos.

Chapter 100 — Kumbha Lectures Sikhidhwaja: More on All Is Brahman

¹ Sikhidhwaja said, “If is it so, O most intelligent sage, that the world is like the nature of its maker, then the world must resemble Brahman in every respect.”

² Kumbha replied:—

Where there exists a cause, there is also an effect associated with it. Where there is no cause whatever, there can be no resulting effect.³ Therefore there is no possibility of any cause or its effect in this world which is manifest before us. It is the identical essence of the ever tranquil and unborn spirit of God.

⁴ The effect of a cause necessarily has the same nature as the cause, but what similarity can exist between one which is neither the cause or effect of the other?⁵ Tell me, how can a tree grow which has no seed for its growth? How can God have a seed whose nature is inscrutable in thought and inexpressible in words?⁶ All things that have their causality at anytime or any place have the nature of their cause, but how can there be a similarity of anything with God who is never the cause of an effect?

⁷ Brahman the un-causing uncaused cause of all has no causality in him. Therefore the meaning of the word “world” is something that has no cause whatever.⁸ Therefore think of yourself as Brahman, according to the view of the intelligent. The world appears as something created in the sight of men of imperfect understandings.⁹ When the world is taken as one and the same with the tranquil intellect of God, it must be viewed in the light of the transparent spirit of Brahman.¹⁰ O king, the intelligent say that any other notion which the mind may entertain about the nature of God is a destruction of the right concept of God.¹¹ The destruction of the mind is equivalent to the destruction of the soul, and slight forgetfulness of the spirit is hard to regain in a whole kalpa age.

¹² As soon as you are freed from your personality, you find yourself to be full of divine knowledge. Your false personality flies away from your perfection in spirituality.

¹³ If you think the world exists from the meaning of the word *vishwa* (all), then tell me how and from where could all this come into existence?¹⁴ How can you call one a brahmin who lifts up his arms and proclaims himself about to be a shudra?¹⁵ If someone cries out that he is dead because his pulse is weakening, take both his death and his life to be mistaken.¹⁶ All these false appearances that present themselves before us are as false as a circle described by the whirling flame of a torch, and as delusive as water in a mirage, a secondary moon in mist, and ghosts appearing to children.

¹⁷ The mind is the common, true name of this false substance which misleads us to error. It is wrapped in ignorance and error.¹⁸ The mind is another name for ignorance, an unreality appearing as a real entity. Here ignorance takes the name of the mind and unreality passes under the title of reality. Ignorance is the lack of true knowledge and knowledge is the absence of ignorance.¹⁹ Ignorance or false knowledge is driven away by our knowledge of truth, just as the error of water in the desert is dispelled by knowledge of mirages.²⁰ As the knowledge of mirages removes the error of water in a sandy desert, so the knowledge of the mind as gross ignorance removes the false mind from the inner seat of the heart.

²¹ Knowledge that the mind is an unreality immediately roots out its projections, just as knowing that a rope is not a snake removes the fear of the snake in the rope. ²² As the knowledge of the falsehood of the snake in the rope removes the mind's projection of the snake, so the knowledge of unreality of the mind removes its offspring of error and ignorance from within us.

²³ The knowledge that there is no such thing as the mind removes its false impressions from the heart, because mind and our individual ego are only the young offspring of our ignorance. ²⁴ There is no mind or ego in us as we commonly believe. There is only one pure consciousness both within and without us, something we can hardly perceive.

²⁵ You have had the sense of your desire, your mind and your personality for such a long time. They are only from your ignorance. Now you are quite set free from all of them by being awakened to the light of knowledge. ²⁶ All the troubles that you have suffered are due to fostering the inborn desires of your heart. They are all driven away by your lack of desire, just as the wind disperses a forest fire.

²⁷ The dense essence of God pervades the whole universe, just as the ocean surrounds all the continents of the earth. ²⁸ Nothing exists such as I, you, this, or that or anything else. There is no mind or senses and no earth or sky. They are all manifestations of Divine Spirit. ²⁹ As visible objects appear in the forms of a frail pot and other fragile bodies on earth, so the many false invisible things appear to us in the forms of the mind, egoism and the like.

³⁰ There is nothing that is born or dies in all these three worlds. Only the display of Divine Consciousness gives rise to the ideas of existence and nonexistence. ³¹ All these are only representations of the Supreme Soul, now evolved and now spread out from it. There is no room for unity or duality or any error or fallibility in its nature.

³² Mind, O friend, that you are the true one in the shape of your senses. These will never be burnt at your cremation, nor will you be utterly destroyed by your death. ³³ No part of you is ever increased or annihilated at anytime. The entirety of your pure self is immortal and must remain entire forever.

³⁴ The powers of your will and unwillingness and the other faculties of your body and mind are attributes of yourself, just as moonbeams are the significant properties of the moon. ³⁵ Always remember the nature of your soul to be unborn and uncreated, without beginning or end, never decaying and ever remaining the same. It is indivisible and without parts. It is the true essence existing from the beginning without end.

Chapter 101 — The Mind of the Living Liberated Is Called Goodness; — Kumbha Advises Sikhidwaja to Abandon His Austerities

¹ Vasishta said:—

The king had listened to the lectures of Kumbha. For some time he remained in silent and deep meditation of his soul as if in a state of trance.² He continued with his mind intent and eyes fixed, quite speechless all the while. He resembled the figure of a silent sage, or a carved statue without motion or sensation.

³ After a while he awoke with eyes twinkling. Chudala, still in her disguised form of Kumbha the brahmin youth, approached him.

⁴ Kumbha said:—

Say king, how did you enjoy yourself in your short lived trance? Did you feel that sweet composure of your soul which the yogis experience in their steadfast meditation and unshaken samadhi trance?⁵ Tell me, were you awakened in your innermost soul and set free beyond the region of error and darkness? Have you known the knowable one and seen what is to be seen?

⁶ Sikhidhwaja replied, “O sage, by your good grace I have seen a great glory in the most high heaven of heavens.⁷ I have seen a state of bliss which is full of ambrosial delight never known to mortals and whose sight is the most ultimate reward of the wishes of the best and most intelligent men, and of saints and mahatmas.⁸ In your company today I have felt a delight which I have never experienced before.⁹ O lotus-eyed sage, never have I enjoyed such a degree of spiritual bliss which knows no bounds and is a sea of ambrosial delight!”

¹⁰ Kumbha said:—

The mind becomes composed and tranquil after its desire of enjoyments is subordinated, when it becomes indifferent to the taste of sweet and bitter, and when it has full control over the organs of sense.¹¹ There arises a peace in the mind which is purer than any earthborn delight. It is as delightful as dew drops falling from flowers under bright, cooling moonbeams at night.

¹² It is today, O king, that your bad desires, like bitter tastes, are improved by your advancement in knowledge.¹³ By your holiness, O lotus-eyed king, the filth of your person is cleansed out like ripe fruit falling from trees.¹⁴ Only as the desires of the impure heart become purified by reason does it become capable of receiving the instructions of the wise, just like a straw drawing water inside.

¹⁵ After the bitterness of your disposition was softened by my lectures, you have been awakened by me to your spiritual knowledge.¹⁶ Just now you have been cleansed from your impurity and immediately purified by your pure knowledge. Even now you have received my admonition and have been instantly awakened to your knowledge.¹⁷ Today you are cleansed from the merits and demerits of your good and bad conduct. You have a new life in you through the influence of good society.¹⁸ It was before midday today that I have come to know the enlightenment and regeneration of your soul to spiritual light.¹⁹ I find you now, O king, to be weakened in your mind from taking my words to your heart. Having rid feelings from your mind, you are awakened to your spiritual knowledge.

²⁰ As long as the mind has its seat and operations in the heart of man, it retains its companion of

ignorance by its side. As soon as the mind forsakes its residence in the heart, pure knowledge comes to shine forth in it like midday light.²¹ The mind suspended between unity and duality is called ignorance. Reducing these is known as knowledge and the way to the salvation of the soul.

²² You are now awakened and emancipated. Your mind is driven away from your heart. You are now the reality and rescued from your unreality. You are set beyond this world of unreality.²³ Rest in the pure state of your soul by being devoid of cares and anxieties. Forsake all society and do not place the reliance of your soul upon anyone or anything here. Become like a devout, divine and silent sage, saint or muni.

²⁴ Sikkidhwaja said, "So I see, sage, that all ignorant people rely mostly on their minds, but the few who are awakened to the knowledge of God do not pay attention their minds.²⁵ Now sage, please tell me. How do living liberated men conduct themselves in this world? How do these unmindful men, like you, manage yourselves here?²⁶ Tell me fully and by the brightness of your glowing words, dispel the deep darkness that is seated in my heart."

²⁷ Kumbha replied:—

All that you say, O king, is exact and indisputable truth. The minds of living liberated men are dead in themselves. Like blocks of stone, their minds never grow or sprout forth in desires.²⁸ Gross desires that grow from wishes become the causes of men's reincarnations in some form or other. This is known by the name of mind. When that becomes altogether extinct in men, they know the truly knowable one.

²⁹ The desire which guides those who know the truth in this life of action in this world is known by the name of goodness. This is unproductive of future birth.³⁰ Great souls and living liberated men, being placed in their quality of goodness and having their organs under control, do not place any reliance upon their minds.³¹ The darkened mind is called the mind, but the enlightened mind is known as the principle of goodness. The unenlightened rely upon their minds, but enlightened men of great understanding rely only upon their goodness.³² The mind is repeatedly born with the body, but the nature of goodness is never reborn anymore. The unawakened mind is under perpetual bondage, but the enlightened soul is under no restraint.

³³ Now sage, you have become of the nature of goodness and you deserve the title of he who has forsaken all things. I understand that you have completely gotten rid of the inclinations of your mind.

³⁴ I find you today as brilliant as the full moon freed from the shadows of an eclipse. Your mind has become as lucid as the clear sky without any stain in it.³⁵ You have that equanimity which is characteristic of the complete yogi. This which you exhibit in yourself is called total renunciation of all.

³⁶ Enlightened understanding is free from the restraints of any desire for heaven or future rewards. By means of superior divine knowledge, it is free from the restraints of observing austerities and charity.

³⁷ All austerities and mortifications serve only to obtain a short lived cessation of pain. The happiness that is wholly free from decay is only found in one's equanimity and detachment under all circumstances of life.³⁸ That thing must be truly good if it is different from the temporary enjoyment of bliss of heaven, and altogether different from a transitory pleasure that is preceded and followed

by pain.

³⁹ We are all doubtful of the happiness that awaits us hereafter in heaven. Our religious acts serve to procure some happiness for those who are unacquainted with the complete joy of their souls derived from their spiritual knowledge. ⁴⁰ Let them use their ornaments of brass who have no gold ornaments for their decorations. Let the ignorant adhere to their rituals and not the wise who are quite happy in their knowledge.

But you, O king, have happily come both to your knowledge and happiness in the company of your Queen Chudala and others. ⁴¹ Therefore, why are you vainly devoted to the observance of your austerities? Mortifications and penance of asceticism are prescribed for the atonement of men's prior misdeeds. ⁴² Both the beginning and end of asceticism are attended with pain. Only the middle promises a short and temporary happiness. Mortifications are mere preparations for the purification of the soul.

⁴³ Remain steady in that pure knowledge which is said to be the result of penitence. When the soul is pure with the clarity of the intellectual sphere, all things and thoughts will be as transparent to view as in the clear light of the sky. ⁴⁴ All things are seen to rise and disappear in the empty sphere of Divine Consciousness. Thoughts of our good and bad actions are like drops of rain that mix with the waters of the immeasurable ocean of the Divine Soul.

⁴⁵ Therefore, O Sikkidhwaja, abandon the barren soil (of rituals) and resort to the abundant field (of divine knowledge). As you would ask a good friend, ask me to know your best good. ⁴⁶ As a wife who wants to be close to her husband should refrain from asking him for petty things, so you should refrain from asking your God for trifling blessings if you want to be in communion with him. Know that the objects of your desire are not always for your good.

⁴⁷ No wise man runs to grasp the sun's reflection in water. You should never pursue the pleasures of heaven or the joy of liberation after you have found Him in your own spirit. ⁴⁸ Forsake what is unstable, though it may appear stable to you. You are always stable by leaving the unstable to perish by itself. ⁴⁹ Knowing the instability of things, preserve the stability of your mind, because the motionless mind perceives no fluctuation of its thoughts and no change or motion of things.

⁵⁰ All our evils proceed from the actions of our bodies and the thoughts of our minds. These two are the mainsprings of men's miseries in all places and times. ⁵¹ If you desire to enjoy the happiness of quiet and rest, curb the unsteadiness of your mind and be ever calm and quiet. ⁵² Know that all motions and their lack dwindle into perfect rest in the mind of a truly wise man. Therefore hold them in equal light and be happy forever.

⁵³ Sikkidhwaja said, "Tell me sage, how can the motion and force of a thing be one and the same with its immobility and rest? I dare say that you, who is the remover of my doubts, will quickly clear this point for me."

⁵⁴ Kumbha replied:—

Only one thing is the all and whole of this universe. It is like the water of the sea and it is agitated by its intelligence, just as the sea is agitated into waves. ⁵⁵ The immensity of Brahman, which is called the only essence and has the form of pure consciousness, is seen in the shape of the world of forms by

the ignorant.

⁵⁶ The agitation of consciousness is all in all in the world and constitutes the moving principle of the universe. ⁵⁷ The agitation of consciousness, being the Divine Spirit, is the same as its stillness. The unity of these two forms, agitation and stillness, is the spirit of God called Shiva. ⁵⁸ The agitation of the Divine Spirit in the work of creation vanishes before the sight of perfect understanding. To the ignorant, it appears to be in active operation, like seeing a false snake in a rope.

⁵⁹ Conscious intellect is ever busy and active, from which it derives its name (*chit*, consciousness). But the inactive spirit which is all pervasive is both inexpressible as well as inconceivable because it is devoid of all attributes (*turiyatita*). ⁶⁰ By long study of the scriptures and association with the wise, and also by continued practice of yoga, the light of the Supreme Spirit dawns in the inner soul like the rising moon with her benign beams. ⁶¹ The Supreme Spirit is only perceived from the benign rays it radiates, which the wise call the light of the Supreme Spirit. We perceive it by our understanding.

⁶² Now you have known the essence of your soul which is without beginning, middle or end and which must continue forever as your real and true state. There is no other distinct form of the great intellectual soul. Know this as yourself, and remain free from all sorrow and pain.

Chapter 102 — Kumbha Departs; Sikkidhwaja in Samadhi

¹ Kumbha continued:—

I have already told you, O king, how all the phenomena of the world sprung from Brahman and how they all also disappear in him.² Having heard all this from me and having understood and reflected upon all that I have said, you are at liberty, O sagely king, to repose in the supreme bliss which you have well known and felt within yourself.

³ I am now returning to my heavenly abode at this time of the conjunction of the moon, when it is very likely that sage Narada may have come before the assembly of the gods from his seat in the high heaven of Brahma.⁴ He may be angry at not finding me there, and it is not showing good manners in a youth to tease his superiors at anytime.

⁵ May you ever abide at your ease by your utter abandonment of every tint of desire, and by your firm reliance in these holy precepts which the wise have always in their view.

⁶ Vasishta said:—

Upon hearing these words, Sikkidhwaja was about to throw a handful of flowers and make his obeisance to his departing teacher, Kumbha vanished immediately from his sight and mixed in the ethereal air.⁷ As one absorbed in meditation does not see the things present before him even in his waking state, so the king lost sight of Kumbha from before his presence.

⁸ The king was plunged in deep sorrow after Kumbha departed. He remained like a painted picture, his thoughts dwelling on his vanished friend.⁹ He thought how marvelous it was and how very inscrutable are the ways of providence that it should bring him to the light of the self-manifest Lord through the means of a stranger, Kumbha.

¹⁰ “Where is this sage Narada,” thought he, “and who is his son, this Kumbha, to me? How did it happen that after so long I should come to be awakened by him?”

¹¹ “O! how very fully has that son of the divine sage explained everything to me with his good reasoning. I am now awakened from my long slumber in ignorance.¹² How I had been plunged in the mud of my acts for such a long time! I was rolling on the wheels of distinguishing between doing what was right or wrong.”

¹³ “How very pure and cold, tranquil and quiet is my present state. I find my essence to be cooling to me as I am washed in the cold bath of Self realization.¹⁴ I am quite calm and lost in my trance. I sit alone as one with Unity. I have no desire for even a straw, but remain solely by myself.”

¹⁵ Thinking thus in himself and relieved of all impressions (*vasanas*), the king entered into the state of samadhi and sat as quiet as a statue carved in wood.¹⁶ He became silent and had no desire or refuge for his reliance. He remained in his immovable posture, like the peak of mountain.¹⁷ Being freed from fear in an instant, he remained a long time with the tranquility of his soul and mind. Being united with the Supreme Spirit in his samadhi, he continued long in his dreamless trance, his soul shining like the rising sun.

Chapter 102 — Kumbha Returns and Awakens the Trace of Life in Sikhidhwaja

¹ Vasishta said:—

Now hear me tell you about Sikhidhwaja, sitting like a block of wood on one side, and the reappearance of Chudala to him from the other.

² After Chudala had given enlightening instruction to her husband Sikhidhwaja, in her disguise of the sagely Kumbha, she disappeared and traversed into the regions of air. ³ In the empty sky she dropped the form of the divine sage's son which she had taken by her magic spell. The enchanted form melted away in the air and she appeared in her female form of beautiful appearance. ⁴ She directed her airy course to her palace in the city where she showed herself as their queen before her assembled attendants and courtiers and discharged the royal duties of her absent lord.

⁵ After three days she again took to her aerial journey, assumed her enchanted form of Kumbha, and advanced to the hermitage of Sikhidhwaja in the forest. ⁶ There she saw the king in his woodland retreat, sitting in his posture of deep meditation resembling a figure carved in wood. ⁷ Seeing him this way, she exclaimed repeatedly in herself, "O what a fortune that he is reposing here in his own soul, sitting quiet and tranquil in himself."

⁸ "I must now awaken him from his trance in the Supreme Being or else his soul will soon forsake its mortal frame owing to his disregard of it. He will end his worldly bondage by excessive meditation.

⁹ It is desirable that he should live some time longer, either with his royalty in the palace or with devotion in this forest. Then we both will depart together, throwing off our mortal bodies."

¹⁰ "It would be difficult to instruct him in all stages of meditation. There is no end of these things. I will try to train him only in the practical aspects of yoga."

¹¹ Thus reflecting in herself she made a loud shout which startled the wild beasts but did not rouse the entranced king, though she repeated her loud shouts before him. ¹² When neither her shouts nor shrieks could rouse he who remained unshaken as a stone in rock, she shook him with her hands in an effort to bring him back to his sense. ¹³ Though shaken and moved and thrown down on the ground, yet the king neither awoke nor came to his senses. Then Chudala thought on another means in the disguise of Kumbha.

¹⁴ She thought, "Ah! I see my lord is absorbed in his prophetic trance and I must find some means to rouse him to his sense. ¹⁵ Or, why should I try to rouse his deified spirit back to its sensation when he is so well absorbed in his state of disembodied meditation? ¹⁶ I also wish to get rid of my female form and reach that state of supreme bliss like him, which is free from further births and transmigrations."

¹⁷ Thus thinking to herself, Chudala was about to abandon her own body when her better understanding stopped her from undertaking that attempt. ¹⁸ "First let me feel the king's body," she thought, "whether there is an end of his life or there is any feeling or pulse in his heart. ¹⁹ Should he be alive, he must come back to his sense, just as the juicy root of trees recalls flowers in spring. ²⁰ If he is alive he will walk about like me in his state of a living liberated soul. If he be found to be no longer living, then I shall follow him to the next world."

²¹ With this in mind Chudala felt his body and examined it with her eyes. Perceiving him to be living, she rejoiced and said to herself, ²² “He has still a trace of life pulsating in his heart. The beating and throbbing of his heart show his life is not yet extinct.”

²³ Rama asked, “How can a little spark of vital flame be residing in the body of the self distracted yogi, whose mind is as cold as stone and whose body becomes as hardened as a clod of earth or a block of wood?”

²⁴ Vasishta replied:—

The trace of life remains in the heart as an imperceptible atom and in the manner of consciousness, just as future flowers and fruit are contained in their seeds. ²⁵ The calm and cold yogi who is devoid of his knowledge of unity and duality and sees all things in the same light, who remains as quiet as a rock and without the pulsation of his heart, still has the vibration of his consciousness within him.

²⁶ The body of a temperate and tranquil minded man never wastes or swells in bulk. It never decays or grows but ever remains in the same state. ²⁷ The body of a man whose mind vibrates with thoughts of unity and duality changes and decays. This is never the case with a yogi of unchanging mind.

²⁸ The action of the heart is the spring of life for everybody in this world, just as the honey in the flower cup is the cause of its future fruit. ²⁹ The frail bodies of mortals are subject to fits of joy and anger, quickness and dullness, every moment. These, O Rama, are the seeds of repeated births and they are hard to be checked or subdued.

³⁰ When the mind is still and quiet, the body becomes as dull as if it were lifeless. The body is subject to no passion or change whatever. It remains as even as the still and clear sky which nothing can disturb. ³¹ The man of even and dispassionate mind is never disturbed or tainted by any fault. He remains as calm as the waters of the ocean without breeze or waves.

³² The body is never lifeless and life is always perceptible unless the mind is defunct in its action. The mind becomes unexcitable and numb in itself only after long practice. ³³ The body without the action of its mind and vitality quickly rots and melts away, just as snow melts away under the heat of the sun.

³⁴ The body of Sikkidhwaja was felt to be hot, though it was without its active mind. Therefore it was known to possess its vitality, which prevented it from wasting and rotting away. ³⁵ The noble lady, having perceived the body of her husband to be in that plight, held it tightly with her hands and began to consider what to do with it.

³⁶ She thought, “I will try to raise him by infusion of my reasoning into his mind. This will no doubt bring him back to his senses. ³⁷ If I do not raise him now, he must rise himself after sometime. But why must I remain alone waiting until then?” ³⁸ Having thought so, Chudala left her body, the framework of the senses, and entered the body of the king and joined with his intellectual essence.

³⁹ She gave a vibration to the reasoning of her living lord. After putting it into action and motion, she returned to her own body, just as a bird quickly moves from the twig of a tree, which is shaken thereby, and comes back to its own nest again.

⁴⁰ She rose in her form of the brahmin boy Kumbha and sat upon a flowery bed, where she began to

chant her hymns of the Sama Veda, her soft tunes resembling the melodious chime of buzzing bees.⁴¹ The king, on hearing the tuneful chime of the hymns, felt an intellectual exhilaration. His dormant life was awakened to its consciousness, just as the lotus bud comes to bloom by the breath of spring season.⁴² His eyelids opened to light like a lotus bud blooms with sunlight, and the king's whole body became vivid with renewed life.

⁴³ Before him, he saw the brahmin boy Kumbha in his divinely fair form singing Sama hymns as if the god of music was present in person.⁴⁴ "O fortunate am I," thought he, "to have found my friendly Kumbha again before me." So thinking, he picked up some flowers and offered them to him.

⁴⁵ "O how great is my good fortune," he said to his guest, "to be thus recalled to your gracious memory. What else could cause a divine person like yourself to be so favorably disposed towards me?⁴⁶ The cause of my salvation has caused you to come and call on me. What else would bring a son of a god down to visit me again?"

⁴⁷ Kumbha spoke. "O sinless prince, my mind was ever intent on you ever since I left you. Now it has come back to me as I find you well in this place.⁴⁸ I do not reap so much delight in the ever delightful region of heaven as I do here in your presence. It is because I have the great work of your redemption no longer pending before me.⁴⁹ I have no friend or companion that is dearer to my soul than you. I have no faithful pupil or confidential disciple like you in this world."

⁵⁰ Sikhidhwaja replied, "Ah! Now I see that the trees of this mountain are about to yield the fruit of my meritorious acts. They have made a retired recluse like you condescend to desire my company.

⁵¹ If these woods and trees and I, who is so devoted to you, should find more favor in your sight than the bliss of your heavenly abode, then please may you live with me in this lonely forest.⁵² As for me, I am so blessed with the gift of your samadhi that I always have my perfect rest in God, even in this place. I have no desire for heavenly delights.⁵³ Resting in that state of pure effulgence, I enjoy my fill of heavenly bliss even in this earth below."

⁵⁴ Kumbha questioned, "Have you ever had your repose in the state of supreme joy? Were you ever freed from the misery which always attends the knowledge of duality?⁵⁵ Have you ever felt a disgust with all temporary enjoyments? Have you rooted out your taste for the tasteless pleasures of this earth?⁵⁶ Has your mind ever rested in that state of even detachment which has no liking for the desirable or dislike for the undesirable, but is always content with whatever awaits upon it at anytime?"

⁵⁷ Sikhidhwaja replied, "It is by your favor sage, that I have seen all that transcends human sight. I have reached beyond the limits of the universe and obtained the best obtainable and most certain bliss.⁵⁸ After long I am freed from decay and disease and gained all which is to be gained, and wherewith I am quite content.⁵⁹ I require no further advice from anyone for my upliftment."

"I feel fully gratified with everything in all places. I am quite at ease and freed of disease everywhere.⁶⁰ I have nothing to know that I don't know; nothing to obtain that has not been obtained. I have forsaken whatever is not worth having, and my soul has its reliance in the supreme essence.⁶¹ I rest quite aloof from everything. I am devoid of any fear or error or apathy of anything. I am always situated in the even and calm course of my mind and in the equality of my soul with all others. I am

free from all imagination, as the clear sky is free from all tint and cloud.”

Chapter 104 — Sikhidwaja & Kumbha Enjoy Each Other's Company; — Kumbha on the Needs (Fate) Incident to the Body

¹ Vasishta related:—

In this manner these two who knew the knowable God continued their conversation on spiritual matters until the third watch of the day in that forest.² Then rising together they wandered in the delightful valleys about cooling lakes and pleasant streams.³ In this way they wandered in that forest for full eight days, passing their time in conversation on various subjects.

⁴ Then said Kumbha to the king, "Let us walk to some other forest." He gave his consent uttering the word Om, and then they walked forward in each other's company.⁵ In this manner they walked over many forest lands and passed by many jungles and shores. They saw many lakes, thick woods, and rising hills and their thickets of dense woods and plants.⁶ They traversed many woodland tracts and rivers, and saw many villages, towns, and woods on their way. They passed by many sweet sounding rivers and gardens, and many holy places and the abodes of men.

⁷ They were united together in equal love and friendship, being of equal age and the same even course of mind. They were of equal liveliness, and both walked or stayed together with their unanimity.

⁸ They worshipped the gods and the spirits of their ancestors in holy places and ate what they got at any place. They lived together both in marshy and dry lands in concord and peace.⁹ The loving pair, bearing equal affection for one another in their hearts, dwelt together in friendship amidst woods of tamara trees and in the forests of the Mandara hills.

¹⁰ To them no place was their home or own, but they were alike in all. Nothing occurred to disturb their minds which were always as undisturbed as a mountain amidst the winds.¹¹ Sometimes they walked amidst the flying dust and at other times amidst the far stretching fragrance of sandalwood forests. They were now covered with ashes and then besmeared with sandal paste.¹² They were sometimes clad in good garments and sometimes in multicolored clothes. Now they were covered with tree leaves and at another they were decorated with flowers.

¹³ Remaining in each other's company for some days, and having the unanimity of their hearts and minds, the king was as perfected in his nature as another Kumbha himself.

¹⁴ The holy and faithful Chudala, seeing the divine form of her husband Sikhidwaja, began to reflect within herself in the following manner.¹⁵ "How divinely fair has my husband become, and how very charming are these woodland scenes. By living long in this place, we must be an easy prey for the god of love.¹⁶ I see that although one is liberated in his lifetime, yet the sense of his liberation cannot give him freedom from his obligation of testing the pleasures that are presented before him. I think it is ignorance to refuse offered enjoyments for the king.¹⁷ Seeing my husband to be noble minded and free from all bodily disease and debility, and having a flowery grove before, it must be a wretched woman who refuses to advance to her lord at such a time."

¹⁸ "That wretched woman is truly undone who, seated in her covered shelter of flowers, has her husband presented before her and yet fails to approach to him for her satisfaction.¹⁹ Accursed is the woman who being wedded to a handsome husband, and having him alone in her company, fails to associate with him.²⁰ To one acquainted with true knowledge, of what good is it to reject a lawful

pleasure that presents itself before that person? ²¹ So I must contrive some means in this forest whereby I may be successful to make my husband join with me.”

²² Having thought so in her mind, Chudala, disguised in the form of Kumbha, spoke to the king like a female nightingale mutters to her mate from her flowery covered shelter in the forest. ²³ “This is the first day of the new moon of the lunar month of Chaitra, and this is a day of great festivity in the court of Indra in heaven. ²⁴ So I must return to the assembly of the gods and present myself before my father in that assembly. So my departure is ordained by destiny and cannot be averted by any means. ²⁵ You shall have to expect my return to this forest this evening. In the meantime, divert yourself in these flowery trees, which will lull your anxiety for me to rest. ²⁶ I shall positively return here from the blue sky by the evening of this day. I shall soon join your company, which is ever delightful to me.”

²⁷ So saying, she gave a stalk of flowers of the Nandana forest to her beloved to serve as a token of her affection for him. ²⁸ The king said, “You must return to me soon.” She instantly disappeared from his sight and mixed with the air like a light autumn cloud vanishing in the empty sky. ²⁹ He flung flowers after her as she mounted in the sky, and these floated in the air like icicles in the cold season.

³⁰ Sikhidhwaja first saw her flight, then her disappearance from him like a peacock looking at the flight of a cloud with uplifted eyes. ³¹ At last the body of Kumbha vanished from Sikhidhwaja’s sight and mixed in the open air, as the waves of the sea subside in still and smooth waters.

³² Chudala reached her celestial city, resembling the garden of paradise with its kalpa trees in full bloom, its shining towers waving with flags hoisted on both sides of its charming paths. ³³ She secretly entered her private apartment and met the company of the maids waiting for her, just as the graceful beauty of spring meets the long expectant trees of the forest. ³⁴ She attended to her state affairs and discharged them quickly. Then she flew aloft in the air and dropped at Sikhidhwaja’s abode like flowers and fruit of autumn dropping on the ground.

³⁵ She appeared there with a sad face and deeply dejected in her mind, like the fair moon darkened under mist or a beautiful lotus hidden under a fog. ³⁶ Believing her to be his Kumbha, Sikhidhwaja rose up and stood in his presence. But he was troubled in his mind to see him so sad and sorry. He asked the cause and addressed him saying, ³⁷ “I greet you, O Kumbha, but why do you appear so sad today? You are the son of a god and must not be sorry at anything. Please take your seat here. ³⁸ Holy saints and those who know the knowable one, like you, are never moved by joy or grief, but remain untouched by them, as the lotuses remain intact in the water.”

³⁹ Vasishta said:—

Being thus approached by the prince, Kumbha sat on his seat and then said in reply, with a voice as thin and soft as the sound of a bamboo flute.

Kumbha speaking:—

⁴⁰ I know that those who know the truth, but remain impatient under bodily accidents and mental anxieties, are not truthful men but cheats who cheat people by their pretended truthfulness. ⁴¹ Know prince that the most learned, if they foolishly expect to evade the condition to which they are exposed by their nature, are the most ignorant.

⁴² The sesame seed naturally has oil inherent in it, and the body also has its inherent incidents. He who is not subject to his bodily accidents is like one who can separate wind from air with his sword.

⁴³ Of course, it is best to evade the evils that are incidental to the body, but it is necessary to undergo patiently what is unavoidable by our bodily powers. ⁴⁴ Again, as long as we have our bodies we must exert our bodily organs to their proper actions and never attempt to suppress them by our understanding, as it is done by many a wise man.

⁴⁵ Even the great Brahma and the gods are subject to the conditions of their bodily frames. Even they with their great understandings do not have the power to avoid what is determined by irrevocable destiny. ⁴⁶ It is beyond the power of both the wise and the unwise to deter the power of destiny. Destiny makes all things run in their destined course, just as the waters of rivers run into the sea.

⁴⁷ The same irrevocable destiny equally determines the fates of the wise and unwise. She guides them with her fingers to the same goal until they get their release from the body.

⁴⁸ However, the ignorant, whether exposed to prosperity or adversity, are always destined to undergo their effects upon their bodies.

⁴⁹ Therefore, it must be known by both the wise and unwise that all beings are destined to roll in their repeated rotations of pleasure and pain, and that there is no power to change the ever chanceful ordinances of unchanging destiny.

Chapter 105 — Kumbha's Story of Being Cursed by Durvasa, Nightly Changing into a Female

¹ Sikhidhwaja said, "If such is the case, sage, that destiny overrules all events, why should you be sorry for anything that has happened to you? You know you are a son of a god and you know the knowable."

² Kumbha replied:—

Hear, O prince, the wonderful accident that has occurred to me. I will relate to you all that has happened to me in this body. ³ The heart becomes light when its grief is shared with a friend, just as the thickened gloom of clouds dissipate after they discharge their waters in rain. ⁴ The troubled mind is restored to its serenity by its communication with a sincere friend, just as the muddy waters of a jar are cleared by filtering with kata seeds.

⁵ After I left here, by handing over the stalk of flowers to you, I traversed though the regions of air until I reached the heavenly abode of the god. ⁶ There I met my father and accompanied him to the court of the great Indra, where having sat a while, I got up with my father and then departed from him at his abode. ⁷ Leaving the seat of the gods in order to come down on earth, I entered the region of air. I kept my pace with the fleet steeds of the chariot of the sun in the airy paths of the skies. ⁸ Thus sailing together with the sun, I reached the point of my separation from him and there took my path through the midway sky, as if I were sailing in the sea.

⁹ I saw there, in a track before me, a path stretching amidst the watery clouds of air, and marked the angry sage Durvasa gliding swiftly by it. ¹⁰ He was wrapped in the covering of clouds and encircled with girdles of flashing lightning. The sandal taints on his body were washed off by showering rains and he seemed like a maiden making her way in haste to meet her lover at the appointed place. ¹¹ Like a devotee he hastened to discharge his fond devotions on the beach of the River Ganges, flowing under the shade of the boughs of the rows of trees on the shore.

¹² I saluted the sage from my aerial seat, and said, "You, wrapped as you are in your blue vest of the cloud, seem to advance in haste, like an amorous woman going to meet her lover."

¹³ Hearing this, the reverend sage was angered and pronounced his curse upon me saying, "Be you transformed to the amorous woman you think me to be. ¹⁴ Go your way and bear my curse, that every night you shall become a woman with protuberant breasts and long braids of hairs on your head, filled with all feminine grace and dalliance." ¹⁵ I was thunderstruck and deeply dejected at this curse. I found the old muni had already disappeared from before me, then I turned my course this way from the upper sky, being quite sick in my heart.

¹⁶ Thus I have related to you everything about my being changed to a lady at the approach of night. My constant thoughts are how I shall manage myself under my womanhood. ¹⁷ How shall I divulge to my father the shame of becoming a swollen breasted maid at night? How can I reconcile myself to my terrible fate throughout the course of my life? O how wonderful is the decree of fate that we are fated to bear in this world in the course of time!

¹⁸ Now I am unlucky to become a prey for young men and the subject of fighting among them, like a piece of flesh among hungry vultures. ¹⁹ O what fun have I become to the ludicrous children of the

gods in heaven! Ah, how shameful have I been before the sages who must be quite ashamed of me. How shall I remain anywhere and before anybody in my female form at night?

²⁰ Vasishta said:—

After saying this much, Chudala became as mute as a silent muni. She remained as quiet as if she were in a swoon. ²¹ Then the pretended Kumbha, seeming to recover his senses and his patience also, spoke out to himself, “Ah! why do I wail like the ignorant when my soul suffers no change by this?”

²² Sikhidhwaja spoke:—

Sage, why do you sorrow for the body? You are the son of a god. Whatever may happen to the body, it can never affect the intangible soul. ²³ Whatever pain or pleasure befalls us in this life, it all affects the changing body and can never touch the unchanging soul.

²⁴ If you are acquainted with the Vedas and fortified against all events, you should not allow yourself to be so much moved by these accidents. You are not like others who are constantly subject to all the casualties of life. ²⁵ To be sorry in sorrow is very sorrowful in the wise. Therefore you who have spoken these precepts before should not now be overwhelmed in sorrow. Remain as unmoved as you are wont to be unshaken all along.

²⁶ Vasishta related:—

In this did the two hearty friends continue to grieve with one another, consoling each other by turns under the cooling shade of the grove where they sat together. ²⁷ At last the bright sun, who is the light of the world, set down in darkness like lamp without oil. Kumbha was despondent at the prospect of her female form.

²⁸ The full blown lotuses closed their leaves like the closing eyelids of the busy dwellers of the world. Footpaths became as deserted by their passengers as the hearts of loving wives are lonely in the absence of their husbands who are devoted to travelling and staying in distant countries. ²⁹ The upper sky borrowed the appearance of the lower earth by spreading the curtain of darkness over groups of its twinkling stars, like the outstretched nets of fishermen enfolding fish. ³⁰ The black dome of the sky was smiling above with its retinue of shining stars, just like the blue beds of lakes rejoiced with their chains of blooming lilies below. The land resounded with the noise of black bees and beetles and the cries of reddish geese on the water.

³¹ The two friends rose and offered their evening prayers at the rising of the moon, chanted their hymns and muttered their mantras, and took their shelter under the forest retreat. ³² Afterwards Kumbha, changed as he was to a female form, and sitting before Sikhidhwaja, spoke his faltering speech to him in the following manner.

³³ “Sage, I seem to fall down, cry out and melt away in my tears to see myself even now changed to my feminine figure in your presence. ³⁴ See sage, how quickly the hairs on my head lengthen into curling locks, and how they sparkle with strings of pearls fastened to them, like the brilliant clusters of stars in the azure sky. ³⁵ Look here at two snowy balls bulging out of my bosom, like two white lotus buds rising on the surface of waters in the spring season.”

³⁶ “Look how my long robe is stretched down to the heels and how it covers my whole body, like that

of a female.³⁷ Look at these shining ornaments and wreathes of flowers decorating my body, like the blooming blossoms of spring ornamenting the forest tree.³⁸ Lo! the moon-bright vest covering the crown of my head and the necklaces hanging about my body.³⁹ Look at my features, how they are converted to their feminine attractiveness, and see how my whole body is graced all over with feminine loveliness.”

⁴⁰ “O! how very great is my sorrow at my sudden change into a woman. Tell me friend, what am I to do and where to go with this my female form?⁴¹ I perceive also the change in my inner parts and in my thighs and posterior.” Kumbha said this much to her friend, then remained quite mute and silent.

⁴² The king also, seeing him thus, remained in mute gaze and silence. Then after a while, he opened his mouth and spoke as follows,⁴³ “Of course it is very sorrowful and pitiable to see you transformed this way into a female. But you, sage who knows the truth, also know that there is no contending with fate.⁴⁴ Whatever is destined must come to pass. Wise men must not be startled or feel sorry because all events affect only the body and cannot affect the inner soul.”

⁴⁵ Kumbha replied, “So it is, and I must bear my feminine form with an unfeminine soul.⁴⁶ I will no more sorrow for what is never to be averted, but must endure with patience what I cannot reject.”

Relying on this principle, they alleviated their sorrow for what was impossible to avoid.⁴⁷ They passed their nights in peace and slept in the same bed without touching one another.

Kumbha rose in the morning in his masculine form again, without any trace of his female features, feminine beauty or grace.⁴⁸ Kumbha was Kumbha again by being divested of his female form. Thus he passed as bisexual and having two forms being of the brahmin boy Kumbha by day and of Chudala the princess by night.⁴⁹ In his male form, Kumbha continued as a friend to the king in the daytime. In the female form of Chudala, he lived as a virgin maid with him at night.⁵⁰ Thus did Chudala cling to her husband like a necklace hangs upon a person’s neck and breast.

They continued to wander in each other’s company to different countries and over distant hills to satisfy their curiosity.

Chapter 106 — Chudala Weds Sikhidhwaja

¹ Vasishta resumed:—

After several days passed this way, Chudala, in her disguise as the pretended brahmin boy Kumbha, spoke to her husband.

² “Hear me, O lotus-eyed prince,” she said, “to what I tell you in good earnest, because I am obliged to become a woman every night and continue to be so for ever more. ³ I wish to fulfill the part of my womanhood by joining myself to a husband by legal marriage for all that time. ⁴ I want to taste the pleasure of conjugal union with my dear friend, who is of his own accord so very friendly to me without any endeavor on my part. So I hope you will place no difficulty in my way.”

⁵ “I choose you sage, as my husband, of all others in the three worlds. Therefore be pleased to accept me for your wife every night. ⁶ The delightful pleasure of conjugal union has come down to us ever since the commencement of creation. Therefore our obedience to the ordinance of nature can cause no guilt on our part. ⁷ I desire that we may do as we like without desiring or disliking anything, and that we be far from expecting the consequence of what we like or dislike.”

⁸ Sikhidhwaja answered, “Friend, I see neither good nor evil in accepting your proposal. You are at liberty to do as you like. ⁹ Being indifferent my mind to everything in the world, I see everything in the same and in an equal light. So I let you have your choice as you may like.”

¹⁰ Kumbha replied, “If so, then I say that this day is very favorable for celebrating the wedding ceremony. It is the full moon of Sravana and an all lucky constellation according to my best calculation. ¹¹ On this day of the full moon, our marriage may take place both during the day as well as at night in the gandharva form (by mutual consent). ¹² It will be celebrated either on the summit of Mahendra Mountain or on the delightful tableland there about, or in the cave of some mineral mine, and in the light of the shining gems and mineral ores in the mountain.”

¹³ “Rows of stately trees all around will shed their flowers at the nuptial ceremony. The twining vines on them will represent the dance of dancing girls by their twisting and shaking. ¹⁴ Let the bright luminary of the night, accompanied by his consort retinue of shining stars, witness our marriage from the high sky with their wide open and glaring eyes.”

¹⁵ “Rise, O king, for your wedding. Let us both hasten to select the forest flowers and prepare the sandal paste and collect the scattered gems with which to decorate our wedding seats.”

¹⁶ Saying so, they both rose together and picked the flowers and collected the gems. ¹⁷ Then in a short time, they went to the shining land and heaped it with flowers of various kinds. ¹⁸ They had their wedding clothing and necklaces ready on the spot, and the god of love helped with supplying everything required on the occasion. ¹⁹ Having thus prepared the items of their wedding ceremony and stored them in a golden cave of the mountain, they both went to sacred stream of the heavenly Ganges Mandakini for making their holy ablutions therein.

²⁰ Here Kumbha served as the priest, pouring the holy water profusely on the lofty head and elevated shoulders of the king, just as the elephantine clouds of Indra pour rainwater in plentiful showers on the towering tops and height of hills. ²¹ Similarly, the king acted the part of the ministering prince,

washing the body of his beloved princess now in the form of Kumbha. Thus the two friends anointed and wiped clean the bodies of their former and future consorts.²² Bathed and purified, they adored the gods, the munis and the spirits of their ancestors for the sake of their honor and without any desire of getting any good or gain from them, for they well knew that there was nothing to benefit themselves from their service to the gods, deified spirits and divine sages.

²³ They took their frugal food as their nature and the course of the world required, seasoned with the nectarine juice of their good and refined intelligence.²⁴ They wore the whitish bark of kalpa trees as their clean wedding clothes and ate its fruit as their wedding cakes. Then they went to the altar for their wedding ceremony.²⁵ At this time the sun descended below his setting mountain, as if to complete their conjugal union in secret.²⁶ It now became dark and twilight. They discharged their evening service and offered their prayers. Groups of stars appeared in the sky to witness their union in marriage.²⁷ Then came the dark night as the only friend of the happy pair, spreading the veil of darkness over the face of nature and smiling with the blushing of snow white lotuses and lilies of the valley.

²⁸ Kumbha collected rich stones and placed those shining on the tableland of the mountain, while Brahma lighted his two lamps of the sun and moon together in the heavens.²⁹ Being then changed to the female form, Kumbha anointed the king with fragrant sandalwood paste, agallochum, camphor powder and pulverized musk.³⁰ She adorned his body with strings, bracelets and wristlets of flowers, and dressed it in a robe of thin kalpa tree bark.³¹ His body was also decorated head to foot with the filaments of kalpa plant, clusters of parijata flowers, and many other flowers and gems.³² She appeared in her bridle garb and maiden-like figure, with her big and swollen breasts and all her youthful grace and allurements.

³³ She thought that as she was now attired and appeared as a marriage bride, she must now offer herself to a husband worthy to her.³⁴ "Here I am as a lovely bride," she thought to herself, "and there is my husband in my presence. I must ask him to accept my hand. This is not the time to withdraw the hand."³⁵ So saying, she approached her husband sitting apart from her in the wood. She appeared like Rati, the goddess of love, advancing towards her loving Kama.

³⁶ She went to him and said, "I am Madanika by name and your loving wife. Therefore I bow down at your feet with the regard due to a husband."³⁷ So saying, the beautiful lady bent down her head with female bashfulness and made her obeisance to her lord with the pendant locks on her head.³⁸ Then she said to him, "O my lord, adorn me with ornaments then light the marriage fire to affirm your acceptance of my hand."³⁹ You appear exceedingly fair to my eyes. You make me quite fond of you. You seem to surpass the god of love in your beauty, even when he wedded his Rati at first in his youthful bloom.⁴⁰ O prince, these flower wreathes on your body look like the bright beams in the body of the moon. To me, those strings of flowers hanging on your chest look like the stream of Ganges gliding on the breast of Sumeru Mountain.⁴¹ With the flowing braided hairs on your head, you look like Mandara Mountain with clusters of vines hanging down from its top. Your head appears like a golden lotus with its hanging hairs resembling the filaments of the flower and covered with strings of blackening bees.⁴² The shining ornaments and flowery decorations of your body add a light and gracefulness of Mount Meru, with its mineral ores on one side and its floral beauty on the other."

⁴³ After her flattering speech was over, the new bride and bridegroom and future husband and wife sat contented together, unmindful and forgetful of their past conjugal relation. ⁴⁴ The brave princess, now Madanika by name, and the noble prince Sikkidhwaja the saint both sat together on a golden seat, which added fresh luster to the beauty and decoration of their bodies. ⁴⁵ They were bedecked with their headdresses, garlands of flowers and ornaments of gems and pearls, and were furnished with flowers and ointments and clad in fine cloths all over their bodies. ⁴⁶ The young lady Madanika blazed like Rati with her maddening beauty. She appeared like the goddess Gauri, the excellent model of beauty, at her wedding festivity.

⁴⁷ The noble lord having adorned his noble lady with his own hands, spoke to her. "O deer-eyed lady, you are as graceful as the goddess Lakshmi of grace and prosperity. ⁴⁸ I pray that all prosperity attend on you as it does with Sachi, the queen of heaven, in the company of her lord Indra, and as it existed between Hara and Gauri, and between Hari and his consort Lakshmi, the goddess of fortune. ⁴⁹ You look like a clear lake of lotuses, your breasts blooming like lotus buds and your black-blue eyes resembling blue lotuses. The sweet fragrance of your lotus-like body invites buzzing bees fluttering all about you. ⁵⁰ You also appear like the tender shoot of the kalpa plant of Kama, your red palms resembling its reddish leaves and your swollen breasts like its blooming buds, and every part of your body is as delicate as its delicious fruits. ⁵¹ With your cooling body and your moonlike face and its smiles like moonbeams, you are as beautiful as the full moon and equally delightful to sight. ⁵² Rise therefore my beautiful lady and ascend on the matrimonial altar and there perform the wedding ceremony standing on the slab of stone marked with creeping plants and their fruits."

⁵³ Vasishta said:—

The altar was studded with strings of pearls, bunches of flowers suspended on all sides. It had four large coconuts hung over the four sides of its square. ⁵⁴ Pots filled with holy water from the Ganges were set about it, and the sacred matrimonial fire was lighted amidst it, fed with sandalwood and other fragrances. ⁵⁵ They walked around the flaming fire clockwise, then sat on seats of leaves with their faces turned towards the east. ⁵⁶ After sitting on the altar, the matrimonial couple lighted the nuptial fire and made offerings of sesame seeds and fried rice upon its flames.

⁵⁷ Having lifted the wife with his own hands, the husband and wife appeared like Shiva and Parvati in the forest. The married pair turned again about the sacred fire, and offered to each other their own selves and loves as their marriage dowries. ⁵⁸ They showed their shining faces to one another as their nuptial presents, and completed the ceremony by going round the fire and scattering the fried rice upon it. ⁵⁹ The husband and wife now parted other hands from their hold of the palms of one another. Their smiling faces appeared like the lunar disc on the new moon.

⁶⁰ After this, when the moon had already run her course of the first watch of the night, they went to sleep on a flowery bedstead which they had newly prepared. ⁶¹ The moon cast her beams to fall aslant on the bedstead, as when attendant women cast their glances askance on the bridal bed. ⁶² She next spread her bright beams all about the couple's leafy covered shelter, as if to listen to the pleasant conversation of the new married couple. ⁶³ The pair, having sat awhile in the light of mineral lamps, retired to their sleeping bed which they had prepared in a secluded spot.

⁶⁴ It was a bedding of flowers covered with heaps of flowers of various kinds. ⁶⁵ There were heaps of lotuses of golden color, as also mandara and other sorts of flowers, to drive away fatigue by their fragrance. ⁶⁶ The flat of the flowery bed of the bridal pair resembled the plane of the broad and bright moon, and a level surface covered by cooling ice. ⁶⁷ It also resembled the wide sea whose waters are permeated by the bright moon and whose surface supplies a bed to Ananta, the sleeping serpent of the infinite god Vishnu.

⁶⁸ The loving pair then lay themselves down and rolled upon their snow white bed of flowers, as when Mandara Mountain rolled about and churned the Milky Ocean. ⁶⁹ They passed their bridal night caressing each other and conversing on topics of love. The entire night glided before them as if only a few moments.

Chapter 107 — Chudala Makes a False Indra Appear to Test Sikhidwaja

¹ Now as the eastern sun gilded the world with his golden rays, the queen consort of Sikhidwaja changed her form of Madanika to that of the brahmin boy Kumbha. ² She stood openly as such before her friend, sitting in the cavern of Mandara where at night they lived in conjugal union together like a pair of forest deities.

³ During the days they wandered in the forests and among trees and plants loaded with fruit and flowers of various colors. ⁴ They passed the day together as two loving friends and spent the night as a wedded couple. They were never separated from each other either by day or night. ⁵ They rambled about the caverns and trees of the mountain and played under the covered shelters of spice and mandara trees. ⁶ They wandered about the outskirts of Dardura, Kailash, Mahendra, Malaya, Gandhamadana, Vindhadri, and Lokaloka.

⁷ On every third day or night, when Chudala found the king to be fast asleep, she used to assume her former form of the queen and return to her royal palace and discharge her state affairs as before, then return to her husband in the forest. ⁸ Thus the loving pair lived as two friends by day and as husband and wife at night, both decorated with flowers and sleeping on their flowery bed.

⁹ They remained for a month in a shining cave of Mahendra under the shade of delightful sarala trees where they were greatly endeared by forest deities and kinnara foresters. ¹⁰ They lived a fortnight in a tree on Suktimat Mountain surrounded by mandara trees and kalpa plants, feasting upon the fruit which they could reach with their hands. ¹¹ They passed two months on the southern ridge of the winged mountain of Mainaka, its covered shelters over hung by the fruits and flowers of the celestial parijata trees. ¹² They dwelt a month in the valley of Jammu at the foot of Himalayan range and beside the Jambu River. They fed on the jam fruit that give its name to the whole country. ¹³ They travelled through the northern Kuru country for ten days, and for seven and twenty days they stayed in the districts lying north of Kosala. ¹⁴ In this manner they passed over many countries and hilly districts, living together as two friends by day and as a married pair at night.

¹⁵ Thus many months rolled away in their travels through many places, until a thought arose in the mind of Chudala to test her associate. She thought, ¹⁶ “I will test the heart of my partner and see whether it is liable to have any attraction toward beauty and pleasurable objects.” ¹⁷ Thinking so, Chudala by her magic skill showed the god Indra playing in the company of celestial apsara nymphs in that forest.

¹⁸ Sikhidwaja saw the god Indra with his companion there. He advanced before him and worshipped him as he deserved, saying, ¹⁹ “O lord of gods, will you consent to reveal to me the cause of your arrival in this forest from your seat in the high and far distant heaven?”

²⁰ Indra replied, “Virtue has attracted us down to these woods, as the flying kites of the air are drawn to earth by the string fastened to their breasts. ²¹ Now rise from here and proceed with us to heaven where the celestial apsara nymphs are eagerly expecting to see you since they have heard of your wonderful virtues. ²² Wear these sandals, hold this sword, anoint your body with this ointment, and ascend to the upper sky and thence to heaven in the manner of the masters and perfect yogis.”

²³ “On reaching the region of the gods, you will enjoy all sorts of delights which await the living liberated souls in this world and the next, and to which I now come to invite you. ²⁴ No holy man like yourself ever neglects the offered occasion to their prosperity, nor should you scorn to take your heavenward course with ourselves at this moment. ²⁵ Let there be no impediment to your ascent to the enjoyment of heaven where you will enjoy your full bliss and which will be blessed by your presence as the three worlds are by the presence of Vishnu.”

²⁶ Sikkidhwaja said, “I know, O lord of gods, the delights that abound in heaven, but I have my heaven everywhere and there is no particular place which I consider as heaven. ²⁷ I am content everywhere and I am pleased with every place. My soul being desirous of nothing from its fullness in itself, I am fully satisfied everywhere. ²⁸ O god, if remaining forever in the same place and in the same state is what you call heaven, then pardon me for I decline to go it.”

²⁹ Indra answered, “I know, O holy saint, that those who have known the knowable and who are perfect in their understandings are indifferent to sensual gratification. However, it is not the part of the wise to reject an enjoyment which offers itself by the gracious allotment of his destiny.” ³⁰ After the god had said so, the king remained silent and returned no answer. Then the god said, “If you are resolved not to leave this place, then I must leave you here and make my way to heaven.”

³¹ Sikkidhwaja said, “I must not go there now, though I may do so on some future occasion.” Upon this the god made farewell. ³² All the other gods who were in Indra’s retinue also vanished upon the disappearance of their chief, just as the huge surges of the sea subside in the deep together with their foaming froths.

Chapter 108 — Chudala again Tests Sikhidwaja by Taking a Lover; then Manifests in Her Own Form

¹ Vasishta related:—

The queen retracted the enchantment by which she had presented the god Indra before the king. She was glad to find that he had subdued his desire of enjoyment.² He remained with perfect tranquility and equanimity of his mind at the appearance and in the presence of the god Indra, fearless, indifferent and unmoved by the god's persuasion.

³ “I will again try to know by some means or other whether this prince is subject to the passions of anger or annoyance or any other feeling, which serve at best but to blindfold the understanding.”

⁴ With this intention she assumed the form of the chaste Madanika at the approach of night, when the moon had already appeared above that forest land.⁵ The wind was blowing gently, bearing the sweet fragrance of flowers. Sikhidhwaja was sitting by the side of a river performing his evening prayers.

⁶ She entered her covered shelter formed by twining vines and decorated with flower garlands that made it look like the shelter of a forest goddesses.⁷ She slept there on a bed of flowers she had made herself, adorned with flower wreaths on her body. She had her beloved one seated in her heart and laid herself on a pillow.

⁸ Sikhidhwaja sought her in the gardens and at last found her sleeping in the covered shelter, with a pretty paramour holding her neck in his arms.⁹ Her lover's hair hung on his neck and shoulders and his beautiful body was daubed with sandalwood paste. He had a wreath of flowers on his head, distorted from his crown which lay loose on the pillow over which it rolled.¹⁰ The flowing tresses of the mistress fell in two fold braids on her shoulder blades of golden color, hanging over her ears and eyebrows and her cheeks and face.

¹¹ He saw the amorous pair with their smiling faces kissing and embracing each another, as when ivy twists around a large tree.¹² They lay with wreathed flowers hanging loosely on their bodies. Both were fascinated with love of one another by the contact of their bodies, which infused their reciprocal passions in the heart for each other.¹³ They were both infatuated and ravished by their mutual love, bruising breasts on the other's bosoms.

¹⁴ Seeing this, Sikhidhwaja felt no change in his disposition. He was rather pleased to find them sleeping so very happily in each another's embrace.¹⁵ “Remain you lovers,” he said, “as you are to your hearts' content. I will put no obstacle in your way, nor make you afraid of me by my presence in this place.” Saying so, he withdrew from there.

¹⁶ Immediately at this time, she also withdrew her charm and assumed herself as the beautiful goddess of love and loving spouse of the prince.¹⁷ She came out and saw the king sitting in a cave of the mountain, in the posture of intense meditation with both eyes open.¹⁸ The lady Madanika advanced towards him with a bashful face, then sat silently by his side with her downcast look and sad appearance, as if abashed and ashamed of her past misconduct.

¹⁹ After a moment, as Sikhidhwaja was released from his meditation, he cast his eyes upon her and spoke to her with an exceedingly sweet voice, which spoke the frankness of his mind.²⁰ “Lady,” he

said, "why do you come so soon to me and leave off the enjoyment of your happiness? Happiness is the end and aim of all beings on earth.²¹ Go, return to your lover and gratify him with all your passionate embraces. Mutual love, so much desired by all, is hard to be had by any in this world."

²² Think not, lady, that I am at all angry or sorry for this affair as I am always contented in myself, knowing the true One that is only to be known.²³ My companion Kumbha and I are always dispassionate in our temperaments. But you arise as a woman from the curse of Durvasa, so you are always at liberty to do whatever you like without incurring any displeasure from me."

²⁴ Madanika replied, "So it is, O highly favored one of heaven. You know that women by their nature are eight times more passionate than men and therefore should not be criticized on account of their gratification of their natural passions.²⁵ I am only a frail woman. I found you absorbed in deep meditation. I could not choose other than to take a partner as you saw in the depth of the forest and in the night."

²⁶ "The weak sex in general, and maidens in particular, are ever fond of illicit love by their very nature for the gratification of their lust, which they can never have the power to check.²⁷ A woman becomes graceful in the company of man and no curse, prohibition, men's menaces or regard of chastity is of any use to stop them from it.²⁸ I am a woman and a weaker vessel, an ignorant and independent lady. Therefore sage, it becomes you to forgive my unsteadiness, because forgiveness is the most prominent feature of holiness."

²⁹ Sikhidhwaja replied, "My young lady, know that anger has no seat in my heart, as there grows no plant in the sky. It is only for fear of incurring the disgrace of good people that I must decline to take you as my spouse.³⁰ But I can associate with you as before in mutual friendship for ever more, without bearing any yearning or grudge in my heart, either for or against one another."

³¹ Vasishta replied:—

After Sikhidhwaja had consented to continue in his detachment and disinterested friendship with his only companion in the forest, Chudala was highly pleased to know the nobleness of his mind. She thought to herself,³² "O, the transcendent tranquility which this lord of mine has gained, whose dispassion has set him above anger and who has attained his living liberation.³³ No delight attracts his heart, nor any excellence ever attracts his soul whose mind is not elated by pleasure or prosperity, or depressed by pain or calamity.³⁴ I think that all the imaginable perfections have jointly met in his person, as the goddess Lakshmi of prosperity is united with the lord Narayana.³⁵ It is now the proper time for me to bring to his memory all and everything relating to me by abandoning my form of Kumbha and disclosing myself to him in my form of Chudala."

³⁶ With this thought, she threw off her form of Madanika and took the appearance of Chudala upon herself.³⁷ She issued out of the body of Madanika in the form of Chudala and stood openly before him, like a jewel taken out of a chest and exposed to view.³⁸ The king saw her unblemished and lovely figure, and found his beloved Madanika transformed into his wedded spouse Chudala.³⁹ He saw his own wife present before him, like a lotus flower blooming in the spring, and like the goddess Lakshmi of prosperity rising out of the earth, or like a brilliant gem displayed openly from its casket.

Chapter 109 — Sikkidwaja & Chudala Reunited

¹ Vasishta related:—

Sikkidwaja was surprised to see his queen appearing so suddenly before him. He looked upon her with eyes staring with mute astonishment. Then he broke his silence, uttering the following words in a faltering speech. ² “What are you, O lotus eyed maid, and from where do you come to this place? Why do you come here and how long have you been here? Say for what purpose do you abide in this forest? ³ Your gait and figure, your features and your form, your sweet smiles, manners and courtesy, speak you plainly to be a copy of the image of my wedded wife.”

⁴ Chudala replied, “So it is my lord, as you think me to be your lawful consort. As you see, I am no doubt your Queen Chudala who has met you today in her natural and undisguised form. ⁵ I assumed the counterfeit forms of Kumbha and others only to show your mistaken course. I have used every means and stratagem to recall you to the right path.”

⁶ “Ever since your foolishly renounced your kingdom to perform ascetic austerities in the forest, I have had recourse to employ every means to reclaim you to the right path of religion. ⁷ I awakened to the light of truth. My form of Kumbha and all the other forms which I took upon myself were chiefly intended for your instruction. ⁸ The forms of Kumbha and others were not real but magical appearances before you. You who knows the knowable can very well discern the whole affair in your meditation. ⁹ You will be convinced of all this if you will only look into it by the light of your meditation and not otherwise.”

After Chudala said this much, the king sat in yoga asana posture and meditated. ¹⁰ He saw the whole affair, rising and exhibiting itself plainly before his mental vision, from the renunciation of his royalty until his meeting with Chudala at the end. ¹¹ All these he saw rising in his soul in one moment of meditation. The successive events appeared from the renunciation of his kingdom to the present instant. ¹² The king, seeing all these in his meditation, felt glad in himself and greatly rejoiced when he came to the end of the scenes, ended his meditation and opened his eyes. ¹³ He extended both arms, the hairs standing on end from joy, his face shining and expressing the gladness of his heart, tears trickling from his eyes, his limbs weakened by his want of self-control. ¹⁴ Then he embraced her to his bosom for a long time, as a weasel does its mate. This continued embrace indicated the permanency of their passion for one another.

¹⁵ Nobody, not even the hundred-hooded Sesha serpent with its hundred tongues, can express the height of happiness which the happy pair felt on this occasion of their reunion as their two bodies met together, like the two orbs of the sun and moon in their union, or as their two discs were joined in one, as if stuck together with some paste or clay. ¹⁶ The two constant lovers continued in their close contact like two adjacent rocks sticking to one another, until at last they parted, their bodies profusely perspiring. ¹⁷ Then they gradually relaxed their arms from their embraces. Their hearts, which had before long overflowed with delight, became as light as two empty pots of water. ¹⁸ They loosened their arms and stared at each another with a fixed and mute gaze of amazement. After the intensity of their delight was over, they sat silently with their deep felt love.

¹⁹ Then the king laid his hand under the chin of his legal and royal consort and spoke to her in soft and

sweet words distilled with honey.²⁰ “Matrimonial love is righteous and far sweeter than celestial ambrosia itself. O my moon-faced love, then how was it that you could continue so long without tasting its sweets?²¹ You have doubtless undergone much deprivation and suffered great pains in the absence of your husband. The struggle that you have taken on yourself to release me from the prison of the world was exceedingly great.”

²² “I know not with whom to compare you, for the great wisdom that you have displayed in your act of my redemption. Even the pious ladies Sachi and Arundhati and the great goddesses Gauri, Gayatri, Lakshmi and Saraswati fall short of your admirable qualities.²³ My love, I see that even the personified powers of understanding and prosperity, the persons of the graces and clemency, and the virtues of forgiveness, sympathy and universal love are unequal to your virtues and beauty.²⁴ I know no adequate recompense for your labor, or how to repay my gratitude to you who has spared no patience and persevered through all pains for the sake of my instruction and redemption.”

²⁵ “O say, what payment will reward your pains and gladden your mind in exchange for releasing me from the dark pit of ignorance and reclaiming me from the boundless wilderness of errors?²⁶ The true virtue of faithful wives is to raise their fallen husbands. This virtue can serve to save a man from his degradation much greater than scriptures or learning, riches, or the spiritual guide and his teaching.

²⁷ Faithful and affectionate wives are of greater service by far to their husbands than a brother or relation or any friend or servant, or even a guru or one’s riches can ever be.²⁸ The faithful wife is a man’s best guide. She serves as his best abode and attendant more than anything else in this world. Therefore the wife deserves always to be regarded above all others, with utmost diligence and attention.²⁹ The happiness of both worlds depends entirely on the disinterested and virtuous wife who serves as a raft to her husband for his going across the wide ocean of the perilous world.”

³⁰ “How shall I, O virtuous lady, possibly repay what you have done for me? I now regard you as the wisest and best of all the virtuous ladies in the whole world.³¹ Your name must ever after remain foremost among all virtuous woman in the world in all future stories of female virtues and respectable character among the women.³² I think the virtuous lady Arundhati and others, whose names are immortalized in the record of sacred history because of their virtues, will feel jealous of you as they came to learn about your chastity and other admirable qualities. So my dear, let me embrace you again to my bosom.”

³³ Vasishta related:—

Saying so, Sikhidhwaja again held Chudala to his close embrace, as the weasel does his mate in their mutual fondness.

³⁴ Chudala said, “My lord, I was sorry to find you entirely devoted to your dry ceremonial duties. It was for that reason that I took so much pain to dissuade you from them and lead you to the knowledge of the intelligent soul.³⁵ Now tell me, my lord, what shall we do in this place and what is the use of your extolling my virtues so far?”

³⁶ Sikhidhwaja replied, “O most excellent among women, you are here at your liberty to do whatever you think is best. It is the prerogative of respectable ladies to manage everything in their own way.”

³⁷ Chudala answered, “Now my lord, as you have come to know that you are released from the

network of this world and are set free on the shore from all its conflicts and confusions, you must have perceived by now that your past austerities were all in vain and gone for nothing.³⁸ You must have known that it is all in vain when you say ‘I do this or that, and will get its reward, and will thus be settled in life,’ and the like. Say do you smile to think of these and other wanderings of your simple understanding?³⁹ Do you know that these wanderings are the creatures of your greed and mere creations of your fancy?⁴⁰ Do you perceive that these false creations of your imagination are as unreal as the appearance of mountains in the empty air?”

⁴¹ “Say what have you learnt after all? What do you depend upon? What object do you seek at present? How do you see all your bodily acts, either of your past or future life?”

⁴² Sikkidhwaja replied, “O dear lady, with your blooming eyes resembling the leaves of a full blown blue lotus, I am likewise situated in and at the same place where you are also located.⁴³ I am tranquil and like the object of my meditation. I am situated in the true ego long after leaving the sense of my personality. I have arrived at that state which is known and felt only by the heart.”

⁴⁴ “There is no power anywhere, not even that of Hari and Hara, that is able to obstruct my heartfelt joy which makes me think myself as nothing else or less than the consciousness itself.⁴⁵ I am now free from errors and liberated from the chains of the world. I am neither this nor that, nor am I glad or sorry at anything or at any event in the world.⁴⁶ I am neither any gross or subtle matter, nor am I like a ray of sunlight that emanates from the body of the sun and falls below by traversing through the midway sky.”

⁴⁷ “I am of the essence of that glorious light which is ever without increase or decrease. I am always tranquil and even in my nature. I am quite at ease, having no desire of my own or anything to expect from anyone.⁴⁸ O you, most chaste lady, know me to be of that essence which exists as nirvana everywhere. I am what I am and what I cannot describe, and no other than this.”

⁴⁹ “O beautiful lady, with your eyes glancing like the flitting waves of rivulets, I bow down to you as my instructor because it is by your good grace that I have come across the turbulent ocean of the world.⁵⁰ No longer shall I be soiled with the dirt of the earth. I am cleansed of it like a bit of gold purified from its alloy by repeated burnings.⁵¹ I am quite calm and easy, quiet and free from passions, and never divided in my attention or distracted in my mind. I am beyond all things. I am everywhere and all pervading. I am situated as I am.”

⁵² Chudala said, “If you remain in this manner, O lord of my life and dearly beloved of my heart, then tell me, my lord. What is now most agreeable to your most noble disposition?”

⁵³ Sikkidhwaja answered, “I know of nothing, O good lady, that is either delectable or detestable to me. I do the same as you do. I am exactly of the same mind as you in everything.⁵⁴ O you who is as fair as the sky, know that I have nothing to choose for myself beyond what I am possessed of. I leave it to you to choose and do whatever you think proper for us.⁵⁵ I will act as you will, like your shadow or reflection in the mirror, because my mind is devoid of desire and effort. I will patiently bear with whatever comes to pass on me.⁵⁶ I will neither excite nor prevent, neither praise nor blame you for anything you do, but leave you at full liberty to do whatever you best choose for yourself.”

⁵⁷ Chudala replied, “If it is as you say, then hear me tell you what is best to be done by you at present.

You are to imitate the conduct of living-liberated persons, released from ignorance and knowing the unity of the deity pervading all things in every place.⁵⁸ We are both as devoid of desires as the emptiness of the sky is without population. But that which I wish to do is what you do not wish at all."

⁵⁹ "Say what man is there who neglects his life and livelihood and remains only in his intellect? There are three stages of human life, namely, its beginning or boyhood, its middle or youth, and its end or old age. Being situated in the middle stage, we must do the duties belonging to this state before we proceed to the last stage of our being.⁶⁰ We are by birth the king and queen of a kingdom, therefore it is most important for us to rule our state and pass our days discharging the duties of our royalty until our end."

⁶¹ Sikkidhwaja said, "Tell me, O steady minded lady, what do you mean by the three stages? How do we stand at the midmost one without having a bit to care for the final one?"

⁶² Chudala replied, "Know king that we are royal persons by birth. We must continue as such from the first to the last stage of our lives.⁶³ Why then do you allow the incapacity of old age to overtake you in the prime of your youth when it is your duty to remain in your city and palace and govern your princely state?⁶⁴ I will rule there as your consort queen and crown the ladies in the royal apartment. All young maidens of the city will dance with joy to see their king and queen again in the royal palace.⁶⁵ Then the city glittering with its uplifted flags, resounding with loud beating drums and decorated with wreaths of flowers hanging all about, will resemble a spring garden smiling with its green plants, blooming buds and blushing flowers all around."

⁶⁶ Vasishta related:—

Hearing these words of the queen, the king smilingly spoke to her with sweet words spoken from the simplicity and frankness of his soul.⁶⁷ "If such is your pleasure, my dear broad-eyed beloved, to incite me to earthly pleasures, then tell me what cause had I to disregard the heavenly happiness which was offered to me by the god Indra?"

⁶⁸ Chudala replied, "Know prince, that I also have no taste for earthly enjoyments or any great pleasure for its grandeur or greatness. I depend upon the bounty of nature and live as I receive from her hand.⁶⁹ Hence I have no taste for heavenly joys or earthly royalty, nor do I derive any pleasure from the performance of virtuous and courageous acts. My delight is in the undisturbed equanimity of my mind and the positive rest of my position.⁷⁰ Only after I have lost my feeling of pleasure in something and that of pain in another do I gain my equanimity and indifference to both and am settled in my perfect rest and tranquility."

⁷¹ Sikkidhwaja responded, "You have rightly said, O large eyed lady with your calm and cool understanding, that it is all alike, whether we get or lose a kingdom, since we derive no lasting good nor suffer great evil from either its gain or loss.⁷² Let us remain in perfect peace by avoiding all thoughts of pleasure or pain, freed from envy, imitation and jealousy. Let us continue in the same state of thoughtlessness as we are at present."

⁷³ In this manner the married couple passed the day in their sweet endearments and mutual conversation. The day glided on swiftly and sweetly over their feast of reason and flow of the soul.

⁷⁴ They rose on the departure of the day to discharge their duties on the parting days. Though they

were ill provided for the emergencies of night, yet they well knew how to suit themselves to every occasion in every place.⁷⁵ Despising heavenly bliss, the loving pair lived together in perfect contentment with their conjugal bliss. They both slept in the same bed, loving and loved by one another.

⁷⁶ The entire night passed swiftly in their heaven-like happiness of conjugal enjoyment, their expressions of love and affection for each other, and in their excited anxiety for each other's embrace.

Chapter 110 — Sikkhidhwaja Returns to Rule His Kingdom; His Nirvana

¹ Vasishta related:—

The eastern sun rose above the horizon like a brilliant gem appearing out of its containing casket, and dispelled the darkness of the sky, just as the blazing gem enlightens the room with its rays.² His dawning rays pierced the eyes of sleeping men and opened their eyelids, just as they open the petals of the closed lotuses. They roused the lazy world to activity, as if the sunbeams gave the sound of the morning bell.

³ The loving pair rose from their bed of flowers in the cave of the mountain brightened by its mineral gold. They sat on their soft and cool leafy seats to make their morning prayers and discharge their religious functions.⁴ Then Chudala stood before a golden vessel of water where she made him take his solemn oath by the names of seven oceans of the earth.⁵ Then she made him sit by the sacred water pot, facing towards the rising sun in the east. In this sequestered retreat, she performed the rite installing him to rule his kingdom.

⁶ After the ceremony was over, they both sat on the same bedding when the godlike Chudala spoke to her husband in the following manner.⁷ “Now my lord, leave off your quiet character of a hermit muni and assume the strength of the eight rulers of the upper skies and world below.”⁸ After Chudala had spoken in this manner, the king assented to what she said and told her that he will do as she asked him and return to his kingdom with her.

⁹ Then he said to the queen who was standing at the post of the custodian on her inaugurated lord, “Now, my dear, I will install you to the rank of the queen regent in my turn and in return for yours.”

¹⁰ Saying so, he caused holy bathing in an adjacent pool and anointed her as the consort queen of his royalty and kingdom.

¹¹ Then the king asked her to exert the powers of her perfection in yoga meditation to produce in their presence a large force and retinue, as they wanted and thought suitable to their royal dignity.

¹² Hearing these words of king, the praiseworthy queen, by the power of her yoga, produced a body of forces as large and as vast as the outstretched clouds in rainy season.¹³ They saw their cloud-like forces composed of lines of horses and elephants, flags flying in the air in the form of scattered clouds, the forest land covered by the feet of foot-soldiers.¹⁴ The sound of music resounded in the hollow caves of mountains and woods. The flash of the helmets on the soldiers’ heads drove away the darkness of the sky.

¹⁵ Then the royal pair mounted upon a royal elephant, oozing with the perfume of its ichor, escorted by the army on both sides of their procession.¹⁶ King Sikkhidhwaja sat with the queen on the same seat accompanied by a mighty force composed of foot-soldiers and chariots that plowed the ground as they drove on forward.¹⁷ The mighty force poured out like a rolling mountain, seemingly blowing off and breaking down the rock and highlands like a cyclone carrying off everything in its way.

¹⁸ The king then proceeded with his great procession from Mahendra Mountain past the mountains and flatlands, rivers, forests and homes of men.¹⁹ He pointed out to his royal consort the places where he had stayed before on his way from out of his city, which he now saw in his heavenly brightness as being near.

²⁰ All his chiefs and chieftains advanced to meet their king. They welcomed him with shouts of his victory from their heartfelt joy, or from the revival of their hopes on the occasion of his happy return.

²¹ The king entered the city accompanied by his two regiments on both sides and attended by bands of musicians playing in concert with the singing and dancing party. ²² He passed through the marketplace and saw the beauty of the shops one after the other. He was hailed by groups of city women who threw handfuls of flowers and fried rice at him as he passed by. ²³ He saw numerous flags and banners raised up on every side. He saw strings of pearls hung over the doorways of houses. The women of city were singing and dancing in merriment all around, giving it the appearance of Kailash, the abode of the gods.

²⁴ He entered his royal palace with all his retinue and was welcomed by the congratulations of his courtiers and attendants. He gave due honors to all his servants, then dismissed the retinue as he entered the inner apartment. ²⁵ He ordered a festivity to be observed for a week, then engaged himself in the management of state affairs and in meditation in the inner apartment.

²⁶ He ruled over his kingdom for ten thousand years. He and his queen gave up the burden of their bodies and expired together about the same time. ²⁷ Having left his mortal frame, he obtained his nirvana like a lamp that has gone out for lack of oil. He attained the state in which the high minded soul has no more to return and be reborn on earth.

²⁸ It was by his observance of equanimity that he enjoyed the peaceful rule of ten thousand years. He had the good fortune to live and die together with the queen with whom he attained nirvana. ²⁹ It was by his view of all persons and things with an even sight and in the same light, and his avoidance of fear and sorrow, together with his lack of pride, envy and hatred, and the dispassion of his disposition, also his observance of the duties to which he was bound by his birth, that made him put off his death for more than a thousand years and enjoy a peaceful rule for all time with the partner of his joy.

³⁰ Now Rama, try to imitate this king and be like him in everything. King Sikkidwaja's virtues made him the crown of all other kings on earth. He enjoyed all the enjoyments of life and lived a long life until he attended his final state of immortality. O Rama, follow your own callings and never be sorry at any accident in life. Be ever prompt and vigilant in your duties and enjoy the prosperity of temporal enjoyments and spiritual liberations both together.

Chapter 111 — Story of Kacha & His Enlightenment by Brihaspati

¹ Vasishta related:—

Now I have told you the complete story of Sikkidhwaja. I hope you will imitate his example and set yourself free from all sorrow and misery. ² Shut out the visible world from your sight. Shut in your passions and affections in close confinement within your heart. Continue with the dispassion of your mind forever attached to the Supreme Spirit. ³ Rule in your kingdom with the example of Sikkidhwaja and conduct yourself in a manner that may secure for you the fruition of both worlds (peace and liberation).

⁴ As Sikkidhwaja came by degrees to attain his enlightenment, so also did Kacha the son of Brihaspati receive the enlightenment of his reason, as I shall now relate to you.

⁵ Rama said, “Please tell me sage, in short, how this Kacha, the saintly son of sage Brihaspati, came to his enlightenment and right understanding, after he was deluded before by error, as was Sikkidhwaja.”

⁶ Vasishta began by saying:—

Hear Rama, another tale as interesting as that of Sikkidhwaja. It is about how Kacha, son of the godlike Brihaspati, was awakened to the light of truth.

⁷ He had passed the period of his youth and was about to enter the career of worldly life. He had acquired full knowledge of worlds and things when he asked the following question of his father. ⁸ He said, “Tell me, O father who knows all righteousness, how is the animal spirit, bound to the body by means of the too thin thread of life, released from its bondage in this temporary world?”

⁹ Brihaspati replied, “The soul, my son, is well able to fly away easily and swiftly over the perilous ocean of the world, by means of its abandonment of concerns with it.”

¹⁰ Vasishta added:—

Kacha, hearing this holy statement of his father, abandoned all his earthly properties and expectations and left his house and went to forest where he took his shelter. ¹¹ Brihaspati was filled with sorrow at his departure, because it is nature of good hearted men to feel equal anxiety both at the union as well as the separation of their friends. ¹² After the sinless Kacha had passed eight years in solitude, he encountered his reverent father who had been looking for him in the woods. ¹³ The son rose and did homage to his venerable father, who embraced him in his arms and breast. Kacha then spoke to his father, the lord of speech, in words that flowed like honey from his lips.

¹⁴ Kacha said, “You see father, that for these full eight years I have forsaken everything and taken myself to this solitary retreat. Still, why is it that I do not enjoy the lovely and lasting peace of mind which I have been seeking so long?”

¹⁵ Vasishta related:—

Upon hearing Kacha’s sorrowful words, the lord of speech Brihaspati told him again to abandon his all, then left him and made his way to the upper sky. ¹⁶ After his father’s departure, Kacha cast off his clothing made of tree bark and leaves. His frail body appeared out of it like the clear autumn sky after

the setting of the sun and the rise of the stars of heaven.¹⁷ He then moved to another forest where he took shelter in the cave of a rock that protected him from rain and rainy clouds, just as the autumn sky protects the landscape from the floods of rain.

¹⁸ He lived all alone on one side of a wood with his naked body and tranquil and vacant mind, breathing only the breath of his life. As he was afflicted on one occasion in this state of his body and mind, he happened to see his father standing before him.¹⁹ The pious son rose from his seat and did reverence to his father with all the marks of filial piety. Being then clasped in his close embrace, he asked him in his faltering words as follows.²⁰ Kacha said, "Behold my father how I have forsaken everything. I have even cast away my tree-bark dress and my shelter of reeds and weeds. Yet why do I not find my rest in my god? What must I yet do to attain to that state?"

²¹ Brihaspati said, "I told you my son, to forsake your all. This all means the mind which comprehends all things in it. By forsaking your mind you can gain perfect joy. The learned know the mind is all in all because it contains everything. There is nothing besides the ideas of them in our minds."

²² Vasishta related:—

Saying so, Brihaspati, the lord of speech, flew hastily into the sky. His son Kacha immediately strove to abandon the thoughts and operations of his mind.²³ But he found it impossible to subdue his mind or suppress its action and motion. Then he recalled his father to his mind, and thought in himself to be in his presence.²⁴ He considered in himself that the mind was no part of his body or anything among the known categories in nature. "It is quite aloof and apart from all, and therefore perfectly guiltless in itself. Why then should I abandon so innocent and constant a companion of mine?²⁵ Therefore I shall seek my father's help to learn how and why the mind is accounted as the greatest enemy of men. Learning this fully from him, I will immediately forsake it from me and obtain my joy thereby."

²⁶ Vasishta related:—

Having thought so, Kacha went upward to the upper sky where he met the lord of speech. He bowed down to him and did his homage with filial respect and affection.²⁷ Kacha then asked his father to tell him the true nature and form of the mind so that he would be able to detect it and accordingly forsake it.

²⁸ Brihaspati answered, "Men acquainted with the mental science know the mind as the egoism of a man. The inner feeling of one's ego takes the name of his mind and no more."

²⁹ Kacha replied and said, "O father of unlimited understanding who is the teacher of all the multitude of gods, explain to me this intricate point of identity of the mind or intellect or egoism.³⁰ I see the difficulty of forsaking this mind and forgetting this egoism or self-personality. I also understand the impossibility of one's perfection without abandoning both of these. Tell me now, O greatest of yogi thinkers, how is it possible to get rid of them in any way?"

³¹ Brihaspati answered:—

Why my son, the destruction of our egoism is as easy as the blinking of our eyelids and easier far than crushing flowers. There is not the least pain in rejecting this feeling.³² Now my boy, listen as I tell

you how this is to be done in a moment, and how it is to be removed like true knowledge of the nature of a thing removes a long standing bias of ignorance.

³³ My son, in reality there is no such thing as what you call your egoism or personality. It is an unreality appearing as reality, a false mental fabrication like the ghost of little children. ³⁴ Like the fallacy of water in the mirage and the mistake of a serpent in the rope and all other errors appearing as truths, the misconception of egoism is a mere delusion of understanding.

³⁵ The delusion of vision shows a couple of moons in the sky and shows many things as their doubles. In the same way, the error of our understanding presents us with our false egoism instead of the one real and everlasting Atman (Soul). ³⁶ There is only one real Atman, without beginning or end and quite transparent in itself. It is more transparent than the clear atmosphere and an Intelligence that knows all things. ³⁷ It is always omnipresent as the light of all things and the life of all living beings. Only this essence spreads throughout all nature and shines in all her phenomena, as the same essence of water displays itself in all rolling surges and waves and moving bubbles in the sea.

³⁸ Such being the case, tell me what is this special egoism of ours, and how and from where could a separate personality come to exist? Where can you find dust rising from water, or see water springing from fire? ³⁹ My son, shun your false belief in the difference of this one and that other, and yourself as another person. Refrain from thinking that you are a mean and contemptible being confined within the limits of space and time. ⁴⁰ Know yourself (soul) to be unbounded by space or time, ever extended all over in your essential transparency, always the same in all seeming varieties, the one unchanging, pure and simple Consciousness.

⁴¹ Your Self (soul) is situated in the fruit, flowers and leaves of all the trees on every side of you. You abide in everything like the core and foundation for its existence, and as moisture for its growth. The pure intellect eternally inheres in everything as its soul and essence. Tell me then, O Kacha, from where do you derive a belief in your egoism and personal existence?

Chapter 112 — Parable of the Aerial Man Building Aerial Homes

¹ Vasishta related:—

Kacha, son of the divine teacher Brihaspati, being thus advised by his respected father in the best kind of yoga meditation, began to meditate as one liberated from his personal ego entity, lost and absorbed in essence of the only one and self-existent deity.² Kacha remained quite free from his I-ness and me-ness with the tranquility of his mind, cut off from all the ties of nature, all apart from the bonds of worldly life.

So I advise you, Rama, to remain unchanged and unmoved amidst all the changes and movements of earthly bodies and changing fortunes of a mortal life.³ Know all egoistic personality to be non-existent. Never hesitate to remove yourself from this asylum of unreality whose essence is like nothing at all, like the horns of a rabbit, whether you grab it or lose it.⁴ If it is impossible for your egoism to be a reality, then why talk of your birth and death or your existence and nonexistence? That is like planting a tree in the sky. You can reap neither fruit nor flower.

⁵ After your egoism is annihilated, pure consciousness remains. It has the form of pure intellect and not that of the unsteady mind. It is tranquil without any desire and extends through all existence. It is more minute and more subtle than the smallest atom. It is the pure power of reasoning and understanding.

⁶ As the waves are raised upon water and ornaments are made of gold, so our egoism springs from the original pure consciousness and appears to be something different from it.⁷ Only our ignorance and imperfect knowledge represent the visible world as a magic show. But the light of right knowledge brings us to see the one and identical Brahman in all forms of things.

⁸ Shun your questions of unity and duality. Remain firm in your belief of that state which lasts after the loss of both. Be happy with this belief and never trouble yourself with thinking anything else, like the false man in the tale.⁹ There is an inexplicable magic enveloping the whole. This world is an impenetrable mass of magic and sorcery which enwraps as thickly as the autumn mists obscure the sky. This is all scattered by the light of good understanding.

¹⁰ Rama said, “Sage, your learned lectures, like drinks of nectar, have given me entire satisfaction. I am as refreshed by your cooling speeches as the parching swallow is cooled by a shower of rainwater.¹¹ I feel as cold within myself as if I were anointed with heavenly ambrosia. I think myself raised above all beings in my possession of unequalled riches and greatness, by the grace of God.¹² I am never tired, even with the fullness of my heart, to listen to the discourses that issue from your mouth. I am like a chakora bird that is never satisfied with swallowing dewy moonbeams by night.¹³ I confess to you that I am never satisfied drinking the sweet nectar of your speech. The more I listen to you, the more am I disposed to learn and listen to you. For who is there so satisfied with ambrosial honey that he declines to taste the nectarine juice again?”

¹⁴ “Tell me father, what do you mean by the false men of the tale who thought the real entity as a nonentity and looked on the unreal world as a solar and solid reality?”

¹⁵ Vasishta related:—

Now, Rama, listen as I tell you the story of the false and fanciful man. It is pleasant to hear and quite ludicrous and laughable from first to last.

¹⁶ Once, somewhere, there lived a man like a magical machine who lived like an idiot with the imbecility of his infantile simplicity, full of gross ignorance like a fool or blockhead. ¹⁷ He was born somewhere in some remote region of the sky and was doomed to wander in the ethereal sphere like a false apparition in the air or a mirage in the sandy desert. ¹⁸ There was no other person other than himself. Whatever else there was in that place, it was only his self or an exact likeness of his self. He saw nothing but himself and anything that he saw he thought to be only his self.

¹⁹ As he grew up to manhood in this lonely retreat, he reflected in himself thinking, "I am airy and belong to the aerial sphere. The air is my province. Therefore I will rule over this region as mine.

²⁰ The air is my ownership right and therefore I must preserve it with all diligence." Then with this thought he built an aerial house for his home in order to protect and rule his aerial dominion.

²¹ He placed his reliance upon that aerial castle from where he could manage to rule his aerial domain. He lived quite content amidst the sphere of his airy habitation for a long time. ²² But in course of time his air-built castle became dilapidated and at last utterly destroyed, just as the clouds of heaven are driven and blown away in autumn, and the waves of the sea are dispersed by a breeze and sink down in the calm after storms. ²³ Then he cried out in sorrow, saying, "O my air-built house! Why are you broken down and blown away so soon? O my air-drawn habitation, where have you withdrawn from me?" In this manner, he wailed in his excessive grief and said, "Ah, now I see that an aerial something must be reduced to an aerial nothing."

²⁴ After lamenting in this manner for a long time, this simpleton dug a cave in the vacuum of the atmosphere. He continued to dwell in that hollow cavity in order to look up to his aerial kingdom from below. Thus he remained quite content in the closed air of the cave for a long period of time. ²⁵ In process of time his cell wasted and washed away. He became immersed in deep sorrow upon the dispersion of his empty cave.

²⁶ Then he constructed a hollow pot and took up residence deep inside it, adapting his living to its narrow limits. ²⁷ Know that his brittle earthen pot also broke down in short time. He came to know the frailty of all his dwellings, just as an unfortunate man finds the unsteadiness of all hopes and help which he fondly lays hold upon.

²⁸ After his pot broke, he got a tub for his residence. From there he surveyed the heavenly sphere, just as anyone beholds it from his own particular house. ²⁹ In course of time, his tub was also broken down, this time by some wild animal. Thus he lost all his temporary residences, just as the darkness and dews of night are dispelled and sucked up by sunlight and heat.

³⁰ After he had sorrowed in vain for the loss of his tub, he took refuge in an enclosed cottage with an open space in the middle in order to view the upper skies. ³¹ All devouring time also destroyed that dwelling of his, scattering it all about like the winds of heaven disperse the dried leaves of trees, leaving him to bewail the loss of his latest retreat and shelter.

³² Then he built a hut in the form of a barn house in the field. From that place he watched over his house of the air, as farmers keep watch and take care of their granaries. ³³ But the driving winds of the

air drove away and dispersed his shelter, just as they do the gathering clouds of heaven. The roofless man had once more to deplore the loss of his last refuge.

³⁴ Having thus lost all his homes in the pool and pot, in the cottage and the hut, the aerial man was left to moan over his losses in his empty abode of the air. ³⁵ Being thus situated in his helpless state, the aerial man reflected upon the narrow confines of the homes which he had chosen for himself of his own accord. He thought of the many pains and troubles that he had repeatedly undergone in the erection and destruction of all his aerial castles by his own ignorance only.

Chapter 113 — Explanation of the Parable of the Aerial Man Building Aerial Homes

¹ Rama said, "Please sage, please interpret your parable of the false man. Tell me the allusion it bears to the fanciful man whose business it was to watch the air."

² Vasishta replied:—

Rama, listen as I expound to you the meaning of my parable of the false man and the allusion which it bears to every fanciful man in this world.

³ The man that I have described as a magical engine means the egoistic man who is led by the magic of his egoism to look upon the empty air of his personality as a real entity.⁴ The dome of the sky, which contains all these orbs of worlds, is only an infinite space of empty void, just as it was before this creation came into existence, before it became manifest to view.

⁵ The spirit of the inscrutable and impersonal Brahman is immanent in this emptiness and becomes apparent in the personality of Brahman, like an audible sound issuing out of the empty air which is its receptacle and support.⁶ From this arises the subtle individual soul with the sense of its egoism, just as the vibration of winds springs from motionless air. Then, as the subtle individual soul grows up in time in the same element, it comes to believe it has an individual soul and a personality of its own.

⁷ Thus the impersonal soul, assimilated with the idea of its personality, tries to preserve its egoism forever. It enters into many bodies of different kinds and creates new ones for its home upon the loss of the former ones.⁸ This egoistic soul is called the false and magical man because it is a false creation of unreality, a production of vain ignorance and imagination.⁹ The pit and the pot, the cottage and the hut, represent the different bodies, their empty void supplying the egoistic soul with a temporary home.

¹⁰ Now listen as I tell you the different names under which our ignorant spirit passes in this world, and begins itself under one or other of these names.¹¹ It takes the various names of the living soul, understanding, mind, heart, and ignorance and nature also. It is known among men by the words imagination, fancy and time, which are also applied to it.¹² In these and a thousand other names and forms, this vain egoism appears to us in this world. But all these powers and faculties are mere attributes of the true Self which is imperceptible to us.

¹³ The world is truly known to rest without basis in the extended and empty womb of the visible sky. The imaginary soul of the egoist is supposed to dwell in it and feel all its pain and pleasure in vain.

¹⁴ Therefore O Rama, do not be like the imaginary man in the fable. Do not place any reliance upon your false personality or subject yourself, like the egoistic man, to the fancied pleasure and misery of this world.¹⁵ Do not trouble yourself, like the false man, with the vain care of preserving your empty soul or suffer like him from the pain of your confinement in the hollow of a pit, pot or other forms.

¹⁶ How is it possible for anybody to preserve or confine empty spirit within the narrow limit of a pot or the like when it is more extended than the boundless sky and more subtle and more pure than the all pervading air?¹⁷ The soul is supposed to dwell in the cavity of the human heart. It is thought to perish with the decay and destruction of the body. Hence people are seen to lament the loss of their frail bodies as if it caused the destruction of their indestructible soul.¹⁸ As the destruction of the pot or any other hollow vessel does not destroy the subtle air which is contained within, so the dissolution of the

body does not dissolve the embodied and intangible soul.

¹⁹ Know Rama, that the nature of the soul is that of the pure conscious intellect. It is more subtle than the encompassing air and far more minute than the smallest atom. It is only a particle of our consciousness, as indestructible as the all pervasive air which is never to be nullified. ²⁰ The soul is never born nor does it die as any other thing at any place or time. It extends over the whole universe as the Universal Soul of Brahman which encompasses and comprehends all space and manifests itself in all things.

²¹ Know this spirit as one entire unit, the only real entity. It is always calm and quiet without beginning, middle or end. Know it as beyond positive and negative and be happy with your knowledge of its transcendental nature. ²² Now free your mind from the false thoughts of your egoism which is the home of all evils and dangers and is an unstable thing depending on the life of a man. It is full of ignorance and vanity and its own destruction and final destruction. Therefore get rid of your egoistic feeling and rely only upon the ultimate and supreme state of the one everlasting God.

Chapter 114 — Supreme Spirit, Thought, Creation

¹ Vasishta said:—

The mind first sprang from the Supreme Spirit of Brahman. Being possessed of the power of thinking, it was situated in the Divine Soul and was called the Divine Mind or Intellect.² The unsteady mind resides in the spirit of God as the feeling of fragrance abides in the cup of a flower and as fluctuating waves roll about in a river. Know, Rama, that the mind radiates from its central point in Brahman, just as the rays of the sun extend to the circumference of creation.

³ Men forget the reality of the invisible spirit of God and view the unreal world as a reality, just as deluded people are inclined to believe a serpent in a rope.⁴ He who sees sunlight without seeing the sun from where they proceed sees it in a different light than the light of the sun.⁵ He who looks at an ornament without looking into the gold of which it is made is deluded by the finery of the ornament without knowing the value of the precious metal of which it is made.⁶ He who looks at the sun together with his glory and sees the sunbeams knowing the sun from where they proceed, truly beholds the unity of the sun with his light and not his duality by viewing them separately.

⁷ He who looks at waves without seeing the sea in which they rise and fall has only the knowledge of the turbulent waves disturbing his mind. He has no idea of the calm waters underlying them.⁸ But who looks on the waves as the water of which they are composed, he sees the same water to be in common in all its swellings and has the knowledge of its unity and common essence in all its varieties.⁹ In this manner, seeing the same gold in its transformation into various sorts of ornaments, we have the knowledge of the common essence of gold in all of them in spite of their distinctions in form to sight.

¹⁰ He who sees only the flames and is unmindful of the fire which emits them is said to be ignorant of the material element, knowing only its transient and fleeting flares.¹¹ The phenomenal world presents its aspect in various forms and colors, such as the many forms and variations of clouds in the sky. Whoever places his faith and reliance upon their reality and stability has his mind always busied with those changeful appearances.¹² He who views the flame as the same as the fire has only the knowledge of fire in his mind and does not know the duality of the flame as a thing distinct from its unity.

¹³ He who is freed from his knowledge of dualities has his mind restricted to the one and only unity. He has a great soul that has obtained the obtainable one and is released from the trouble of diving into the depth of the duality and plurality of all visible objects.¹⁴ Get rid of your thoughts of the endless multiplicities and varieties of things. Keep your mind fixed steadily within the cavity of your pure intellect and employ it to meditate upon Supreme Consciousness without thought of any object of the senses.

¹⁵ When the silent soul forms an effort of will in itself, then there arises the power of its versatile desires, like the force of the fluctuating winds rising from the bosom of quiet air.¹⁶ Then from the silent soul arises the willful mind as a distinct and independent thing of itself. It thinks in itself as the undivided and Universal Mind of the mundane world.¹⁷ Whatever the mind wills to do in this world, the same comes to take place immediately, agreeably to the type formed in its will.

¹⁸ This mind passes under various names such as the living principle, understanding, egoism, and the

heart. It becomes as minute as a microscopic organism and an aquatic mollusk, and as big as a mountain and fleeter than the swiftest winds.¹⁹ It forms and sustains the world at its own will. It becomes unity and plurality at its own option. It extends itself to infinity and shows itself in the endless diversity of objects which fill its ample space.²⁰ The whole scenery of the universe is nothing other than a display of the eternal and Infinite Mind. It is neither a positive reality nor a negative unreality of itself, but appears to our view like the visionary appearance in a dream.²¹ The phenomenal world is a display of the kingdom of the Divine Mind just like paradise is a display of imagination formed in the minds of men, and like every man builds the airy castle of his mind.

²² Only our knowledge of the existence of the world in the Divine Mind serves to remove our fallacy of the entity of the visible world. If we look into the phenomenal in its true light, it speedily vanishes into nothing.²³ When we do not consider visible things in their true color, but take them in their false colors as they present themselves to view. We find them expressed in a thousand shapes, just as we see the same seawater in its diverse and various forms of foam, froth, bubbles, waves, surges, tides and whirlpools.²⁴ As the sea bears its body of waters, so the mind shows itself in the shape of its various faculties. Mental powers are always busy with their many functions under the influence of Supreme Consciousness, all without affecting its tranquility.

²⁵ Yet the mind, whether in its state of sleeping or waking or in its bodily or mental actions, does nothing of itself apart from the dictates of consciousness.

²⁶ Know that there is nothing new in whatever you do or see or think upon. Everything proceeds from the inherent intellect which is displayed in all things and in all the actions and thoughts of men.

²⁷ Know all these to be contained in the immensity of Brahman, besides whom there is nothing in existence. He abides in all things and categories. He remains as the essence of the inner consciousness of all.²⁸ Divine Consciousness exhibits the entirety of the imaginary world. The evolution of consciousness takes the name of universe with all its immense numbers of worlds.

²⁹ How does your false idea of the difference of things from one another arise? When you know that it is the one Consciousness alone that assumes these various forms, then you have nothing to fear about the bondage or liberation of your soul.³⁰ O Rama, give up your egotism, pride, and self-esteem. Give up your thoughts of bondage and liberation. Remain quiet and self subdued in the continued discharge of your duties, like the holy mahatmas of elevated souls and minds.

Chapter 115 — Shiva Describes the Triple Virtues of Men to the King of the Bhringis

¹ Vasishta said:—

Take my advice, Rama, and strive to be an example of the greatest man in your deeds, enjoyments and bounty. Rely on your unshaken endurance by driving away all your cares and fears.

² Rama asked, “Tell me sage. What is the deed that makes the greatest actor, and what is that thing which constitutes the highest enjoyments? Tell me also, what is the great virtue which you advise me to practice?”

Vashishta speaking:—

³ Long ago, Lord Shiva who bears the crescent moon on his forehead explained these three virtues to the lord of the Bhringis, who was thereby released from all disease and disquiet. ⁴ Long ago, on a northern peak of the north Lokaloka Mountain, the god who wears the crescent moon as a crown on his head used to hold his residence together with all his family and attendants.

⁵ It happened that the mighty but little knowing lord of the Bhringis asked him one day, his palms pressed together and his body lowly bowing down before the god who is the lord of Uma, ⁶ “My lord, please explain to me what I ask you to explain for my knowledge, for you know all things and you are the god of gods. ⁷ Lord! I am overwhelmed with sorrow to see the loud noisy waves of this deep and dark world in which we have been constantly struck back and forth forever, without finding the calm and quiet tree of truth. ⁸ Tell me, my Lord, what is that certain truth and inner assurance on which we may rely with confidence, and whereby we may find our rest and repose in this our shattered house of this world?”

⁹ The Lord replied, “Always place your reliance on your unshaken patience and neither care nor fear for anything else. Always strive to be foremost in your action and passion and in your renunciation of everything.”

¹⁰ Bhrangi replied, “Explain to me fully, my lord. What is meant by being the greatest in action and passion? What are we to understand from the greatest liberality or abandonment of everything here?”

¹¹ Lord Shiva replied:—

He is said to be the greatest actor who does his deeds as they occur to him, whether of goodness or of evil, without any fear or desire of fruition. ¹² He who does his acts of goodness or otherwise, who gives no expression to his hatred and affection and feels both pleasure and pain equally without reference to any person or thing and without the expectation of their consequences, is said to be the greatest actor in the theatre of this world. ¹³ He is said to act his part well who does his business without any ado or anxiety and maintains his silence and purity of heart without any taint of egoism or envy. ¹⁴ He is said to act his part well who does not trouble his mind with the thoughts of actions that are accounted as auspicious or inauspicious, or considered as righteous or unrighteous according to common opinion.

¹⁵ He is said to perform his part well who is unaffected by any person or thing, but witnesses all objects as a mere witness and goes on doing his business without his desiring or deep engagement in it. ¹⁶ He is the best actor who is devoid of care and delight and continues in the same way and even

course of his mind, retaining the clarity of his understanding at all times and without feeling any joy or sorrow at anything.¹⁷ He does his duties best who is ready in his mind when it is the time for action and sits unconcerned with it at other times, like a retired and silent sage or saint.

¹⁸ He who does his works with unconcern and without assuming the vanity of being the doer is accounted as the best actor. He acts his part with his body but keeps his mind quite unattached to it.

¹⁹ He is reckoned as the best actor who is naturally quiet in his disposition and never loses the evenness of his temper, and who does good to his friends and evil to his enemies without taking them to his heart.²⁰ He is the greatest actor who looks at his birth, life, death and his rising and falling in the same light. He does not lose the equanimity of his mind under any circumstance whatsoever.

²¹ Again, he is said to enjoy himself and his life the best who does not envy anybody and does not pine for anything, but enjoys and acquiesces to whatever is allotted to his lot with cool composure and submission of his mind.²² He also is said to enjoy everything well who receives with his hands what his mind does not perceive, acts with his body without being conscious of it, and enjoys everything without taking it to his heart.²³ He is said to enjoy himself best who looks at the conduct and behavior of mankind like an unconcerned and indifferent spectator. He looks upon everything without craving anything for himself.

²⁴ He whose mind is not moved with pleasure or pain and is not elated with success and gain or dejected by his failure and loss, and who remains firm in all his terrible tribulations, is the man who is said to be in the perfect enjoyment of himself.

²⁵ He is said to be in the best enjoyment of himself who meets with an equal eye of detachment his decay and death, his danger and difficulty, his wealth and poverty, and looks on their ups and downs with an eye of delight and cheerfulness.²⁶ He is called the man of greatest gratification who sustains all the ups and downs of fortune with equal firmness of mind, just as the deep sea contains its loud noisy waves in its fathomless depth.²⁷ He is said to have the highest gratification who is possessed of the virtues of contentment, equanimity and benevolence which always accompany his presence, just as cooling beams cling to the disc of the moon.

²⁸ He too is greatly gratified in himself who tastes the sour and sweet and the bitter and pungent with equal pleasure, and tastes a savory and an unsavory dish with the same taste.²⁹ He who tastes the tasty and juicy and the distasteful and dry food with equal pleasure, and beholds the pleasant as well as unpleasant things with equal delight, is the man that is ever gratified in himself.³⁰ He to whom salt and sugar are alike and to whom salty and sweet food are equally edible, and who remains unchanged both in his happy and adverse circumstances, is the man who enjoys the best bliss of his life in this world.³¹ He is in the enjoyment of his highest bliss who makes no distinction of one kind of food from another and who yearns for nothing that he can hardly earn.

³² He enjoys his life best who braves his misfortune with calmness and bears his good fortune, his joyous days, and better circumstances with moderation and coolness.³³ He is said to have abandoned his all who has given up the thoughts of his life and death of his pleasure and pain, and those of his merits and demerits from his mind.³⁴ He who has abandoned all his desires and exertions and forsaken all his hopes and fears and erased all his determinations from the tablet of his mind is said to have renounced everything in this world and to have freed himself from all.³⁵ He who does not take

the pains that invade his body, mind and senses to his mind is said to have cast all the troubles of his mortal state away from himself.

³⁶ He is considered the greatest giver of his all who gives up the cares of his body and life and has abandoned the thoughts of acts judged to be proper or improper for himself. ³⁷ He is said to have made his greatest sacrifice who has sacrificed his mind and all his mental functions and endeavors before the shrine of his self-denial. ³⁸ He who has given up the sight of what is visible from his view and does not allow what can be sensed to intrude upon his senses is said to have renounced all and everything from himself.

Vasishta speaking:—

³⁹ It was in this manner that the lord of gods Mahadeva gave his instructions to the lord of the Bhringis. By acting according to these precepts, O Rama, you must attain the perfection of your self-denial. ⁴⁰ Meditate always on the everlasting and pure spirit that is without beginning or end, which is wholly this entire immensity and has no part or partner, and no representative or representation of itself. By thinking in this way you become stainless yourself and come to be absorbed in the same Brahman where there is all peace and tranquility.

⁴¹ Know the one Brahman without decay is the soul and seed of all various works or productions that proceed from him. His immensity spreads unopened throughout the whole of existence, just as endless space comprehends and manifests all things in itself. ⁴² It is not possible for anything at all, whether of positive or potential existence, to exist without and apart from this universal essence of all. Rely secure with this firm belief in your mind and be free from all fears in the world.

⁴³ O most righteous Rama, look always to the inner soul within yourself and perform all your outer actions with the outer members of your body by forsaking the sense of your egoism and personality. Thereby be freed from all care and sorrow and you shall attain your supreme joy.

Chapter 116 — Melting Down of the Mind; Self Inquiry

¹ Rama said, “O all-knowing sage, please tell me, what becomes of the essence of the soul after one’s egoism is lost in his mind and both of them are dissolved into nothing?”

² Vasishta replied:—

However great and predominant is one’s egoism over himself, and however much its accompanying evils of pride and ignorance may overpower man, yet they can never touch the pure essence of the soul, just as the water of the lake cannot come in contact with the lotus-leaf.³ The purity of the soul appears vividly in the bright and serene countenance of a man after his egoism and its accompanying faults are all melted down in his deadened mind.

⁴ All the ties of our passions and affections are cut asunder and fall off upon breaking the string of our desires. Our anger becomes weakened and our ignorance wears out by degrees.⁵ Our desire is weakened and wearied and our covetousness flies far away. Our limbs become weakened and our sorrows subside to rest.⁶ Then our afflictions fail to afflict us and our joys cease to excite us. Then we have a calm everywhere and a tranquility in our heart.⁷ Joy and grief now and then cloud his countenance, but they cannot overshadow his soul which is bright as eternal day.

⁸ The virtuous man becomes a favorite of the gods after his mind with its passions is melted down. Then there rises the calm evenness of his soul resembling the cooling beams of the moon.⁹ He bears a calm and quiet disposition, offending and opposed to none, and therefore loved and honored by everyone. He remains retired and constant to his task and enjoys the serenity of his soul at all times.¹⁰ Neither wealth nor poverty and neither prosperity nor adversity, however opposite they are to one another, can ever affect or mislead or elate or depress the minds of the virtuous.

¹¹ Unfortunate is the man who is drowned in his ignorance and who does not seek the salvation of his soul. Salvation is easily obtainable by the light of reason which serves to save him from all the difficulties of this world.¹² He who wants to obtain his longed for joy and cross over the waves of his miserable transmigrations in the vast ocean of this world must always inquire within, “What am I? What is this world? What am I to be afterwards? What is the meaning of these short lived enjoyments here? What are the fruits of my future state?” These inquiries are the best expedients towards the salvation of the soul.

Chapter 117 — Sage Manu Teaches King Ikshaku: Creation Is an Appearance

¹ Vasishta said:—

Rama, know that the renowned King Ikshaku was the founder of your race. Learn, O descendant of that monarch, the manner in which he obtained his liberation.

² Once upon a time when this monarch was ruling over his kingdom, he came to think upon the state of humanity in one of his solitary hours. ³ He wondered what might be the cause of the decay, disease and death, and also of the sorrow, pleasure and pain, and likewise of the errors to which all living beings are subject in this mortal world. ⁴ He reflected long upon these thoughts, but was unable to find out the cause he so earnestly sought. He happened to meet sage Manu one day, coming to him from Brahmaloka. King Ikshaku proposed the same questions to him. ⁵ Having honored the lord of creatures as he took his seat in his court, Ikshaku asked be excused for asking him some questions to which he was impelled by his impatience.

⁶ “By your favor, sage, I take the liberty of asking you a question regarding the origin of this creation and the original state in which it was made. ⁷ Tell me, what is the number of these worlds and who is their master and owner? When and by whom is it said to be created in the Vedas? ⁸ Tell me, how may I be freed from my doubts and false beliefs regarding this creation, and how I may be released from them like a bird from its net?”

⁹ Manu replied:—

I see, O king, that after a long time you have come to exercise your reasoning, as shown by your asking me a question as important as this.

¹⁰ All this that you see, nothing is real. They resemble fairy castles in the air and water in a mirage in sandy deserts. Anything which is not seen in reality is considered nothing in existence. ¹¹ Even the mind which lies beyond the six senses is reckoned as nothing in reality. But that which is indestructible is the only thing that is said to exist, and that which is (*tat sat*) is the only being in reality.

¹² All these visible worlds and successive creations are only unsubstantial appearances in the mirror of that real substance. ¹³ The inherent powers of Brahman evolve themselves like shining sparks from fire. Some of these assume the forms of luminous worlds while others appear in the shapes of living soul. ¹⁴ Others take many other forms which compose this universe. There is nothing like bondage or liberation here, except that the undecaying Brahman is all in all. There is no unity or duality in nature, except the diversity displayed by the Divine Mind from the essence of his own consciousness.

¹⁵ As the same water of the sea shows the various forms of its waves, so does Divine Consciousness display itself in everything. There is nothing else besides this. Therefore leave aside your thoughts of bondage and liberation and rest secure in this belief from the fears of the world.

Chapter 118 — Manu Teaches Ikshaku: Divine Will Creates & Dissolves

¹ Manu continued:—

By Divine Will, the living souls of beings evolve from the original Consciousness, just as waves arise in the ocean.² These living souls retain the tendencies of their prior states in former births and thereby are led to move in their course of light or ignorance in this world, accordingly subject either to happiness or misery, which is felt by the mind and never affects the soul itself.

³ The invisible soul is known in the knowable mind, which is moved to action by it (the soul) just as the invisible point of Rahu becomes visible to us during the eclipse of the moon.⁴ Neither the teacher of scriptures nor the lectures of our spiritual teachers can show the Supreme Spirit before our sight, but our spirit shows us the holy spirit when our understanding rests in its own true essence.

⁵ As travelers journey abroad with their minds, free from all attainment and aversion to any particular object or spot, so self-liberated souls are found to stay in this world quite unconcerned even with their bodies and the objects of their senses.⁶ It is not for good and godly men to pamper or famish their bodies, or quicken or weaken their senses, but to allow them to be employed with their objects at their own option.⁷ Be of an indifferent mind with regard to your bodies and all external objects. Enjoy the cool calmness of your soul by taking yourself entirely to your spirituality.

⁸ The knowledge that “I am an embodied being” is the cause of our bondage in this world. Therefore it is never to be entertained by those who seek their liberation.⁹ But the firm conviction that “I am no other than an intellectual being, as rarefied as the pure air” is the only belief that is able to free our souls from their bondage in this world.

¹⁰ As the light of the sun pierces and shines both within and without the surface of a clear sheet of water, so does the light of the holy spirit penetrate and shine both inside and outside the pure souls of men, as well as in everything else.¹¹ The variety of forms makes the various kinds of ornaments out of the same substance of gold. So it is that the various acts and ways of the one soul make the differences of things in the world.

¹² The world resembles a vast ocean, and all its created are like the waves upon its surface. They rise for a moment only to be yield to the latent flame of their desires that cannot be satisfied.¹³ Know all the worlds are absorbed in the vast ocean of the Universal Soul of God, just as all things are eaten by death and time and lie buried, like the ocean itself, in the stomach of Agastya that cannot be satisfied.

¹⁴ Cease thinking that the bodies of men are their souls. See all that is visible in a spiritual light. Rely solely on your spiritual self and sit retired from all except alone with yourself.¹⁵ Men are seen foolishly to wail for the loss of their souls, though it is lying within themselves, just as a fond mother moans on missing her child, forgetful of it sleeping upon her lap.¹⁶ Men bewail the loss of their bodies crying, “O I am dead and gone” and so on, not knowing that their souls are ever without decay and imperishable.¹⁷ As the fluctuation of water shows many forms upon its surface, so the will of God exhibits the forms of all things in Divine Consciousness.

¹⁸ Now king, keep the steadiness of your mind and repress your imagination and the flights of your fancy. Call your thoughts home and confine them to yourself. Remain calm and cool and undisturbed amidst all disturbances and go and rule your kingdom with your mind settled in the Self.

Chapter 119 — Manu Teaches Ikshaku: Living in the Spirit

¹ Manu resumed:—

The Lord with his creative power exerts his active energy and plays the part of a restless boy (in his formation of the worlds). Again, by his power of re-absorption, he absorbs all into himself and remains in his lonesome singleness.² His volition gives rise to his active energy, so his non-use of will causes the cessation of his exertion and the absorption of the whole creation in himself.

³ As the light of the luminous sun, moon and fire, and as the luster of brilliant gems spread themselves on all sides, and as the leaves of trees grow of themselves, and as the waters of a waterfall scatter their particles all about,⁴ so the light of divine glory displays itself in the works of creation that appear intolerable to the ignorant who know not that it is the same God appearing to be otherwise.⁵ It is a wonderful illusion that has deluded the whole world which does not perceive the Divine Spirit that pervades every part of the universe.

⁶ He who looks on the world as a scenery painted in the tablet of Divine Consciousness, remaining unimpressed and without desire of everything, quite content in his soul, has put on an invulnerable armor upon himself.⁷ How happy is he who having nothing, no wealth or support, yet has his all by thinking himself as the all intelligent soul.⁸ The idea that something is pleasurable and something else is painful is the sole cause of all pains and anxiety. The destruction of these feelings by the fire of our indifference to them prevents the access of pain and affliction to us.

⁹ O king, use the weapon of samadhi and cut in half the feeling of the agreeable and disagreeable. Tear apart your sensations of love and hatred by the sword of your courageous equanimity.¹⁰ Clear the entangled jungle of ceremonious rites by the tool of your disregard of the merit or demerit of acts. Relying upon the rarified nonmaterial state of your soul, shake off all sorrow and grief from you.

¹¹ Know your soul to be full of all worldly possessions. Drive all differences from your mind. Bind yourself solely to reason and be free from all fabrications of mankind. Know the supreme bliss of the soul and be as perfect and unfailing as the soul itself. Being embodied in the intellectual mind, remain quite calm and transparent, aloof from all the tears and cares of the world.

Chapter 120 — Manu Teaches Ikshaku: Seven Stages of Yoga; Living Liberated

¹ Manu continued:—

Yogis say that the first stage of yoga is enlightenment of understanding by the study of scriptures and attendance on holy and wise men.² The second stage of yoga is discussion and reconsideration of what has been learnt before. The third is the reflection of the same in one's self and is known under the name of self-inquiry or meditation. The fourth is silent meditation in which one loses his desires and darkness in his presence before the light of God.³ The fifth stage is one of pure consciousness and joy in which the living liberated devotee remains in a partly waking and partly sleeping state.⁴ The sixth stage is one's consciousness of indescribable bliss, in which he is absorbed in a state of trance.⁵ Resting in the fourth and succeeding stages is called liberation, then the seventh stage is the state of an even and transparent light in which the devotee loses his self consciousness.

⁶ The state above *turiya* or fourth stage is called nirvana or extinction in God. The seventh stage of perfection relates only to disembodied souls and not to those of living beings.⁷ The first three stages relate to the waking state of man, and the fourth stage concerns the sleeping state in which the world appears like a dream.⁸ The fifth stage is the stage of sound sleep in which the soul is drowned in deep joy. The unconsciousness of one's self in the sixth stage is also called his *turiya* or fourth state.

⁹ The seventh stage is still above the *turiya* state of self-unconsciousness. It is full of divine effulgence whose excellence no words can express and no mind can conceive.¹⁰ In this state the mind is withdrawn from its functions, freed from all thoughts of whatever can be thought, and all doubts and cares are drowned in the calm composure of its even temperament.¹¹ The mind that remains unmoved amidst its passions and enjoyments and is unchanged in prosperity and adversity, retaining full possession of itself under all circumstances, becomes of this nature both in its embodied and disembodied states of life and death.

¹² The man who does not think himself to be alive or dead, or to be a reality or otherwise, but always remains joyous in himself, is one who is truly called to be liberated in his lifetime.¹³ Whether engaged in business or retired from it, whether living with family or leading a single life, the man who thinks himself as nothing but consciousness and who has nothing to fear or care or to be sorry for in this world, is reckoned as liberated in this life.

¹⁴ The man who thinks himself to be unconnected with anyone, free from disease, desire and affections, who believes himself to be a pure aerial substance of Divine Consciousness, has no cause to be sorry for anything.¹⁵ He who knows himself to be without beginning or end, decay or death, and to be of the nature of pure intelligence, remains always quiet and composed in himself and has no cause for sorrow at all.¹⁶ He who considers himself to belong to that Intellect which dwells alike in the minute blade of grass and the infinite sky, in the luminous sun, moon and stars, and in the various races of beings such as men, naagas and immortals, such a man has no cause whatever for his sorrow.

¹⁷ Whoever knows the majesty of Divine Consciousness to fill all the regions both above and below and on all sides of him, and reflects himself as a display of his endless diversity, how can he be sorry at all for his decay and decline?

¹⁸ The man who is bound by his desire is delighted to have the objects he seeks, but the very things

that tend to his pleasure by their gain prove to be painful to his heart at their loss.¹⁹ The presence or absence of something is the cause of the pleasure or pain of men in general. The wise practice the curtailment and absence of desires.²⁰ If we act with unconcern and little desire or expectation of reward, no act or its result leads either to our joy or grief.²¹ Whatever act is done with ardent physical effort and the whole hearted application of mind and soul tends to bind a man. An indifferent action, like a fried grain, does not germinate into any effect.

²² The thought that I am the doer and owner of a deed overpowers all bodily exertions and sprouts fourth with results that are forever binding on the doer.²³ As the moon is cool with her cooling beams and the sun is hot by his burning heat, so a man is either good or bad according to the work he does.

²⁴ All acts done or left undone are as short lasting as the cotton flying from cottonwood trees. They are easily put to flight by the breath of understanding. All the acts of men are lost by cessation of their practice.

²⁵ The germ of knowledge growing in the mind increases itself day by day, just as seed sown in good ground soon shoots forth into the paddy plant.

²⁶ There is one Universal Soul that sparkles through all things in the world, just as the same translucent water glistens in lakes, large oceans and seas.²⁷ Withhold your notions of the varieties and multitudes of things and know these as parts of one undivided whole which stretches through them as their essence and soul.

Chapter 121 — Manu Teaches Ikshaku: Avoiding the Sense of Ego and Possession

¹ Manu continued:—

The soul originally is full of bliss by its nature, but being subject to ignorance, it fosters its vain desire for temporal enjoyment, from which it has the name of living soul.² But when the desire of pleasure is lessened by the discriminative knowledge of man, he forsakes his nature of a living and mortal being and his soul becomes one with the Supreme Spirit.³ Therefore do not allow your desire of earthly enjoyment to draw your soul up and down to heaven and hell, like a bucket whose handle is tied with a rope and cast down and pulled up from a well.

⁴ Selfish people who claim something as theirs from that of another are grossly mistaken and led into error. They are destined, like the bucket in a well, to descend lower and lower.⁵ He who gets rid of his knowledge that “this is I” and “that is another” and “that this is mine” and “that is the others” gradually rises higher and higher according to his greater disinterest.

⁶ Do not delay depending upon your enlightened and elevated soul extending over and filling the whole space of the sky and comprehending all the worlds in it.⁷ When the human mind is thus elevated and expanded beyond all limits, then it approaches the Divine Mind and is assimilated to it.

⁸ Anyone who has arrived at this state may well think he is able to effect whatever was done by the gods Brahma, Vishnu, Indra, Varuna, and others who were of such elevated souls and minds.

⁹ Whatever acts are attributed to any of the gods or other persons are no more than the display of divine pleasure in that form.¹⁰ Whoever is assimilated into Divine Consciousness and has become deathless and unmindful of his mortal state has a share of incomparable supreme joy for his enjoyment.

¹¹ Continue to think this world as neither a vacuum nor a fullness, neither a material nor a spiritual substance. It is neither an intellectual being nor a quite unconscious thing.¹² By thinking in this way, you will have composure of your disposition, or else there is no separate place or time or condition for your liberation.¹³ Without egoism and ignorance, we get rid of our personal existence. Our contemplation of the nature of God and his presence before us in meditation constitutes our liberation.

¹⁴ The even delight and perpetual tranquility of the soul constitute our bliss and liberation. These are to be obtained through calm and cool reasoning in the meaning of scriptures, avoiding all impatience, unsteadiness of mind and temper, and the pleasures derived from our taste in poetry, light studies and trifling amusements.

Chapter 122 — Manu Teaches Ikshaku: Manu's Admonition to Ikshaku

¹ Manu continued:—

Now the living liberated yogi, in whatever manner he is clad, however well or ill fed he may be, and wherever he may sleep or lay down his humble head, rests with joy in his mind in a state of perfect ease and blissfulness as if he were the greatest emperor of the world.² He breaks down all the bonds of caste and creed, and the rites and restraints of his order by the battery of the scriptures. He wanders free from the snare of society like a lion having broken loose from his cage roaming rampant everywhere.³ He has his mind abstracted from all objects of the senses and fixed on an object which no words can express. He shines forth with a grace in his face that resembles the clear autumn sky.

⁴ He is always as deep and clear as a large lake in a valley. Being rapt in heavenly joy, he is always cheerful in himself without care or want of anything else.⁵ He is ever content in his mind without having anything for his dependence or any expectation of reward for his actions. He is neither addicted to any meritorious or unworthy acts nor subject to joy or grief for anything of pleasure or pain.

⁶ As a piece of crystal does not receive or emit any other color in its reflection except that of its pure whiteness, so the spiritually minded person is not imbued with the tinge of the effects of his actions.

⁷ He remains indifferent in human society and is not affected either by the torture or the pleasures of his body. He considers his pain and pleasure as passing over his shadow. He never takes them to his heart as they do not touch his intangible soul.

⁸ Whether honored or dishonored by men, he neither praises nor is displeased with them. He remains either connected or unconnected with the customs and rules of society.⁹ He hurts nobody, nor is he hurt by any. He remains free from the feelings of anger or affection, fear and joy.¹⁰ No one can have the greatness of mind from his own nature, but it is possible for the Author of nature to raise the greatness of mind even in a child.

¹¹ Whether a man leaves his body in a holy place or in the house of a low savage, or whether one dies at this moment or many years afterwards,¹² he is released from his bondage to life as soon as he knows the soul and gets rid of his desires. The error of egoism is the cause of his bondage and its eradication through knowledge is the means of his liberation.

¹³ The living liberated man is to be honored and praised and to be bowed down to with veneration, regarded with every attention by everyone who desires his prosperity and elevation.¹⁴ No religious sacrifice or willful austerity, no charity or pilgrimage can lead us to that supremely holy state of human dignity which is attainable only by our respectful attendance upon the godly who have gotten rid of the troubles of the world.

¹⁵ Vasishtha said:—

The venerable sage Manu, having spoken in this manner, departed to the celestial abode of his father Brahma. Ikshaku continued to act according to the precepts delivered to him by the sacred seer.

Chapter 123 — Spiritual Powers

¹ Rama said, “Tell me sage who is the most learned in spiritual knowledge, can a living liberated man of this kind obtain any kind of extraordinary power?”

² Vasishta replied:—

The all-knowing sage sometimes has a greater knowledge of one thing than another, and has his mind directed in one particular way as opposed to another, but the learned seer of a contented mind has his soul quite at rest in itself.

³ There are many who by their complete knowledge of particular mantras, tantras, and the virtues of certain minerals have attained the power of aerial flight and other powers, but what is extraordinary in these? ⁴ The powers of self-expansion and contraction and other powers have been acquired by others through their constant practice. These are disregarded by seers in spiritual knowledge.

⁵ This is the difference between knowing seers and the bulk of idle practitioners in yoga. The knowing seers are content with their dispassionate mind without placing any reliance on practice.

⁶ This is truly the sign of the inconspicuous seer in yoga, that he is always cool and calm in his mind and freed from all the errors of the world, and in whom the traces of the passions of love and anger, sorrow and illusion and the mishaps of life are scarcely visible.

Chapter 124 — Three Bodies; *Turiya*; the Story of the Hunter and the Sage

¹ Vasishta said:—

Know now that the Lord stops to take upon Himself the nature of the living or animal soul, just as a brahmin, by disregarding the purity of its original nature, assumes the character of a vile shudra for some mean purpose.² There are two kinds of living beings that come into existence in the beginning of the repeated creations. One comes into existence without any causality and therefore is called the causeless or uncaused.³ Then the soul emanating from the Divine is subject to various reincarnations and becomes many kinds of beings according to its previous acts and propensities.⁴ All beings originally emanate without any cause from the source of the Divine Essence. Then their actions become the secondary cause of continuous reincarnations.

⁵ The personal acts of men cause their happiness and misery. The will produced by the conscious knowledge of one's self becomes the cause of the action.⁶ Will or desire of any action or its result is likewise the cause of one's bondage to this world. What they call liberation is no more than our release from the bonds of our desires.⁷ Therefore be careful to choose what is right and proper from whatever is wrong and improper, and try to reduce your wishes as much as possible.⁸ Do not let yourself possess or be possessed of anything or any person, but give up thinking on anything besides what remains after the thoughts of all other things.

⁹ Anything to which the senses are addicted serves to bind the soul the more it takes pleasure in it, and also to unbind and release the mind in proportion to the distaste which it bears to it.¹⁰ If there is anything which is pleasing to your soul, know that is your binding string to the earth. If, on the contrary, you find nothing to your liking here, then you are free from the traps of all the valueless things on earth.¹¹ Therefore let nothing whatever tempt or deceive your mind to anything that exists whether living or inanimate. Regard everything from a mean bit of straw to a great idol as unworthy of your regard.

¹² Think not that you are a doer or giver of anything, or a person offering anything or eating what you have offered to the gods. Be quite aloof from all your bodily actions owing to the immaterial nature of yourself or soul.¹³ Do not concern yourself with past acts or cares for the future over which you have no command, but discharge well your present duties as they are and come to your hand.

¹⁴ All men's feelings and passions, their desires and all the rest, are strung together with their hearts. Therefore it is necessary to cut these heart strings with the weapon of a brave and strong heart.¹⁵ Now break your sensuous mind by the power of your reasoning mind and restrain its rage of running into errors as they break iron pegs using iron hammers.¹⁶ Intelligent men rub out one dirt using another and remove one poison by another poison. Soldiers oppose a steel weapon with a weapon of the same metal.

¹⁷ All living beings have a triple form of the subtle, solid and the imperceptible spiritual bodies. Now lay hold and rely upon the last in utter disregard of the two former.¹⁸ The solid or gross body is composed of hands, feet and other members and limbs. It exists upon its food in this lower world.

¹⁹ The living being also has an intrinsic body which is derived from within and is composed of all its wishes in the world. This body is known as the mental or intellectual part of the body.²⁰ The third

form is the transcendental or spiritual body. It assumes all forms and is the simple intellectual soul which is without beginning or end and without any alteration in its nature.²¹ This is the pure *turiya* state in which you must remain steadfast as your living liberation. Reject the two others in which you must place no reliance.

²² Rama said, "I have understood the three definite states of waking, dreaming, and sound sleep as they have been defined to me. But the fourth state of *turiya* is yet left undefined. I beg you to explain it clearly to me."

²³ Vasishta answered:—

Turiya is that state of the mind in which the feelings of one's egoism and non-egoism, and those of existence and inexistence are utterly drowned under a total aloofness, a state in which the mind is settled in one unchangeable and uniform even course of tranquility and clearness.²⁴ In that state the selfish feelings of mine and yours are altogether wanting, and one remains as a mere witness of the affairs of life. This is the *turiya* state of living liberation.

²⁵ This is neither the state of waking, owing to its lack of any wish or concern, nor the state of sound sleep, which is one of perfect unconsciousness.²⁶ It is that calmness in which the wise man sees everything going on in the world. It is like the state of unconsciousness of the ignorant in which they perceive no stir in the course of the world.²⁷ The evenness of the mind after the falling down of every bit of egotism, like the settling of turbulent waters underneath, is the *turiya* state of the detachment of the soul.

²⁸ Hear me give you an example on this subject which will grant as clear a light to your enlightened mind as that of all seeing gods.

²⁹ It happened once that a hunter, roaming for his prey in some part of a forest, chanced to see a sage sitting silently in his solitude. Thinking it something strange, the hunter approached him saying,³⁰ "O sage, have you seen a wounded stag fleeing this way with an arrow in its back?"

³¹ The sage replied, "You ask me where your stag has fled, but my friend, know that sages like us who live in the forest are as cool as blocks of stone.³² We lack that egoism which enables one to conduct the transactions of the world. Know, my friend, that the mind conducts all the actions of the senses.

³³ Know that long ago the feeling of my egoism has dissolved in my mind. I have no perception whatever of the three states of waking, dreaming, and sound sleep. I rest quietly in my fourth state of aloofness in which there is no vision of what can be seen."

³⁴ The hunter heard the sage's words but being quite at a loss to comprehend its meaning, he departed on his own way without saying a word.

³⁵ Therefore, O Rama, I tell you there is no other state beyond the fourth or *turiya* quietism. It is that unalterable aloofness of the mind which is not to be found in any other.³⁶ Waking, dreaming and sound sleep are the three tangible conditions of the mind. These are respectively the dark, quiet and unconscious states in which the mind situated in this world.³⁷ The waking state presents us the dark complexion of the mind and its susceptibility to all the passions and evils of life. The sleeping state shows us its quiet aspect, its lack of cares and anxieties.³⁸ The state of sound sleep is one of unconsciousness. The state beyond these three bears the feature of death in it. Yet this dead-like figure

possesses the principle of life which is experienced by yogis by diligent attention and preserved from harm and decay.

³⁹ Now Rama, the sages say that the soul which remains in its quiet rest after its renunciation of all desire is in the cool calmness of itself, the liberated state of the holy and devout yogi on earth.

Chapter 125 — Means of Attaining Steadiness of Turiya State

¹ Vasishta resumed:—

Know Rama, that the conclusion which is arrived at in all works on spiritual philosophy is the negation of everything except the entity of the Supreme Soul. There is no principle of ignorance or delusion which is a secondary agent under one quiescent Brahman, who is ever without a second.

² The spirit of the Lord is always calm with the serene brightness of Divine Consciousness in itself. It is full of its omnipotence and is attributed with the name of Brahman. ³ Some determine that the Divine Spirit is formless vacuum. Others call it omniscience. Most people in the world call it the Lord God.

⁴ O sinless Rama, avoid all these and remain quite silent in yourself. Be extinct in the Divine Essence by restraining the actions of your heart and mind and by the tranquility of your soul. ⁵ Have a quiet soul in yourself and remain like a deaf and dumb man in your outward appearance. Look always within yourself and be full with the Divine Spirit. ⁶ Discharge the duties of your waking state as if you are doing them in your sound sleep. Forsake everything in your inner mind and do whatever comes to you outwardly without taking any into your heart.

⁷ The essence of the mind is only for one's misery, as the absence of mind is his highest joy. Therefore the mind must be drowned in the intelligent soul by completely destroying the action of mental powers. ⁸ Remain as cold as a stone at the sight of anything that is delightful or disgusting to you. Like this, learn to subdue everything in the world under your control. ⁹ The objective is neither for our pleasure or pain, nor is it the intermediate state of the two. Therefore it is by diligent attention to the subjective that we can attain the end of all our misery.

¹⁰ He who has known the Supreme Soul has found within himself a delight that resembles the cooling beams of the full bright moon. Being possessed of the full knowledge of the essence of all things in the three worlds, he performs his parts as if he were not paying attention to them.

Chapter 126 — The Seven Stages of Yoga; Each Leads to the Next through Incarnations

¹ Rama said, "Sage, tell me about the practices of the seven stages of yoga and the characteristics of yogis in every stage."

² Vasishta related:—

Rama, know that mankind is divided into two classes, the zealous and the resigned. One expects heavenly reward and the other is inclined to supreme joy. Know their different characters as follows.

³ Those who are addicted to enjoyments think the quietude of nirvana as nothing to their purpose. They prefer worldliness above final bliss. He who acts his part in this sense is called an active and energetic man. ⁴ Such a man of the world is like a tortoise which, though it has its neck well hidden in its shell, still stretches it out to drink the salt water of the sea that it inhabits until after many births, he gets a better life for his salvation.

⁵ But he who reflects on the nothingness of the world and the uselessness of his situation in it, such a man does not allow himself to be carried on by the current of his old and recurring course of duties here in day after day. ⁶ He who, after being released from the burden of his business, reflects on the delight of his rest after labor, is the man who is said to repose in his quiescence. ⁷ When a man comes to investigate in himself how he shall become dispassionate and get over the loud noisy ocean of the world, such a man is said to have come to his good and right sense and to stand on the way to his tolerance. ⁸ He who has an insensitivity in his heart to the very many thoughts that daily rise in his mind, and who manages his gravest and greatest concerns without being much concerned about them in his mind, such a man is said to taste the delight of his steadiness day by day.

⁹ He who condemns the rustic amusements and mean employments of men, and instead of taking up the faults and failings of others for his merry talk, employs himself to meritorious acts, ¹⁰ whose mind is engaged in agreeable tasks and painless acts, who is afraid of sin and rejects all pleasures and bodily enjoyments, ¹¹ whose conversation is full of love and tenderness, appropriate without any harshness, and whose speeches are suitable to the time and place in which they are delivered, ¹² such a man is said to stand on the first step of yoga when he makes it his duty to attend the society of the good and great, whom he learns to imitate in his thoughts, words, and actions.

¹³ He also collects books on spiritual learning from everywhere and reads with attention and diligence. He then considers their contexts and lays hold on the tenets which serve to save him from this sinful world. ¹⁴ Such a man is said to have come upon the (first) stage of yoga, or else he is a hypocrite who assumes the disguise of a yogi for his own interest only.

The yogi then comes to the next step of yoga, which is called the stage of investigation. ¹⁵ From the mouths of the best scholars, he hears explanations of the scriptures and the Puranas, the rules of good conduct, and the manner of meditation and conduct of yoga practice. ¹⁶ Then he learns the divisions of categories and distinction of things, together with the difference between actions that are to be done or avoided. All this heard from the mouth of an adept in yoga will facilitate his course through the other stages. It is like the master of a house who easily enters every apartment of his house. ¹⁷ He takes off his outer habit of pride and vanity, his jealousy and greed, and the other passions which formed, as it were, an outer garment of his body just like a snake casting off his old skin. ¹⁸ Having thus purified his

mind, he attends to the service of his spiritual teachers and holy persons and acquaints himself with the mysteries of religion.

¹⁹ Then he enters the third stage which is to avoid all company, which he finds as agreeable as a bed of flowers. ²⁰ He learns to steady his mind according to the dictates of scriptures. He passes his time talking on spiritual subjects in the society of hermits and devotees. ²¹ He sits with dispassionate renunciants and religious recluses who are disgusted with the world. Relying upon the firm rock of his faith, he wears out his long life with ease. ²² He passes his mortal life with cheerful delight of his loneliness and the pleasing tranquility of his mind in his woodland retreat and wanderings. ²³ By study of holy books and performance of religious acts, he gets a clear view of things, as it generally attends upon the virtuous lives of men.

²⁴ The conscious man who has arrived at the third stage of yoga practice perceives in himself two kinds of disconnection with the world, as you will now hear from me. ²⁵ This disconnection of a person with all others is of two sorts, one which is his ordinary disassociation with all persons and things, and the other is his absolute disconnection with everything, including himself.

²⁶ Ordinary disconnection is the sense of one being neither the subject or object of his action, nor being the slayer of or slain by anybody, but that all accidents are incidental to his prior acts and all are dependent on the orderings dispensed of Providence. ²⁷ It is the conviction that I have no control over my happiness, misery, pain or pleasure, and that all prosperity and adversity, employment, privation, health and disease happen to me of their own accord. ²⁸ All union is for its separation and all gain is for its loss. So health, disease, pain and pleasure come by turns, and there is nothing which is not succeeded by its reverse, because time with its open jaws is ever ready to devour all things.

²⁹ The negative idea of nonexistence, which is produced in the mind from our lack of reliance on the reality of things, is the sense conveyed by the expression, our ordinary disconnection with all things.

³⁰ With this sort of the disunion of everything in the mind, and our union with the society of high minded men and disassociation with the vile and unrighteous, and association with spiritual knowledge, ³¹ these joined with continuous exertion of manliness in habitual practice of these virtues, one assuredly arrives at the certain knowledge of what he seeks as clearly as he sees a globe set in his hands.

³² Knowing that the supreme author of creation sits beyond the ocean of the universe and watches over its concerns impresses us with the belief that it is not I but God that does everything in the world. There is nothing that is done here by me, but by the great God himself. ³³ Having left aside the thought of one's agency on any act, whoever sits quiet silent and tranquil in himself, such a one is said to be absolutely unconnected with everything in the world.

³⁴ The Lord of all is he who does not reside within or without anything, or dwells above or beneath any object, who is not situated in the sky or in any side or part of the all surrounding air and space, who is not in anything or in nothing, and neither in gross matter nor in the conscious spirit, ³⁵ who is present and manifest in everything without being expressed in any, who pervades all things like the clear sky, and who is without beginning or end or birth or death. Whoever seeks this Lord of all is said to be set in the best part of this third stage of yoga. ³⁶ Contentment is a sweet fragrance in the mind, and virtuous acts are as handsome as the leaves of a flower. The heartstring is like a stalk

troubled by the thorns of cares, anxieties and suffering with the gusts of dangers and difficulties.

³⁷ The flower of inner discrimination is expanded, like the lotus-bud, by the sunbeams of reason and produces the fruit of renunciation in the garden of the third stage of yoga practice.

³⁸ Association with holy men and doing virtuous acts, one suddenly arrives at the first stage of yoga.

³⁹ So this first step is to be preserved with care and nurtured like a tender sprout, watering its roots with reason. ⁴⁰ The yoga practitioner, like a good gardener, must foster the rising plant of spiritual knowledge by the daily application of reasoning to every part of it. ⁴¹ This stage being well managed and all its parts being properly performed, introduces the succeeding stages.

⁴² Now the better part of the third stage, as already described, is one of all desires removed from the mind of the yogi.

⁴³ Rama said, "Now sage, tell me. How is salvation attained by an ignorant man, one of base birth addicted to baseness himself who has never associated with yogis or received any spiritual instruction, ⁴⁴ who has never ascended any of the first, second or succeeding stages of yoga, and who is dead in the same state of ignorance in which he was born?"

⁴⁵ Vasishtha replied:—

An ignorant man who has never attained any of the states of yoga in his whole life is carried by the current of his reincarnation to wander in a hundred births until he happens, by some chance or other, to get some glimpse of spiritual light in any of his births. ⁴⁶ Or it may be that he happens to associate with holy men and becomes dissatisfied with the world. The renunciation which springs thereby becomes the ground for one of the stages of his yoga. ⁴⁷ By this means, the man is saved from this miserable world, because it is the united voice of all the scriptures that an embodied being is released from death as soon as he has passed through any one stage of yoga.

⁴⁸ The performance of even a portion of some of the stages of yoga is enough for the remission of past sins and for conducting the purified person to the celestial abode in a heavenly car. ⁴⁹ He enjoys the celestial gardens of Sumeru in company with his beloved when the weight of his righteous acts outweighs those of unrighteousness.

⁵⁰ The yogi, released from the trap of his temporal enjoyments and having passed his allotted period, dies in due time to be reborn in the houses of yogis and rich men or in the private houses of learned, good and virtuous people. ⁵¹ Being thus born, he undertakes the habitual practice of the yoga of his former birth and has the wisdom to immediately begin at the stage he practiced which he had left unfinished before.

⁵² These three stages, Rama, are called the waking states because the yogi retains his perception of the differences of things, just as a waking man perceives the visible to differ from one another.

⁵³ Men employed in yoga acquire a venerable dignity which cause the ignorant to also wish for their liberation. ⁵⁴ He is reckoned venerable who is employed in all honorable deeds and refrains from what is dishonorable, and who is steadfast in the discharge of all his social duties, whether they are of the ordinary or occasional kind. ⁵⁵ He who acts according to customary usage and the ordinances of scriptures, who acts conscientiously and according to his position and thus dispenses all his affairs in the world, is truly called a venerable man.

⁵⁶ The venerable nature of yogis germinates in the first stage, blossoms in the second, and becomes fruitful in the third stage of yoga. ⁵⁷ The venerable yogi who dies in the state of yoga enjoys the fruits of good desires for a long time, then becomes a yogi again. ⁵⁸ The practice of the parts enjoyed in the three first stages of yoga first serves to destroy the ignorance of the yogi, then sheds the light of true knowledge in his mind as brightly as the beams of full moon illuminate the sky at night.

⁵⁹ He who devotes his mind to yoga with undivided attention from first to last, and who sees all things in one even and same light, is said to have arrived at the fourth stage of yoga. ⁶⁰ As the mistake of duality disappears from sight and the knowledge of unity shines supremely bright, the yogi in this state is said to have reached the fourth stage of yoga when he sees the world like a vision in his dream.

⁶¹ The first three stages are called the waking state of the yogi, but the fourth is said to be a state of dreaming. That which can be seen disappears from his sight, just as the dispersed clouds of autumn gradually vanish from sight, and as the scenes in a dream recede to nothingness.

⁶² They who have their minds lying dormant in them and who are unconscious of their bodily sensations are said to be in the fifth stage. This is called the sleeping state or the trance of yoga meditation. ⁶³ In this state, there is an utter cessation of awareness in the mind of the yogi of the endless varieties of things and species. The yogi relies on his awareness of only an undivided unity. His sense of duality is entirely melted down and lost in the cheerfulness of his awakened mind. ⁶⁴ The fifth stage is also a state of sound sleep. The yogi loses all external perceptions and sits quietly with his internal vision. ⁶⁵ The continued calmness of his posture gives him the appearance of sleep. The yogi continues in this position practicing the denial of all his desires.

⁶⁶ This step leads gradually to the sixth stage, which is a state of unconsciousness both to the existence and nonexistence of things, as also of one's egoism and non-egoism. ⁶⁷ The yogi remains unmindful of everything, quite unconscious of unity or duality. By being freed from every scruple and suspicion in his mind, he arrives at the dignity of living liberation. ⁶⁸ The yogi of this sort, though still living, is said to be extinct or dead to his consciousness. He sits like a lamp in a picture that emits no flame. He remains with a vacant heart and mind like an empty cloud hanging in the empty air. ⁶⁹ Within and without he is full of divine ecstasy, like a full pot in a sea. He is possessed of higher power, yet he appears as worthless on the outside.

⁷⁰ After passing his sixth grade, the yogi is led to the seventh stage which is called a state of disembodied liberation because of its pure spiritual nature. ⁷¹ It is a state of quietude which cannot be described in words. It extends beyond the limits of this earth. It is said to resemble the state of Shiva by some, and that of Brahman by others. ⁷² By some it is said to be the state of the androgynous deity, or the indistinct state of male and female powers. Others have given many other names to it according to their fancies. ⁷³ The seventh is the state of the eternal and incomprehensible God which no words can express or explain in any way.

Thus Rama, have I described the seven stages of yoga. ⁷⁴ By practice of these perfections, one evades the miseries of this world. By subjection of the unruly elephantine senses, one can arrive at these perfections.

⁷⁵ Rama, hear me tell you about a furious elephant which with its protruded tusks was ever ready to

attack others.⁷⁶ As this elephant was about to kill many men unless it could be killed by one of them, so are men's senses like ferocious elephants of destruction to them.⁷⁷ Hence every man who has the valor of destroying this elephant of his sensuality as his very first step becomes victorious in all the stages of yoga.

⁷⁸ Rama said, "Tell me sage, who is this victorious hero in the field of battle? What is the nature of this elephant that is his enemy? What are these grounds of combat where he encounters him, and how does he defeat and kill this great foe?"

⁷⁹ Vasishta replied:—

Rama, our desire has the gigantic figure of this elephant which roams at random in the forest of our bodies and sports demonstrating all our passions and feelings.⁸⁰ It hides in the hidden place of our hearts and has our acts for its great tusks. Its fury is our ardent desire for anything, and our great ambition is its huge body.⁸¹ All the scenes (desire objects) on earth are the fields for its battle, where men are often defeated in their pursuit of any such desire.⁸² The elephant of desire kills miserly and covetous men in the state of their wish or desire, or exertions and effort, or longing and yearning after anything.

⁸³ In this way fierce greed lurks in the sheath of human breast under different names. Only refraining from those desires serves as the great weapon of their destruction.⁸⁴ This constant desire to possess everything in the world is conquered by reflection on the omnipresence of the soul in all of them, and that the unity of my soul stretches over and grasps all things that I desire.

⁸⁵ He who continues in this world like the rest of mankind is doomed to suffer under the colic pain of this venomous greed.⁸⁶ Our highest liberation is the diminution of the stinging poison of greed. Our liberation is when the calm and cooling countenance of the absence of desire appears to our sight.

⁸⁷ Words of advice stick to the wise mind like drops of oil adhere to a glass mirror. Our indifference to the world is the only prevention of its thorns, and it is the best advice to the wise.⁸⁸ It is advisable to destroy a desire by the weapon of detachment as soon as it arises in the breast. It is proper to root out the sprout of a poisonous plant before it spreads itself on the ground.

⁸⁹ The lustful soul is never free from its miserliness, while the mere effort of detachment makes it set quiet in itself.⁹⁰ Having no care for anything, by lying down as inactive as a dead carcass, you can kill your desire by the weapon of your detachment, just like they catch and kill fishes with hooks.

⁹¹ The wise say that desire is that attitude of "let this be mine" or "I may have it" and the lack of every desire is called renunciation.

⁹² Know that the memory of something is also the desire to have it again. Memory includes both what was enjoyed before and in the future.⁹³ O high minded Rama, you must learn to remain like a senseless block in your mind by forgetting whatever you think of or otherwise. For your detachment from the world, all must be buried in forgetfulness.

⁹⁴ Who will not lift up his arms and have his hairs standing on end to hear and reflect that lack of desire is the supreme good of everyone's desire.⁹⁵ By sitting quite silently and quietly one attains the state of supreme joy, a state before which the sovereignty of the world seems like a bit of straw.⁹⁶ As a traveler traverses on foot through many regions to reach to his destination, so the yogi passes

through all his ordinary acts in order to reach his goal of final bliss.

⁹ ⁷ What is the good of using many words when it can be expressed in a few? Our desire is our strongest bondage and its lack our complete liberation.

⁹ ⁸ Now Rama, rest quietly in your joy knowing that all this creation is full of the uncreated, everlasting, un-decaying and tranquil spirit of God. Sit quietly delighted in yourself seeing all that is visible in its spiritual sense. ⁹⁹ Know to ignore everything and the quiet posture of the yogi, which the spiritually minded call the state of yoga. Continue to discharge your duties even in your yoga state until you get rid of them by deprivation of your desires.

¹⁰⁰ The wise also describe yoga as unconsciousness of one's self. It consists of the entire absorption of one's self in the supreme by wasting away the mind and all its operations. ¹⁰¹ Again, this self absorption is conceiving of one's self to be the all pervasive spirit of Shiva, uncreated, self-conscious and ever benevolent to all. This conception of one's self is equivalent to renunciation of everything besides oneself.

¹⁰² He who has the sense of egoism and selfishness is never released from the miseries of life. The negation of this sensation produces our liberation. Therefore each person may choose to do either this or that for his bondage or liberation.

Chapter 127 — Valmiki Admonishes Bharadwaja

¹ Bharadwaja asked Valmiki, “Tell me sage, what did Rama do after hearing the sage’s lecture? Did he with his enlightened understanding ask any other question? Or did he remain in ecstatic quietude with his full knowledge of yoga and the Supreme Soul?”

² “What did that supremely blessed yogi (Vasishta) do next? He is adored by all and honored even by gods. He is a personification of pure understanding, free from the state of birth and death, filled with every good quality and always kindly disposed to the welfare and preservation of the peoples in all the three worlds.”

³ Valmiki replied:—

After hearing Vasishta’s lecture combining the essence of Vedanta philosophy, lotus-eyed Rama became perfectly acquainted with the full knowledge of yoga. ⁴ He felt his bodily strength failing and his body falling. He stared with glaring eyes, his clear intellect shrouded under a cloud. He awoke in a moment from his entranced state and felt a flood of rapturous joy within himself. ⁵ He forgot about asking questions and listening to their answers. His mind was full with the ambrosial nectar of delight. In his emotional state, the hairs of his body stood up like bristles.

⁶ An indescribable light with unusual brightness spread over his consciousness. That light put the auspicious prospects of the eight siddhi powers of yoga into utter shade. ⁷ In this way Rama attained the highest state of Shiva, in which he sat calmly without uttering a word.

⁸ Bharadwaja said, “O how much I wonder at such a high dignity which Rama had attained. How much I regret the impossibility of its attainment by a dull and ignorant sinner as myself.”

⁹ “Tell me, O great sage, how may it be possible for me to attain to that stage of perfection which is impossible even for the gods Brahma and others to attain? Tell me also, how can I get over the impassable ocean of earthly troubles?”

¹⁰ Valmiki replied:—

By reading of the history of Rama from first to last, by following the precepts of Vasishta as given in these lectures, and by consideration of their true sense and meaning in your understanding, you may be able to attain the state that you desire. This all that I can tell you at present.

¹¹ The world is an exhibition of our ignorance. There is no truth in anything we see in the world. It is only a display of our error. For that reason it is entirely disregarded by the wise, and so much regarded by fools. ¹² There is no entity or anything here other than Divine Consciousness. Why then are you deluded by phenomena? Learn their secrets and have a clear understanding.

¹³ The perception of the delusive phenomena resembles the waking dream of day dreamers. He alone is said to be awake who has the lamp of his intellect ever burning within himself. ¹⁴ The world is based on emptiness and it also ends in a vacuum. Its midmost part being likewise empty, there is no reliance placed upon it by the intelligent or the wise.

¹⁵ Our primeval ignorance accompanied by our primordial desires presents all that is nonexistent as existing, just as our fancy paints a paradise or fairy city to our view, and sleep shows its various dreams before us. ¹⁶ Being unpracticed to taste the sweet plantain of your beneficent intellect, you are

deluded to greedily devour the delirious drug of your desires and make yourself giddy with drinks of its poisonous juice.

¹⁷ He who lays hold of true knowledge for his support never falls down in the pit of ignorance during his wakeful state. Those who depend only upon their subjective consciousness stand above all other states. ¹⁸ So long as the adepts in yoga do not plunge themselves into the fresh and sweet waters of the great fountain of their consciousness, they must be exposed to the loud waves of the dangerous ocean of this world. ¹⁹ That which has no existence before and which will remain not existing afterwards must be understood to be nonexistent in the interim also. Just as our night dreams and fleeting thoughts are never in being, so is this world and whatever is seen in it.

²⁰ All things are born of our ignorance, just as bubbles are swollen air. They glisten and move about for a moment, then melt into the sea of our knowledge. ²¹ Find out the stream of the cooling waters of your consciousness and plunge yourself deep into it. Drive away all external things from you like they shut out hot and harmful sunbeams from houses. ²² The one ocean of ignorance surrounds and floods the world, just as a single salt sea surrounds and washes an island. The distinctions of "I" and "you" and the like are the waves of this salt sea of our falseness. ²³ The emotions of the mind and its various feelings and passions are the many forms of the waves of this sea of ignorance. Our egoism and selfishness make the great whirlpool in which the self-willed man is hurled of his own accord. ²⁴ His love and hatred are the two sharks that lay hold of him in their jaws and drag him at last into the depth, which nobody can prevent.

²⁵ Go and plunge yourself in calm and cooling sea of your solitude and wash your soul in the nectar waters of your ambrosial singleness. Dive deep into the depth of unity and fly from the salt sea of duality and the distasteful waves of diversities.

²⁶ Who is lasting in this world and who is passing from it? Who is related to anyone and what does one derive from another? Why are you drowned in your delusion? Rise and be wakeful. ²⁷ Know yourself as that one and same soul which is said to be diffused all over the world. Say what other thing there is that should you regret or lament except that and you?

²⁸ Brahman appears to ignorant children as spread out through all the worlds, but the learned always rely upon the concentrated blissful soul of God. ²⁹ Unreasonable men grieve and are pleased suddenly and without cause. It is a sad thing to find them in error. But the learned are always joyful.

³⁰ The truth of the fine subtlety of the Divine Soul is hidden from eyes of the ignorant. They are as doubtful about its nature as men are suspicious of foreign lands and waters. ³¹ See the great bodies of earth, air, water and sky composed of atomic particles, so durable as to last forever. Why then mourn at the loss of anything in the world? ³² From nothing comes nothing. Something cannot become nothing. Only the appearance of form takes place in the substance of things.

³³ By virtue of prior acts in former births, men are reborn in different shapes to enjoy or suffer the results of those acts. Adore therefore the Lord God and author of the worlds who is always bountiful and bestows all blessings. ³⁴ The worship of this God destroys all our sins and cuts off the knots of snares of this world. ³⁵ You may worship Him in some form or other until your mind is cleared and your nature is purified. Then you can resort to the transcendent spirit of the formless deity.

³⁶ Having overcome the impenetrable gloom of ignorance by force of the purity of your nature, you may pursue the course of the yoga with the humility of your inner soul and belief in the scriptures.

³⁷ Then sit a moment in your fixed meditation (samadhi) and behold the transcendent spirit in your own spirit. In this state the dark night of your former ignorance will break forth into open and bright daylight. ³⁸ It must be by one's courageous efforts, or by virtue of meritorious acts in former births, and also by grace of the great God, that men may obtain the obtainable one.

³⁹ Neither birth nor character, nor good manners or bravery of a man ensures him success in any undertaking. It is the merit of acts in former births. ⁴⁰ Why do you sit so sadly to think of inscrutable and unavoidable fate? There is no power, not even that of God himself, to erase what has been already been destined. ⁴¹ Where is the expounder of spiritual science, and where is the pupil who can comprehend it fully? What is this creeping plant of ignorance, and what is this inscrutable destiny, that joins two things together? These are questions too difficult to be solved.

⁴² O Bharadwaja, let your reason help you overcome your illusion. Then no doubt you will gain an uncommon share of wisdom. ⁴³ See how a high spirited hero overpowers all his imminent dangers and stretches his conquest far and wide. On the other hand, see how a mean spirited man is tried and grieves at the ordinary casualties of life. ⁴⁴ A good understanding is the result of and attends upon the meritorious deeds of many lives, as it appears in the acts of wise men and in the lives of all living liberated persons.

⁴⁵ Know my son that the same action is filled with your freedom or bondage according to whether it proves favorable or adverse to you. ⁴⁶ The righteous acts of virtuous men serve to destroy the sins of their past lives, just as rain showers extinguish a fire in the forest. ⁴⁷ But my friend, if you want to avoid falling into the deep whirling currents of this world, I would rather advise you to avoid religious acts and attach your mind to the meditation of Brahman. ⁴⁸ So long as one is attached to the outer world, led by his desires that cannot be satisfied, he is exposed to the contrary wind and waves of the sea. He can find his rest only in the calm water of his solitude.

⁴⁹ Why do you lean so much upon your sorrow only to blind your understanding? Rather support yourself on the strong staff of your good understanding and it will never break under you. ⁵⁰ Those who are reckoned among great men never allow themselves to be altered or moved by their joy or grief to be carried away like straw by the currents of a river.

⁵¹ Friend, why do you sorrow for people who are swinging in the cradle of the circumstances of life in the dark night of this world, playing their several parts with giddy amusement? ⁵² Look at playful Time that sports joyously in this world with the slaughter and production of endless beings by turns. ⁵³ His game is not particular of any age or gender. He chases all in general like an all-devouring serpent.

⁵⁴ Why talk of mortal men or other animals that live to die in a moment? Even all the gods are under the clutches of the remorseless and relentless Death. ⁵⁵ Why do you dance and make yourself merry in your amusement when you are in danger of losing by degrees the powers of your body and limbs? Sit but silently for a while and see the drama of the course of this world.

⁵⁶ Seeing the ever varying scenes of this changeful theatre of the world, the wise spectator, O good

Bharadwaja, never shrinks or trembles for a moment.⁵⁷ Shun your unwelcomed sorrow and seek the favorable amidst all that is unfavorable. Do not sadden the clear and cheerful countenance of your soul, which is of the nature of the perfectly blissful intellect of God.⁵⁸ Always bear reverence towards the gods, brahmins and your superiors. Be a friend even to irrational animals in order to meet with the grace of God, according to the saying of the Vedas.

⁵⁹ Bharadwaja replied, "By your kindness, I have known all these and many more truths. I come to find that there is not a greater friend than our indifference to the world, or a greater enemy to us than this world itself.⁶⁰ I want to learn the substance of all the knowledge that sage Vasishta imparted in the great work of many words."

⁶¹ Valmiki answered:—

Bharadwaja, hear now of the highest knowledge for the liberation of mankind, the hearing of which will save you from drowning in the injustice of the world.

⁶² First bow down to that Supreme Being who is of the nature of the solitary entity combined with intellect and joy, who is ever existent with his attributes of creation, preservation and destruction.⁶³ I will tell you, in short and upon the authority of the scripture, how you may come to know the first principle and the manner in which it exhibits itself in the acts of creation, preservation and destruction of the universe.

⁶⁴ But tell me first, how have you forgotten what I have told you on this subject? If you consider from first to last what is already in your memory, it is possible to know everything, just like they survey the entire earth from a small globe held in the hand.⁶⁵ Now consider all this in your own mind and you will get the truth which will prevent all your sorrows. Moreover, associate with the learned and study the best books which with the help of your reasoning and renunciation, may lead you to endless joy.

Chapter 128 — Valmiki Summarizes the *Yoga Vasishta* for Bharadwaja; Vishwamitra Explains Who Is Rama; Rama Is Brought out of Samadhi

¹ Valmiki continued:—

The yogi should be peaceful and tranquil, exempt from all forbidden acts and those proceeding from a desire of fruition. He must avoid all sensual gratifications and have his belief in God and his holy religion of the Vedas. ² He must rest quietly in his seat, his mind and body under his control, and continue repeating the syllable Om until his mind is cleared. ³ Then he must restrain his breathing to purify his inner organs (heart and mind), then restrict his senses by degrees from their respective outward objects. ⁴ He must think on the natures and causes of its body and its organs of sense, his mind and its understanding, and also his soul and its consciousness, and repeat the scriptures or the holy texts which relate to these subjects.

⁵ Let him sit reclined meditating on Viraj, initially as the god of visible nature, then as the internal soul of nature. Next he must meditate on the formless spirit as part and abstracted from all. At last he must fix his mind solely in the supreme cause.

⁶ Let him cast off in his mind and the earthly substance of his flesh and bones to the earth, and commit the liquid part of his blood to the water, and the heat of his body to fire. ⁷ Then he is to give over the airy and empty parts of his body to air and vacuum. Having returned his elemental parts to the five elements, he shall deliver the organs of his sense to the particular divinities from whom they are derived.

⁸ The ears and other organs which serve to sense phenomena all around, having been cast aside, he is to give the skin of his body to electricity. ⁹ Let him then resign his eyesight to the sun (Surya) and his tongue to water (Varuna). Next he must give up his breath to air (Vayu), his voice to fire (Agni), and his palms to the god Indra. ¹⁰ He must then offer his feet to the god Vishnu and his anus to Mithra. After giving up his penis to Kasyapa, he should dedicate his mind to the moon (Soma). ¹¹ Afterwards he must lay down his understanding to Brahma, and the other inner faculties to special divinities, and at last also give up his outer senses to their presiding duties. ¹² Having thus given his entire body to the gods, he should think himself as the all comprehending Viraja. This he must do pursuant to the statements of the Veda, and not of his own will or fabrication.

¹³ The Lord who embodies the whole universe in himself, in his androgynous form of half-male and half-female, is said to be the source and support of all sorts of beings. ¹⁴ He was born in the form of creation and it is he who is settled in everything in the universe. He caused this earth to appear from the two part cosmic egg, as also the water which is twice as much as the land. ¹⁵ He produced the heat twice as much as the water, and the air double in volume to that of heat, and lastly emptiness which is twice more in its extent than the air which it contains. Each latter one lies next above the former.

¹⁶ These form the world whether they are divided or undivided from their succeeding and surrounding ones. The earth is surrounded by the sea, and the sea surrounded by undersea fire.

¹⁷ Thus the yogi, by contracting his thought of the former one under the latter, will absorb his thought of heat under that of air, and this again under his idea of emptiness, which at last is swallowed up by his thought of the great cause of all. ¹⁸ In this manner the yogi must remain for a moment only in his

spiritual form by contracting his physical body under the spiritual.

¹⁹ The wise describe the spiritual body composed of the ten senses of perception and conception, the mind or memory, and the understanding faculties, to be above and outside the physical half of the cosmic egg. The yogi must think himself to be this supernatural spiritual being (Hiranyagarbha).

²⁰ The former, material half, composed of the five-fold subtle elements, is represented by the figure of the four-faced Brahma and differs from the former by being an evolution of un-evolved spirit. ²¹ The nameless and formless being in which the world exists is called matter (*prakriti*) by some, illusion (*maya*) by others, and atoms by philosophers. ²² Agnostics, whose minds are confused by false reasoning, call it ignorance. After all, it is that hidden and unknowable something in which all things dissolve at the ultimate dissolution of the world.

²³ Again, everything that is quite unrelated to the Divine Spirit and intellect comes into existence at the recreation of the world and retains and remains in its primary form to the end of the world.

²⁴ Think of creation in the direct method and of its destruction in the reverse order, then take yourself to the fourth stage of *turiya* after you have passed over the three preceding steps. ²⁵ To attain the state of blissfulness, you must enter into the Supreme Spirit by removing all impressions of matter and sense from your mind, mind and understanding, and all desires and acts that lie unexpanded and hidden in it.

²⁶ Bharadwaja responded:—

I am now quiet released from the chains of my impressions, as my intellectual part has found its entrance into the sea of transcendent blissfulness (*turiya*). ²⁷ The nature of my soul, being indistinct from the Supreme Spirit, makes me identical to it. I find that I am devoid of all attributes, only an intellectual power like the Spirit.

²⁸ As the emptiness inside a pot becomes one with the universal and all pervading vacuum after the pot is broken, so the human soul vanishes into the Supreme Spirit after it flies from the confines of the body after its destruction. ²⁹ As a fire brand cast into a burning furnace becomes the one and the same as the fire, so the kind mixing with its kind becomes indistinctly known under common name. ³⁰ Again, as straw swimming in a salt sea become transformed to the sea salt, so all animal and inanimate souls mixing with the Divine Soul become animated also. ³¹ As salt thrown into the sea looses its name and nature and becomes sea salt, so everything is swallowed in the Universal Soul and assimilated to it.

³² As water mixing with water, salt with salt, and butter with butter lose their distinctions and not their substances, so myself and all other substances mixing with the Divine Spirit lose our distinct names without loosing our true substance. ³³ All bodies, absorbed in the all-knowing and ever blissful consciousness of the great Creator of all, become equally all pervading and tranquil and everlasting and blessed forever.

³⁴ So I think I am like the supreme transcendent being without any part or partner, without action or passion, without the organs of sense, and neither loving nor hating anyone. ³⁵ I think myself as that sole entity which is the form of truth and immutable in its nature and desires, devoid of virtue and vice, perfectly pure and the supreme cause of all worlds. ³⁶ I am that blissful Brahman who is without a second and without decay, the form of pure light who is described by negative properties, and who is beyond the three qualities of active, passive and superlative (*rajas*, *tamas* and *sattva*) which do not

relate to him as they do to others.

³⁷ Thus one should meditate on himself as Brahman, even when he is employed discharging the duties destined to his station in life. His continued practice of this kind of meditation will gradually wear out all other impressions from his mind. ³⁸ The mind being thus set down, the soul will appear of itself within the man. The appearance of the inner spirit serves to destroy all his internal grief and fill its place with heart felt joy. ³⁹ He also perceives the height of the truth shining in himself, that there is no other blissful god beside his own consciousness and this is what he calls his ego and the supreme Brahman.

⁴⁰ Valmiki said:—

Friend, if you want to stop the revolution of the wheel of this world upon you, give up your observance of religious acts and devote yourself to meditation on Brahman.

⁴¹ Bharadwaja replied, “I have understood well the meaning of the knowledge you have imparted to me. I have acquired clarity of understanding and I no longer have any reliance upon the world. ⁴² I desire to know about the duties of those who have gained the spiritual knowledge of God. Are they subject to or freed from the performance of meritorious acts?”

⁴³ Valmiki said:—

Those who seek liberation are not liberated from doing that which if avoided involves the guilt of omission of duty. But he must refrain from doing the acts of his desire, and those which he is prohibited from doing.

⁴⁴ When the living soul comes to feel spiritual bliss in itself, when his sensuous desires disappear from his mind and he perceives his organs of sense lying quite calm and quiet under him, then he may consider himself as one with the all pervading spirit of the Lord. ⁴⁵ When the sentient soul conceives in itself the sense of its conversion to the essence of God beyond the bounds of the body and its senses and beyond the reach of his mind and understanding, then it is freed from its obligation of worldly duties. ⁴⁶ When the soul is free from all its action and passions and remains aloof from all titles and attributes, when it gets rid of the feelings of pain and pleasure, then he is freed from the burden of his duties. ⁴⁷ When one sees the Supreme Soul pervading all beings and sees all creation existing in the Universal Spirit, when he finds no difference between the mundane soul and the Supreme Spirit, then he is released from the bonds of his action. ⁴⁸ When the living soul has passed over the three states of waking, dreaming and sound sleep and enters into the fourth *turiya* state of perfect bliss, then he is freed from the obligations of earthly duties.

⁴⁹ The fourth state of *turiya* means residing in the living Universal Soul of God. It is the state of the soul’s liberation from its condition of sleeping in ignorance. It is full of spiritual bliss. ⁵⁰ This *turiya* state, the consciousness of one’s joy, derives from the fixedness of the soul in the supreme. It is the great end of yoga meditation. ⁵¹ After the mental operations of a man have ceased, he perceives nothing within himself except the *turiya* state which is a calm quiescence of the soul in the sea of ambrosial waters of the one sole unity.

⁵² Why do you plunge yourself under the waves of the salty waters of the sea of duality? Fly to the Lord of worlds and adore the great god who is full of all blessings.

⁵³ Thus I have related to you, my son, all the doctrines of Vasishta. It is the best means to your knowledge and practice of yoga meditation. ⁵⁴ You truly will be able, O wise Bharadwaja, to learn everything by digesting the substance of this scripture and considering the meaning of the precepts of this great teacher. ⁵⁵ According to the statements of the Vedas, we attain the perfection of anything by continued practice. Therefore, you must avoid attending to all other things and concentrate your mind on the object of your practice.

⁵⁶ Bharadawja replied, "Tell me O sage, the course of conduct which Rama followed after he received knowledge of yoga and united his soul with the Supreme Spirit. ⁵⁷ By knowing this I also will try to practice upon the same model so that I may succeed to attain the same state of spiritual elevation and bliss like him."

⁵⁸ Valmiki said:—

When the virtuous and high minded Rama was absorbed and sat entranced in Divine Essence, Vishwamitra addressed the venerable Vasishta.

⁵⁹ Vishwamitra said:—

O highly endowed son of Brahma, wise Vasishta, even now you have shown the effectiveness of your teaching by awakening the dormant power of Rama. ⁶⁰ He is truly the best in yoga who transforms the body of his pupil by his kind look, touch and sound and causes his inspiration by infusing the holy spirit of Shiva in him. ⁶¹ So it was with Rama, whose pure soul was dispassionate by its own nature and whose earnest desire of mental cessation and detachment led him to that happy state through conversing with his spiritual guide.

⁶² The intelligence of the student causes his understanding through the guidance of his spiritual teacher. But when these three roots or principles are imperfect, how can understanding arrive at its perfection? ⁶³ It is evident that knowledge is in need of both pupil and teacher for its communication. When both pupil and teacher are competent and worthy of one another, it is certain that the result will be likewise.

⁶⁴ Now be pleased to rouse Rama from the samadhi of mental inactivity, which you alone can do by your bliss in detachment, while we who are employed in worldly affairs are too far from it. ⁶⁵ Please sage, remember the cause that calls us here and the business to which we are invited at the earnest request of King Dasharata himself. ⁶⁶ Therefore O sage, do not frustrate our object by the purity of your mind. We have a service to perform to the gods and which is the cause of Rama's incarnation on earth.

⁶⁷ I am to conduct Rama to the home of the spiritual masters, then he shall be called to destroy the rakshasas, after which he will be led to the salvation of Ahalya and his marriage to Sita. ⁶⁸ He will break the great bow of Shiva in a valiant deed for that marriage, then he shall encounter the furious Parashurama and restrain his pride and way to heaven. ⁶⁹ Then fearless Rama will forsake his paternal and ancestral kingdoms to which is he unattached and, under pretext of his banishment, he will take himself to Dandaka Forest and its foresters. ⁷⁰ He will restore the sanctity of many pilgrimage places and thereby save the lives and souls of beings from sin and death.

He will show the world the sorrows of men at the loss of their wives from his own example of Sita's

abduction by Ravana.⁷¹ He will set the example of husbands' duty of recovering wives from the hands of their kidnappers by his recovery of Sita and his slaughter of Ravana, and by assembling the monkeys of the forest in his favor.⁷² He will prove the purity of Sita to please his plea and he will be employed in the observance of all religious acts for the entire liberation in this world, and lack any desire of reward in the next.

⁷³ But in order to secure the future welfare of men, he will encourage the practice of spiritual devotion and ritual acts according to the instruction of those who are best acquainted with those subjects.⁷⁴ He will liberally bestow his liberation to every living being of every kind. These and many others are the duties of Rama to this world and to me also.⁷⁵ Such are the acts that Rama shall perform, wherefore he is to be thanked by everyone here for all his conquests which no one else can make. So fare you well.

⁷⁶ Valmiki resumed:—

After these words of the sage were heard by the princes in the court and the assembled spiritual masters and great yogis such as Vasishta and others, they thanked the hero and remained to think of his lotus-like feet with respect and esteem.

⁷⁷ But the sages Vasishta and others were not to be satisfied until they could hear more about the lord of Sita whose virtues they all eagerly expected to hear fully and recite in their songs of praise.

⁷⁸ Vasishta then said to Vishwamitra, "Tell me sage, who was this lotus-eyed Rama in his past life? Had he been a god or sage or an ordinary man?"

⁷⁹ Vishwamitra replied:—

Believe what I say. This Rama is that primary Supreme Being who churned the sea for the good of the world. He is known only by the deepest learning of the Vedas.⁸⁰ He is full of spiritual joy, meek and gentle. He has the auspicious Srivatsa mark upon his body. He is bountiful to all living beings and quickly appeased by all.⁸¹ He destroys everyone in his rage and abandons all the frail trifles of this world. He is the first male and creator of all and supports, nourishes and is kind friend of all.⁸² He has passed over the unsubstantial and illusory things of this world. He is the sea of joy and is dived in by the dispassionate.

⁸³ Sometimes he is known as a liberated soul, relying in himself. At others he is seen to be settled in his *turiya* state of samadhi trance, and sometimes as a male or female agent of creation.⁸⁴ He is the god of the triple Vedas and beyond the reach of the three qualities of things. He is the soul of the Vedas and the wonderful Soul (*Purusha Viraj*) that is displayed in the six branches of the Vedas.

⁸⁵ He is the four-armed Vishnu and the four-faced Brahma, the creator of the world. He is also the great Mahadeva with his three eyes who is the destroyer of the world.⁸⁶ He is the uncreated creator born by his yoga or union with the power of delusion. He is the ever wakeful and the ever great spirit of God which, though it is formless, yet forms and supports this frame of this universe by transforming himself into the form of a man-lion.⁸⁷ As victory is carried upon the wings of bravery, and as light is carried upon the flame of fire, and as learning bears and conveys the fruit of good understanding, so is this godlike Rama carried upon the wings of the garuda bird of heaven.

⁸⁸ Blessed is this King Dasharata who has the Supreme Being for his son. Fortunate is the ten-headed

Ravana for finding a place in the mind of Rama as his enemy.⁸⁹ How lamentable is the state of heaven by Rama's absence from it. How pitiable is the infernal region from its loss of Lakshman (Ananta serpent) who is present here. Happy is this earth, the middle land, from the presence of the two gods from those two regions in this place.⁹⁰ This Rama is an incarnation of the god Vishnu who sleeps in the midst of the sea. He is the incarnate Supreme Soul without decay. He is a consolidation of Divine Consciousness and joy in his person.

⁹¹ The yogis of subdued organs discern Rama in spirit, but we of ordinary understanding can see him only in his outward figure.⁹² We hear that he has come down to blot out the iniquities of the race of Raghu, and hope that the venerable Vasishta will kindly guide him to the affairs of the world.

⁹³ Valmiki said:—

Saying this much, the great sage Vishwamitra held his silence. Then the intense Vasishta opened his mouth and addressed Rama.

⁹⁴ Vasishta said:—

O great armed Rama! O highly intellectual prince! It is not the time for you to be absorbed in yoga. Rise and rejoice the hearts of your people.⁹⁵ Until you satisfy the wants of men and their expectations of you, you are not allowed to attain the perfection of your pure samadhi meditation.⁹⁶ Therefore attend to the temporal affairs of your state for some time and discharge the burden of your duties to the gods. Then take yourself to the state of your spiritual advancement and be happy forever.

Valmiki speaking:—

⁹⁷ Despite being addressed in this manner, Rama remained absorbed in his trance and uttered not a word in reply. Then the spirit of Vasishta entered the heart of Rama through the restful passage of the *sushumna nadi*.⁹⁸ It infused its force to the respiration, mental faculties, organs and the vital spirit of Rama. It ran through the veins and arteries and inflated the organs of sense. Then Rama slowly opened his eyes and saw before him sage Vasishta with learned men about him. He remained gazing upon all without any wish or effort of his own, and without considering anything of his duties, or what he was to avoid.

⁹⁹ He heard the voice which his teacher Vasishta had uttered to him. He respectfully replied.¹⁰⁰ Rama said, "By your kindness sage, I am taught to have no concern with anything of the injunctions or prohibitions of the law. Yet it is my duty to abide by all that my teacher bids me to do.¹⁰¹ I think, O great sage, that of all the sayings of the Vedas, Agamas, Puranas, and other scriptures, the word of the teacher is the highest law. His bidding is a command and its opposite a positive prohibition."

¹⁰² So saying, the virtuous Rama bowed down his head at the feet of venerable Vasishta, then spoke of his indifference to the world to all present in the assembly.¹⁰³ Rama said, "May you all prosper and know the most certain truth to which I have arrived. There is nothing better than the knowledge of the Self, and none superior to the teacher from whom it is derived."

¹⁰⁴ The spiritual masters and others responded saying, "Such is the impression of Rama in our minds also. It is by your favor and acceptance that this belief is confirmed in us.¹⁰⁵ We thank you, Rama Chandra, and wish all happiness to attend on our great prince. We beg leave of sage Vasishta for our

departure as we are called here."

¹⁰⁶ Valmiki said:—

So saying they rose giving praises to Rama, blessing him with showers of flowers falling upon his head from their hands.

¹⁰⁷ Thus have I related to you the whole story of Rama. O Bharadwaja, follow the same course of yoga and be happy forever. ¹⁰⁸ Now my relating the perfection to which Rama had arrived, together with my telling you the varied sayings of the sage which are like so many strings of gems to be worn on the chests of yogis and poets, will serve by the grace of the sage to give you liberation.

¹⁰⁹ Whoever hears and attends to these discourses of Rama and Vasishta is sure to be relieved in every state of life and be united with Brahman after his release.

¹¹⁰ Thus ends the Maharamayna of sage Vasishta and spoken by Valmiki relating to the boyhood of Rama and consisting of thirty-two thousand sloka stanzas.

BOOK VI, Part 2
The Latter Treasury
(Uttaradha Bhaga)

Sage Vasishta explains that true detachment is achieved only by the awakening of self knowledge (atman jnana). The result is an automatic cessation of all actions and their results. The person no longer identifies with the body or seeks enjoyment in worldly objects. It is only when this realization of ones identity with the Supreme Self (atman) remains firmly established that one attains supreme liberation (param nirvana).

Vasishta also narrates his own experiences of samadhi. The sense of separate identity is lost in this state. He knows himself as one with pure consciousness (chidakasa). With the attainment of this knowledge everything else becomes known to him. He sees himself as existing everywhere and in all places and therefore he feels no need for movement, as he has nowhere to go to. Though devoid of the sense organs, he can see everything with his eye of wisdom (jnana netra) and he thus perceives that the innumerable universes of myriad names and forms exist within the pure consciousness as his own body.

As the discourse nears its end Rama's doubts and mental agitations are all gone. When Vasishta begins to discuss the ultimate state of bliss (nirvana) Rama and the others in the assembly listening are all lifted to the blissful plane of consciousness.

Rama, freed from the distressing thoughts that had been weighing upon his mind, is absorbed in samadhi and has no more questions to ask. As the great sage concludes his discourse, Rama exclaims in rapturous joy, "Ah! I have attained the most wonderful state of nirvana that is the end of the purpose of life! I am always in form (swarupa) but in the extremely peaceful myself there is nothing. There is nothing that is now covetable to me."

Vasishta then goes on to explain that having attained the state of nirvana, rishis are endowed with the highest state of samadhi (sahaj samadhi) that allows them to mix with people and to perform their allotted duties in life without coming down from their samadhi state. Then Brahma, Vishnu and Maheshwara appear and advise Shri Rama to remain firmly established in brahman always and to joyfully carry out his work and duties in the true spirit of one who is liberated while living (jivan mukta).

Chapter 1 — Passively Act out Your Duties from Prior Lives

¹ Rama asked, “Renouncing the idea of one’s personal ego results in the attendant evil of inertness and inactivity. This naturally brings on a premature decay and decline and the eventual falling off of the body. Then how is it possible, sage, for an indifferent person of this kind to practice his actions and discharge the active duties of life?”

² Vasishta replied:—

Rama, giving up false ideas is possible for a living person, but not for one who is dead and gone. Now listen as I expound this truth which will greatly please your ears.

³ The idea of one’s personal ego is said to be an idealism by idealists, but the meaning of the word emptiness is the repudiation of that false notion.⁴ Idealists say the essence of all substances is a creation of the imagination and they describe the idea of pure emptiness as giving up this false conception.⁵ The best and wisest of men say that the idea of anything in the world as something in reality is mere imagination, but the belief that all things are an empty nothing displaces the error of thought from the mind. Since all things are reduced to and return to nothing, this alone is the ever lasting something.

⁶ Know your memory of anything is only your imagination, and its forgetfulness alone is good for you. Therefore try to blot out all your former impressions from your mind as if they were never impressed on it.⁷ Erase from your mind the memory of all you have felt or unfelt, and remain silent and secluded like a block after forgetting all things whatsoever.⁸ Continue your practice of continuous action with an utter forgetfulness of the past, because your habit of activity is enough to conduct you through all the actions of your life, as it is the habit of a half-sleeping baby to move its limbs.

⁹ It requires no design or desire on the part of an actor to act the part to which he is led by the course of his prior propensities, just as a potter’s wheel is propelled by its original momentum without requiring the application of continued force for its whirling motion. So, O sinless Rama, consider our actions to be directed by our previous impressions and not our present efforts.

¹⁰ Hence renunciation has become the pleasant tendency of your mind, without its inclination to the gratification of its desires. The leanings of men to particular pursuits are directed by the current of their previous inclinations. The predisposition of the mind is said to be the cause of the formation of the character and fortune of a man in his present state, which runs like a stream in its habitual course and carries all men like straw floating along with its currents.

¹¹ I say that lack of desire is our supreme bliss and supreme good. I am proclaiming this with a loud voice and lifted arms, and yet nobody will listen to me. Why is it that none would perceive it as such?

¹² The wonderful power of illusion makes men neglect their reason and throw away the richest jewel of their mind from the chest of their breast in which it is deposited.¹³ The best way to renunciation is to ignore and deny phenomena, which is what I want you to do. Know that your disavowal of all is of the greatest reward to you, as you will be able to experience for yourself.

¹⁴ Sitting silently with calm content will lead you to that blissful state before which your possession of an empire will seem insignificant and only serves to increase your desire for more.¹⁵ As the feet of a traveler are in continuous motion until he reaches his destination, so the body and mind of the

covetous are in continuous agitation until his renunciation gives him rest.

¹⁶ Forget and forsake your expectation of reward for the result of your actions. Allow yourself to be carried onward by the current of your fortune without taking anything to your mind, like a sleeping man unconsciously carried on by his dreams. ¹⁷ Stir yourself to action as it occurs to you without any purpose or desire and without feeling any pain or pleasure. Let the current of the business conduct you onward like the current of a stream carries a bit of straw in its course. ¹⁸ Take no pleasure or pain to your heart from the work in which you are employed, but remain unconscious of both, like a wooden machine working for others. ¹⁹ Remain insensitive to pleasure or pain in your body and mind and all the sense organs, like sapless trees and plants in winter when they bear their bare trunks without sensitivity in their limbs.

²⁰ Let the sun of your good understanding suck up the consciousness of your six external senses, just as sunshine dries up the moisture of winter plants. Continue to work with the members of your body like an engine is set to work. ²¹ Restraine your intellectual pleasures from their inclination to sensual gratifications, and retain your spiritual joy in yourself to support your life, just as the ground carefully retains the roots of trees in winter for their growth in spring season.

²² It is the same whether or not you continually gratify the cravings of your senses. They will continue unsatisfied in spite of all your supplies. The vanities of the world will profit you nothing. ²³ If you move about continually like a running stream, or like the continuous shaking of water in a hydraulic engine, free from every desire and craving of your mind, then you are said to advance towards your endless bliss. ²⁴ Know this as a transcendent truth, capable of preventing all your future reincarnations in this world: that you become accustomed to the free agency of all your actions without being dragged to them by your desires. ²⁵ Pursue your business as it occurs to you without any desire or purpose of your own towards its object. Continue to turn about your callings, just like a potter's wheel revolves round its fulcrum. ²⁶ Think neither of the object of your action nor its reward, but know them to be equally alike whether you refrain from action or do it without desire for its result.

²⁷ But what is the use of many words when it can be expressed in brief? The desire for results is the bondage of your soul. Renouncing your desire for results is filled with perfect freedom.

²⁸ There is no business whatever for us in this world that must be done or abandoned at anytime or place. Everything is good that comes from the good God. Therefore sit quietly with your cold detachment before the occurrence of any event. ²⁹ Think of your works as no works and take your abstinence from action as your greatest work. Remain quiet in your mind during both action and inaction, just as Divine Consciousness is in ecstasy amidst the thick of its action.

³⁰ Know that unconsciousness of all things is the true yoga-trance which requires the complete suppression of mental operations. Remain wholly intent on the Supreme Spirit until you are one and the same with it. ³¹ When you identify with the tranquil and subtle spirit, without any sense of dualism and the existence of anything else, absorbed in thought of the endless and pure essence of God, then nobody can sorrow for anything. ³² Let no desire rise in your detached mind, like a tender germ sprouting in the sterile desert soil. Do not allow a wish to grow in you like a slender blade shooting in the bosom of a barren rock. ³³ The unconscious and insensible saint derives no good or evil by doing or not doing any deed or duty in his living state or in his next life. ³⁴ There is no sense of duty or

abandonment of duty in the minds of the saintly yogis who always view the equality of all things and acts. Never consider their deeds as their own doings. Do not think they are the agents of their own actions.

³⁵ Consciousness of individual ego and the sense of selfishness will never release a man from the miseries of life. Only his unconsciousness of these can save him from all sorrow. Therefore everyone may choose which of these he may best like. ³⁶ There is no other ego or “me” other than the one self-existent being and God having all forms. Besides the essence of this transcendent being, it is hard to account for any of the many things that appear to be otherwise than Himself.

³⁷ The visible world appearing so vividly to our sight is nothing more than the manifestation of the one Divine Essence in many, like the transformation of gold into the many shapes of ornaments. Seeing the continual decay and disappearance of phenomena, we ignore their separate existence. We acknowledge the sole existence of the one being who lasts after all and forever.

Chapter 2 — Lack of Choice Means No Responsibility for Actions

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Do not think of unity or duality but remain quite calm and quiet in your spirit and as cold hearted as damp mud. The worlds are still with the unmoving spirit of the divinity working in them.² The mind with its understanding, egoism and all its thoughts is full of the Divine Spirit in its diverse forms. Time and its motion and all sound, force and action, together with all modes of existence are only manifestations of Divine Essence.

³ Divine Spirit has the form of jelly-like mud (*i.e.*, it is plastic in nature) showing all things, forms and colors, and the mind and all its functions also, upon its own mold of endless shapes and types beyond the comprehension of men.⁴ Divine Essence forms the patterns, forms and shapes of all things, together with the measurements of space and time and the position of all the quarters and regions of the earth and heavens, all formed out of its own substance like on a mold of clay. So all things existent or nonexistent are the products and derivations of the formative mud and mold of the Divine Spirit.

⁵ Remain indifferent about the essence of your egoism and selfishness, which is nothing other than that of the Supreme Spirit. Live unconcerned with everything, like a dumb insect inside a stone.

⁶ Rama asked, “Sage, if a wise and God knowing man lacks the false knowledge of egoism and selfishness, then how is it that the abandonment and renunciation of his duties will impose any guilt or evil upon him, and his full observance of them is attended with any degree of merit or reward?”

⁷ Vasishta replied:—

I also will ask you one question, O sinless Rama, and you should answer it soon if you understand well what is rightly meant by the term duty and that of activity.⁸ Tell me, what is the root of action and how far does it extend? Is action destructible at last or not, and how is it totally destroyed at the end?

⁹ Rama asked:—

Why sage, whatever is destructible must be destroyed by rooting it out all together, and not by chopping off branches.¹⁰ The acts of merit and demerit are both to be destroyed together with their results of good and evil. This is done by eradicating and eliminating them altogether.

¹¹ Hear me tell you, sage, about the roots of our deeds. By the rooting them out, our actions are wholly eradicated, never to grow forth anymore.¹² I think, O sage, that this body of ours is the tree of our action that has grown in the great garden of this worlds surrounded with twining vines of various kinds.¹³ Our past acts are the seeds of this tree, and our happiness and sorrow are the fruit that cover it. It is green with the vegetation of youth for a while, and it smiles with its white blossoms of grey hairs and the pale complexion of old age.¹⁴ Destructive death lurks about this tree of the body every moment, just as the light-legged monkey climbs over trees to break them down. It is overwhelmed in the womb of sleep, just as a tree is overwhelmed under the mists of winter. Its flitting dreams are like the falling leaves of trees.¹⁵ Old age is the autumn of life and decaying wishes are like the withered leaves. Wife and family are as thick as grass in the wilderness of the world.

¹⁶ The reddish palms and soles of the hands and feet, and the other reddish parts of the body, resemble

the reddening leaves of this tree which are continually moving in the air with the marks of slender lines upon them.¹⁷ Little reddish fingers with their flesh and bones, covered by thin skin and moving in the air, are like the tender shoots of the tree of the human body.¹⁸ Soft and shining nails, set in rows with their rounded forms and sharpened ends, are like the moon-bright buds of flowers with their painted heads.

¹⁹ This tree of the body is the growth of the ripened seed of the past acts of men. The organs of action are the knotty and crooked roots of this tree.²⁰ These organs of action are supported by the bony members of the body and nourished by the sap of human food. They are fostered by our desires, resembling the core and blood of the body.²¹ Again, the organs of sense supply those of action with their power of movement, or else the body with the lightness of all its members from head to foot would not be moved to action without the sensation of their motion.²² Though the five organs of sense grow apart at great distances from one another, like so many branches of this tree of the body, yet they are moved by the desire of the heart which supplies them with their sap.

²³ The mind is the great trunk of this tree which comprehends the three worlds in it. It is swollen with the sap that it draws through its five-fold organs of sense, just as the stem of a tree grows with the juice it draws by the cellular fibers of its roots.²⁴ The living soul is the root of the mind, and having intellect ingrained, it is always busy with its thoughts which have the same intellect for their root. But the root of all these is the one great cause of all.²⁵ The intellect is the great Brahman which has no cause of itself. Having no designation or termination, it is truth from the purity of its essence.

²⁶ The consciousness of ourselves as personal ego is the root of all our actions. The internal thought of our personal entity is the root of our energy and gives impulse to all our actions.²⁷ It is our perception, O sage, which is said to be the source and root of our actions and whenever there is this principle in the mind, it causes the body to grow in the form of the big salmali tree.²⁸ When this perception, otherwise called consciousness, is accompanied with thoughts of ego and personality, it becomes the seed of action. Otherwise, mere consciousness of the Self is the state of the Supreme Soul.

²⁹ So also when consciousness is accompanied with its power of intellectual reasoning, it becomes the source and seed of action. Otherwise, it is calm and quiet because that is the nature of the Supreme Soul.³⁰ Therefore the knowledge of one's personality is the cause of his action, and this causality of action, as I have said, is quite in conformity with your teachings to me.

³¹ Vasishta said:—

Thus Rama, action with discernment is based on the knowledge of one's personality. Therefore it is impossible to avoid activity as long as the mind is situated in the body and has the knowledge of its personality.³² Whoever thinks of anything sees the same both within as well as outside of himself. Whether it is in reality or not, still the mind is possessed with a mental fabrication of it.

³³ Again whoever thinks of nothing truly escapes from the error of mistaking a mental fabrication for reality. But at present we are not going to discuss whether the reality is a falsity, or the falsity of anything is a sober reality.

³⁴ This thinking principle presents the shadow of something within us and passes under various names

like will, desire, mind and its purpose.³⁵ The mind resides in the bodies of both rational and irrational beings, and in their waking and sleeping states. Therefore, it is impossible to get rid of the mind by anybody at anytime.³⁶ So long as the mind is busy with its thoughts, neither silence nor inactivity of a living body amounts to refraining from action. Only the unawareness of the meaning of the word action amounts to one's postponement from acts.³⁷ Freedom to choose either to do or not to do anything is meant to make one's action. Therefore, by avoiding your choice in the doing of an act you avoid it altogether. Otherwise there is no other means to avoid an agent's responsibility for his own acts.

³⁸ Nobody is deemed to be the doer of an act who does not do it by his deliberate choice. Knowledge of the unreality of the world also leads to ignoring all action.³⁹ Ignoring the existence of the world is renunciation of it. Renunciation of all associations and connections is the same as one's liberation from them. Knowledge of the knowable One necessarily includes knowledge of all that is to be known.⁴⁰ There being no such thing as production, there is no knowledge of anything whatever that is produced. Therefore abandon your eagerness to know the knowable forms and seek knowledge of the only invisible One.

⁴¹ There is no knowing whatever of the nature and actions of the quiescent spirit of Brahman. Its action is only the reasoning of its consciousness which evolves itself in the form of an infinite emptiness.

⁴² The learned well know the teaching of the Vedanta, that "utter unconsciousness is liberation." Hence no one is exempt from action as long as he lives with his conscious body.⁴³ Those who regard action as their duty are never released from their subjection to the root of action. This root is the desire mind's consciousness of its own actions.

⁴⁴ It is impossible, O Rama, to destroy this bodiless consciousness without the weapon of good understanding. It lies so very deep in the mind that it continually nourishes the roots of action.⁴⁵ When we can nourish the seed of bodiless consciousness by our great efforts, then we should be able to destroy bodiless consciousness using the same weapon, effort.⁴⁶ In the same manner, we also can destroy the tree of the world with its roots and branches.

⁴⁷ Only one exists which has no sensation and has the form of endless emptiness. That unintelligible empty form and pure intelligence is the core and substance of all existence.

Chapter 3 — Disappearance of Phenomena

¹ Rama said, “Tell me, O sage, how is it possible to convert our knowledge to ignorance? It is impossible to make a nothing of something or make anything out of a nothing.”

² Vasishta replied:—

Truly a nothing or unreality cannot be something in reality, and a real something cannot become an unreal nothing. In any case, where both of these are possible, there perception and lack of perception of something are equally tangible of themselves.

³ Two senses of the word knowledge are apparent in the example of “a rope appearing as a snake.” Here the knowledge of the rope is certain, but that of the snake is a mistake or error. It is the same with a mirage presenting the appearance of water.⁴ Therefore it is better to have no knowledge of these false appearances, whose knowledge tends to our misery only. Know the true reality alone and never think of the unreal appearance.

⁵ Thought confirming perceptions of the senses is the cause of sorrow for all living beings. Therefore it is better to root out the sense of what can be perceived from the mind and rely only upon knowledge of the underlying Universal Soul.⁶ Leave aside the knowledge of parts and the sense of perceiving objects of the senses. Know the whole as one Infinite Soul in which you have your rest and nirvana.

⁷ Destroy all your acts of merit and demerit by the force of your discrimination. Your knowledge of the impermanency of your deeds, aided by your knowledge of truth, will result in your mastery (*siddhi*) of yoga.⁸ By rooting out the memories of your acts, you put a stop to their results and your course in the world. If you succeed to gain the object of your search by means of your reason, you no longer have any need for your action.

⁹ Divine Consciousness, like the bael fruit, forms its core and seeds (of future worlds) within itself, lying hidden inside and never bursting out of its bosom.¹⁰ As a thing contained in its container is not separate from the containing receptacle, so all things that lie in the womb of space are included in the infinite space of the Divine Mind which encompasses endless emptiness in it.

¹¹ As the property of fluidity is never separated from the nature of liquids, so thoughts are never separated from the thinking principle of the Divine Mind.¹² Again, as fluidity is the inseparable property of water and light is that of fire, so thoughts and thinking intrinsically inhere in the nature of Divine Consciousness and not as its separable qualities.

¹³ Thoughts are the action of consciousness’ process of reasoning. Their deprivation gives rise to the imaginary fabrications of error in the mind. There is no other cause of error, nor does it last unless it rises in the absence of reason.¹⁴ Thoughts are the action of the intellect’s process of reasoning, just as movement is that of the wind. By means of their respective actions we have our perceptions of them. But when the soul ceases action, then both of these are at a utter stop within and without us.¹⁵ The body is the field and scope of our actions and our egoism spreads itself over the world, but our unconsciousness and lack of ego tend to put away the world from us just as lack of force puts down a breeze.¹⁶ Unconsciousness of body and mind renders the intelligent soul as dull as a stone. Therefore root out the world from your mind like a boar uproots a plant with its tusk.¹⁷ Only in this way, O Rama, can you get rid of the seed vessel of action in your mind. There is no other way to enjoy the

lasting peace of your soul.

¹⁸ After the germinating seed of action is removed from the mind, the wise man loses sight of all temporal objects in his full view of the holy light of God. ¹⁹ Holy saints never seek to have, or dare to avoid, or leave any employment of their own choice or will. Therefore they are said to be truly saintly souls and minds who are strangers to the preference or rejection of anything. ²⁰ Wise men sit silently wherever they sit and live, their hearts and minds as vacant as the empty sky. They take what they get and do what is destined to them as they are unconscious of doing them. ²¹ As sediments are swept away by the current of a stream, so saintly and meek minded men are moved to action by a power that is not their own. They act with their organs of action with as much unconcern as babies move their bodies in their half-sleep state.

²² As the sweetest things appear unsavory to those who are satisfied with them, so the delights of the world seem disgusting to those who are delighted with divine joy in themselves. They are so absorbed in their rapture that, like insane people, they are unconscious of what is passing in and about them. ²³ Unconsciousness of one's acts makes abandonment of action, and this is perfected when a person is in full possession of his understanding. It matters not whether a man does anything or nothing with his insubstantial or unconscious organs of action.

²⁴ An action done without desire is an act of unconsciousness. They are not recognized as our actions and leave no trace in our minds. ²⁵ An act which is not remembered, forgotten as if it buried in oblivion, is an act without a doer. This forgetfulness is equal to the abandonment of action. ²⁶ He who pretends to have abandoned all action without abandoning them from his mind is said to be a hypocrite and is devoured by the monster of his hypocrisy. ²⁷ They who have rooted out the prejudice of actions from their lives and taken themselves to the rest and refuge of inaction are freed from the expectation of reward from whatever they do, and also from the fear of any evil for what they avoid to perform. ²⁸ They who have eradicated the seeds of action with their roots and germs from the ground of their minds always have an undisturbed tranquility to rest upon which is attended with a serene delight.

²⁹ The meek are slightly moved in their bodies and minds by the current of business in which they have fallen. The reckless are carried onward, whirling in the torrent, like drunken people lying on the ground or like anything moved by a machine. ³⁰ Those who are seated in any stage of yoga and are graced with the calmness of liberation appear as cheerful as men in a playhouse who are half asleep and half awake over the act in this great theatre of the world.

³¹ We say a tree is wholly eradicated when it is drawn out by its roots. If we merely chop off its branches, it will grow again. It must be uprooted from the ground. ³² So the tree of your acts, though its branches be chopped off, will grow again if it is left rooted. ³³ To abandon your acts, it is enough to remain unconscious that you are performing them.

Other recipes for the same will come to you of themselves. ³⁴ Whoever adopts any other method to abandon his actions, other than those prescribed here, his attempts are as useless as striking the air. ³⁵ The reasoned abandonment of a thing is true renunciation. Whatever is done without intent is like a fried grain or seed that never sprouts or brings forth fruit. ³⁶ An act done with will and physical effort becomes productive with the moisture of desire, but all other efforts of the body without the will are

entirely fruitless to their actor.

³⁷ After one has gotten rid of his action and freed himself from further desire, he becomes liberated for life, whether he may dwell at home or in the woods or live in poverty or affluence. ³⁸ A contented soul is as solitary at home as in the midst of the most remote forest, but a discontented mind finds the solitary forest to be as thickly crowded with irritations as much as the disturbances in a family house.

³⁹ A quiet and calmly composed spirit finds the lonely woodland, where a human being is never to be seen even in a dream, to be as lovely as the bosom of a family dwelling. ⁴⁰ A wise man who has lost the sight of visible phenomena and the endless particulars abounding in this forest of the world beholds the silent and motionless sphere of heaven spread everywhere around him.

⁴¹ A thoughtless ignorant whose unsatisfied ambition grasps the whole universe in his heart, rolls over the surface of the earth and all its loud seas with as much joy as upon a bed of flowers. ⁴² All these cities and towns, so tumultuous with crowds of men, appear to an ignorant, moneyless man as a garden of flowers where he picks up his worthless penny with as much delight as holy men culling fragrant blossoms to make their offerings to holy shrines. ⁴³ The wide earth with all her cities and towns and distant districts and countries, so full of mutual strife and broil, appear to the stained soul of the ignorant and greedy as if they are reflected in their fair forms in the mirror of their minds, or painted in their bright colors upon the canvas of their hearts.

Chapter 4 — Annihilation of Egoism

¹ Vasishta continued:—

One abandons the world through diminishing one's ego, like a lamp going out for lack of oil, and by knowing that all that can be perceived lies within the conscious soul.² Abandonment of the world is not giving up actions but renunciation of the knowledge of the objective world. The subjective soul is without the reflection of the visible world, and the objective self is immortal and indestructible.

³ After the knowledge of the individual self and "this" and "that" and "mine" and "yours" becomes extinct like an extinguished lamp, there remains only the intelligent and subjective soul.⁴ But he whose knowledge of himself and others, and of "mine" and "yours" and "his" and "theirs" has not yet abated in his subjectivity has no intelligence, tranquility, abandonment or extinction of himself.

⁵ After extinction of one's egoism and selfishness, there remains the sole and tranquil and intelligent soul, beside which there is nothing else in existence.⁶ The egoistic part of the soul being weakened by the power of true knowledge, everything in the world wastes away and dwindles into insignificance. Though nothing is lost in reality, yet everything is buried with the extinction of the self.

⁷ The knowledge of ego is lost under that of the non-ego, without any delay or difficulty. It being so easy to effect, there is no need to resort to difficult methods to remove the ego.⁸ The thoughts of ego and non-ego are only false conceptions of the mind. The mind being as empty as the clear sky, there is no solid foundation for this error.

⁹ No error exists unless it moves upon the basis of ignorance. It grows upon misjudgment and vanishes in the light of reason and right judgment.¹⁰ Know all existence to be only Consciousness which extends like an unreal emptiness. Therefore sit silently in the empty space of Consciousness in which all things are extinct as nothing.¹¹ Whenever the idea of ego occurs to the mind, it should immediately be put down by its negative idea of non-ego, that I am nothing.¹² Let the conviction of non-ego replace that of ego. Ego is a meaningless term, as untrue as empty air or the flower of a tree rooted in the air. Being fixed like an arrow in the bow-string of holy meditation, strive to hit the mark of Divine Essence.¹³ Always know that your ideas of ego and you and I are as unreal as empty air. Being freed from the false idea of every other thing, quickly cross the delusive ocean of the world.

¹⁴ How can a senseless and beastly man attain the highest state of divine perfection if he is unable to overcome his natural tendency towards egoism?¹⁵ He who by his good understanding has been able to subjugate the six-fold beastly desires of his nature is capable of receiving knowledge of great truths, and not any other foolish man in human shape.¹⁶ He who has weakened and overcome the inborn feelings of his mind becomes the receptacle of all virtue and knowledge. Such a person is called a man in its proper sense of the word.

¹⁷ Whatever dangers may threaten you on rocks and hills and upon the sea, you may escape them by thinking that they cannot injure your inner soul, though they may hurt the flesh.¹⁸ Knowing that your egoism is nothing in reality, except your false conception of it, then why do you allow yourself to be deluded by it like the ignorant who are misled by their frenzy?¹⁹ There is nothing here that is known to us in its reality. All our knowledge of things is as false as that of an ornament in gold. So our knowledge of the ego is lost by our forgetfulness of it.

²⁰ Try to dislodge the thoughts that arise in your mind like constant vibrations in the air by thinking that you are not the ego and that your ego has no foundation at all. ²¹ The man who has not overcome his ego and its accompaniments of covetousness, pride and delusion listens to these lectures in vain. They are useless to him. ²² The sense of egoism and the other which abides in you is nothing other than the stir of the Supreme Spirit which stirs alike in all like motion impels the winds. ²³ The uncreated world which appears like an act of creation is inherent and apparent in the Supreme Soul. In spite of all its defects and frailty, it is fair by being situated in the Supreme Soul.

²⁴ The Supreme Soul neither rises nor sets at anytime, nor is there anything else existent or nonexistent besides that One. ²⁵ All this is transcendental in the transcendent spirit of God and everything is perfect in his perfection. All things are quiet in his tranquility and whatever is, is good by the goodness of the great God. ²⁶ All things are extinct in the ever existing spirit of God. They are quiet in his quiescence, and all good in his goodness. This extinction in the ever existing soul of God is no annihilation. It is understood like the sky, but it is not the sky itself.

²⁷ Men may bear the strokes of weapons and suffer the pain of diseases, yet how is it that nobody can tolerate the thought of the extinction of his ego? ²⁸ The word ego is the ever growing seed of the meaning of everything in the world. That egoism being rooted out of the mind, this world also is uprooted from it. ²⁹ The meaningless word ego, like empty vapor or smoke, has the property of soiling the mirror of the soul, which resumes its brightness after removal of the mist. ³⁰ The significance of the word I or ego is as force or fluctuation in the calm and quiet atmosphere. This force being still, the soul resumes its serenity like that of the unseen and imperceptible and one eternal and infinite air.

³¹ The significance of the word ego produces the shadow of external objects in the mind. That shadow being lost, there follows the serenity and tranquility of the soul which are the attributes of the unknowable, infinite and eternal God. ³² After the cloudy shadow of the sense of the word ego is removed from the atmosphere of mind, the clear sky of transcendent truth appears shining with serene brightness throughout its infinite sphere. ³³ After the essence of the soul is cleansed of its impurity, without any alloy or base metal, it shines with bright luster like pure gold when purified from its mixture with copper or other metals.

³⁴ As an insignificant term bears no accepted sense, so the unintelligible word ego bears no definite sense of any particular person. It is equal to the non-ego or impersonal entity of Brahman. ³⁵ Only Brahman resides in the word ego. Brahman exists as named objects and materials, like calmness which is a reflection of being. ³⁶ The meaning of the word ego, which contains the seed of the world in it, is rendered unsuccessful by our ceasing to think of it. Then what is the good of using the words "I" and "you" that serve only to bind our souls to this world?

³⁷ The essence is the pure and blissful spirit which is afterwards soiled under the name of ego. Ego rises out of that pure essence, just as a pot is produced from clay, but its substance is forgotten under its form, just as gold is forgotten in its form of an ornament. ³⁸ From this seed of ego, the visible plant of creation takes its rise and produces countless worlds as its fruit which grow to fade and fall away.

³⁹ The meaning of the word ego, like the minute seed of a long pepper, contains the wonderful productions of nature consisting of the earth and sea, hills, rivers, and forms and colors of things with their various natures and actions. ⁴⁰ Heaven and earth, air and space, hills and rivers everywhere are

like the fragrance of the full blown flower of ego.⁴¹ Ego, in its widest sense, stretches out to the edges of creation and contains all the worlds under it, just as daylight comprehends all objects and their action under it.⁴² As early daylight brings the forms and shapes and colors of things to view, so our ego presents the false appearance of the world to our visual sight.

⁴³ When ego, like a particle of dirty oil, falls into the clear water of Brahman, it spreads over its surface in globules that resemble worlds floating in the air.⁴⁴ At a single glance, ego sees multitudes of worlds spread before its visual sight, just as the blinking eye observes thousands of specks scattered before its sight.⁴⁵ Egoism being extended far perceives the furthest worlds lying stretched before its sight. But the unselfish soul without ego, like a sleeping man, does not perceive the nearest object, just as our eyes do not see the pupils lying within them.

⁴⁶ We can get rid of the mirage of the world only through the force of unfailing reasoning and the total extinction of our egoistic feelings.⁴⁷ Only by our constant reflection upon our consciousness does it become possible for us to attain the great object of our ultimate end, the attainment of the perfection of our souls. Then we have nothing more to desire or grieve at, nor any fear of falling into error.⁴⁸ It is possible by your own endeavor, and without the help of any person or thing, to attain your perfection. Therefore I see no better means for you than the thought of the extinction of your egoism.

⁴⁹ Now Rama, this is the summary of the whole doctrine: that you forget your ego and yourself and extend the sphere of your soul all over the universe and behold them all in yourself. Remain quite calm and quiet and without any sorrow, exempt from all acts and pursuits of the frail and false world, and think of the soul as one whole and not as a part of the universe.

Chapter 5 — Bhushunda's Story of a Vidyadhara and His Questions

¹ Vasishta continued:—

A conscious man who employs himself to inquire after truth, after controlling his nature and restraining his organs of sense from their objects, becomes successful at last.² But a man of perverted understanding who has no command over his own nature finds it as impossible to gain any good or better state, just as it is in vain to expect any oil from pressing sand.³ A little instruction is as impressive on the pure mind as a drop of oil sticks to clean linen, but no education has any effect on the hard heart of fools, just as the most brilliant pearl makes no impression on a dirty glass mirror.

⁴ I recall an example of this teaching from an old story related to me by the aged Bhushunda in past days, when I was living with him on the top of Sumeru Mountain.⁵ In times of old, I once argued this question, among other things, with the time-worn Bhushunda when he was living in his solitary retreat in one of the caves of Mount Meru. I said to him,⁶ “O long living seer, do you remember ever having seen a person of infatuated understanding who was unconscious of himself and ignorant of his own soul?”

⁷ Bhushunda replied:—

Yes, there lived a vidyadhara spirit of old, on the top of the mountain on the horizon, who was greatly distressed with constant struggle and yet anxious for his longevity.⁸ He took up austerities of various kinds and observed abstinence, self-restraint and vows of various forms and thereby attained a life without decay which lasted for many ages of four kalpas of four yugas each.⁹ At the end of the fourth kalpa he came to his senses and his perception suddenly burst forth in his mind, like emeralds glaring out of the ground at the roaring of clouds.

¹⁰ Then the vidyadhara reflected, “What stability can I have in this world where all beings are seen to come repeatedly into existence, to decay with age, and at last to die and dwindle away into nothing? I am ashamed to live in this state of things and under such a course of nature.”¹¹ With these reflections he came to me quite disgusted at the frailties of the world and distasteful of harmful vanities. He asked me questions regarding the city with its eighteen compartments [*i.e.*, ten organs, five vital airs, mind, soul, and body].¹² He advanced before me and bowed down profoundly. After being honored by me, he took the opportunity to ask his questions.

¹³ The vidyadhara said, “I see these organs of my body, which though so frail are yet as hard and strong as any weapon of steel. They are capable of breaking and tearing everything and hurtful in their acts of injuring others.¹⁴ I find my senses to be dim and dark, always disturbed and leading to dangers. The passions in the heart set fire to the forest of our good qualities and boil with the waves of sorrow and grief. The dark ignorance of our minds envelops everything in the deepest gloom. Hence our real happiness consists in control over our bodily organs, senses, and the passions and feelings of the heart and mind. Happiness is not to be had from any object of sense.”

Chapter 6 — The Vidyadhara Expresses His Disgust with the World to Bhushunda

¹ The vidyadhara spirit continued:—

Tell me now, what is the most noble state which is devoid of increase or decrease or any pain whatever, which is without beginning or end, and which is most sanctified and sanctifying?

² For so long I have been sleeping like an inert soul. Now I am awakened to sense by the grace of the Supreme Soul. ³ My mind is heated with the feverish fervor of my unsatisfied desire. It is full of regret at my ignorance. Now raise me from the depth of darkness in which I grovel under my delusion.

⁴ Many a time does misfortune overtake the fortunate, and bitter sorrows befall the wise and learned, just as in the end, hoarfrost falls on tender lotus leaves and discolors them. ⁵ We see frail living beings constantly springing to birth and dying away to no purpose. They exist neither for virtuous acts nor their liberation, but are born only to die like gnats and insects.

⁶ I have passed through different stages of life, now with one state of things and then with another, and deceived by the gain of worthless trifles. We are always discontented with the present state and cheated repeatedly by the succeeding one. ⁷ There is no end to the rambling of the restless, unwary mind, ever running after its frail pleasures and floating as it were upon the breakers of its enjoyments. The mind has no rest after its struggles but wanders onward in the desert paths of this dreary world.

⁸ The objects of enjoyment, which are the causes of our bondage in this world, appear at first to be very charming and sweet, but they are all frail and ever changing in their natures, and in the end prove to be our destruction. ⁹ Moved by our egoism and led by a sense of honor to live in dishonor, I am degraded from the dignity of my high birth as a vidyadhara spirit. I am not pleased with myself.

¹⁰ I have seen the pleasure garden of Chitra-radha (chief of gandharvas) and all the sweet and soft flowery beds on earth. I have slept under the branches of wish-fulfilling kalpa trees in paradise and have given away all my wealth and property in charity. ¹¹ I have played in the groves of Mount Meru and about the cities of the vidyadharas. I have wandered about in heavenly cars and in the aerial regions on all sides. ¹² I have rested amidst heavenly forces and reposed in the arms of my consorts. I have joined bands of heavenly women in their joyous frolic and music, and I have walked through the cities of the rulers of mankind. ¹³ I saw nothing of any worth among them, only the bitter sorrow of my heart. Now I come to find by my best reason that everything is burnt down to ashes before me.

¹⁴ My eyes, ever inclined to dwell upon the sights of things and become infatuated for the face of my mistress, have been the cause of great affliction to my mind. ¹⁵ My eyesight runs indiscriminately after all beautiful objects without its power of considering whether this or that is for our good or bad.

¹⁶ My mind also, ever prompt to meet all hazards and to expose itself to all kinds of restraints, never finds its rest until overwhelmed under some danger and exposed to the peril of death.

¹⁷ My sense of smell likewise is ever alert seeking after fragrant and delicious things to its own peril. It is difficult for me to repress it, like trying to restrain an unruly horse. ¹⁸ I am restrained by the sense of smell through the two canals of my nostrils bearing the body's rotten breath, coughs and colds. I am constrained like a prisoner of war in a dungeon.

¹⁹ My craving tongue forces me to seek my food in these rugged and dreary rocks, the haunt of wild

elephants where wolves search for their food.²⁰ I need to restrain the sensitivity of my body and make my skin endure the heat of hot weather, burning fire, and burning sun.²¹ My ears, sage, which ought to take a delight at hearing good lectures, are always inclined to listen to talk that is no way profitable to me but misleads me to wrong, just as grass covering a well tempts a silly deer to his ruin.²² I have listened to the endearing speeches of my friends and servants and attended to the music of songs and instruments, but I have derived no lasting good from that.

²³ I have seen the beauty of women and the natural beauty of objects everywhere. I have seen the sublime beauty of mountains and seas and the grandeur of their foothills and coasts. I have witnessed the prosperity of princes and the brilliancy of gem and jewels.²⁴ I have long tasted the sweets of the most delicious dishes. I have relished food of the six different tastes served to me by gorgeous ladies.

²⁵ I have associated with lovely damsels clad in silken robes wearing necklaces of pearls, reclined on beds of flowers, and fanned by soft breezes. I have had all these pleasures of touch and enjoyed them unrestrained in my pleasure gardens.²⁶ I have smelled the odors on the faces of heavenly damsels and I have had the smell of fragrant balms, perfumes and flowers. I have inhaled fragrances carried to me by the breath of soft, gentle and fragrant breezes.

²⁷ Thus have I seen and heard, felt and smelled, and repeatedly tasted whatever sweets this earth could afford. Now they have become dry, distasteful, stale and unpleasant to me. Say, what other sweet is left for me to enjoy?²⁸ I have enjoyed all these enjoyments of my senses for a full thousand years, and still I find nothing either in this earth or in heaven that is able to yield full satisfaction to my mind.

²⁹ I have reigned for a long time over a realm and enjoyed the company of courtesans in my court. I have vanquished the forces of my enemies in battle, but I know of no great profit that I have gained thereby.³⁰ Those demons who were invulnerable in warfare and seized the dominion of the three worlds, even those invincible asura demons have been reduced to ashes in a short time.

³¹ I think the best gain is that which, once gained, leaves nothing else to be desired or gained. Therefore I must seek that precious gain, however difficult it may be to attain.

³² What difference is there between those who have enjoyed the most delightful pleasures and others who have never enjoyed them at all? Nobody has ever seen the heads of the former kind crowned with kalpa tree wreaths or the latter with diminished heads.³³ I have long been led by my organs of sense to enjoy beautiful objects in the wilderness of this world. I have been quite deceived by them, like a child by a cheat.³⁴ Only now and too late, and after being repeatedly deceived by my organs of sense, I have come to know that the objects of my senses are my greatest enemies.³⁵ I see the deceitful organs of sense, like so many sly hunters, have laid their snares about the wild forest of this world to trap all unwary people, just as they do silly deer or beasts of prey by enticements.³⁶ There are few men in this world who are not poisoned by the deadly venom of their serpent-like organs of sense.

³⁷ The forest of the world is full of furious elephants of enjoyments, surrounded by the snare of our desire. Our greed wanders rampant with sword in hand, and our passions stir like keen spearmen tearing our hearts and souls every moment.³⁸ Our bodies become a field of battle where the commanding charioteer of our egoism has spread a net of deceit employing our efforts as horsemen

and our desires as noisy revelers.³⁹ The organs of sense are the flag-bearers set at the extremities of the battlefield that is our body. They are reckoned the best soldiers who by their bravery are able to overtake these staff-bearers in the field.

⁴⁰ It may be possible for us in war to pierce even the head of furious Airavata, the war elephant of Indra, but it is too hard for anyone to repress the unruly senses within their proper bounds.⁴¹ The greatest victory that may be won by the valor, magnanimity and fortitude of great men is to conquer the unconquerable organs of sense.⁴² When a man is no longer thrown and carried about by the irresistible force of his sensual appetites, like a bit of insignificant straw, he is said to have attained the perfection and excellence of the gods of heaven.⁴³ I account men of well governed senses and great patience to be truly men. All other men of ungoverned minds are mere moving machines made of the flesh and bones that compose their bodies.

⁴⁴ O sage, I think I can overcome all things if I could only reduce the force of the five external organs of sense which form the battalion under the mind's command.⁴⁵ By the prescriptions of reason you may be able to heal the sensual appetites which form the great sickness of the mind. Otherwise you cannot get rid of them with any medicine or mantra, or by holy pilgrimage or any other remedy.⁴⁶ I am led to great distress by the joint force of my senses, just as a lonely traveler is robbed by a gang of thieves.

⁴⁷ The organs of sense are like dirty canals of the body with their stagnate and foul watery matter. They are filled with harmful and hairy moss and emit a stink of malaria.⁴⁸ The senses seem to me to be like so many deep and dark forests covered with impenetrable snows and full of terrors that render them impassable to travelers.⁴⁹ The organs of the outward senses resemble the stalks of lotuses growing upon the dirt of the body with holes in them, but without any visible thread inside. They are knotty on the outside and without any consciousness of their own.⁵⁰ Our senses are like so many seas with salty water and huge waves dashing on every side. They are full of various gems and pearls, but they are also full of horrible whales and sharks.⁵¹ Sensual pleasures bring on the untimely death of the sensualist and causes grief and sadness to his friends. It makes others take pity on his state and mourn at his fate, which leads him only to repeated reincarnations.

⁵² The senses are a vast and unlimited wilderness to men, friendly to the wise and hostile to the unwise.⁵³ The sphere of the senses is as dark as that of a cloudy sky where the black clouds of distress are continually growling and the lightning strikes of joy constantly flash with their impermanent glare.⁵⁴ The organs of sense are like underground crevasses or mounds of mud upon earth. Inferior animals take refuge in them, but they are shunned by superior and intelligent beings.⁵⁵ They are like hidden pits covered with thorns and brambles and inbred with venomous snakes in which the unwary fall to be struck and bitten to death.

⁵⁶ All sensualities are like savage rakshasa demons who wander and revel in their adventurous excursions in the darkness of night and feed on human victims.⁵⁷ Our organs of sense are like dry sticks, all hollow and empty in the inside. They are crooked and full of joints, fit only as fuel for fire.⁵⁸ The bodily organs are the instruments of vice, like pits and thickets obstructing our way, like a reed flute full of dirt.⁵⁹ The limbs of the body are the implements of its action and the instrument for producing an infinite variety of works. They are like the potter's wheel, turning and whirling with

their mud in order to produce the fragile pottery of clay.

⁶⁰ Thus sage, I am plunged in the dangerous sea of my sensual desires. You alone are able to raise me out of it by your kindness to me. They say that in this world only holy saints are victorious over their senses. Only their company removes the grief of mankind and saves them from the perilous sea of sensuality.

Chapter 7 — Bhushunda Describes the Seed of the Tree of the World

¹ Bhushunda replied:—

Having listened to this holy speech by the vidyadhara spirit, I answered his questions in plain words as follows.

² Well said, O chief of the vidyadharas. It proves that you are awakened to your good sense by your good fortune. After so long you now desire to be raised out of the dark pit and dungeon of the world.

³ Your holy intentions shine brightly like blazing clouds in midday light, and like pure liquid gold melted down by the fire of right reasoning. ⁴ Your clear mind will easily be able to grasp the meaning of my advice to you, just as a clean mirror is capable of receiving the reflection of every object set before it. ⁵ You must give your assent to what I say by uttering the syllable Om. You need have no doubt and may take what I have come to know by my long research as certain truth.

⁶ By giving up your ignorance, you well know that whatever you feel within yourself is not your self, and that it is hard to have it, in spite of your long search. ⁷ Know it for certain that there is no “I” or “you” and no phenomenal world that may be called real. All this is the blissful God who is no cause of either your happiness or misery.

⁸ We cannot use reason to determine whether this world is a creation of our ignorance or whether it is ignorance itself, because there being only one simple entity, there is no possibility of the coexistence of duality.

⁹ The world appears like water in a mirage. It is insubstantial and though it appears to be something real, in reality it is nothing at all. The phenomena that appear to view are all Himself and nothing else. ¹⁰ The world being like water in a mirage, it neither exists or doesn’t exist. There can be no reflection of it either. Therefore it must be only Brahman.

¹¹ The seed of the world is the “I” ego, the subjective self. The “you” or the objective world is derived from the subjective self or egoism. Such being the case, the visible world with all its lands and seas, its mountains and rivers and gods also, is a huge tree growing out of the same original source of egoism.

¹² The great tree that represents all the worlds grows out of the particle of egoism. The organs of sense are the juicy roots of this tree, and the far extending sky is the many branches of the main tree of the mundane world. ¹³ The starry frame in the sky is the netted canopy high over this tree. The groups of constellations are bunches of blossoms of this tree. The desires of men are like the long fibers and filaments of the tree. Luminous moons are its ripe fruit. ¹⁴ The many spheres of heaven are the hollows of this large and great tree and Meru, Mandara and other mountains are its great boughs and branches.

¹⁵ The seven oceans are the ditches of water dug around the trunk and roots of this tree. The infernal region is the deep pit underlying the roots of this tree. The yugas and other cycles of time are its knots and joints, and the rotation of time over it is like a circle of worms constantly sucking up its sap.

¹⁶ Our ignorance is the earth in which it grows, and all peoples are like flights of birds hovering upon it. Its false apprehension forms its great trunk which is burnt by the fire of nirvana and our knowledge of the utter extinction of all things.

¹⁷ The sights of things, the thoughts of the mind, and the various pleasures of the world are all as false

as a forest growing in the sky, or like silver in white clouds or in the coating of conch and pearl shells.¹⁸ The seasons are its branches and the ten sides of the air are its smaller branches because they spread themselves in all directions. Self-consciousness is the core and essential part of this tree and the wind is the breath of life that fluctuates in every part of this tree of the world.¹⁹ Sunshine and moonbeams are the two flowers of this tree. Their rising and setting represent the opening and closing of blossoms. Daylight and the darkness of night are like butterflies and bumble bees fluttering over them.

²⁰ In the end, know that one all pervading ignorance extends all over this tree of the world. Ignorance stretches from its roots in the nether worlds through all sides of the compass to its top in the heavens above. It is all an unreality appearing as real existence. When egoism, which is the seed of this fallacy, is burnt up by the fire of non-egoism, the tree will no longer grow or give seed for future births in this imaginary world.

Chapter 8 — Bhushunda Describes the Tree and the Temple of Illusion

¹ Bhushunda continued and said:—

Now vidyadhara, you have heard how the mundane tree comprises the earth with her mountains and cavern abodes, and stretches to all sides and touches the skies bearing all living beings continually moving and living upon it.² Such is the tree of the world that grows out of the seed of egoism. But when this is roasted by the fire of reason, it ceases to sprout forth anymore.

³ What is visible does not exist. “I” and “you” are not a positive reality. The fallacy of their existence is completely burnt away by the knowledge that all is identical with God.⁴ The thought of “I” and “you” becomes the seed of the world. Therefore, the thought of non-ego and no you removes the idea of egoism and you, and this is the true and best knowledge of God.

⁵ Think of the nonexistence of the world before its creation. Tell me, where was this knowledge of egoism and the other, or this delusion of the unity or duality?⁶ Those who strive diligently to get rid of their desires altogether, according to the instructions of their spiritual teachers, truly become successful in obtaining the supreme state.⁷ As the confectioner becomes skillful in his profession by learning and practicing of the art of confectionary, so the inquirer after truth becomes successful by constant application and by no other means.

⁸ Know that the world is a wonderful phenomenon of the intellect. It does not exist in outer space as it appears to the naked eye, but in the inner mind.⁹ As a picture is the copy of the pattern inscribed in the painter’s mind, so the opening and closing of our thoughts unfolds or obscures the world to us.

¹⁰ This thought or fancy of the mind makes us see a large building supported on huge columns, studded with gems and pearls and gilded with bright gold.¹¹ It is surrounded by a thousand pillars of precious stones, rising high like the peaks of Mount Sumeru and emitting the various colors of the rainbows, glittering with the brightness of the evening sun on clouds.¹² It is furnished with many a fountain for the enjoyment of men, women and children living under it among the decorations of all kinds of animals.¹³ It is full of elements with its enemy of darkness that is light. Darkness and light are its alternate results, hence it has derived its name as picture.

¹⁴ There are lakes of lotuses with kalpa trees beside them for the sport of women who pluck their flowers to decorate themselves, flowers that scatter their fragrance as plentifully as clouds sprinkle their rain all around.¹⁵ Here the great boundary mountains are as light as toys in the hands of children. The breath of little children toss and whirl them about like playthings.¹⁶ Here the bright evening clouds are like ladies’ glittering earrings and light autumn clouds are like flying fans and flappers. The heavy clouds of rainy season move as slowly as the waving fans of palm leaves. The orb of the earth moves about under the canopy of the starry heavens like dice on a chessboard.¹⁷ Here all living creatures and the sun and moon move about like dice and the king and queen on a chessboard. The appearance and disappearance of the world in the arena of vacuum are like the gain or loss of a chess piece in a game played by the gods.

¹⁸ A thought long dwelt upon and brooded over in the mind comes to appear as really present before the sight of its creator.¹⁹ In the same way, this world of forms is a visible representation of the thoughts of the mind. It is as an exquisite performance of the artist’s mind from a prototype grafted in

the soul.²⁰ It is the apparition of an unreality, present in appearance but absent in substance. It truly is the appearance of an unreality, by whatever cause it may have come to appear.

²¹ It is like the various forms of ornaments made of the same gold substance. The vault of the world is as full of ever changing wonders as the changeful and wonderful thoughts of the mind. Therefore the cessation of thought causes the extinction of the world.²² Hence it lies entirely within your power to have or leave the world as you may like. Either disregard your temporal enjoyments, if you seek your final liberation, or continue in your acts and rites in order to continue your repeated reincarnations through endless births and deaths.

²³ I understand you have attained a state of reason and you have purified your soul in this your second or third stage of yoga. I believe you will not fall back down to a lower order. Therefore hold your silence and rely on the purity of the soul and shut out all that is visible from your sight.

Chapter 9 — Bhushunda on the Creations of the Intellect

¹ Bhushunda said:—

The unintelligible objects of thought are phenomena of the intellect. They lie as calmly in the great, inert body of the intellect like sunbeams shine on the surface of a clear basin of water.² The unintelligent world exists in the intelligent intellect by its power of using the intellect and remains alike with the unlike, just as the undersea fire resides in water and latent heat with cold.³ Both the intelligent and the unintelligent have their source in the understanding process of the intellect which produces and reduces them from and into itself, just as the wind both fans land extinguishes fire.

⁴ Rest in the intellect that remains after negation of your egoism. Remain in that calm and quiet state of the soul which results from your thinking in this manner.⁵ You are settled in your form of intellect, both within and without everything, just as sweet water remains in and out of a raining cloud.

⁶ There is nothing as “I” or “you.” All are forms of the one intellect connected with the intellect which is Brahman itself. There is nothing else endued with intelligence. The whole is one stupendous intelligence with which nothing can be compared.⁷ The one Intelligence is the earth, heaven and nether world, together with their inhabitants of men, gods and demigods. It exhibits in itself the various states of their being and actions.⁸ As the world is seen to remain quietly, a representation like a map, so does the universe appear from its portrayal in the emptiness of the Divine Mind.⁹ Hence we see various appearances unfolded from the Divine Mind and exhibited to view. It is your choice whether to view them as animate or inanimate beings.

¹⁰ These are the wonderful phenomena of the intellect. They appear like so many worlds in the open sky. They are like a mirage created by sunshine to delude the ignorant. They appear as empty air to the learned who see them in their true light.¹¹ As a blinded eye sees apparitions in clear sky, so the world appears as a phantom before the general short-sightedness of unspiritual and ignorant people.

¹² Knowledge of the objective world and that of the subjective ego are mere reflections of ideas in the mind. They appear and disappear by turns, just as a city is gilded or shaded by the falling and failing of sunlight. But in this case, city houses are realities but the apparitions of the mind are as baseless as a garden in the empty sky.

Chapter 10 — Bhushunda Describes Brahman

¹ Bhushunda continued:—

Know O vidyadhara spirit, that the world is an evolution of Divine Intelligence, and not as it appears to be: an inert mass distinct from that intelligence. The reflection of hot sunbeams on water is not different from the cold water. In the same way, the reflection of the world in Divine Intelligence is not different from the substance of that Intelligence itself.² Therefore remain at rest without making any distinction between your knowledge of the world or its absence. A picture drawn on the tablet of the painter's mind, and not painted on an outward canvas, is as false as a fairyland in empty air.

³ The omnipotence of Brahman also contains unconscious matter in his intelligence, just as the calm and clear water of the sea contains the matter which is its future waves, froth and foam.⁴ As the froth is not produced in water without some cause or other, so creation never proceeds from the essence of Brahman without its particular cause.⁵ But the uncaused and causeless Brahman can never have any cause whatever for his creation of the world, nor is there anything in this or any other world that is ever born or destroyed in Brahman.⁶ The complete lack of a cause makes the growth and formation of the world an utter impossibility. It is as impossible as the growth of a forest or the sight of a sea in a mirage in a desert.

⁷ The nature of Brahman is the same as infinity and eternity. It is tranquil and immutable at all times. Therefore it is not liable at anytime to entertain a thought or will to create. Thus, there being no temporary cause for such, the world itself must be identical with Brahman.⁸ Therefore, the nature of Brahman is both as empty as the hollow emptiness of air and as dense as the density of a rock. The solidity of Brahman represents the solid cosmos, as his insubstantiality displays the empty atmosphere.

⁹ Whether you can understand anything or nothing regarding the mysterious nature of God, remain quite unconcerned about it. Rest your soul in that Supreme Spirit in which all intelligence and its absence are both alike.¹⁰ The everlasting bliss of the uncreated God has no reason to create the world which cannot increase his bliss. Therefore, from the improbability of God making a creation for no purpose whatsoever, know that all that exists is uncreated God himself.

¹¹ Of what use is it to reason with the ignorant concerning the production and destruction of creation when they do not know the Divine Intellect?¹² Wherever there is the Supreme Being, there are worlds also because the meaning of the word "world" conveys the sense of their variety.¹³ The Supreme Brahman is present in everything in all places, in the woods and grass, in the habitable earth and in waters likewise. So the creatures of God bring forth every part of creation together with the all-creative power.

¹⁴ It is improper to ask what is the nature and constitution of Brahman because there is no possibility of ascertaining the essence and absence of the properties of an infinite and transcendental entity.¹⁵ All lack is absent in Him who is full in himself. Any particular nature is inapplicable to the Infinite One who comprehends all nature in him. All words that describe his nature are mere reasoning contrary to logic.¹⁶ Nonexistence is altogether impossible for the everlasting and self-existent being who is always existent in his own essence. Any word descriptive of his nature is only a misrepresentation of

his true nature and quality.¹⁷ He is neither I nor you. He is unknowable to understanding and invisible to people in all worlds. Yet He is represented as such and such, which are like false phantoms of the brain presenting themselves as ghosts to children.

¹⁸ That which is beyond the sense of “I” and “you” (subject and object) is the truly Supreme, but what is seen under the sense of “I” and “you” proves to be null and void.¹⁹ The distinction of the world from the essence of Brahman is entirely lost in the sight of those who see only the unity of Brahman. The subjective and objective are of equal importance to those who believe all objects of sense are mere productions of fancy from the very substance of Brahman, just as the various ornaments are only transformations of the same gold material.

Chapter 11 — Bhushunda: Creation Necessarily Is of the Same Nature as Brahman

¹ Bhushunda continued:—

He is said to abide in the Supreme whose mind is unmoved by the blow of a weapon on his bare body, or even a touch on his naked skin.² One must strive by exercise of his manly powers and patience to practice rigid mental quietness and indifference to attain deep sleep state over all visible appearances.³ A wise man acquainted with the truths of nature is not troubled by the severest trials or persecution, just as the heaving waves of the lake cannot submerge a lotus that stands firm in its water.⁴ He who is impassive as empty air to the blows of weapons on his body, and who is unaffected by the embraces of beautiful women, is the only person who inwardly sees what is worth seeing.

⁵ As poison assumes the form of an insect which is not different from the nature of poison,⁶ so the infinite number of souls produced in the Supreme Spirit retain the nature of their original substance and which they are capable of knowing.⁷ As an insect born in poison does not die from it, so the human soul produced by the Eternal Soul is not subject to death, nor does it forsake its own nature though it takes a grosser form like vile, poisonous insects.⁸ Things born in and produced by Brahman are of the same nature with Brahman, though different from it in appearance, like an insect from poison which adheres to the food and appears as otherwise. So the world exists in Brahman but appears to be without it.

⁹ No worm is born in poison that does not retain the nature of poison. It never dies in it without being revivified in it.¹⁰ Owing to the indestructible property of self-consciousness, all beings pass over the great gulf of death, just like they leap over a gap in the ground caused by the gouge of a bull's hoof.

¹¹ Why do men neglect to lay hold on that blessed state which is beyond and above all other states in life, and which when had, infuses a cool calmness in the soul?¹² What a great stain to the pure soul to neglect meditation on glorious God, before which our mind, egoism and understanding all vanish into insignificance.¹³ As you look upon a pot or a piece of cloth as mere trifles, so you should consider your body as brittle as glass and your mind, understanding and egoism as empty nothings.

¹⁴ The wise and learned divert their attention from all worldly things, and also from their internal powers of mind and understanding, to remain steadfast in their consciousness of the soul.¹⁵ A wise man takes no notice of others' faults or merits, nor does he notice the happiness or misery of himself or anyone else. He knows full well that no one is the doer or sufferer of anything whatsoever.

Chapter 12 — Bhushunda on the Identity of Will & Its Work of Desire; Vasishta on the Four Quarters to Attain Liberation from Ignorance

¹ Bhushunda continued:—

The supposition that an emptiness is a part of the universal emptiness is false, so the concept of an individual ego is altogether an error.² The false conception of limited emptiness produced from unlimited emptiness has given rise to the mistaken belief of unreal and individual souls proceeding from the one universal and undivided soul of God.

³ Divine Intellect exists in the form of air in air which it takes for its body. It is manifest throughout the aerial sphere and therefore I am neither the ego nor the non-ego.⁴ The unity of subtle intellect is of such a nature that it contains the gravity of the immense world in the same manner as a heavy mountain is contained in an atom. The conscious intellect is of the form of air, empty and all pervading.⁵ The intellect, rarer than subtle air, thinks of the gross nature of unintelligent matter which exhibits itself in the form of the world.

⁶ It is well known to the spiritually minded person that our egoism and the materiality of the world are only expansions of intellect, just as the currents and swirls of streams in whirlpools are only expansions of water.⁷ When this process of intellect is stopped, the whole course of nature is at a standstill, just like the water of a lake without waves or the quiet sky without wind.⁸ Thus there is no cause of any physical action in any part of the world except what is derived from the agitation of Intellect, without which this whole is a shapeless void and nothing.⁹ The action of Intellect makes the world appear to us at all times and places, whether in the sky, water or land, or when we wake, sleep, or dream.¹⁰ The action and inaction of the Intellect is imperceptible to our understanding because of the extreme subtleness of the mind, more transparent than clear sky.

¹¹ The knowing soul is one with the Supreme Spirit. It is unconscious of pleasure or pain or the sense of its egoism. Melted down into Divine Essence, it resides as the fluidity of psychic fluid.¹² A wise man has no regard for any external intelligence, fortune, fame or prosperity. Having no desire or hope to rise or fear to fall, he sees none of these things before him, just as one in the gloom of night sees no object visible in broad daylight.

¹³ The moonlight of the intellect issues forth from the moonlike disc of the glory of God. It fills the universe with its ambrosial flood. There is no other created world, nor any receptacle of time or space except the essence of Brahman which fills the whole.¹⁴ Thus the whole universe being full with the glorious essence of God, it is the mind which revolves with the spheres of the worlds on itself, like ripples on the surface of waters.¹⁵ The revolving world is rolling on like a running stream to its decay with its ever rising and sinking waves and its gurgling and spiraling currents and whirlpools.

¹⁶ As moving sands appear like water and as distant smoke seems like gathering clouds to the deluded, so this world appears to them as a gross object of creation, a third thing beside Divine Spirit and mind.

¹⁷ As sawed off wood appears to be separate blocks, and as water divided by wind has the appearance of detached waves, so this creation in the Supreme Spirit seems to be something without and different from it.¹⁸ The world is as un-solid and insubstantial as the trunk of a plantain tree, and

as false and frail as the leaves of the tree of our desire. It is plastic in its nature, but as hard as stone in substance.¹⁹ It is personified in the form of Viraj with his thousand heads and feet, and as many arms, faces and eyes, his body filling all sides with all mountains, rivers and countries situated in it.

²⁰ It is empty within and without any core. It is painted in many colors and has no color of itself.²¹ It is covered with bodies of gods and demigods, gandharvas, vidyadharas, and great naaga serpents. It is inert, moved by the all moving air of the all connecting spirit of God (*sutratma*). It is animated by the all enlivening vital life force of the Supreme Soul.

²² As the scene of a great city appears brilliant in a painting well drawn on canvas, so the picture of the world displayed by imagination in the retina of the mind appears charming to those who do not choose to consider it in its true light.²³ The reflection of the unreal and imaginary world which falls on the mirror of the fickle and fluctuating mind appears to swim upon its surface, like a drop of oil floating over the surface of water.²⁴ This world is covered with the network of feelings imprinted in the heart and interspersed with winding, whirling currents of mistake and misery. It runs with the flood of our affections and with silent murmurs of sorrow.

²⁵ Common understanding is ready to attribute choice, the predicates "I" and "you" and so forth to the original and prime Intellect, but none of these is separate from the Supreme One, just as fluid is no other than water itself.²⁶ The luminous Intellect itself is called creation, or else there is no other creation or any creator.²⁷ As the power of impulse is inherent in every moving substance, like the blowing of winds and flowing of water, so the Intellectual Soul, being of a empty form, knows all things only in their empty or ideal states.²⁸ As seas and oceans become the seeming cause for separate countries by separating one land from another, though the vacuum remains ever the same, so delusion is the cause of different ideas and dreams of material objects, but spirit remains unchanging forever.

²⁹ Know the words mind, egoism, understanding and such other words which signify the idea of knowledge proceed only from ignorance. They are soon removed by proper investigation.³⁰ Through conversation with the wise it is possible to remove one half of this ignorance. By investigation into the scriptures, we can remove a quarter of it. Our belief in and reliance on the Supreme Spirit serves to put down the remaining quarter.³¹ Having thus divided yourself into these fourfold duties, and by each destroyed the four parts of ignorance, at last you will find a nameless something which is the true reality itself.

³² Rama said, "Sage, I can understand how a portion of our ignorance is removed by conversation with the wise, and how a quarter of it is driven away by the study of scriptures. But tell me. How is the remainder removed by our belief and reliance in the spirit?³³ Tell me sage, what do you mean by the simultaneous and gradual removal of ignorance? What am I to understand by what you call the nameless one and the true reality, as distinguished from the unreal?"

³⁴ Vasishta replied:—

It is proper for all good and virtuous people who are dispassionate and dissatisfied with the world to have recourse to wise and holy men, and argue with them regarding the course of nature in order to get over the ocean of this miserable world.³⁵ It is also proper for intelligent persons to search diligently after passionless and unselfish men wherever they may be found, and particularly to find

and revere such of them who possess knowledge of the soul and are kindly disposed to share their spiritual knowledge with others.³⁶ Finding such a holy sage takes away half of one's temporal and spiritual ignorance by setting him on the first and best step of divine knowledge.

³⁷ Thus half of one's spiritual gloom is dispelled by association with the holy. The remaining two-fourths are removed by religious learning and one's own faith and devotion.³⁸ Whenever any desire of any enjoyment whatever is carefully suppressed by his own effort, it is called self-exertion and it destroys one fourth of spiritual ignorance.³⁹ The company of the holy, the study of scriptures, and one's own efforts tend to take away one's sins. This is done by each of these alone or all of these together, either by degrees or all at once.

⁴⁰ Whatever remains after the total extinction of ignorance, whether as something or nothing at all, is said to be the transcendent and nameless or unspeakable something or nothing.⁴¹ This truly is the real Brahman, the undestroyed, infinite and eternal one. Being only a manifestation of the insubstantial will, Brahman is also understood to be a nonexistent blank. By knowing the measureless, immeasurable and unerring Being, rely upon your own extinction in nirvana and be free from all fear and sorrow.

Chapter 13 — Bhushunda's Anecdote of Indra's Rule of an Atomic World

¹ Bhushunda said:—

The universe contains the totality of existence and appears as a wide extended sphere. It is not in need of any preexistent place or time as recipients of its substance just as ethereal light requires no prop or pillar in the heavens for its support.² The fabrication of this triple world is the mere thought or working of the mind. All this is more quiet and calm, more minute and light, and much more translucent than odor residing in the air.³ The world is a wonderful phenomenon of the intellect. Though it is as minute as a particle of fragrance borne by the wind, the world appears as big as a mountain to outward organs of sense.⁴ Everyone views and thinks of the world in the same form and light as it presents itself to him, just as the operations of the mind and visions in a dream appear as they occur to their recipients and to no one else.

⁵ I will tell an old legend of what happened to Indra, the lord of the gods, when he was confined in a minute particle in times long ago.⁶ Once upon a time it came to pass that this world grew up as a small fig fruit on a branch of the great tree of a kalpa age.⁷ The mundane fruit was composed of the three compartments of earth, sky and infernal regions which contained the gods and demigods of heaven, the hills and living creatures on earth, the marshy lands below, and troops of gnats and flies.⁸ It was a wonderful production of consciousness, as high as handsome full-blown buds with the juice of desire. It was scented with all kinds of smelling fragrances that were tempting to the mind by the variety of its tastes that were sweet to eat.

⁹ This tree grew upon the Brahman tree which was overhung by millions of creepers and orchids. Egoism was the stalk of the fruit which appeared beautiful to sight.¹⁰ It was encompassed by artery nerves called oceans and seas whose light is the principal door of liberation. It secreted the starry heaven above and the moist earth below.¹¹ It ripened at the end of the kalpa age when it became the food of black crows and cuckoos, or if it fell below there was an end of it by its absorption into the indifferent Brahman.

¹² At one time the great Indra, the lord of the gods, lived in that fruit, just like a big mosquito lives in an empty pot as the great leader of its company of small gnats.¹³ But this great lord was weakened in his strength and valor by his study and his teacher's lectures on spiritualism, which made him a spiritually minded person and a seer in all past and future matters.

¹⁴ It happened once upon a time, when the valiant god Narayana and his heavenly host had been resting and their leader Indra was weakened in his arms, that the demon asuras rose in open rebellion against the gods.¹⁵ Then Indra rose with his flashing arms and fire and fought for a long time with the strong asuras. At last Indra was defeated by superior strength and fled from the field.¹⁶ He ran in all ten directions, pursued by the enemy wherever he fled. He could find no place to rest, just as a sinner has no resting place in the next world.

¹⁷ Then as the enemy lost sight of him for a moment, he made use of that opportunity. He compressed the thought of his big body in his mind and became a minute form on the outside.¹⁸ Then through his consciousness of his personal minuteness, he entered the womb of an atom which was glittering amidst the expanse of solar rays, like a bee entering a lotus bud.¹⁹ He immediately rested in that state

and his hope of final bliss in the next. He utterly forgot the warfare and attained the ultimate bliss of nirvana.

²⁰ In that lotus and instantly in his imagination, he conceived his royal palace. He sat in lotus posture as if resting on his own bed. ²¹ Then Indra, seated in that mansion, saw an imaginary city containing a grand building in the middle, its walls studded with gems, pearls and coral. ²² From within the city, Indra saw a large country all around containing many hills and villages, pasture grounds for cattle, forests and human dwellings. ²³ Then Indra felt a desire to enjoy that country he had formed in his imagination, with all its lands and hills and seas. ²⁴ Afterwards Indra conceived a desire to possess the three worlds, together with all the earth and ocean, sky and infernal regions, the heavens, planetary spheres above and mountain ranges below. ²⁵ Thus did Indra remain there as lord of the gods in possession of all abundance for his enjoyments.

Afterwards, a son was born to him named Kunda, of great strength and valor. ²⁶ Then at the end of his lifetime, this Indra of unblemished reputation left his mortal body and became extinct in nirvana, like a lamp extinguished for lack of oil. ²⁷ Kunda reigned over the three worlds. Then, having given birth to a boy, he departed to his ultimate state of bliss after the end of his life term. ²⁸ That son also ruled in his time, then departed at the end of his lifetime to the holy state of supreme bliss. He also left a son after him. ²⁹ In this manner a thousand generations of grandsons of the first Indra have reigned and passed away in their time. There is still a prince named Ansaka reigning over the land of the lord of the gods.

³⁰ Thus generations of the lord of immortals still hold sovereignty over the imaginary world of Indra in that sacred particle of sunbeam in empty air. That atomic particle is continually decaying and wasting in this long course of time.

Chapter 14 — Bhushunda: Countless Indras Ruling an Atomic World

¹ Bhushunda continued:—

There was a prince born of the race of that Indra who also became lord of the gods. He was endowed with prosperity and all good qualities and devoted to divine knowledge.² This prince of Indra's race received his divine knowledge from the oral instruction of Brihaspati.³ Knowing the knowable one, the prince persisted in the course of knowledge as he was taught. Being the sovereign lord of the gods, he reigned over all three worlds.⁴ He fought against demigods and conquered all his foes. He made a hundred sacrifices and got over the darkness of ignorance by his enlightened mind.

⁵ He remained long in meditation, his mind fixed in the central channel within his subtle body (the *sushumna nadi*) that resembles the thread of a stalk of the lotus. He continued to reflect on hundreds of many other matters.⁶ Once he had a desire to see the essence of Brahman by the power of his understanding in meditation.⁷ He sat in quiet seclusion and in the silent meditation of his tranquil mind, he saw the disappearance of the chain of causes all about and inside himself.

⁸ He saw the omnipotent Brahman extended in and about all things, present in all times and places and existing as all in all.⁹ His hands stretch to all sides and his feet reach the ends of the worlds. His face and eyes are on all sides and his head pierces the spheres. His ears are set in all places and he endures by encompassing all things everywhere.¹⁰ He is devoid of all organs of sense, yet possessed of the powers of all senses in himself. He is the support of all. Being destitute of qualities, he is the source and receptacle of all quality.¹¹ Unmoved and unmoving by himself, he is moving in and out of all things, as well as moving them all both internally and externally. He is unknowable owing to his minuteness and appears to be at a distance though he is so near us.

¹² He is like the one sun and moon in the whole universe, and the same land in all the earth. He is the one universal ocean on the globe and the one Mount Meru all about.¹³ He is the core and gravity of all objects and he is the one emptiness everywhere. He is the wide world and the great cosmos that is common to all.¹⁴ He is the liberated soul of all and the primary consciousness in every place. He is every object everywhere and beside all things in all places.¹⁵ He is in all pots and huts and in all trees and their coatings. He moves carts and carriages and enlivens all men and other animals.

¹⁶ He is in all the various customs and manners of men and in all the many modes of their thinking. He resides equally in the parts of an atom as in the stupendous frame of the triple world.¹⁷ He resides as pungency in the heart of pepper and as the empty space in the sky. The three worlds exist in his intellectual soul, whether they are real or mere unrealities.

¹⁸ Indra saw the Lord in this manner. Then being liberated from his animal state by the help of his pure understanding, he remained in the same state of meditation.¹⁹ In his abstract thought, the magnanimous god saw all things united in his meditative mind. He saw this creation in the same form as it appears to us.²⁰ Then he wandered in his mind all over this creation, believing himself as the lord of all he saw. He became the god Indra and reigned over the three worlds and their many colorful spectacles.

²¹ Know, O chief of the race of vidyadhara spirits, that to this day the same Indra who descended from the family of Indras is still holding his reign as lord of the gods.²² Then he perceived in his mind, by virtue of his former habit of thinking, the seed of his memory sprouting forth with the lotus stalk in

which he thought to have lain before.²³ I have told you about the reign of the former Indra in the heart of an atom in the sunbeam, and of the residence of his last generation, the latter Indra, in the hollow fiber of the lotus stalk.²⁴ So have thousands of other Indras gone by, and are going on still in their fancied realm in the empty sky, all in the same manner and mode as observed by their predecessors.

²⁵ So runs the course of nature in ceaseless succession, like the current of a river running onward to the sea. So do men, whether or not acquainted with divine knowledge, flow on as streams to the abyss of eternity.²⁶ Such is the lengthening delusion of the world which appears to be true but vanishes to nothing at the appearance of the light of truth.²⁷ From whatever cause, and in whatever place or time, and in whatever manner this delusion is seen to have sprung, it is made to disappear by knowledge of it.

²⁸ Only egoism produces the wonderful appearance of delusion, like clouds in the sky cause rain. Ego spreads itself as a mist, but disappears immediately at the sight of light.²⁹ He who has gotten rid of his belief in sight of the world and has attained knowledge of the self-reflecting soul, who has placed his belief in one empty form of empty air devoid of all properties and beyond all categories, is freed from all option and settled in the only One.

Chapter 15 — Bhushunda, the Sense of Ego Is the Seed of Error

¹ Bhushunda resumed and said:—

Wherever anyone has a thought of ego, the idea of the world is found inherent in it, just as it appeared to Indra within the heart of an atomic particle.² The error of the world covers the mind like green grass spreads over the ground. The origin of the error is the idea of one's ego and it takes its root in the human soul.

³ This minute seed of ego, moistened with the water of desire, produces the tree of the three worlds on the mountain of Brahman in the great forest of emptiness.⁴ The stars are the flowers of this tree, hanging on high on the branches of mountain crags. Rivers resemble its veins and fibers, flowing with the juicy core of their waters. The objects of desire are the fruits of this tree.⁵ The revolving worlds are the fluctuating waves of the water of egoism. The flowing currents of desires continually supply varieties of exquisite social meetings, sweet to the taste of the intellect.⁶ The sky is the boundless ocean full of ethereal waters, abounding with showering drops of starlight. Plenty and poverty are the two whirlpools in the ocean of the earth, and all our sorrows are the mountainous waves on its surface.

⁷ The three worlds are presented as a picture of the ocean, with the upper lights as its froths and foams swimming upon it. Planets are floating like bubbles upon it and their belts are like the thick valves of their doors.⁸ The surface of the earth is like a hard and solid rock, and the intellect moves like a black crow upon it. The hurry and bustle of its people are like the constant rotation of the globe.⁹ Infirmities and errors, old age and death, are like waves gliding on the surface of the sea. The rising and falling of bodies in it are like the swelling and dissolving of bubbles in water.

¹⁰ Know the world to be a gust of the breath of your ego. Know it also as a sweet scent from the lotus-like flower of ego.¹¹ Know the knowledge of your ego and that of the objective world are not two different things. They are one and the same thing, just as the wind and its breath, water and its fluidity, and fire and its heat.¹² The world is included under the sense of ego, and ego is contained in the heart of the world. These being productive of one another are reciprocally the container and contained of each other.

¹³ He who erases the seed of his ego from his understanding by ignoring it altogether has washed the picture of the world from his mind by the water of ignorance of it.¹⁴ Know, O vidyadhara spirit, that there is no such thing as ego. It is a causeless nothing, like the horn of a rabbit.¹⁵ There is no egoism in the all pervading and infinite Brahman who is devoid of all desire. Therefore, there being no cause or ground for it, it is never anything in reality.¹⁶ Whatever is nothing in reality could not possibly have any cause in the beginning of creation. Therefore egoism is a nothingness, like the son of a barren woman is a nothingness.

¹⁷ The lack of egoism on the one hand proves the deprivation of the world on the other. Thus there remains the Intellect or the one mind alone in which everything is extinct.¹⁸ From the proof of the absence of ego and the world, the operations of the mind and the sight of all that can be seen come to an end. Nothing remains for you to care for or fear.¹⁹ Whatever is not is a nothing. The rest is as calm and quiet as nothing in existence. Knowing this as a certainty, be enlightened and fall no more to the

false error which has no root in nature.²⁰ Being cleansed from the stain of imagination, you become as purified and sanctified as the holy Lord Shiva forever. Then the sky will seem to you like a huge mountain and the vast world will shrink to an atom.

Chapter 16 — The Extinction of the Vidyadhara in Samadhi

¹ Bhushunda continued:—

As I was speaking in this manner, the chief of the vidayadharas became unconscious of himself and fell into the trance of samadhi. ² Despite my repeated attempts to awaken him from that trance state, he did not open his eyes but remained wholly absorbed in his nirvana trance. ³ He attained the supreme and ultimate state and became enlightened in his soul. He made no other further attempt to know what he sought.

Vasishta speaking:—

⁴ Rama, I have told you this story to show the effect of instruction on pure hearts, where it floats like a drop of oil on the surface of water. ⁵ This instruction consists in forgetting the existence of individual ego in the Supreme Spirit. This is the best advice and there is nothing else like this calculated to give peace and comfort to your soul. ⁶ But when this advice falls on the soil of evil minds, it is suppressed and lost in the end, just as the purest pearl falls from the surface of a smooth mirror. ⁷ Good advice sticks fast in the calm minds of the virtuous, entering their reasoning souls like sunlight shining in a diamond.

⁸ Egoism is truly the seed of all worldly misery. The seed of the thorny silk tree grows only prickles on earth. In the same way, the thought that “this is mine” is the out stretching branch of this thorny tree.

⁹ First the seed ego, then its branches of me or my-ness produce the endless leaves of our desires. Their sense of selfishness produces the burdensome fruits of our sorrows and misery.

¹⁰ Then the vidyadhara said (to Bhushunda), “I understand, O chief of sages, that with this knowledge even dull people become long lived in this world. This true knowledge is the cause of your great longevity and that of other sages. ¹¹ After the pure in hearts and minds are once admonished with the knowledge of truth, they soon attain the highest state of fearlessness.”

¹² Vasishta said:—

The chief of the birds of air spoke to me this way on the summit of Sumeru Mountain. Then he held his silence like the mute clouds on the top of Rishyasringa chain. ¹³ I took leave of the sagely bird and went to the home of the vidyadhara spirit to learn the truth of the story, then returned to my place which was graced by the assembly of sages.

¹⁴ I have told you, O Rama, the story of the ancient bird and the calmness attained by the vidyadhara with little pain and knowledge. Eleven great yugas have elapsed since my conversation with Bhushunda, the ancient chief of the feathered crow tribe.

Chapter 17 — The Minute Seed of Egoism; as a Cannonball

¹ Vasishta said:—

The tree of desire which produces the fruit of worldliness and is filled with the taste of all kinds of sweet and bitterness may be checked in its growth by means of the knowledge of one's lack of egoism.² By the habit of thinking one has no egoism, one comes to view both gold and stone and all sorts of rubbish in the same light. By being calm and quiet in all events, one never has any cause for sorrow at anything whatsoever.

³ When the cannonball of egoism is fired from the gun of the mind by force of divine knowledge, we are at a loss to know where it takes its flight.⁴ The stone of egoism is flung from the parapets of the body by the gigantic force of spiritual knowledge. We do not know where this heavy egoism will land and be lost.⁵ After the stone of egoism is flung away by the great force of the knowledge of Brahman, we cannot say where this engine of the body is lost forever.

⁶ The meaning of ego is frost in the heart of man. It melts under the sunshine of the lack of ego. It flies off in vapor, then disappears into nothing we know not where.⁷ Ego is the juice of the inner part of the body and the lack of ego is the solar heat without. The former is sucked up by the latter and forsakes the dried body like a withered leaf, then flies off where we know not.⁸ The moisture of egoism, being sucked up from the leafy body of the living, flies by the process of suction by solar heat to the unknown region of endless vacuum.

⁹ Whether a man sleeps in his bed or sits on the ground, whether he remains at home or wanders on rocks, whether he wanders over the land or water, wherever he sits or sleeps or is awake or not,

¹⁰ this formless egoism abides in him, either as gross matter, the subtle spirit, or in some state or the other which, though far away from him, seems to be united with him.¹¹ Egoism is seated like a minute seed in the heart of the fig tree of the body where it sprouts forth and stretches its branches and makes up the different parts of the world.¹² Again, the big tree of the body is contained within the minute seed of egoism which bursts out into branches forming the various parts of the universe.¹³ As everyone sees the small seed as containing a large tree which develops itself into a hundred branches, bearing all their leaves, flowers and abundant fruit, so the big body resides within the atomic seed of egoism with all its endless parts of physical organs and mental faculties which are discernible to the sight of the intelligent.

¹⁴ Egoism is not to be had in the body by reasoning, which points out the mind of everybody, but seek it in the sphere of Empty Consciousness. The seed of egoism does not spring from the heart of unreality. The blunder of the reality of the world is destroyed by the fire proceeding from the spiritual wisdom of the wise.

Chapter 18 — All Memories Remain in Bits in the Air; Each Sees Only His Own

¹ Vasishta related:—

There is never and nowhere an absolute death or total dissolution of the body, mind, soul or egoism. The final release is the creation of the inner imagination of the mind.

² Look at these flying sights of Meru and Mandara Mountains displayed before you. They are not carried to and fro to everybody, but are reflected in everyone's minds like the flying clouds of autumn in the water of a river. ³ These creations are placed over, above, below and under one another like the coatings of a plantain tree. Creations are either in contact or detached from one another like clouds in the sky.

⁴ Rama said, "Sage, I do not fully understand the sound sense of what you say by the words, 'look at these flying sights.' Therefore I ask you to explain this clearly to me."

⁵ Vasishta replied:—

Know Rama, that life contains the mind and the mind contains the worlds within it, just as there are various kinds of trees with their various parts contained in the core of a small berry.

⁶ After a man is dead, his vital energies fly and unite with the ethereal air, like the waters of streams flow into the ocean. ⁷ Then the winds of heaven disperse his vital energies and the imaginary worlds of his lifetime which existed in the particles of his vital breath. ⁸ I see the winds of heaven carrying away the vital energies together with their contents of imaginary worlds and filling the whole space of air with vital breath on all sides. ⁹ I see Meru and Mandara Mountains drifting with imaginary worlds before me. You also will observe the same before the sight of your understanding.

¹⁰ The ethereal airs are full with the vital energies of the dead which contain the minute particles of mind. These minds contain the various types of the worlds in them, just as sesame seeds contain oil inside. ¹¹ As the ethereal airs carry the vital energies, which are of the same kind, so the vital breaths carry particles of the mind. These again bear pictures of the worlds in them, as if they were grafted upon them. ¹² The same emptiness contains the entire creation and the three worlds with the earth and ocean, all of which are carried in emptiness like different odors are carried by the winds. ¹³ All these are seen in the sight of understanding and not by the sight of the visual organs. They are the portrayals of our imagination, like the fairylands we see in our dreams. ¹⁴ There are many other things more subtle than the visible atmosphere and which, owing to their existence only in our desire or fancy, are not carried upon the wings of the winds as the former ones.

¹⁵ There are some certain truths derived from intellect called intellectual principles. They have the power to cause our pleasure and pain and lead us to heaven or hell. ¹⁶ Again our desires are like the shadows of cities floating on the stream of life. Though the current of life is continually gliding away, yet the shadowy desires, whether successful or not, ever remain the same. ¹⁷ The vital breath carries its burden of the world along its course to the stillness of endless emptiness, just as breezes carry away the fragrance of flowers to the dreary desert where they are lost forever.

¹⁸ Though the mind is ever fickle, changeable and forgetful in its nature, yet it never loses the false idea of the world which is inherent in it, just as a pot removed to any place and placed in any state

never gets rid of its inner emptiness.¹⁹ So when the fallacy of the false world has taken possession of the deluded mind, it is equally impossible either to realize the form of the formless Brahman or to set the false world at nothing.

²⁰ This world is a revolving body carried about by the force of the winds, yet we have no knowledge of its motion. It is like sitting quietly in a boat that is carried miles away by the tide and winds.²¹ As men sitting in a boat have no knowledge of the force which carries the boat forward, so we earthly beings have no idea of the power associated with its rotating motion.²² As a wide extending city is represented in miniature in a painting at the foot of a column, so this world is contained in the core of the minute atom of the mind.

²³ A thing however little or insignificant is given much too great importance by the low and mean, just as a handful of paddy rice is of greater value to a little mouse than gems, and a particle of mud to a contemptible frog than the pearls under the water.²⁴ A trifle is taken as too much by those who are ignorant of its insignificance, just as the learned in the error of their judgment mistake this imaginary world as a preparation for their future happiness or misery.²⁵ The inner belief of something as really good and of another as positive evil is a mistake common to the majority of mankind, and to which the learned also are liable in their conduct in this world.

²⁶ As the intelligent and embodied soul is conscious of every part of the body in which it is confined, so the enlightened living soul (*jiva*) beholds all the three worlds displayed within itself.²⁷ The unborn and ever lasting God, who is of the form of conscious soul extending over the infinity of space, has all these worlds as parts of his all pervading empty body (as in the god Viraj).

²⁸ The intelligent and ever living soul sees the uncreated worlds deeply impressed in itself, just as a rod of iron, were it endowed with intelligence, would see future knives and needles in itself.²⁹ A clod of earth, whether endowed with intelligence or not, knows the seed hidden in it which later sprouts. In the same way, the ever living soul knows the world contained in it.³⁰ As the sensitive or insensitive seed knows the germ, plant and tree within its core, so the spirit of God perceives the great tree of the world conceived in its deepest womb.³¹ As a man with eyesight sees the image of something reflected in a mirror which a blind man does not, so a wise man sees the world in Brahman, which the ignorant does not perceive.³² The world is nothing except the union of the four categories of time, space, action and substance. Egoism, being indistinct from the attributes of the world, exists in God who contains the whole in Himself.

³³ Whatever lesson is taught to anybody by means of a parable, know that the simile relates to some particular property of the compared object and not in all respects.

³⁴ Whatever is seen moving or unmoving here in this world is the expanded body of the living soul, without any alteration in its atomic minuteness.³⁵ Leaving intelligence aside and taking force only, we find no difference between this physical force and the giver of the force.³⁶ Again, whatever alteration is produced in the motion or choice of any thing or person at any time or place or in any manner, it is all the act of Divine Consciousness.

³⁷ Consciousness infuses the mind with its power of choice, volition, imagination and the like because none of these can sprout in the mind without consciousness and without a conscious cause.

³⁸ Whatever desires and fancies arise in the minds of the unenlightened, they are not like the positive will or decree of the Divine Mind owing to the endless varieties and inconsistencies of human wishes. ³⁹ The desires arising in the minds of the enlightened are like no desires and as if they never arose because ⁴⁰ all thoughts and desires being groundless, they are as false as children's idle wishes. For who has ever held the objects of his dream? ⁴¹ Intention (*sankalpa*), with its triple sense of thought, desire and imagination, is impressed by consciousness on the living soul from its past memory. Though we have a notion of this idea of the individual soul, yet it is as untrue and insubstantial as a shadow, but not so original Consciousness which is both real and substantial.

⁴² He who is free from the error of taking the unreal world for real becomes as free as the god Shiva himself and, having gotten rid of the physical body, becomes manifest in his spiritual form.

⁴³ The imagination of the ignorant whirls about the worlds like cottonseed flying in the wind. But they appear to be as unmoved as stones to the wise who are not led away by their imagination. ⁴⁴ So there are multitudes of worlds amidst many other things in the vast womb of emptiness which nobody can count. Some are united with one another in groups, and others that have no connection with another.

⁴⁵ Supreme Consciousness, being all in all, manifests itself in endless forms and actions filling the vast space of infinity. Some are as transient as raindrops or bubbles in air and water that quickly burst and disappear. Others appear as great cities situated in the heart of the Infinite One. ⁴⁶ Some of these are as durable as rocks, and others are continually breaking and wearing out. Some appear bright as if with open eyes and others dark as if with closed eyelids. Some are luminous to sight and others hidden under impenetrable darkness. Thus the heart of Consciousness resembles a vast expanse of ocean with the waves of creation rolling through all eternity. ⁴⁷ Some, though set apart, continually tend towards another, like the waters of distant rivers run to mix with those of seas and ocean, and like the luminous bodies of heaven appear together to brighten its sphere.

Chapter 19 — The Form of Viraj, the Living Cosmos

¹ Rama said, "Sage, tell me about the nature of the living soul. How does it assume its different forms? Tell me also, what is its original form and what forms does it take at different times and places?"

² Vasishta replied:—

The infinite consciousness of God, which fills all space and vacuum, takes of its own will a subtle and minute form called by the name of Intellect. This is expressed by the term living soul (*jiva*).³ Its original form is neither that of a minute atom nor a bulky mass. It is neither an empty void nor anything having solidity. It is the pure intellect with consciousness of itself. It is omnipresent and it is called the living soul.

⁴ It is the minutest of the minute and the hugest of the huge. It is nothing at all, and yet the all which the learned call the living soul.⁵ Know it as identical with the nature, property and quality of any and every object that exists anywhere. It is the light and soul of all existence. It is identical with all by its absorbing the knowledge of everything in itself.

⁶ Whatever this soul thinks in any manner of anything at any place or time, it immediately becomes that by its notion thereof.⁷ The soul possesses the power of thinking, just as air has its force in the winds. The soul's thoughts are directed by its knowledge of things and not by the guidance of anyone, like children creating the appearance of ghosts.

⁸ As the existent air appears to be nonexistent without the motion of the wind, so the living soul which desists from its function of thinking is said to be extinct in the Supreme Deity.

⁹ The living soul is misled to think of its individuality as the ego by the density or dullness of its intellect. It supposes itself to be confined within a limited space of place and time and within the limited powers of action and understanding.¹⁰ Being thus circumscribed by time and space, and endowed with substance and properties of action and the like, it assumes to itself an unreal form or body with the belief of it being a sober reality.¹¹ Then it thinks itself to be enclosed in an ideal atom, just as one sees his own unreal death in a dream.

¹² Just as in a dream of the mind one finds his physical features changed to another form, so the soul in its state of ignorance forgets its intellectual nature and becomes the same nature and form as it constantly thinks upon.¹³ Thinking itself to be transformed into a gross and material form, such as that of Viraj the macrocosm, it views itself as bright and spotted as the moon with the black spot upon it.

¹⁴ Then, in its body resembling the moon, it finds the sudden union of the five senses of perception appearing of themselves within.¹⁵ Then these five senses are found to have the five organs of sensation for their inlets, by which the soul perceives the sensation of their respective objects.

¹⁶ Then the Purusha, or First Male power known as Viraj, manifests himself in five other forms said to be parts of his body. These are the sun, the sides, water, air, and the land, which are the objects of the five senses. He then becomes endless forms according to the infinite objects of his knowledge. Thus he is manifested in his objective forms, but remains quite unknown to us in his subjective or causal form which is unchangeable without decay.

¹⁷ At first he sprang up from the Supreme Being as its mental energy or the mind. He was manifest in the form of the calm and clear sky with the splendor of eternal delight. ¹⁸ He was not of the five elemental form, but the soul of the five elements. He is called the Viraj Purusha, the macrocosm of the world, and the Supreme Lord of all. ¹⁹ He rises spontaneously of himself, then subsides in himself. He expands his own essence all over the universe, and at last contracts the whole in himself. ²⁰ He arose in a moment with his power of volition and with all his desires in himself. He rises of his own will at first and after lasting long in himself, dissolves again in himself.

²¹ He is the same with the mind of God. He is the great body of the material world. His body is called the container of the eight elementary principles, and also the spiritual form. ²² He is the subtle and gross air manifest as the sky, but invisible as subtle ether. He is both within and without everything, and is yet nothing in himself. ²³ His body consists of eight members, namely the five senses, the mind, the living principle and egoism, together with the different states of their being and not being. ²⁴ He (in the form of Brahma) first sang the four Vedas with his four mouths. He determined the meanings of words and it was he who established the rules of conduct which remain in fashion to this time. ²⁵ The high and boundless heaven is the crown of his head and the lower earth is the footstool of his feet. The unbounded sky is his large belly and the whole universe is the temple over his body. ²⁶ The multitudes of worlds all about are the members of his body.

The waters of seas are the blood of the scars upon his body. The mountains are his muscles and the rivers and streams are the veins and arteries of his body. ²⁷ The seas are his blood vessels and the islands are the bonds round his persons. His arms are the sides of the sky and the stars are the hairs on his body. ²⁸ The forty-nine winds are its vital airs. The orb of the sun is its eyeball while its heat is the fiery bile inside its belly. ²⁹ The lunar orb is the sheath of his life and its cooling beams are the humid humors of his body. His mind is the receptacle of his desires and the core of his soul is the ambrosia of his immortality. ³⁰ He is the root of the tree of the body and the seed of the forest of actions. He is the source of all existence.

He is cooling moonlight diffusing delight to all beings by the healing beams of that balmy moon planet Oshadhisa (lord of medicinal herbs). ³¹ The scriptures say that the moon is the lord of life, the cause of the body and thoughts and actions of all living beings. ³² It is from this moonlike Viraj which contains all vitality in himself that all other living beings in the universe take their rise. Hence the moon is the container of life, mind, action and the sweet ambrosia of all living beings.

³³ The will or desire of Viraj produced the gods Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva from himself. All the celestial deities and demons are the miraculous creations of his mind. ³⁴ It is the wonderful nature of intelligent Consciousness that whatever it thinks upon in its form of an infinitesimal atom, the same appears immediately before it in its gigantic form and size.

³⁵ Rama, know that the entire universe is seat of the soul of Viraj and that the five elements compose the five component parts of his body. ³⁶ Viraj shines as the collective or Universal Soul of the world in the bright orb of the moon. He diffuses light and life to all individuals by spreading moonbeams which produce vegetable food for the support and sustenance of living beings. ³⁷ The plants supply animal bodies with their sustenance and thereby produce the life of living beings. They also produce the mind which becomes the cause of the actions and future births by the mind's efforts towards the

same.

³⁸ In this manner a thousand Virajes and hundreds of mahakalpa periods have passed away. There are many such still existing and yet to appear, with varieties of customs and manners of peoples in different ages and climates. ³⁹ The first and best and supremely blessed Viraj Purusha resides in the manner in which we conceive him, indistinct in his essence from the state of transcendent divinity, his huge body extending beyond the limits of space and time.

Chapter 20 — Description of Viraj & the Origin of Individual Life

¹ Vasishta continued:—

This Viraj Purusha is a volitive principle. Whatever he wills to do at anytime, the same appears instantly before him in its material form of the five elements.² O Rama, the sages say that this will has become the world because by being intent upon producing the this world, it expanded in that same form.³ Viraj is the cause of all things in the world which came to be produced in the same form as their material cause.

⁴ As the great Viraj collectively is the aggregate of all souls, so is he distributed likewise in the individual souls of everyone.⁵ The same Viraj is manifest in the meanest insect and the highest Rudra, in a small atom as in a huge hill. He expands himself from a seed to a very large tree.⁶ The great Viraj himself is the soul of every individual, from the creeping insect to the mighty Rudra of air. His infinite soul extends even to atoms that are sensible and conscious of themselves.

⁷ As Viraj expands and extends his soul to infinity, so he fills the bodies of even microscopic atoms with particles of his own essence.⁸ In reality, there is nothing great or small in the world. Everything appears to be in proportion as it is filled and expanded by the Divine Spirit.

⁹ The mind is derived from the moon and the moon has sprung from the mind. So does life spring from life and fluid water flows from the congealed snow and ice and vice versa.¹⁰ Life is only a drop of seminal fluid, distilled as a particle by the amorous union of parents.¹¹ Then this life reflects in itself, derives the properties of the soul, and becomes like it in the fullness of its perfections.¹² Then the living soul has consciousness of itself and of its existence as one pure and independent soul. But there is no cause whatever as to how it comes to think of itself a material being composed of the five elements.

¹³ Opposing nature leads one to error but in fact, nature always remains the same. It is like wrong interpretation of language that instills bad ideas while the character remains the same.¹⁴ The living soul is conscious of its existence by itself. The mind's instinct to perceive things is devoid of consciousness, and not the breath of life or external air.¹⁵ But being harassed by the frost of ignorance and confined to the objects of sense, the living soul is blinded of its consciousness and is converted to the breathing soul or vital life, and so loses the sight of its proper course.¹⁶ Being thus deluded by the illusion of the world, the soul sees duality instead of its unity. Being converted to the breathing of vital life, unity is lost to the sight of the soul which is hidden under it.

¹⁷ We remain confined to this world of ignorance as long we enjoy the idea of ego. But as soon we give up the idea of ego, we become free men.¹⁸ Therefore, O Rama, when you are able to know that there is no salvation and confinement in this world, and no existence or nonexistence, then and there you will be a truly free man.

Chapter 21 — Earning a Living from the Scriptures

¹ Vasishta continued:—

A wise man must always conduct himself wisely and not with mere show or affectation of wisdom, because even the ignorant are preferable to affected and pretended lovers of learning.

² Rama asked, “Tell me sage, what is meant by true wisdom and by the show or affectation of it? What is the good or bad result of either?”

³ Vasishta replied:—

A friend to learning is someone who reads the scriptures and teaches to earn his livelihood without endeavoring to investigate into the principles of his knowledge.⁴ This is learning only to earn a living in a busy life without showing its true effect upon the improvement of a person’s understanding.

⁵ Someone satisfied with his food and clothing as the best gains from his learning is known as an amateur and novice in the art of explaining the scriptures.⁶ He who performs righteous and ceremonial acts as ordained by law with an intent to gain results is called a probationer in learning and is nearly to be crowned with knowledge.

⁷ Knowledge of the soul is reckoned as the true knowledge. All other knowledge is merely a semblance of it, being empty of essential knowledge.⁸ Those who are content with bits of secular learning without receiving spiritual knowledge, all their labor in this world is in vain. They are called mere novices in learning.

⁹ Rama, you must not rest here with your heart’s content unless you can rest in the peace of your mind with your full knowledge of the knowable one. You must not remain like a novice in learning in order to enjoy the fruits of this painful world.¹⁰ Let men work honestly on earth to earn their bread and let them take their food for sustenance of their lives. Let them live to inquire after truth and let them learn that truth which is calculated to prevent their return to this miserable world.

Chapter 22 — The Meaning of Knowledge; the Wise and the Not Wise

¹ Vasishta resumed:—

The truly wise man, by his knowledge of the knowable One, has placed his reliance in Him, has set his mind to its pristine purity by cleansing it from its worldly propensities, and has no faith in the merit of acts.² The truly wise are the learned who know all kinds of learning and yet are employed in acts with indifference to everything.³ The heart of a truly wise man is detached from all his acts and efforts, and his mind is unaffected, calm and quiet at all times.

⁴ The true meaning of the word knowledge is the sense of one's liberation from the doom of birth and death. The art of earning food and clothing is only the practice of cunning fellows.⁵ He is called a wise man who, although engaged in mundane transactions, remains without any desire or expectation and continues with a heart as vacant as empty air.⁶ The accidents of life come to pass without any direct cause and to no purpose. What was neither present nor expected comes to take place of its own accord.⁷ The appearance or disappearance of an event or accident proceeds from causes quite unknown to us, and these afterwards become causes of the effects they produce.

⁸ Who can tell what is the cause for rabbits to lack horns or the appearance of water in the mirage? They cannot be found out or seen.⁹ Those who explore the cause for rabbits to lack horns may well expect to embrace the necks of the sons and grandsons of a barren woman.

¹⁰ The cause of the appearance of unreal phenomena of the world is nothing other than our lack of right sight which presents these phantoms to our view, and which disappear at a glance of our rational vision.¹¹ The living soul appears as the Supreme Spirit when it is seen by the sight of our blind intellect, but no sooner does the light of Divine Consciousness dawn in our minds, than the living or animal soul shrinks into nothing.¹² The unconscious Supreme Soul becomes awakened to the state of the living soul, just as the potential mango of winter becomes the positive mango in spring.¹³ The intellect awakened becomes the living soul which, in its long course of its living, becomes worn out with age and toil and passes into many births in many kinds of beings.

¹⁴ Wise men who possess their intellectual sight look within themselves in the recesses of their hearts and minds without looking at what is visible outside, and without thinking of anything or making any effort whatever. They move on with the even course of their destiny like water flowing on its course to the ocean of eternity.¹⁵ They who have come to the light of their transcendent vision fix their sight on brighter views beyond the sphere of phenomena and discern the invisible exposed to their view.

¹⁶ They who have vision of transcendent light, owing to their heedlessness of everything in this world, have slow and silent motion like that of a hidden water course.¹⁷ They who are regardless of phenomena and are thoughtless of the world's affairs are like those who are disentangled from their snares. They are truly wise who occupy themselves with their business as freely as the airs of heaven gently play and move the leaves of trees.¹⁸ Those who have seen the transcendent light across the dizzy scenes of mortal life are not restricted to the course of this world, just as sailors are not restricted to shallow and narrow pools and streams.

¹⁹ They who are slaves to their desires are bound to the bondage of works ordained by law and scriptures. Thus they pass their lives in utter ignorance of truth.²⁰ The bodily senses fall upon carnal

pleasures like vultures pouncing upon rotten dead flesh. Therefore curb and retract desires with diligence and fix your mind to meditate on the state of Brahman and the soul.

²¹ Know that Brahman is not without creation, just as no gold is without its form and reflection, but keep yourself clear from thoughts of creation and reflection and confine your mind to the meditation of Brahman filled with perfect bliss. ²² Know Brahman is as inscrutable as the face of the universe is indiscernible in the darkness of the chaotic state at the end of a yuga age when there is no appearance of anything and no distinction of conduct and manners, ²³ and the elements of production in the consciousness of divine nature are in their quiescent agitation in the Divine Spirit, like the movements of flimsy vapors in the darkness of an immovable and wide spreading cloud.

²⁴ As water particles are in motion in a still pond, so are the changing thoughts in the changeless soul, and so are the motions of elemental bodies in the unchanging essence and nature of God. ²⁵ As the universal and undivided sky and space take the names of the different quarters of heaven, so indivisible Brahman, being one and same with creation, is understood as distinct and different from it.

²⁶ The world contains egoism as the ego contains the world. One contains the other, just as the covering layers of the plantain tree contain and are contained under one another.

²⁷ The living soul (*jiva*), being possessed of egoism, sees its internal world through the openings of the organs of sense which seem to be lying without it. In the same manner, mountains look upon lakes issuing out of its caves as if they were outward things. ²⁸ So when the living soul makes the mistake of seeing itself, it is like taking a bar of gold for an ornament which is to be made of it. ²⁹ Hence they who are acquainted with the soul and are liberated in their lifetime never think themselves as born or living or dying at anytime. ³⁰ Those who are awakened to the sight of the soul are employed in the actions of life without looking at them, like a householder discharges his domestic duties while his mind is fixed on the milk pot in the cow stall.

³¹ As the god Viraj is situated with his moonlike appearance in the heart of the universal frame, so the living soul resides in the heart of every individual body like a little or large dew drop, according to the smallness or bigness of the physical body. ³² This false and frail body is believed to be a solid reality because of its tripartite figure and is mistaken for the ego and soul because of the consciousness displayed and dwelling in it. ³³ The living soul is confined like a silkworm in the cell of its own making (*karma-kosha*) by acts of its past life. The living soul resides with its egoism in the seed of its parents like fragrance in the honey cups of flowers.

³⁴ Egoism residing in the seminal seed spreads its consciousness throughout the body from head to foot, like moonbeams scattered throughout the universe. ³⁵ The soul stretches out the fluid of its intelligence through the openings of its organs of sense. This being carried to the sides through the medium of air, extends all over the three worlds like vapor and smoke cover the face of the sky.

³⁶ The body is full of consciousness, both in its inner and outer parts, but the cave of the heart is where our desires and egoism are deeply seated. ³⁷ The living soul is made up of only its desires. Desires soon come out from within the heart and appear on the outside in a person's outer conduct.

³⁸ The error of egoism can never be suppressed by any means other than one being inattentive to himself and his awareness of the fullness of divine presence in his calm and quiet soul.

³⁹ Though dwelling on your present thoughts, yet you must rely upon your reflection of the empty Brahman by the speedy suppression of your egoism by degrees and your self-control. ⁴⁰ They who know the soul manage themselves here without fostering their earthly thoughts. They remain like silent images of wood, without looking at or thinking of anything at all. ⁴¹ He who has fewer earthly thoughts is said to be liberated in the world. Though living in it, he is as clear and free in his mind as the open air.

⁴² Egoism breeds in the heart and grows into intelligence circulating throughout the whole body from head to foot, like the sunbeams that pervade the sphere of heaven. ⁴³ Ego becomes the sight of the eyes, the taste of the tongue, and hearing in the ears. Then the five senses, being fastened to the desires in the heart, plunge the ego into the sea of sensuality. ⁴⁴ Thus omnipresent consciousness loses its purity and becomes the mind employed with one or other of the senses, just as the common moisture of the earth grows the sprout in spring.

⁴⁵ He who thinks on the various objects of the senses without knowing their unreality and the reality of the only One, and who does not endeavor for his liberation here, has no end of troubles in this life.

⁴⁶ That man reigns as an emperor who is content with any kind of food and clothing and with any sort of bed anywhere, ⁴⁷ who with all his desires of the heart is indifferent to all the outward objects of desire, who with his vacant mind is full with his soul, and being as empty vacuum is filled with the breath of life, ⁴⁸ who whether he is sitting or sleeping, or going anywhere or remaining unmoved, continues as quiet as in his sleeping state, and though stirred by anyone, he is not awakened from his slumber of nirvana in which his mind and its thoughts are all drowned and have become extinct.

⁴⁹ Consciousness is common to all. It resides in each heart like fragrance in flowers and flavor in fruit. ⁵⁰ Self-consciousness makes an individual person. The extinction of self-consciousness is said to form the wide world all about, but being confined to one's self, it eliminates the sight of the world from view. ⁵¹ Be unconscious of the objects on earth and remain unconscious of all your prosperity and affluence. If you wish to be happy forever, make your heart as hard as impenetrable as stone.

⁵² O righteous Rama, convert the feeling of your heart to unfeeling and make your body and mind as unconscious as the hardest stone. ⁵³ Of all the positive and negative acts of the unwise and wise men, there is nothing that makes such a marked difference between them as those proceeding from the desire of the unwise and the lack of desire of the wise. ⁵⁴ The result of the desired actions of the unwise is the world stretched out before them, while the result of acts done without desire by the wise serves to put an end to the world before them.

⁵⁵ All that which is visible is destructible, and that which is destroyed come to be renewed to life, but that which is neither destroyed nor resuscitated is you, your very soul. ⁵⁶ The knowledge of the world's existence is without foundation. Though it is thought to exist, it is not found to be so in reality. It is like water in a mirage.

⁵⁷ The right knowledge of things removes the thought of egoism from the mind, and though a thing may be thought of in the mind, yet it takes no deep root in the heart, just as a burnt seed does not sprout in the ground. ⁵⁸ The man who does his duties or not, but remains passionless and thoughtless and free from frailty, has his rest in the soul and his nirvana is always attendant upon him. ⁵⁹ Those who are

saintly remain calm and quiet through their control of the mind and by suppression of desires for enjoyments. But those who are weakened in their natures have a mine of evils in their hearts.

⁶⁰ The wise soul is distinguishable from others by its brightness, full of light like a cloudless sky. The same soul is alike in all, but in the ignorant the soul appears as dim as evening twilight. ⁶¹ As a man sees the light of heaven coming from a great distance and filling the space around him, so the light of the Supreme Soul fills and reaches all. ⁶² The infinite and invisible consciousness, as wonderful as the clear sky, conceives and displays this wonderful world within the infinity of its own emptiness.

⁶³ To the learned and unerring, those who have gotten rid of the error of the world and rest in their everlasting tranquility, the world appears like a consumed and extinguished lamp. To all common people, the world appears to be placed in the air by the will of God for the enjoyment of all.

Chapter 23 — Story of Vasishta Meeting the Brahmin Manki in the Desert Seeking Rest in an Outcaste Village

¹ Vasishta said:—

I have spoken on dispassion and renunciation of worldly desires. Therefore rise and go beyond the material world after the example of one Manki.² Once there lived a brahmin named Manki who was applauded for his devotion and steadfastness to holy vows.

³ It happened at one time on some particular occasion that I was coming down from the vault of heaven upon an invitation from your grandfather Aja.⁴ As I wandered on the surface of the earth to reach your grandfather's kingdom, I encountered a vast desert scorched by sunshine.⁵ It was a dreary waste without end, filled with burning sands and hidden by grey and fly dust, marked by a few scattered hamlets here and there.⁶ The extended waste, its unrestricted emptiness, howling winds, burning heat and light, seeming water in sand, and untraveled ground resting in peace appeared like the boundless and spotless immensity of Brahman.⁷ Its deceptive mirages upon sand, its dullness and empty space, and the mist hanging on all sides seemed as delusive as the appearance of illusion itself.

⁸ As I was wandering along this hollow and sandy wilderness, I saw a wayfarer idly walking before me and muttering to himself in the agony of his wearisome journey.⁹ The traveler said, "This powerful sun afflicts me with blazing beams as much as the company of evil-minded men annoy me.

¹⁰ Sunbeams pour down fire on earth and melt the core of my body and bones, just as they dry up leaves and ignite forest trees.¹¹ Therefore I must go to that distant hamlet for relief from this weary journey and recover my strength and spirits to continue my travel."¹² So thinking, he was about to proceed towards the village where low caste Kiratas lived when I interrupted him.

¹³ Vasishta said:—

I salute you, O you passenger of the sandy desert. May all be well with you who is my fellow traveler on the way, looking so good and passionless.¹⁴ O traveler of the lower earth who has long lived among men, and who has not found your rest, how is it that now you expect to have it in this remote village of mean people?¹⁵ You can have no rest in the homes of vile people in that distant village which is mostly peopled by Pamara villains, just as thirst is not appeased but increased by drinking salty water.¹⁶ Those huts and hamlets shelter cowardly cowherds and those who are afraid to walk in the paths of men, just as timid deer are adverse to wander beyond their own track.¹⁷ They have no stir of reason or any flash of understanding or mental faculties in them. They are not afraid evil actions, but remain and move on like stone mills.¹⁸ Their manliness consists in the emotions of their passions and affections and in exhibitions of the signs of their desire and aversion. They delight mostly in actions that appear pleasant at the moment.¹⁹ As there are no rain clouds over dry and parched desert lands, so there is no shadow of pure and cooling knowledge stretched over the minds of these people.

²⁰ Rather dwell like a snake in a dark cave, or remain like a blind worm in the center of a stone, or limp about as a lame deer in a barren desert, rather than mix in the company of these village people.

²¹ These rude rustics resemble poison mixed with honey. They are sweet to taste for a moment, but prove deadly at last.²² These villainous villagers are as rude as rough winds that blow gusts of dust amidst shattered huts built with grass and dried leaves.

²³ After I addressed the traveler in this way, he felt as glad as if he had been bathed in ambrosial showers.

²⁴ The traveler said:—

Who are you sage? Your magnanimous soul seems to be full and perfect in yourself, full of the Divine Spirit. You look at the bustle of the world like a passer-by is unconcerned with the commotions of a village. ²⁵ Have you drunk the ambrosial nectar of the gods that gave you the divine knowledge? Are infused with the spirit of the sovereign Viraj that is quite apart from the fullness of space it fills, quite full with its entire emptiness? ²⁶ I see your soul is as empty yet as full as his, and as still and yet as moving as the Divine Spirit. It is all and not all what exists, something yet nothing. ²⁷ It is quiet and fair, shining and yet unseen. It is inert and yet full of force and energy. It is inactive with all its activity and action.

²⁸ Though now journeying on earth, you seem to range far above the skies. You are without support, though supported on a sound basis. ²⁹ You are not stretched over objects, and yet no object exists without you. Your pure mind, like the beautiful moon, is full of the nectar beams of immortality.

³⁰ You shine like the full moon without any of her digits or blackish spots. You are cooling like moonbeams, full of ambrosial juice as that watery planet. ³¹ I see the existence and nonexistence of the world depend upon your will and your intellect contains the revolving world, like the germ of a tree contains within it the would be fruit.

³² Sage, I am a brahmin descended from sage Sandilya. My name is Manki and I am intent on visiting places of pilgrimage. ³³ I have made very long journeys and I have seen many holy places in my travels all about. After long time, I have turned my course to return to my native home. ³⁴ But my mind is so sick and adverse to the world, that I hesitate to return home. I have seen the lives of men pass away from this world like flashes of lightening.

³⁵ O sage, please give me a true account of yourself, as the minds of holy men are as deep and clear as clear lakes. ³⁶ When great men like you show kindness at the first sight of someone as mean as I am, his heart is sure to glow with love and gratitude, just as lotus buds are blown. I am hopeful of your favor towards me. ³⁷ Hence, sage, I hope that you will kindly remove the error which is born in me by my ignorance of the delusions of this tempting world.

³⁸ Vasishta replied:—

O wise man, I am Vasishta, the sage, saint and inhabitant of the ethereal region. I am traveling this way on an errand of sagely King Aja. ³⁹ I tell you sage, do not be disheartened at your ignorance. You have already come onto the path of wisdom and you have very nearly gotten over the ocean of the world and arrived at the shore of transcendental knowledge. ⁴⁰ I see that you have come to possess the invaluable treasure of indifference to worldly matters. This kind of speech and sentiments, and the calmness of disposition which you have displayed, can never proceed from a worldly person and indicates your high-mindedness.

⁴¹ A precious stone is polished by gently rubbing away its impurity. So the mind comes to its reasoning by rubbing off of the impurity of its prejudice. ⁴² Tell me what you desire to know and how you want to abandon the world. In my opinion, knowledge and abandonment are accomplished by

practicing the teacher's instructions and by questioning what he does not know or understand.⁴³ It is said that whoever has a mind to cross the doom of his soul's reincarnation should possess good and pure desires in his mind, and an understanding inclined to reasoning under the direction of his spiritual guide. Such a person is truly entitled to attain to the state which is free from future sorrow and misery.

Chapter 24 — Manki Complains about Life to Vasishta

¹ Vasishta said:—

Being thus approached by me, Manki fell at my feet. Then shedding tears of joy from both eyes, he spoke to me with due respect.

² Manki said:—

O venerable sage, I have long been travelling in all ten sides of the earth, but I have never met a holy man like you who could remove the doubts arising in my mind.³ Sage, today I have gained the knowledge which is the chief good of a brahmin whose sacred body is more venerable and far more superior in birth and dignity than the bodies of all other beings in heaven and on earth.

But sage, I am sorry at heart to see the evils of this nether world.⁴ Repeated births and deaths and the continued rotations of pleasure and pain are all painful because they end in pain.⁵ Because pleasure leads to greater pain, it is better, O sage, to continue in one's pain. The sequence of fleeting pleasures being only lasting pain, pleasure is to be considered as pain.

⁶ O friend, all pleasures are painful to me. My pains have become pleasurable at my advanced age when teeth and hair are falling with decay and my internal parts are also wearing out.⁷ My mind continually aspires to higher stations in life, but it fails to persevere in its holy course. The seedling of my salvation is suppressed by thorns and thistles of my evil and worldly desires.⁸ My mind is situated amidst its passions and affections within the covering of my body, just as the banyan tree stands amidst its falling leaves inside a rustic village. Desires fly like hungry vultures all over its body in search of their abominable sustenance.⁹ My wicked and crooked thoughts are like the brambles of creeping and thorny plants. My life is a weary and dreary maze, a dark and dismal night.

¹⁰ The world with all its people, without the moisture of true knowledge, is parched and dried up like withered plants, decaying day by day with constant cares, fast advancing towards its dissolution without being destroyed all at once.¹¹ All our present acts are drowned in those of our past lives and, like withered trees, bear no flower or fruit in our present life. Actions done with desire end with the gain of their transitory objects.¹² Our lives are wasted in our attachment to family and dependents. We are never employed to lead our souls across the ocean of the world. The desire of earthly enjoyments decay day by day and a dreadful eternity awaits us.¹³ Our prosperity and possessions, whether they are more or less, are as harmful to our souls as the thorny and poisonous plants growing in the hollow caves of earth. We are attended with thoughts and cares causing fever heat in the soul and emaciating the body.

¹⁴ Fortune sometimes makes brave and fortunate people fail at the hands of foes, just as a man ardent with the desire for gems in his mind is tempted to catch naaga serpents lying in dark caves with shining gems on their hoods.

¹⁵ I am entirely inclined to give up the objects of sense. My mind is polluted by worldly desires and is all hollow within. I am abandoned and shunned by the wise like a dead sea with its troubled and muddy waters.¹⁶ My mind turns about false vanities like rheumatic pains throughout the body.

¹⁷ Despite my innumerable deaths and although my mind is cleansed from the impurity of ignorance by reading scriptures and associating with good men, I am still hunting with sorrow after desired

emptiness, just as the moon and stars with their power to remove darkness stand good in emptiness.
¹⁸ There is no end to the dark night of my ignorance when the gloomy apparition of my egoism has played out its part. I do not have knowledge which will destroy my ignorance, like a lion destroying a furious elephant, and burn down my actions like a fire burns straw. ¹⁹ The dark night of my earthly desire is not yet over, and the sun of my disgust of the world has not risen. I still believe the unreal as real and my mind wanders about like an elephant. ²⁰ My senses continually tempt me. I know not what will be the end of these temptations which prevent even the wise from observing the precepts of the scriptures. ²¹ This lack of sight and disregard of the scriptures lead to our blindness by lighting our desires and by blinding our understanding.

²² Therefore sage, tell me. What am I to do in this difficulty? What may lead to my chief good? I am asking you to tell me. ²³ It is said that the mist of our ignorance flies like clouds at the sight of wise men and with the purification of our desires. Now sage, confirm the truth of this saying of wise men by enlightening my understanding and giving peace to my mind.

Chapter 25 — Vasishta Instructs Manki

¹ Vasishta said:—

Consciousness, the reflections of consciousness, the desire of having them, and their imagination are the four roots of evil in this world. Though these words are meaningless, yet considerable sense is attached to them as the four sources of knowledge.² Know that knowledge is also their reflection which is the seat of all evils. All our disasters proceed from that, just as thickly as vegetation growing by water.

³ Men clothed in the robes of their desires walk in the dreary paths of this world with very many varieties of their actions, like circles drawn under circles.⁴ But these wanderings over earth and desires cease for the wise, just as moisture in the ground dries at the end of spring season.⁵ Our various desires grow the very many thorny plants and brambles in the world, just as spring sap causes thick clumps of plantain trees to grow.⁶ The world appears as a dark maze to the mind sweetened in the serum of its greedy appetites, just as the ground is shaded under bushy trees growing from the water supplied by spring season.

⁷ There is nothing in existence except the clear and empty Consciousness, just as there is nothing in the boundless sky except the hollow emptiness of air.⁸ There is no intelligent soul beside this One. All else is the everlasting reflection of this One alone. The world is called ignorance and error.⁹ He is seen (in spirit) without being seen, and is lost upon being seen (by visual sight). Looking with ordinary sight one sees only what is unreal, like ghosts and demons appearing before children, and not the true Divine Spirit.¹⁰ By rejecting all visible sights, understanding views the one essence of all. All things merge into it, just as all the rivers on earth fall into one universal ocean.

¹¹ As an earthenware cannot be without earth, so all intelligent beings are never devoid of their consciousness or intellect.¹² Whatever is known by understanding is said to be our knowledge. But understanding has no knowledge of the unknowable, and no lack of understanding can have any knowledge, owing to their opposite natures.¹³ As there is the same relation of knowledge among the looker, his seeing and the sight, so it is omniscience of Brahman which is the only essence. All else is as nothing as a flower growing in the air, which never exists.¹⁴ Things of the same kind carry a relationship to one another and readily unite in one. So the world being alike to its idea, and all ideas being alike to the eternal ideas in the mind of God, therefore the world and the Divine Mind are certainly the same thing and no other.

¹⁵ If there be no knowledge or idea of wood and stone, then they would be the same as the nonexistent things of which we have no idea.¹⁶ When the outer and visible features of things are so exactly similar to our ideas and knowledge of them, they appear to be no other than our ideas or knowledge of them.¹⁷ All visible appearances in the universe are only the outstretched reflections of our inner ideas. Their fluctuation is like that of the winds and their motion is like that of the waters in the ocean.

¹⁸ All things are mixed together with the omnipresent spirit, just as a log of wood is covered by black dye. Both appear to be mixed together to the unthinking, but both are taken for the one and same thing by the thinking part of mankind.¹⁹ The idea of reciprocity is unity, and the knowledge of mutuality is also union. Examples are the interchange of water and milk, the correlation of vision and what can be

seen, and not the union of the wood and black dye with one another.

²⁰ The knowledge of one's egoism is his bondage. Knowledge of his lack of ego is his emancipation. Thus one's imprisonment and freedom from the confines of his body and the world being both under his control, why should he neglect freeing himself from his perpetual bondage?

²¹ Like seeing two moons in the sky or water in a mirage, we believe in the reality of our egoism which is altogether an unreality. ²² The disbelief in one's egoism removes the concept of "I" and selfishness. It is possible to everyone to get rid of these mistaken ideas. So how is it that anyone should remain ignorant?

²³ Why do you maintain your egoism and remain confined in your body like a plum drowned in a cup of water, or like air confined in a pot? Your relation to God is to be nothing else but like himself and to be one with him. Have the reciprocal knowledge of yourself in the likeness of God. ²⁴ It is said that the lack of reciprocal knowledge makes the union of two things into one, but this is wrong both ways. Neither does any dull material thing or any spiritual substance lose its own form. ²⁵ Force is not converted to inertness from the indestructibility of their nature. Whenever the spiritual is seen or considered as the material, it becomes a duality, and there is no unity in this view of the two.

²⁶ Thus men under the influence of their desires, harassed by their varied vanities, continue going downward like a stone torn from the head of a cliff falls from precipice to precipice headlong to the ground. ²⁷ Men are carried here and there by the currents of their desires like bits of straw. They are overtaken and overwhelmed in an endless series of difficulties which are impossible for me to number. ²⁸ Men, cast like a ball flung from the hand of fate, hurry onward with their ardent desires until they are hurled into the depth of hell where, worried and worn out with hell torments, they take other forms and shapes after lapses of long periods.

Chapter 26 — Vasishta's Teaching Continued; Manki Attains Self Realization

¹ Vasishta said:—

Thus the living soul, having fallen into the maze of this world, is subject to disasters and accidents as countless as the microscopic organisms generated in rainy season.² All these accidents, though unconnected with one another, follow as closely upon each other as stones lying scattered together in the rocky desert, linked in a lengthening chain of thoughts in the mind of man.³ The mind blinded of its reason becomes a wilderness overgrown with the tree of its disasters, yet the mind by its pretended merriment and good humor appears to men to be smiling like a spring grove.⁴ O how pitiable are all those beings! Bound to their subjection to hope, they are subject to diverse states of pain and pleasure in their repeated births in various forms on earth.⁵ Alas for those strange and abnormal desires which subject the minds of men to the triple error of taking the nonexistent to be actually present before them.

⁶ Those who know the truth are delighted in themselves. They are immortal in their mortal life. They are diffusers of pure light all about them. What is the difference between the wise sage who is coldly detached in all respects and the cooling moon?⁷ What is the difference between a whimsical boy and a covetous fool who desires anything without consideration of past or future?⁸ What is the difference between the greedy fool and voracious fish that devour the alluring bait of pleasure or pain and will not give up the bait until they are sure to give up their lives?⁹ All our earthly possessions, whether our bodies, lives, wives, friends or properties, are as frail as a brittle plate made of sand. As soon as it dries, it crumbles and breaks to pieces.

¹⁰ O my soul, you may forever wander in hundreds of bodies of various forms in repeated births and pass from the heaven of Brahma to the highest sphere of Brahma, yet you can never have tranquility unless you attain the steady detachment of your mind.¹¹ Bondage to the world is dispersed by mature introspection into the nature of things, just as an uneven, rugged road does not stop a wayfarer from walking with his open eyes.¹² The negligent soul becomes prey to desire and unruly passions, just as a heedless traveler is caught in the clutches of demons. But the well-guarded spirit is free of fear of any demon.

¹³ As opening one's eyes presents what can be seen to sight, so waking consciousness introduces ego and the phenomenal world into the mind.¹⁴ As closing one's eyes shuts out visible objects from sight, so the closing of consciousness puts out the appearance of all sights and thoughts from your eyes and mind.¹⁵ The sense that the external world exists, together with that of one's individual ego, is all unreal and empty. It is consciousness alone that shows everything in itself by the fluctuation of its mistaken wanderings, just as the motion of wind displays the varieties of clouds in empty air.

¹⁶ It is only Divine Consciousness which exhibits unreal phenomena as real in itself, without creating anything apart or separate from its own essence. It is similar to how clay or metal produces a pot or a jar out of itself, which is not distinct or separate from its substance.¹⁷ As sky is only an emptiness and wind is a mere fluctuation of air, and as waves are composed of nothing but water, so the world is nothing other than a phenomenon of consciousness.¹⁸ The world exists undivided in the bas-relief of consciousness. The world has no existence separate from its substance of the conscious soul, which is as calm and clear as the empty air. The world resembles the shadow of a mountain on the surface of

water, or a surging wave rising on the surface of the sea.

¹⁹ The wise and unexcitable sages have a calm coolness in their souls. To them the shining worlds appear like cooling moonbeams falling on the internal mirror of their minds. ²⁰ How is this invisible supreme light produced in the calm, quiet and all-pervading auspicious soul in the empty expanse of the universe? ²¹ That essence called Brahman forms the essential nature and form of everything. Brahman permeates throughout all nature, except where it appears to be obstructed by some preventive cause or other. ²² Anything which presents a hindrance to the permeation of divine essence, like a flower growing in the air, is a nothing in nature.

²³ The wise man sits quietly like a stone without the action of even his inner mental faculties, because the Lord is without reflection or sensation of anything and without birth or decay at anytime. ²⁴ He who by constant practice remains unconscious of everything, like the empty state of the open sky, arrives at a state of sound sleep or trance without the disturbance of dreams.

²⁵ But how do we know that the world is the mere thought or will of the Divine Mind? Where is it said that the creative power of Brahman's thought forms the wonderful world in his mind without the aid of any tool or instrument or means or ground for its construction? Hence the world is merely an ideal and nothing real. There is no cause or creator of it whatsoever. ²⁶ As the Lord stretches out the world in his thought, he or it instantly becomes the same. As the Lord is without any visible form, so this seeming world has no visible or material form whatsoever, nor is there any framer of what is simply an ideal.

²⁷ So all men are as happy or unhappy as they think themselves to be in their minds. They all abide in the same Universal Soul which is common to all. Yet everyone in his own mind believes himself to be of his own kind. ²⁸ Therefore it is vain to regard anything or any intellectual being as a material substance, just as it is false to regard the imaginary hills of one's dream as being real rocks situated on earth. ²⁹ By assigning egoism to one's self, one becomes subject to error and change. Lack of egoism places the soul in unchanging identity and tranquility.

³⁰ As the meaning of bracelet is no different from the gold of which it is made, so the sense of your false egoism is no different than the tranquil soul. ³¹ The tranquil sage, calm and sober minded like a silent muni, is no voluntary actor of any act, although he may be physically employed in his active duties. The quiet saint carries with him an empty and careless mind, although it may be full of learning and wisdom. ³² The wise man manages himself like a mechanical figure or puppet, never moving of its own motion but moving as it is moved. Having no impulse of his own desire within him, he sits as quietly as an immobile doll. ³³ The wise man who knows the soul is as quiet as a baby sleeping in a swinging cradle, moved without moving itself. The wise man moves his body like a baby, without having any cause for doing so.

³⁴ The soul that is intent on the thought of the One only, calm and quiet as the infinite spirit of God, becomes unconscious of itself and all other things, together with all objects of desire and expectations of good or bliss. ³⁵ He who is not the viewer himself, who does not have the view before him, and who is exempt from the triple condition of subjective, objective and action, such a person can have no other object in his view that is concentrated on the vision of the invisible One. ³⁶ Our sight of the world is our bondage. Our disregard of it is our perfect freedom. Therefore, he who rests in his

disregard of whatever is expressed by words has nothing to look after or desire.

³⁷ Say, what is ever worth looking after or worthy of our regard when our material bodies are as evanescent as our dreams and our individual existence is a mere delusion? ³⁸ Therefore a wise man rests only in his knowledge of the true One by subjecting all his efforts and desires and suppressing all his curiosity, being devoid of all knowledge save that of the knowable One.

³⁹ Hearing all this, Manki was released from his great error, just like a snake sloughs of its skin to which it had been tightly bound. ⁴⁰ He retired to a mountain where he remained in deep meditation for a hundred years. He discharged the duties that occurred to him of their own accord, without retaining any desire of anything. ⁴¹ He still resides there, unmoved and unconscious like a stone, quite detached in all his senses and feelings, and wakeful with his internal consciousness by the light of his yoga contemplation.

⁴² Now Rama, enjoy your peace of mind by relying upon your habit of reasoning and discrimination. Do not corrupt your understanding under fits of passion. Do not let your mind be fickle like a fleeting cloud in the dry season of autumn.

Chapter 27 — All Is One, so We Cannot Conceive Diversity

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Be dead to your senses and retain the tranquility of your soul by accepting whatsoever you get as your lot. Otherwise fair will appear as foul, like a pure crystal showing itself black in the shade.² All is contained in the only one all extended Soul, so we can not conceive how variety or multiplicity can arise from unity.

³ The attributes of consciousness are entirely of an empty nature, having neither beginning nor end. Consciousness is neither produced nor destroyed with the production and destruction of the body.

⁴ All unconscious and material bodies are moved by the miraculous power of the intellect or mind which, being unmoved of itself, gives motion to bodies, just as the still waters of the sea give rise to waves.⁵ As it is error to suppose a sheet of cloth in a cloud, so the supposition of egoism in the body is altogether false.⁶ Do not rely on the unreal body which is of this world and grows to perish in it. Depend on the real essence of the endless spirit for your everlasting happiness.

⁷ Empty consciousness is the essential property of the immortal soul. This is the transcendent reality in nature, and may this super-excellent entity be your essence likewise.⁸ If you are certain of this truth, you become as glorious as that essence because a person in deep meditation loses himself in the object on which he meditates.

⁹ The triple aspects of viewer, view, and viewing are the three properties of the one and same intellect. There is nothing other than the knowledge of this, as there is no thought unlike the act of its thinking.¹⁰ The soul is ever calm and clear and uniform in its nature. It does not rise or fall like the tides by the moon's influence, nor is it soiled like seawater by stormy winds.¹¹ A passenger in a boat sees the rocks and trees on the bank to move. One thinks a shell or conch contains silver. The mind mistakes the body for reality.¹² As the sight of the substance dispels the view from the intellectual perspective, so the intellectual view dispels belief in the material. When knowledge of the living soul is dissolved in the Supreme Soul, there remains nothing except the unity of the all pervading spirit.

¹³ The knowledge that all this world is quite calm and quiet and that all is an evolution of the Divine Spirit takes away the belief in everything else, which is nothing but the product of error and illusion.

¹⁴ As there is no forest in the sky, moisture in sand, or fire on the moon, so there is no material body in the sight of the mind.

¹⁵ Rama, do not fear for this world, a mere creation of your error without any real existence whatsoever. Know this transcendent truth, O you who is the best among those who inquire after truth, that this world is a nothing and void.¹⁶ Your mistake of the existence of the visible world and any disbelief about the invisible soul must have been removed today by my words. Say now, what other cause can there be for of your bondage in this world?

¹⁷ As a plate, water-pot or any other earthenware is no more than clay, so the outer world is nothing other than the inner thought of the mind. It wears away under the power of reasoning.

¹⁸ Whether exposed to danger or difficulty, placed in prosperity or adversity, or subject to wealth or poverty, O Rama, you must preserve your even disposition while conscious of your joy and grief. Be joyfully free from the knowledge of your individual ego and remain as you are, calm by nature and not

subject to any state.¹⁹ Remain Rama, as you are, like the moon in the sphere of your race, with your full knowledge of everything in nature. Avoid joy or grief at every occurrence and give up your desire or disgust for anything in the world. Do so or as you may choose for yourself.

Chapter 28 — Destiny, Deed, Agent & Doing Are All the Same; God as the Seed

¹ Rama said, "Please sage, explain to me about the acts of men which become the causes of their repeated births, just as seeds are sources of future trees. Explain those acts described as divine dispensation, destiny, or fate (*daiva*)."

² Vasishta replied:—

The meaning of *daiva* or destiny is as that of a potter producing pottery. It is the act of intelligence and not of blind chance or human effort.³ How is it possible for any action to be done only by human effort without some effort of understanding directing human energy to action? It is this intelligent power that makes the world and all that it contains.⁴ The prosperity of the world depends on understanding exerting itself with a desire to bring about some certain end. It ceases when understanding, the cause of the course of the world, ceases.

⁵ Mental indifference or lack of desire in the mind is called a negative act. The mind that merely moves on without engaging in any pursuit is like the smooth current of a stream without surges.

⁶ There is no difference between a thinking and unthinking soul except that the mind of one is moved by its imagination to invent some art or work.⁷ As there is no essential difference between water and its waves, or between desire and its result, so there is no difference between the intellect and its function, nor is there any difference between actions and their agent.

⁸ Rama, know the action as the agent. The actor is the same as his action. Both are quite alike just as ice and coldness.⁹ As frost is cold and cold the same as frost, so the deed is the same as its doer, and the doer is the same as the deed he does.¹⁰ The vibration of Consciousness is the same as destiny which is also the agent of action. These are synonymous terms expressing the same thing. Destiny, deed and other words have no distinct meaning.¹¹ The vibration of consciousness is the cause of creation, just as the seed is the source of a tree. Lack of this vibration produces nothing. Therefore intellectual activity contains the seed of the whole world.¹² The Divine Mind contains in its infinite expanse all the ample space of time and place. Of its own nature, it sometimes fluctuates and sometimes is at a standstill, much like the vast ocean.

¹³ The causeless and un-causing seed of the Intellect, being moved by desire, becomes the cause of the precise details of material bones, just as the seed produces sprouts and plants.¹⁴ All plant life, whether grass, vines or trees, grows from their particular seeds, and these seeds originate from the vibration of the Divine Mind, which is uncreated and without any cause.¹⁵ There is no difference between the seed and its sprout, just as there is no difference between heat and fire. As you recognize the identity between seed and its sprout, so must you recognize the identity between man and his acts.

¹⁶ Divine Intellect exerts its power in the womb of the earth and grows the sprouts of unmoving plants as from their seed. These become great or small, straight or crooked as Divine Intellect would have them to be.¹⁷ What other power is there beside that of the Intellect to grow sturdy oaks from soft clay and humid moisture that are the womb of the earth?¹⁸ It is this Intellect which fills the seeds of living beings with vital fluid, like the sap inside plants gives growth to flowers and fruit on the outside.¹⁹ If this all inhering Intellect were not almighty, say then, what other power is there that could produce the mighty gods and demigods in the air and the huge mountains on earth?²⁰ The Divine Mind contains the

seeds of all moving and unmoving beings. They all have their being from the movement of this intellectual power, and from no other source whatever.

²¹ As there is no difference between the alternate productions of seed, plant and fruit from one another, so there is no difference in the reciprocal causation of man, his acts and vice versa. In the same way there is not even a shade of difference between the swelling waves and the sinking waters of the sea.

²² Shame on that silly and beastly being who does not believe in the reciprocity of man and his actions, or agent and his act, as taught in the Vedas. ²³ The restless craving that is inherent in one's consciousness is the embryonic seed of his reincarnation, just like the growth of plants. Therefore it is necessary to kill the seed by frying it in the fire of renunciation. ²⁴ The learned say that detachment is performing an act, whether good or bad, without taking it to the mind. ²⁵ It is also said that detachment is the destruction of desire which loosens a man from all connection to an act. Therefore try by all means in your power to create in your mind a total unconcern for everyone and an indifference to all things whatsoever.

²⁶ In whatever manner you think it possible, get rid of your craving desires, whether by theoretical or practical yoga or your human efforts. You must root every desire from your heart in order to secure your best welfare and perfect bliss. ²⁷ You must endeavor to the utmost of your human power to suppress some portion of your egoism in order to prevent the rise of selfish passions and desires within your heart. ²⁸ There is no other way to cross the impassable expanse of the world except by the exercise of our human virtues, nor is there any other way of extinguishing our ardent desires except by the extinction of egoism.

²⁹ The inherent consciousness of the ever existent Soul is both the prime seed as well as the first sprout of the world. It is the source of action and its cause and effect on men. The ever existent Soul is called destiny and the happiness and sorrow of all.

³⁰ In the beginning there was no seed or sprout, nor any man or his action. There was no such thing as destiny or doom or any other prime cause, but all that existed was Supreme Intellect which is all in all. ³¹ There is no seed or sprout in reality, nor is there any action or its active agent in fact. There is only one Supreme Intellect in absolute and positive existence. It is under the auspices of this hollowed name that you see all these gods and demigods and all men and women performing their respective parts as actors on the stage of the world. ³² Knowing this certain truth and thinking yourself as the imperishable one, be free from your thoughts of agent and action. Give up all your desires and false imagination, and live to reflect only upon your self-consciousness.

³³ Remain fearless, O Rama, and be graceful with the calm composure of your mind. Subdue all your desires and lay aside your fears with them. Rely on your clear intellect and continue to do your endless acts. Be full in yourself with the Supreme Soul, and thus you shall have the fullness of your desires fulfilled in you.

Chapter 29 — Sermon on Holy Meditation

¹ Vasishta continued to say:—

Always remain looking inwardly by being freed from the feelings of passion and desire. Continue in the performance of your actions everywhere, but always reflect upon the quiet and spotless consciousness within yourself.² The mind which is clear like the open sky, full of knowledge and settled in the Divine Consciousness, always even, graceful and replete with joy, is said to be highly favored of heaven and expanded by Brahman.³ Whether overtaken by pain and grief, or exposed to dangers and difficulties, or attended by pleasure or prosperity, in a greater or less degree,⁴ in whatever place and in whatever state you are placed, bear your afflictions with a glad heart. Whether you weep or cry, or become a play of opposite circumstances, be joyful for both are meant for your good.

⁵ If you are delighted in the company of your consorts and feel happy at the approach of festivity and prosperity, it is because you are tempted by your fond desire of pleasure, like ignorant people.⁶ Fools who are allured by their greed for gain meet with their fate in hazardous exploits and warfare. It is fit that they should burn with the fire of their desire, like straw consumed in a fire.

⁷ Earn money by honest means with the caution of a crane in whatever opportunity presents itself to you. Do not run in pursuit of gain like the ignorant crowd.⁸ O you destroyer of your foes, forcefully drive away all your desires as your greatest enemies, just as the winds of heaven drive away the empty, rainless clouds of the sky.

⁹ Be tolerant, O Rama, of ignorant people who are led away by their desires and deserve your pity. Be reverent towards high minded men. Be delighted in yourself by speaking sparingly and without being misled by your desires like the ignorant mob.¹⁰ Congratulate with joy and sympathize with sorrow. Pity the sorrows of the poor and be valiant among the brave.¹¹ Turn your eyes into your heart and be always joyous by communing with your soul. Then whatever you do with a liberal mind, you are not to answer for it as its agent.¹² By remaining fixed in the meditation of your soul and by having your eyes always turned within yourself, you shall be invulnerable even at the strike of a thunderbolt of Indra.

¹³ He is said to be master of himself who is freed from the delusion of desire and lives retired in the cave of his consciousness, who is attached to his own soul and acts at his own will and has his delight in his very self.¹⁴ No weapon can wound the man established in the Self, no fire can burn his soul, no water can drench the spirit, and hot winds cannot dry him up.¹⁵ Grasp the firm pillar of your soul, which is unborn and uncreated, without decay and immortal. Adhere steadfastly to your soul just as one clings to the pillars of his house.

¹⁶ The world is a tree and all things in it are like the flowers of this tree. Our knowledge of all things is like the fragrance of these flowers, but our self-consciousness is the essence of them all. Therefore look internally to this inward essence before you mind the externals.¹⁷ All outward affairs are brought about by their inner reflection in the mind. It is as hard to bring a desire into being as it is to raise a stone to life.¹⁸ Get rid of your bodily exertions and lull your mind to sleep. Do all your duties like a tortoise with its contracted limbs.¹⁹ Manage your affairs with a half-sleeping and half-

awakened mind. Do your outward functions without the effort of your mental faculties.

²⁰ As children possess their innate knowledge and dumb creatures are endowed with their instinct, without the feeling of any desire rising in them, so masters live and act with their minds unattached to anything, as vacant as the empty air. ²¹ Remain untroubled and free from care, with a entirely sleepy and indifferent mind within yourself, a mind devoid of all its functions and quite absorbed in itself, and slightly acting on the members of the body. ²² After your mind is cleansed from the stain of desire, you may continue to discharge or dispense with your duties by subduing your mind with knowledge and resting quietly in your pure consciousness.

²³ Go on managing your outward affairs in your waking state as if your faculties were dormant in sleep. Neither desire to have anything nor let go of anything that presents itself to you. ²⁴ If you are dormant when waking, by your inattention to all about you, so you are awake when sleeping by your trance in the heart of the Supreme Soul. And when you are in the condition of the union of the two, you attain the state of perfect enlightenment. ²⁵ Thus by your gradual practice of this habit of mental indifference, you reach that state of unity which has no beginning or end and is beyond all other things.

²⁶ The world certainly is neither a unity nor duality, therefore leave inquiry into its endless varieties. Resort to your supreme bliss with a mind as clear as the translucent sphere of empty air.

²⁷ Rama asked, "If it be so, O great sage, that there is no ego or you, as you say, then tell me, why are we conscious of ourselves? How are you sitting here under the name of sage Vasishta?"

²⁸ Valmiki said:—

Being thus questioned by Rama, Vasishta, the best of speakers, remained silent for a moment, reflecting on the answer he should make. ²⁹ His silence created some anxiety in the royal audience. Rama, also perplexed in his mind, repeated his question to the sage saying, ³⁰ "Sage, why are you as silent as I am? There is no argument in the world which sages like you are unable to solve and expound."

³¹ Vasishta replied:—

It is not owing to my inability to speak or want of argument on my part that made me hold my tongue. It is the wide scope of your question that kept me from giving its answer.

³² Rama, there are two kinds of questioners, namely, the ignorant and the intelligent. So there are two modes of argument: the simple mode for simpletons and the rational form for intelligent and reasonable men. ³³ Rama, for so long you have been ignorant of superior knowledge and fit to be taught in ordinary, ambiguous language. ³⁴ But now you have become an expert in superior truth and found your rest in the state of supreme bliss. Therefore you no longer benefit from the ambiguous language of common speech. ³⁵ Whenever a good speaker wishes to deliver an eloquent speech, (he must first consider) whether it be long or short or relate to some abstruse or spiritual subject.

³⁶ There is no counterpart to the ego which lacks all representation and cannot be described by the sound of any word. Ego is beyond the attributes of number and other categories, so one cannot attribute any such fiction of fancy to it. It is the totality of all, as light is composed of innumerable particles of ray.

³⁷ It is not right, O Rama, that one who has known the truth should give an imperfect or defective answer to a question. But what can he do when no language is perfect or free from defect, as you well know? ³⁸ It is right, O Rama, that I who know the truth should declare it to my students. The knower of abstract truth is known to remain as silent as a block of wood. The soundness of his mind is hard to sound. ³⁹ Lack of self-reflection causes a person to speak. They who know the supreme excellence hold their silence. This is the best answer that can be given to your question regarding this truth.

⁴⁰ Every man, O Rama, speaks of himself as he is, but I am only my conscious self, which is unspeakable in its nature and appertains to the unspeakable one. ⁴¹ How can that thing be given a definite term which is inexpressible in words? Therefore I cannot express the inexpressible in words. As I have already said, all words are only fictitious signs.

⁴² Rama asked, "Sage, you disregard everything that is expressed by words and regard them as imperfect and defective symbols of their originals. Now you must tell me, what do you mean by your statement, 'lacks all representation' and what are you yourself?"

⁴³ Vasishta replied:—

It being so, now hear me tell you, O Rama, who is the best among the enquirers of truth, what you are and what am I in truth, and what is the world in reality.

⁴⁴ This ego, my boy, is empty consciousness, imperishable in its nature. It is neither conceivable nor knowable and is beyond all imagination. ⁴⁵ I am the empty sky of consciousness and so you also are the empty sky. The whole world is an entire emptiness and there is nothing else except an everlasting and infinite emptiness everywhere. ⁴⁶ The soul is identical with pure knowledge. It is free from the knowledge of the senses and beyond conscious knowledge. I cannot call it anything other than the Self or the Soul.

⁴⁷ Yet it is the fashion of disputants, in order to maintain their own ground or for the liberation of their pupils, to multiply the egoism of the one soul and distribute it into a thousand branches.

⁴⁸ When a living soul remains calm and quiet in spite of the management of its worldly affairs, when it is as motionless as an egoless corpse, it is said to have attained its perfect state. ⁴⁹ This state of perfection consists in refraining from external exercise and devotion, persistence in continual meditation, feeling no sensation of pain or pleasure, and being unconscious of one's self-existence and the coexistence of all else. ⁵⁰ Freedom from egoism and the consciousness of all other existence brings on the idea of a total nonexistence and emptiness, which is altogether beyond thought and meditation. All attempts to grasp a nothing are as vain as a blind man's desire to see a picture. ⁵¹ The posture of sitting unmoved like a stone at the shocks and turn of fortune is truly the state of nirvana or deathless trance of a conscious being. ⁵² This state of saintly trance is not noticeable by others or perceived by the saint himself, because the knowing sage shuns the society of men in disgust and is enlightened with the spiritual knowledge within himself. ⁵³ In this state of spiritual light, the sage loses sight of his own ego and you and all others and beholds the only one unity in which he is extinct and absorbed in pure and spotless bliss.

⁵⁴ The process of using consciousness is said to create phenomena. This is the cause of the creation of the world, which is the cause of our bondage and continual sorrows. ⁵⁵ Dormancy of the intellect or

unconsciousness is when the intellect is not employed with phenomena. Then it is called the supremely calm and quiet state of liberation and is free from decay.⁵⁶ When the soul is in its state of peaceful tranquility, its ideas of space and time fly away like clouds in autumn. Then it has no thought of anything else for lack of its power of thinking.

⁵⁷ When the sight of the soul is turned inwards in sleep, it sees the world of its desires rising before its consciousness in their aerial forms. But soul's sight directed to the outside in its waking state sees the inner objects of desire presented in the gross forms of the outer world.⁵⁸ The mind, understanding and other faculties depend upon the consciousness of the soul. They are of the same nature as the intellect, but being considered in their intimate relation with external objects, they are represented as grossly material.⁵⁹ The same intellect is spread over our consciousness of all internal and external feelings and perceptions. Therefore, it is vain to differentiate this one and undivided power by applying different names.⁶⁰ There is nothing set apart from the perception of the conscious intellect which is as pure and all-pervading as emptiness and which is said by the learned to be indefinable by words.

⁶¹ Being seen very acutely, the world appears hazy in the divine essence, as it were something between a reality and unreality. You also appear as something real and unreal at the same time.⁶² In the same way, I am empty air, free from desire, and you also are pure consciousness if you could only restrain your desires.⁶³ He who is certain of this truth, knows himself in reality. Whoever thinks himself as somebody under a certain name is far from knowing the truth. Again, anyone remaining in his unreal body, but relying in his intellectuality, is sure to have his tranquility and liberation.

⁶⁴ Man's exercise of his intellect improves the love of union with the original Intellect by removing ignorance, just as heat of the fire mixes with primitive heat when wind ceases to blow.⁶⁵ Living beings converted to the state of unmoving trees and stones by mental detachment or unconsciousness of themselves, are said to have attained their liberation which is free from disturbance. They are situated in a state without decay.⁶⁶ A man having obtained his wisdom through his knowledge is said to have become a muni or sage. But a fool even with teaching, owing to his ignorance, becomes a brute creature or degraded even lower to some plant life.

⁶⁷ The knowledge that "I am Brahman" and this other is the world is a gross error proceeding from gross ignorance. But all untruth flies away before investigation, just as darkness vanishes before the advance of light.⁶⁸ The wise, with the perception and actions of his outward organs, is simply devoid of inner desires. He does not think or feel about anything in his mind. He remains quite calm and composed in his outward appearance.⁶⁹ The samadhi of a wise man is like sound sleep unaffected by dream in which phenomena are buried within himself and he sees nothing but his self or soul.

⁷⁰ As the blueness of the sky is a false conception of the brain, so the appearance of the world is a fallacy to the silent soul. The world is no more than a mist of error that obscures the clear and empty sphere of the soul.⁷¹ A true sage, though surrounded by the objects of wish, still lacks desire for any. He knows them all to be mere unrealities and false vanities.

⁷² Know, O intelligent Rama, that all objects of desire in this world are as marvelous as those seen in our imagination, dream, and in the magic of jugglers. Such also are all the objects of our vision, on which you can place no trust or reliance.⁷³ Know also that there is no pain or pleasure, or any act of

merit or demerit, or anything owing to the impossibility of there being any agent or passive agent.

⁷⁴ The whole universe is a vacuum without any support. It appears like a secondary moon in the sky or a city in one's imagination, none of which has reality in nature.

⁷⁵ Abide only by the rules of the community or strictly observe your silence, remaining like a block of wood or stone. Be set free in the Supreme. ⁷⁶ The tranquility and intellectuality of the Supreme Deity do not admit any diversity in his nature. His lack of corporeality does not admit the attribution of a body or any of its parts to him. ⁷⁷ There can be no nature and no conception that can be attributed to the pure spirit. This Divine Spirit being inherent in all bodies, there can be no nature ever imputed to him.

⁷⁸ Atheists reason there is no consciousness in the uncreated spirit or, in other words, the nonexistence of a self-conscious Eternal Consciousness. This is not acceptable, for though our knowledge of the container and contained is very imperfect, yet there is someone at the bottom that is ever perfect.

⁷⁹ O Rama, rely upon that uncreated and indestructible Supreme Being which is ever the same and pure, irrefutable and adored by the wise and good. It is the irrefutable truth on which you should quietly depend for your liberation. Though you may eat and drink and play about like all others, yet you must know that all this is nothing.

Chapter 30 — Sermon on Spirituality

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Egoism is the greatest ignorance, an impassable barrier in the way of our ultimate extinction. Yet foolish people are seen to fondly pursue their final bliss through their egoistic efforts, which are no better than the attempts of a madman.² Egoism is the sure indicator of the ignorance of unwise people. No cool headed and knowing man is ever known to have a concept of “I” or a sense that he is the agent of doing anything.³ The wise and knowing man, whether embodied or liberated, renounces the impurity of his egotism and relies on the utter nothingness of himself, which is as pure and clear as the emptiness of heaven, free from trouble and anxiety.

⁴ The autumn sky is serene and clear, and so are the waters of the calm and unperturbed sea. The disc of the full moon is fair and bright. But none of these is as cool, calm and full of light as the radiant face of the wise and knowing sage.⁵ The features of the sage and wise are ever calm and steady, like painted figures of warriors in battle array, even in the midst of business and trifles, and even when engaged in the commotion of warfare and fury of fight.⁶ All worldly thoughts and desires are nothing to a sage existing in nirvana. They are as imperceptible as the slender lines in a painting, and as lean as the rippling waves on the surface of the sea which are indistinct from its waters.

⁷ As the rolling waves of the sea are nothing other than its heaving water, so visible phenomena in the world are nothing other than the play of the spirit of Brahman in itself.⁸ Hence the soul that is undisturbed by wave-like commotions is freed from all worldliness. It is calm and quiet both inside and outside like the still ocean, and raised above worldly matters in its holy meditation.⁹ Ego rises of itself as an uncreated thing in the form of consciousness in the all comprehensive intellect of God, just as waves rise and fall in the waters of the deep and have no difference in their nature.¹⁰ As rising smoke in the sky exhibits various forms of forts, chariots and elephants, and as none of them is anything other than the same smoke, so all these phenomena and ideas are in no way different from the nature of their divine origin.

¹¹ By considering the fallacy of your individual ego consciousness, you will, my royal hearers, get rid of your error. Then you will exult in your knowledge of truth and be victorious over yourself. Do not despair, for you are wise enough to know the truth.

¹² As the growing sprout conceives the would be tree with all its future flowers and fruit, so the ignorant man conceives in his vacant mind the false ideas of himself, his soul, his ego and of everything else according to its fancy.¹³ The conceptions of the mind are as false as the sight of things, like seeing a circle in the twirling of a lighted torch. Though the presiding soul is always true, yet these thoughts of the mind are as untrue as its fancy of fairies in the orb of the moon.

¹⁴ Now my royal hearers, continue to enjoy your peace by considering, at your pleasure, the rise, end, and continuation of the world, and remain free from disease in all places and times.¹⁵ Conduct yourselves with calmness in whatever turns to be favorable or unfavorable. Unless you behave like dead bodies, you cannot perceive the bliss of your final nirvana, the cessation of mental activity.

¹⁶ He truly attains the state of supreme bliss in this world who gives up his egoism and egoistic desires from his mind and renounces the animal nature of his life to live a life of consciousness.

¹⁷ Living the animal life leads only to sorrows and misery. Men thus bound by the chain of their animal desires are like big boats burdened with heavy loads of cargo.¹⁸ Strangers to reasoning, addicted to the gross thoughts of ignorance, are never blessed with liberation. How is it possible to obtain in this life what is attainable only by the deceased in the next world?¹⁹ Whatever a man fancies in this life and desires to have in the next, he dies with the same and finds them in his future life. But where there is no such fancy, desire or hope that is truly the state of everlasting bliss.²⁰ Therefore be fearless with the thought that there is no such thing as yourself or anyone else. By knowing this truth, you will find this poisonous world turned into a paradise.

²¹ Examine your whole material body composed of your outer frame and the inner mind. Say, in what part do you find your egoism situated? If nowhere, then accept the truth that you have no ego anywhere.²² Seeing all and every part up to the seat of your egoism, and finding it seated nowhere, you see only an open space of which no part is ever lost or destroyed.²³ In this (attainment of liberation) you are required to do no more than to exert your courage to renounce your enjoyments, cultivate your reasoning powers, and govern yourself by subduing your body and mind. Therefore, you ignorant men who desire your liberation, delay no longer to practice self-control.

²⁴ The learned explain liberation as meditation upon God without any desire of the heart or duplicity in the mind. They say this is not possible without the assistance of spiritual knowledge. But the world being full of error, it is necessary to derive this knowledge from spiritual works, or else it is very likely to be entrapped in the very many snares which are forever set all about this earth.

²⁵ Knowing full well the unreality of the world and the uncertainty of one's self, one's body, friends, family, wealth and possessions, whoever is distrustful of them and identifies himself with his intelligence and pure emptiness, truly finds his liberation in this and in no other state whatsoever.

Chapter 31 — Sermon on the Means of Attaining Extinction

¹ Vasishta said:—

He who has devoted his whole soul to the contemplation of Consciousness and feels it stirring within himself, knows in his mind the vanity and unreality of all worldly things.² By habituating himself to this sort of meditation and seeing the outward objects in his perceptive soul, he sees the external world like an appearance in his dream.³ All this is truly the form of Consciousness represented in a different garb. Consciousness is more subtle than pure air, but collects and condenses itself as the solid world, then recognizes itself as such. The world is no other than the consolidated consciousness, and there is nothing beside this anywhere.

⁴ It has no dissolution or decay, nor has it any birth or death. It is neither emptiness nor solidity. It is neither extension nor lack of density, but it is all and the supreme one and nothing in particular.

⁵ Nothing is lost by the loss of individual ego or this world. The loss of an unreality is no loss at all, just as the loss of anything in our dream is the loss of nothing.⁶ Nothing is lost at the loss of an imaginary city, which is altogether a falsity. So nothing is destroyed by the destruction of our egos and this unreal world.⁷ Our perception of the world comes from a nothing. If it is granted as such, then there is nothing that can be attributed to it, like a flower growing in the air.⁸ After mature thought with regard to this unreality, the conclusion is that you must remain as you are, as firm as a rock in the state in which you are placed and in the conduct appropriate to your station in life.

⁹ The world is the creation of your fancy as you wish it to be. There are particular duties attached to your station in all your wanderings through life. But all these immediately cease at the moment (of your realization in meditation), and this is the conclusion arrived at (by the scriptures).¹⁰ All this is inevitable and unavoidable in life. It is avoided only by divine meditation, in which case the entire creation vanishes into nothing leaving no trace behind.

¹¹ Unholy souls who view creation before them like the dreams of sleeping men are called sleeping souls. They see the world rising before them like waving waters in a mirage.¹² We do not know what to say about those who consider the unreality of the world as a reality, other than saying they are like the offspring of barren women.

¹³ The souls of those who have known the true God are as full as the ocean with heavenly delight because they do not look upon or even notice visible objects.¹⁴ They remain as calm as the still air and as tranquil as the unmoving flame of a lamp. They continue to be quite at ease even if they are employed or unemployed in action.¹⁵ As a minute atom makes a mountain, so the sage's heart becomes full when it is employed in business. Yet the cold-hearted detachment of the wise seer continues the same as ever before.

¹⁶ The wish makes the man, though it is not seen by anyone. It is the cause of the world, though it is not perceived by anybody.¹⁷ What is done by oversight or in ignorance is undone by the knowledge of it, just as, for example, thefts carried on in darkness are undone and disappear before the blaze of daylight.¹⁸ All beings composed of fleshy bodies and the five elemental substances are altogether unreal, mere gross productions of only error. Understanding, mind, egoism and other mental faculties are of the same nature.

¹⁹ Leaving aside both the elemental and mental aspects of your body, you attain the purely intellectual state of your soul. This is called your liberation.²⁰ When attachment to consciousness and adherence to intellectual thoughts are secured, there will be an end to seeing phenomena and there will be no more appearance of any fancy in the mind, or any desire or craving rising in the heart.²¹ But he who has fallen into the error of taking phenomena as true, his sight of the unreal prevents him from seeing true reality. In the end he finds that the phenomenal world is only a mirage, never faithful to anybody at any place.²² He whose soul has risen to enlightenment finds the falsity of the world, but whoever happens to have any memory of the world in him comes to fall into the error of its reality again.

²³ Therefore avoid your reliance on all worldly objects. Rely only on the one who is simply emptiness. Remember that it is good for you not to remember the world anymore, and that your forgetfulness of it altogether is best for you.²⁴ In your forgetfulness of the world you will find nothing to be seen or enjoyed in it, and nothing of its existence or nonexistence whatsoever. It is forever well, quiet and still as the calm and undisturbed ocean.²⁵ The whole visible world is Brahman himself. As such, the ocean of Brahman is to be understood as a positive reality. It is a bubble in his eternity, which is all quiet and calm after the absorption of bubbles and waves.

²⁶ Meek and tolerant men are calm and dispassionate in their worldly transactions. They rest in the Supreme Spirit in their souls.²⁷ The saint whose soul is extinguished in God has only meekness remaining in him. Being devoid of all desire, he is unfit for all worldly concerns.²⁸ As long as one is not perfect in the extinction of his soul in God, he may be employed in his every day duties by being devoid of passions, hatred, and fear of anyone.²⁹ The saint being freed from his passions and feelings of anger, fear and other affections, and getting the tranquility of nirvana extinction in his mind, becomes as cold as snow and remains like a block of stone forever.

³⁰ As the lotus contains the seed of the future flower, so the saint has all his thoughts and desires quite concealed in his innermost soul. He never gives any expression to them on the outside.³¹ The mind wanders outside by thinking about the outer world. It remains confined within itself by meditation on the inner soul. Such is the contemplation of the Supreme Being, either as he is thought of or seen in spirit in the inner soul, or viewed himself to be displayed in his works of creation in the outer world.

³² The outer world is nothing other than an external representation of the delusive dream that is inside ourselves. There is not the slightest difference between them, just as there is none in the same milk contained in two different pots.³³ The motion or inertness and the fickleness or steadiness of the one or other are no more than the effects of our lengthened delusion. The state of one being the container of the other makes no difference in them, as there is none between the ocean and the waves it contains.

³⁴ The dreams that we see in sleep are only operations of the mind, though in our ignorance they are supposed to be separate from ourselves.³⁵ He who remains in the manner of the Supreme Soul, quite calm and tranquil, free from all fancy and desires, becomes (extinct in) the very soul by thinking himself as such. He never becomes so unless he thinks himself to be so.³⁶ Perfect stillness of the soul is the divine state when there is not even a dream stirring in the mind, but what that state is or isn't is incomprehensible to the mind and inexpressible in words.³⁷ Yet this state is made intelligible to us by the instructions of our spiritual guides, by entirely removing our error, and by our intense meditation of it. Otherwise, no one can explain what it really is.

³⁸ Therefore it is proper for you to remain entirely extinct in the Eternal One and tranquil as the Divine Spirit by giving up all your fear and pride, your grief and sorrows, your covetousness, and all your other errors. You must also forsake the dullness of your heart and mind, that of your body and all its parts, together with the sense of your individual ego and the distinctions of things from the one perfect unity.

Chapter 32 — Sermon Inculcating Knowledge of Truth

¹ Vasishta continued:—

As soon as the intellect's reasoning commences to act, it is immediately attended by the sense of individual ego, the cause of the false conception of the world. This introduces a series of unrealities, just as the stirring of air causes winds to blow.² But when the intellect's reasoning is directed by knowledge, its fallacy of the reality of the world does not affect us in any manner. We see the world as a reflection, a display of Brahman himself, but we are liable to great error by thinking the phenomenal world to be distinct from Him.

³ As the opening of the eyes receives the sight of external appearance, the opening of the intellect's thought receives the false idea of the reality of the phenomenal world.⁴ What appears on the outside to be quite distinct from the nature of the inner intellect cannot be a reality. Therefore this unreal show is no more than the dancing of a barren woman's son before one's eyes.⁵ Consciousness is perceived by its conception of the idea of things, but when we consider the fallacy of its conceptions and its idea of the unreal as real, it appears as a delusion like the appearance of a ghost to children.

⁶ Our egoism, from the knowledge that "I am such a one," serves to bring us misery. But by ignoring this knowledge of myself, that I am not this or that, loosens me from my bondage to it. Therefore I say that our bondage and liberation are both dependent on our own choice.⁷ Therefore, meditation which is accompanied with self-extinction and forgetfulness of one's self in samadhi, and remaining moving and quick in the manner of the quiet and dead, is the calm tranquility of holy saints, which is ever the same, unaltered, and without decay.⁸ Therefore, O wise men, do not trouble yourself like the unwise with the discrimination of unity and duality and the propriety or impropriety of speech, all which is wholly useless and a painful frivolity.

⁹ A covetous man with his increasing desires meets with a series of ideal troubles gathering as thickly about him as the thronging dreams that assail his head at night. These proceed from his fondness of outward and visible objects and from his fond desires inwardly cherished within his heart. They grow as thickly upon him as the creations of his wild fancy.¹⁰ But the meek man of moderate desire remains inactive in his waking state. By his freedom from desiring temporary objects, he does not feel the pain or fear the pains of his real evils.¹¹ Hence desire being moderated and brought under proper bounds resembles our freedom from its bonds. We get rid of our once intense thought of something by our neglect of it over the course of time and changing events.¹² The complete curtailment of desires is sure to be attended with liberation, just as the complete disappearance of frost and clouds from the sky leaves the empty vacuum to view.

¹³ The means of diminishing our desires is the knowledge of ego as Brahman himself. This knowledge leads to one's liberation, just as the study of science and association with the wise serve to convert ignorant men to discernment and knowledge.¹⁴ In my belief there is no ego other than the one Supreme Ego. This belief is enough to bring men to the right understanding of themselves and make their living souls quite calm, tranquil and dead to the sense of their personality and self-existence.

¹⁵ The world appears as a duality or something distinct from the unity of God, just as the motion of the wind seems to be something else beside the wind itself, or breathing as another thing than breath. But

this fallacy of dualism will disappear upon reflection of, “how can I or anything else be something of itself?”¹⁶ That “I am nothing” is what is meant by extinction.

Why remain ignorant? Go and associate with the wise and argue with them and you will come to learn.¹⁷ In the company of those who are acquainted with truth you loosen the bonds of your worldly errors, just as darkness is dispelled by light and night recedes before the advance of day.¹⁸ Make it the duty of your whole life to argue with the learned about such topics as, “What am I?” and “What are these visible objects? What is life and what this living soul? How and from where did they come into existence?¹⁹ The world is seen to be full of animal life and I find my egoism is lost in it.” The truth of all this is learnt in a moment in the society of the learned. Therefore take yourself to the company of those inspiring men of truth.

²⁰ Resort one by one to all those who are wiser than you in the knowledge of truth, and by investigation into their different doctrines. The demon of your controversy will disappear forever.

²¹ As the demon of controversy rises before the learned like a ghost appearing before children, so the error of egoism rises before the learned in their attempt to maintain their respective arguments.

²² Therefore let the diligent inquirer after truth attend separately to the teaching of every scholar of particular doctrines. Then, taking them together, let him consider in his own mind the meaning of their different teachings.²³ Let him weigh well in his own mind the meanings of their different sayings to sharpen his own reasoning and to accept the doctrine which is free from the flights of imagination and all earthly views.²⁴ Having sharpened your understanding by associating with the wise, cut short the growth of the plant of your ignorance by degrees, bit by bit.

²⁵ I you to do so because I know it is possible for you to do so. We tell you people as we ourselves have well known. We never speak about what is improper or impracticable for you.²⁶ As the gathering or dispersion of clouds in the sky and the rising and sinking of waves in the sea is no gain or loss to either, so the attainment or deprivation of any good whatever is of no concern to the unconcerned sage or saint.²⁷ All this is as false as the appearance of water in a mirage, while our reliance on the everlasting and all pervading One is firm, secure and certain. By reasoning rightly in yourself, you will discover your egoism to be nowhere. Then how and from where do you create this false phantom of your imagination?

Chapter 33 — Sermon on the True Sense of Truth

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Rama, if a man will not gain his wisdom by his own efforts, by his own reasoning, and by the development of his understanding in the company of good men, then there is no other way to it. ² If one tries to remove the false creations of his imagination by the prescribed remedies of the scriptures, he will succeed to change and correct himself, just as they remedy one poison with a counter poison.

³ All fancies and desires are checked by un-imagining them, and this un-imagining or lacking desire is the cause of liberation. Renouncing worldly enjoyment is the first step to liberation.

⁴ First consider well the meanings of words, both in your mind and utterance of them, and all habitual and growing misconceptions will slowly cease and subside of themselves. ⁵ There is no greater error or ignorance in one's self than the sense of one's own individual ego. Once this error of ego has subsided by disregarding of its accepted sense, then liberation is near. ⁶ If you have the least reliance upon your body and individual ego, you surely lose the infinite joy of your unbounded soul. But by forsaking the feeling of your personality, you are freed from the bondage of your fondness for anything of this world and become perfected in divine knowledge and blissfulness.

⁷ Lack of understanding makes all these unrealities appear as real to the ignorant. But we venerate and bow down to the sage who remains as unmoved as a stone at all this. ⁸ Who, from lack of any sense of external objects, remains as cold as a stone and remains at peace in the Supreme Spirit by meditation on the Divine Mind in his own mind, sees only an empty void both within and all around himself.

⁹ Whether visible phenomena exist or not, they tend to our misery. Only our thoughtlessness of them leads to our happiness. Therefore it is better to remain unconscious of them by shutting our senses against them. ¹⁰ There are two very serious diseases waiting on mankind because of men's cares for this and the next world. Both are attended with intolerable physical and temporal pains to the patients who suffer them. ¹¹ In this world, the intelligent are seen throughout their lives vainly trying to remove their diseases of hunger and thirst by their best medicines of food and drink. But there is no remedy whatever to heal their spiritual illnesses of sin and evil, or to prevent their inevitable fate of death and rebirths in endless succession.

¹² The best sort of men are trying to heal their spiritual illnesses and prevent their future fate by means of the ambrosial medicines of dispassion, good company, and improvement of their understanding.

¹³ Those who are careful to cure their spiritual complaints become successful through their desire to get better and the best medicine of abstinence and refraining from evil. ¹⁴ This deadly disease of sin leads men to hellfire in the future. Say, what remedy is left to try after he has gone to the next world where there is no balm to heal the sickly soul? ¹⁵ Try all earthly medicines to prevent your life from being wasted away by earthly diseases, and keep your souls pure for the next world by the healing balm of spiritual knowledge in this life.

¹⁶ This life is only a breath, like a trembling dew drop hanging at the end of a shaking leaf, ready to fall down. But your future life is long and enduring under all its variations. Therefore heal it for the everlasting future. ¹⁷ By carefully attending to the treatment of spiritual diseases at present, you will not only be healthy and holy in your soul in the next world, but you will evade all the diseases of this

life which will fly far away from you.

¹⁸ Know your conscious soul to be like a microscopic organism which evolves itself into the form of this vast world, just as an atom contains a huge mountain which in time evolves from its core. ¹⁹ As the evolution of your consciousness presents the forms that you have in your mind to your sight, so does the phenomena of the world appear in the womb of vacuum. They are no more real than a false fantasy.

²⁰ In spite of the repeated deluge and destruction of the visible earth, there is no change or end of the false phantom of our mind where its form is neither destroyed nor resuscitated owing to it being a fantasy without any reality whatever. ²¹ Should you like to lift up your soul from the muddy pit of earthly pleasures and desires where it is drowning, then you must put forth your human virtues as the only means to this end, without which there is no other. ²² The man of uncontrolled mind and soul is a dull-headed fool fallen in the muddy pit of carnal desires. He becomes the receptacle of all kinds of danger and difficulty, just as the seabed is the reservoir of all the waters falling to it.

²³ As boyhood is the first stage in the life of a man, an introduction to later stages for perfection of human nature, so the first step to one's self-extinction is the renunciation of carnal enjoyments which leads to the subjection of passions.

²⁴ The stream of a wise man's life is ever flowing onward with the rising and falling of events, without overflowing its banks or breaking its bounds. It resembles a river drawn in a picture, flowing without the current of its waters. ²⁵ The course of the lives of ignorant people runs with tremendous noise, like the swift currents of rivers. It rolls onward with dangerous whirlpools and flows on with rising and setting waves. ²⁶ Continuous creations and courses of events transpire with the succession of our thoughts. They appear before us like the illusive series of our dreams, the false appearance of two moons in the sky, or the delusion of mirage and apparitions rising to the sight of children. ²⁷ So the constant waves raised by the rising and falling waters of our consciousness appear like an endless chain of created objects, rising in reality to our view but, being taken into mature consideration, false and unreal as they seemed true and real to our false apprehension of them.

²⁸ It is said that there are worlds and cities of gandharva spirits and spiritual masters contained in the hollow vault of the sky. It is supposed that the space of the sky is a reservoir of waters. But all these are only creations of the mind. There are no such things in reality. ²⁹ Worlds are like bubbles of water in the ocean of the conscious mind. They are only the productions of the fanciful mind, things such as they are thought to be. Together with the idea of ego, all are only forms of our varying thoughts.

³⁰ The expansion of consciousness unfolds the world. Closing consciousness conceals phenomena from view. Therefore these appearances are neither inside nor outside of us. They are neither realities nor altogether unreal either. ³¹ There is one thing alone of the form of Consciousness which is unborn and unknown, and the Lord of all without any decay. It is devoid of substance and property. It is called Brahman or immensity and tranquil spirit, which is as quiet and calm as the infinite void and is rarer than even the empty atmosphere. ³² There is no cause whatever which can be reasonably assigned to the agitation, consciousness, and creations of the spirit of Brahman which, being above nature, is said to have no nature at all. Its agitation is like that of the air whose cause is beyond all conception.

³³ Brahman has his thoughts rising in him like waves in the ocean, like our consciousness of dreams rising in our soul. In reality, the nature of this creation is neither as that of his dream or the wave produced from his essence. ³⁴ Only this much can be said of him. There is only an unknowable unity which is ever the same and never as quick as thought or as dull as matter. It is not a reality or unreality, nor anything positive or negative.

³⁵ The yogi who remains in this detached tranquil state of Brahman, unaware of his own consciousness, is said to be the best of sages and saints. ³⁶ Who becomes inactive and inert as a clod of earth, even while he is alive, who becomes unconscious of himself and the outer world and thinks of nothing, is said to be the best of sages and saints. ³⁷ We lose sight of wished for objects by ceasing to wish for them. We get rid of our knowledge of ourselves and the world by our ceasing to think about them.

³⁸ All things expressed in words have certain causes assigned to them. But the cause of their nature remains inexplicable. Only the knowledge of the cause of this prime nature leads to our liberation.

³⁹ Nothing whatever has a nature of itself unless it is implanted by the intelligence of God, as if by infusion of the moisture of divine intelligence. ⁴⁰ All our thoughts are agitated by inspiration of the breath of the great Intellect. Therefore know them as proceeding from the vacuum of the entity of the supreme Brahman. ⁴¹ There is no difference whatsoever between creator and creation, except the difference between air and its agitation, which are the one and same thing. The thought of any difference is as false as the sight of one's death in his dream.

⁴² An error continues only as long as the blunder does not become evident by the light of reasoning. When the error is cleared of its falsity, it vanishes into the light and truth of Brahman. ⁴³ Error, being the false representation of something, flies away before a critical insight into it. All things being only productions of our error, like our conception of the horns of a rabbit, they all vanish before the light of true knowledge, leaving only the entity of Brahman. ⁴⁴ Therefore give up all your errors and delusions and thereby get rid of the burden of your diseases and decay. Meditate only on the One who has no beginning, middle or end, who is always clear and the same, and who is full of bliss and bliss. Assimilate yourself into the nature of the clear sky (in that supreme state of Brahman-space).

Chapter 34 — Sermon on the Practice of Spiritual Yoga

¹ Vasishta continued:—

A man lost in the pleasure or pains that fall to his share in this life is lost forever for the future. But the scriptures pronounce that he who is not lost is imperishable.² He who has his desires always rising in his mind is always subject to the changes of fortune. Therefore it is proper to give up desire at first in order to prevent alternating pains and pleasures.

³ The error that this is “I” and that the world does not attach to the immortal soul which is tranquil and unsupported, quite dispassionate and without decay.⁴ That this is “I”, that is Brahman, and the other is the world, are verbal distinctions that breed error in the mind by giving different names to the one, uniform and unchanging emptiness that is ever calm and quiet.⁵ Here there is no ego or world, no fictitious names of Brahman and other. The all pervading One is quite calm and all in all. There is no active or passive agent at all in this place.⁶ The multiplicity of doctrines and the plurality of terms used to explain true spirit and the inexplicable One are invalid and refutable. Among them, the word “ego” in particular is altogether false and futile.

⁷ A man absorbed in meditation does not see visible phenomena, just as a thoughtless person has no perception of a ghost standing in his presence, and just as a sleeping man does not perceive the dreams occurring to another sleeping by his side, or hear the loud roar of clouds in the unconscious state of his sound sleep.⁸ In this manner the courses of spirits are imperceptible to us, though they are continually moving all about us. It is our nature to perceive what you know and never know anything which is without or beyond our knowledge.

⁹ Knowledge, being like our soul, shows all things like itself. Therefore our knowledge of ego and the world is not separate from the soul and the Supreme Soul.¹⁰ Our knowledge manifests itself in the form of the world before us, just as our dreams and desires represent themselves to us as true. These various manifestations of the inner soul are in no way different from the soul, just as waves and bubbles are nothing but the water in which they arise.¹¹ In spite of the identity of the soul and its manifestations of knowledge, concept, ideas and others, ignorant thinkers consider them to be distinct things. The learned make no distinction whatever between the manifestation and its manifesting principle.

¹² As the indivisible soul becomes a component body by assuming all its organs and limbs, so the eternally undivided spirit of God appears to be multiplied in all parts of the world and in the various works of creation.¹³ The intellect contains numberless thoughts in itself, just as a tray holds a great many golden cups. Whenever this intellect is awake, it sees innumerable worlds appearing before it.

¹⁴ It is Brahman himself who shines in his brightness in the form of this fair creation. He is dissolved throughout the whole in his liquefied form of Intellect, just as the sea shows itself in the changing forms of its waves.¹⁵ Whatever the mind thinks, it appears in the form of the world. Formless thought takes a definite form. But what is not in the mind never appears to view.

¹⁶ The concepts of exercising the intellect and the lack of any thought are both applied to the Supreme Intellect because of its almighty power to assume either to itself. This sort of explanation is for the instruction of others. In reality, there are no such states appertaining to the ever intelligent soul.¹⁷ The

world is neither a reality nor an unreality, but exhibits itself as such by using the reasoning of the intellect. But as the world does not appear absent reasoning, the same is taught in this lecture.
¹⁸ Reasoning and its absence are like the agitation and stillness of the soul. If both are under your subjection, it is quite easy and never difficult for you to restrain yourself by remaining as still as a piece of stone.

¹⁹ An appearance which has neither essence nor substance, nor any assignable cause for its existence, is the very nature of this egoism of ours. We know not from where it appeared like an apparition before us. ²⁰ It is very strange that this apparition of your ego, which is no entity in reality, should take such possession of your mind as to make you unconscious of yourself.

²¹ By accident one happens to observe the ego in the person of the impersonal Brahman, just as a man by deception of his eyesight comes to see a tree in the sky. ²² If my ego and the world are really the same as Brahman, then how can they have their production and dissolution, and what is the cause of our joy or sorrow in either of these cases? ²³ This world of thought comes to be visible by the almighty power of God. But the absence of thought prevents its appearance to us. Thoughtlessness of the world avoids its sight.

²⁴ By mere accident the empty mind of Brahman exhibits the ideal world in itself, just as any man dreams a fairy city, or sees the objects of his desire and fancy in his mind. How is it possible to separate the contained from the containing mind? ²⁵ Creation abides in the Divine Mind like waves abide in the sea, a statue abides in the wood from which it is carved, and pots and other things abide in the clay from which they are made. So all things abide in Brahman.

²⁶ As all things appear in their formless state in the insubstantial and transparent emptiness of the mind, so ego and this world also appears in the Divine Mind. ²⁷ As air by its natural inflation breathes out in various sorts of breezes, so the one whose nature is unknown evolves himself in every form of ego of each individual and of the world. ²⁸ As formless smoke presents forms of elephants, horses and the like in empty clouds, so the insubstantial spirit of God represent the formless ego, you and all things beside in itself. ²⁹ Creation is a component part of the unknown body of Brahman, just as leaves and branches are component parts of a tree. Each contains both the other's cause and effect.

³⁰ Knowing the impossibility of the existence of the world other than in the self, the ever existent soul, remain at peace within yourself without trouble. Be free from attributes and errors. Remain as free and detached as the free, open and empty space. ³¹ Know that neither you nor ourselves nor the worlds nor the open air and space are ever in existence. Brahman alone is ever existent in his eternal tranquility, calmness and fullness. ³² Seeing the endless particulars in the universe, remain free from all particularities such as I, myself, you, yourself, and the like. Think yourself to be in the sole and Supreme One and you shall have your liberation. ³³ Knowledge of particulars serves only to bind you to them. Your ignorance of particulars lends only to your liberation. Sit as you are and do your business in your state of tranquility totally unaware of everything. ³⁴ Do not let anything visible attract your sight or allow their thoughts to absorb your mind. Thus the world disappears with your thoughtlessness of it. Say what else have you to think about?

³⁵ The absence of the visible and its observer resembles the state of the waking sleeper. It will make the mind as void of thoughts as the autumn sky is devoid of clouds. ³⁶ We distinguish between creation

and creator because we assume the action of Divine Consciousness is distinct from the unchanging Brahman. In the same way, our knowledge of the difference between wind and air causes us to think they are different. Therefore, our liberation lies in the absence of making this distinction and the knowledge of the unity of Brahman.³⁷ The knowledge of the vibration of the Divine Spirit is truly the cause of our knowledge of the world. The absence of this knowledge of differences is called our nirvana or utter extinction in God.

³⁸ As the seed is conscious that the sprout growing out of it is its own kind, so Divine Consciousness knows the world produced from it is the same as itself.³⁹ As a seed becomes a plant from its conception of the plant in itself, so Divine Consciousness becomes creation from its concept of creation.⁴⁰ As thoughts are only various modifications of the mind, so creation is a pattern of Divine Consciousness. All kinds of seeds serve as examples of having products of the same nature.⁴¹ The world is the changeless form of the unchanging essence of one. Know it to be as unchangeable and without decay as He who is without beginning or end.

⁴² The Divine Soul is full of its innate will whereby it produces and destroys the world out of and into itself. This form of unity and duality is like the appearance and disappearance of an imaginary city.

⁴³ As you have no distinct idea of the things expressed by the words sky and emptiness, so you must know that the words Brahman and creation bear no distinction from the Divine Spirit.⁴⁴ The great Consciousness or omniscience, which is the everlasting form of divine essence, has the knowledge of ego jointly eternal with itself, which men by ignorance assume to themselves.⁴⁵ There is nothing that ever grows or perishes in the mundane form of Brahman, but everything rises and falls in it like the waves of the sea, rising and falling in all ways and never to be lost in any way.

⁴⁶ All things being of the form of Brahman remain in the same Brahman, just as all spaces remain in infinite space and all waves and billows rise and fall in the same sea.⁴⁷ Wherever you are placed and whenever you have time, attend but for a moment to the nature of the soul in your consciousness and you will perceive the true ego.

⁴⁸ The sages, O Rama, have described two states of our consciousness, namely its sensible and insensible states. Now therefore, be inclined to that which you think is for your best good and never be forgetful of it.

Chapter 35 — Description of the Supreme Brahma

¹ Vasishta continued:—

The state of the soul is as calm as an untroubled mind during a journey from one place to another, when it is free from the cares of both places.² Therefore, to secure your unchanging composure, be quite unconcerned in all states of your life, whether when you sit or walk or hear or see anything.

³ Being thus devoid of desires and undistinguished in society, continue as steadfast as a rock in the particular conduct of your station in life.⁴ Being placed in this manner beyond the reach of ignorance, one is blessed with the light of knowledge in his mind.⁵ After ignorance disappears from the mind, there can be no trace of any thought left, nor can the mind think of anything when tranquility arises in it.

⁶ Brahman is truly one with the world and the same one appears as many to our ignorance which represents the fullness of Brahma as a multitude and his pure spirit as extended matter.⁷ The fullness (of creation) appears as an emptiness, and emptiness appears as substantiality, brightness deemed darkness, and what is obscure is brought to light.⁸ The unchangeable is seen as changing and the steady appears as moving. The real appears as unreal and unreality as reality, so that seeming as otherwise, and so vice versa also.⁹ The indivisible appears as divided and energy appears as inertia. The unthinkable seems to be the object of thought and the undivided whole seems to shine in innumerable parts.¹⁰ Without ego appears as the very ego and the imperishable one appears as perishable. The unstained seem tainted and the unknowable is known as the knowable throughout the known world.¹¹ The luminous one appears as the deep darkness of chaos and the oldest in time manifests as a new born creation. The one who is more minute than an atom bears the boundless universe in its heart.

¹² He the soul of all, yet he is unseen or dimly seen in all these his works. Though boundless and endless in himself, he appears as bounded in the innumerable works of his creation.¹³ Being beyond illusion, he binds the world in delusion. Being ineffable light, he centers his brightness in the dazzling sun. Know then, O best of inquirers, that Brahman resembles the endless expanse of the vast ocean.

¹⁴ This immense treasure of the universe, so enormous in size, appears as light as a feather when put into balance with the immensity of Brahman. The rays of his illusion, eluding moonbeams in their transparency, are as invisible as the glare of the mirage.

¹⁵ Brahman is as boundless and impassable as the vast ocean. He is situated in no time or place or in the sky where he has set forests of star clusters and huge mountains of planets.¹⁶ He is the minutest of the minute, and the bulkiest of the bulky. He is the greatest among the great, and the greatest of the great.¹⁷ He is neither doer, deed nor instrument of doing anything, neither is he the cause of another, nor has he any cause for himself. Being all empty within, Brahman is full in himself.

¹⁸ The world which is the great casket of its contents is as empty as a vast desert. In spite of containing countless solid and stony mountains, the world is as flexible as plastic ether and as subtle as rarefied air.¹⁹ All things however time worn appear again every day. Light becomes dark by night, and darkness is changed to light again.²⁰ Things present become invisible to sight and objects at a distance present themselves to view. The intellectual changes to the material and the material

vanishes to the super-physical.²¹ The ego becomes the non-ego and the non-ego changes to the ego. One becomes the ego of another, and that other, and the ego becomes something other and different than the ego.

²² The full ocean of the surface of Brahman gives rise to innumerable waves of the world, and these waves like worlds evolve from and dissolve into the ocean of Brahman's breast by their liquid-like and plastic nature.²³ The empty body of Brahman bears a snow-white brightness over all its parts, making all creation full of a light as fair as snow and frost.²⁴ This God being beyond the space of all time and place and without any form, figure or shape whatever, stretches out the unreal figures in the world in space and at all times of day and night, like the unstable waves of the sea.

²⁵ In this light shines the bright filament of worlds in the vast space of the sky. They appear like so many ancient trees standing in a large forest bearing the five elements as their five petal leaves.²⁶ The great God has spread out this light like a clear mirror before his sight as he wished to see the shadow of his own face represented in the translucent twilight.²⁷ The unbounded intellect of God produced of its own free will the spacious firmament in which the Lord planted the tree of his creation, which brought forth the luminous orbs as its fruit in various different parts.²⁸ The Lord created a great many varieties of things, both inside and outside of himself, which appear as internal thoughts in his consciousness, and as all entities and non-entities in his outer or physical world.

²⁹ In this manner, the Divine Mind exhibits the different forms of things in itself and of its own will, just as the tongue displays the varieties of speech within the cavity of the mouth.³⁰ The flowing of Divine Will forms the worlds. It is the conception of pleasant sensations in the mind that causes these torrents and whirlpools in the ocean of the world.³¹ All things proceed from Divine Mind, just as light issues from fire. By lulling the creative mind to rest, the glow of all visible objects is extinguished and put out of sight.

³² All the worlds belong to Divine Consciousness, just as the property of whiteness adheres to the substance of snow. All things proceed from Divine Consciousness, just as cooling moonbeams issue from the moon.³³ It is from the flow of colors from this bodiless Consciousness that the picture of the world derives its variegated colors. This Consciousness alone is known as an infinite extension without deprivation or variation at anytime.³⁴ This stupendous Consciousness, like a gigantic fig tree of the forest, stretches out its huge branches on the empty air of heaven, bearing the enormous bodies of orbs of worlds like clusters of flowers and fruit.³⁵ Again this colossal Consciousness appears like a huge mountain firmly fixed in the air, letting down many a gushing and running stream flowing with numberless flowers fallen from the mountain trees.

³⁶ In this spacious theatre of emptiness, the old actress Destiny acts her part to represent worlds in their repeated rotations and successions.³⁷ In this stage the boy player of Time is also seen to play his part producing and destroying by turns an infinity of worlds in the continued course of kalpa and mahakalpa ages, and in the rotation of the parts of time.³⁸ This playful Time remains firm in his post in spite of the repeated entrances and exits of worlds in the theatre of the universe, just as a fixed mirror ever remains the same though shadows and appearances in it are continually shifting and gliding.

³⁹ The Lord God is the causal seed of the worlds, whether existing at present or to come into existence in future, in the same manner as the five elemental principles are causes of the present creation. ⁴⁰ The twinkling of God's eye causes the appearance and disappearance of the world with all its beauty and brightness. But the Supreme Soul has no outer eye or its twinkle. He is confined in his spirit.

⁴¹ The very many great creations and dissolutions of worlds, and the constant births and deaths of the living, all of which are continually going on in the course of the nature, are all the various forms of the one unvaried spirit whose breath, like the inflation of air, produces and reduces all from and into itself. Know this and be quiet and still.

Chapter 36 — Sermon on the Seed or Source of the World

¹ Vasishta continued:—

The false varieties of the world take us by surprise, like whirlpool currents that attract passing vessels, but all variety is found to be of the same nature, like the various waves of the sea.² The nature of the whole world is unknowably known to us, just as the universal emptiness which rests in God is imperceptibly perceptible to our eyes.³ I find nothing in the fancied cities of demons in the air. This really ideal world appears to be in real existence only to the ignorant.⁴ The sight and thought of visible appearances are like the visions and memories of objects in dream. This world is only an appearance to sight and a fantasy in the mind.⁵ Phenomena and fancy have no place except in consciousness, beside which there is nothing to be had except only an unbounded emptiness. Where then is the substantiality of the world?

⁶ The error of the world consists in the knower's knowledge of it. Ignorance (of the existence) of the world is free from this error. The knowing or ignoring of it is dependent upon you because the thinking or unthinking of a thing is entirely within your power.

⁷ The empty intellect is of the form of the transcendent sky or an extended space to which it is impossible to attribute any particular nature or quality whatsoever.⁸ The world also is of the form of the intellect, so it also has no particular character or variable property assignable to it. It is seen to exist, but having no particular feature of its own, it is not subject to any variation in its nature.⁹ All this being a representation of empty intellect, it has no substantiality whatsoever. It is the substance and not the knowledge of a thing that is subject to any change in its form. Knowledge belongs to the intellect, which is always unchangeable.

¹⁰ I see the all quiet, calm, and pure spirit of God. I am without the error of ego, or "you" and see nothing about me, just like we can never see a forest growing in the air.¹¹ Know that my voice is the empty air, just like my conscious thought. Know also that my words proceed from my empty consciousness, which likewise resides in empty spirit.

¹² What they call the transcendent essence is the eternal and involuntary state of rest of the Divine Soul, and not what it assumes to itself of its own volition. That state of rest is like that of a slab of stone with the figures naturally marked upon it, or like pictures drawn on a plate or chart.¹³ The silent sage whose mind is calm and quiet in the management of his ordinary business remains unmoved like a wooden statue without the disturbance of any desire or anxiety.

¹⁴ The living wise and detached man sees everything in his lifetime like a hollow reed, all empty within and without, having no core inside.¹⁵ He who is not delighted with the outer world reaps the pleasure of his inner meditations. But he who is indifferent to both is said to have gone over the ocean of the world.¹⁶ Give out words from your lungs like a sounding reed from its hollow pipe. Clear your mind from its thoughts by keeping your body detached from busy affairs.¹⁷ Touch the tangibles as they come to you without desiring them. Remain in your solitary cell without wishing or caring or grieving.

¹⁸ You may enjoy the various flavors offered to you. Take them to your mouth with a spoon without wishing for or taking a delight in their sweet taste.¹⁹ You may see all sights that appear before you without desiring or delighting in them.²⁰ You can smell sweet perfumes and flowers that fall in your

way without you seeking them. Take the scents only to breathe them out, just as fragrant winds scatter flowers all around.²¹ In this manner, if you enjoy the objects of sense with utter detachment, neither longing after nor indulging yourself in any, you shall have nothing to disturb your peace and content at anytime.²² Whoever finds his taste for the poisonous pleasures of life increasing day by day casts his body and mind to be consumed in their burning flame and loses his endless bliss.

²³ Lack of desire in the heart is said to be the dull unconsciousness of the soul, called samadhi by dispassionate sages. There is no other better lesson to secure peace of mind than contentment without any desire.²⁴ Increasing desire is as painful as living in hellfire, while reducing desires in the mind is as delightful as living in heaven.²⁵ The feelings of the heart and mind are only desire. Desire moves mankind to practice austerities and penances according to the scriptures.²⁶ Whenever a man allows his desire to rise in any manner in his heart, he scatters a handful of the seeds of affliction to sprout forth in the fair ground of his mind.²⁷ To the extent one's craving is lessened by his reason, the pain of his covetous thoughts cease to harm them.²⁸ The more a man holds fond desires in his mind, the more they boil and rage and wave in his breast.

²⁹ You heal the sickness of your desire by the medicine of your own efforts. I think you will never find a more powerful balm to rid this chronic disease.³⁰ If you are unable to check to your desires altogether, you must still try to do it by degrees, just as a traveler never fails to reach his destination even by slow paces.³¹ He who does not try to diminish his desires day by day is reckoned as the meanest of men, destined to dive in misery every day.

³² Our desire is the causal seed of the crop of our misery in this world. When this seed is fried in the fire of our best reason, it will not sprout in the ground of our breast.³³ The world is the field of our desires and the harmful source of only our misery. The extinction of desires is called nirvana. Therefore never be tempted by the delusion of desire which leads to your utter destruction.

³⁴ Of what use are scriptures' dictates or teachers' precepts if we fail to understand that our samadhi, our final rest, consists in the extinction of our passing desires?³⁵ He who finds it difficult to check the desires in his mind will find it hopeless to derive any good from his teachers' instructions or scriptures' teachings.³⁶ The poison of greed proves harmful for human life, just as forests full of hunters prove destructive to deer.³⁷ If one is serious about acquiring self-knowledge, he may learn to lessen his cravings and through lack of sensory perception be led to acquire his spiritual knowledge.³⁸ Extinction of wish is the eradication of anguish, and this is the bliss of nirvana. Therefore try to reduce your desires, and thereby to cut off your bondage. This will not be difficult for you if you only try.

³⁹ The evils of death and old age and the weeds of continued sorrows are the produce of the secret seed of desire, which is to be burnt speedily by the fires of equanimity and detachment.⁴⁰ Wherever there is renunciation, you find liberation from bondage. Therefore always suppress your rising desires, just as you repress your fleeting breath.⁴¹ Wherever there is craving, there is bondage in this world. All our acts of merit or demerit and all our distresses and diseases are the unchanging companions of our worldly wishes.⁴² Deprived of its activity and the indifferent saint free from its bondage, desire is made to weep and wail like a man robbed.⁴³ To the extent a man's desire is decreased in his heart, his prosperity increases leading him onward towards his liberation.

⁴⁴ A foolish man, ignorant of himself and fostering fond desire for anything, is watering the roots of the poisonous tree of this world only to bring his death by its harmful fruits.⁴⁵ The tree of desire grows in the human heart and yields the two seeds of happiness and misery. But the latter, fanned by the breeze of sin, bursts into a flame that burns the other, together with it its possessor.

Chapter 37 — If Will Is within God, Why Lecture against Desire?

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Rama, listen as I explain more fully what I have already told you in brief regarding the treatment of the disease of desire, which also forms an article in the practice of yoga asceticism.

² Tell me if the will is anything other than the soul in which it exists? If it is nothing apart from the soul, how do you wish to attribute an agency to it other than that of the soul? ³ Divine Consciousness, more subtle than open air, consequently is without any part and is indivisible. It is an integral whole, one with myself, yourself and the whole world itself. ⁴ This Consciousness is like an infinite emptiness. It is the knower and the known, the subjective and the objective. Then what is that other which you call the will?

⁵ There is no relationship between the container and the contained, or between subject and object, or between it and ourselves. We do not know of any saintly man who knows any object of his knowledge (to exist separately). ⁶ We are at a loss to determine the relationship between our own subjectivity and objectivity. It is just as impossible to determine my egoism and me as it is to see a black moon in the sky. ⁷ Such is the case with all the triple conditions of knower, known, and knowing. They have no existence of their own in the nature of things. I do not know how they can exist except in the essence of the one soul.

⁸ All unrealities exist in the reality of the soul. Our individual ego, the subjective, the objective, and all other things liable to destruction become extinct by nirvana in the self-existent and everlasting soul. ⁹ In nirvana there is no presence of anything, nor is there anything present that becomes extinct. The idea of the simultaneous presence and absence of a thing is as absurd as the sight of light and darkness together in the same place at the same time. ¹⁰ Neither can abide together on account of the repugnance of their nature, nor can both be extinct at the same time because we see the presence of the one and the absence of the other before our eyes. So there is no nirvana in the living because one is a state of rest and the other of pain and misery.

¹¹ Phenomena are fallacies and afford no real happiness. Think them as unreal and rely solely upon the uncreated Lord by your extinction through nirvana in him.

¹² The pearl shell looks like silver, but you will find none in it. It is of no use or value. Then why do you deceive yourself with such like trinkets of the world? ¹³ The presence or possession of trinkets is full of misery and their absence is filled with bliss. When you understand absence, thoughts of detachment proves to be a substantive good. ¹⁴ Why do the ignorant not come to perceive their bondage in riches? Why do they neglect to lay hold of the treasure of their eternal welfare, which is even now offered before them? ¹⁵ Knowing causes, effects and states of things to be full of the presence of the One and nothing else, why do they fail to feel his immediate presence in their consciousness, which spreads alike through all?

¹⁶ Mistaken men, like stray deer, seek Brahman in the causes and states of things. They do not know that the all pervading spirit spreads undivided and unspent throughout the whole emptiness of space.

¹⁷ But what is the conclusion of the doctrine of causation unless it establishes the Cause as the primary source of all? But how can the force which causes wind or the fluidity inherent in fluids be accounted

as the creator of wind and water?¹⁸ It is absurd to say that emptiness is the cause of vacuum, or that creative power is the cause of creation, when only the one God is the cause, effect, state, and all of everything himself.¹⁹ Therefore it is absurd to attribute terms implying causality and creation to Brahman, who is identical with all nature, is unchangeable in his nature, and derives neither pleasure nor pain from his act of the creation of worlds.

²⁰ Brahman, being nothing other than consciousness, can have no will or volition stirring in his nature, just as a toy soldier or painted army is nothing other than the material of which it is made without any movement in them.

²¹ Rama said, "If the world and our ego are all unreal and phenomena are nothing other than the unknowable Brahman, then it is the same whether there be any will stirring in the Divine Mind or not, since God is always all in all.²² Again if the rising will is identical with the nature of God, just as the rising wave is the same as the sea water, then what does it mean to teach the need to control the will?"

²³ Vasishta replied:—

O Rama, it is true, as you have understood it, that the Divine Will is nothing other than divinity itself. Those who are awakened to the light of truth know this. But hear me say more on this subject.

²⁴ Whenever a wish arises in the breast of the ignorant, it gives rise to knowledge of the wished for object, just as the gloom of night departs before the advance of sunlight.²⁵ But in the heart of a wise man, the rising wish sets of itself. When there is understanding, questions about duality vanish from the mind.²⁶ When desire for anything is dead, no one can wish for anything. Who is free from ignorance sees the pure light of his liberation.²⁷ A wise man is neither fond of nor adverse to the sight of phenomena. He views the beauties of visible nature as they appear before him without enjoying them in his own nature.²⁸ If anything offers itself to him by some means or another's cause, and if he finds it right for him to take it, then he may then have the choice to either accept or refuse it, as he may like.

²⁹ Truly will or desire and the unwillingness of the wise are moved by and proceed from Brahman himself. They have no uncontrollable or inordinate desire, but pursue their own course and have nothing new or unusual to wish for.³⁰ As wisdom rises on one side, so desires set down on the other side. They cannot combine or dwell together. It is impossible for desire and wisdom to reside together in the mind, just as there is no possibility of light and darkness meeting at the same place.

³¹ A wise man does not need any exhortation or prohibition for any act because his heart remains quite cool to all desires. There is nobody to tell him anything to any purpose.³² This is the character of a wise man. His desires are imperceptible in his heart. While he is full of joy in himself, he is unconcerned to all others about him.³³ There is also a shade of heavenly sadness settled in his outward face, and a distaste or detachment to everything in his mind. It is then that the current of desires ceases to flow in his heart, and his mind is elevated with the sense of his liberation.³⁴ Whose soul is serene and his intellect unclouded by the doubts of unity and duality, his desires turn to detachment and all thoughts remain concentrated in the Lord.

³⁵ He resides calmly in the tranquility of the Supreme Soul whose knowledge of duality has entirely

subsided in his intellect, whose belief of unity is not mixed with any other thing, and who is quite at ease without any uneasiness.³⁶ He has no object to gain by his acts or anything to lose by their omission. He has no concern whatever with any person or thing either for his good or otherwise.

³⁷ He is indifferent to his desire as well as to his coolness. He has no care for the reality or unreality of things. He is not concerned about himself or others. He is not in love with his life or in fear of his death.³⁸ The self-extinguished soul of the enlightened never feels any desire stirring, and if ever any wish is felt to rise in his breast, it is only an agitation of Brahman.

³⁹ To him there is no pleasure or pain, no grief or joy. He views the world as the quiet and uncreated soul of the divinity manifest by itself. A man who goes on in this manner, like the course of an underground stream, is truly called enlightened and awakened.⁴⁰ He who thinks pleasure to be his pain is one who takes bitter poison for his sweet nectar. The wise say that a man who converts evil to good and thinks himself happy in his mind is awakened to his right sense.⁴¹ The world is one with Brahman when we think of ourselves as emptiness in the vacuum of Brahman, quiet as the tranquility of the Divine Spirit, thinking everything rests in the spacious mind of God.⁴² In this manner all consciousness is lost in unconsciousness and the knowledge of the world is lost in the infinity of empty air. The error of our egoism is likewise drowned in the depth of the even and vast expanse of the divine unity.

⁴³ All that is seen here in the forms of moving and inert bodies of the world are as quiet as the motionless, empty sky that contains them, or as a visionary paradise of imagination.⁴⁴ As there is a free exchange of thoughts among people without any obstacle to their passage from one mind to another, in the same manner there is the same reflection of this shadowy world in the minds of all at once.⁴⁵ Earth, heaven, and sea, with hills and all other things, appear before our empty minds exactly as the false sights of water appear in a mirage to our eyes.⁴⁶ The dream-built city of the world appearing visibly before us is as false as a dream and as delusive as a demon appearing in the imaginations of little children.⁴⁷ Our egoism, our consciousness of ourselves which seems to be a reality to us, is nothing other than a delusion of our brain and a false conception of the mind.

⁴⁸ The world is neither an entity nor a nonentity, nor is it completely a substantiality or un-substantiality. It cannot be determined by the senses or explained by speech, yet it exhibits itself as a fairyland in empty air.⁴⁹ Here our wish and effort, as well as our lack of both, are all alike in the opinion of the learned. But in my opinion it is better to remain coolly indifferent.

⁵⁰ The knowledge of I and the world is like that of air in endless emptiness. The vibration of the intelligent soul, like a breath of air in vacuum, causes this knowledge in us, beside which there is no other cause.⁵¹ The aptitude of the intellect of the intelligent soul to its thoughts, which is its longing for external objects, makes it what we call the mind, which is the seat of what is called the world. But the soul released from this aptitude is said to have its liberation. Follow this precept and keep yourself quiet.

⁵² You may have your desire or not. You may see the world or its dissolution. Ultimately you will come to learn that neither is any gain or loss to you, since there is nothing here in reality and everything is, at best, only the shadowy and fleeting form of a dream.⁵³ Will and no will, entity and nonentity, the presence or absence of anything, and the feeling of pain or pleasure at the loss or gain of

something, are all only ideas and merely aerial fantasies of the mind.

⁵⁴ He whose desires are decreased day by day becomes as happy as an enlightened wise man and similarly shares in the liberation of his soul. ⁵⁵ When the sharp knife of keen desire pierces the heart, it produces very painful wounds of sorrow and grief which defy the remedies of mantras, minerals and all sorts of medications. ⁵⁶ Whenever I look back into the vast multitude of my past actions, I find them all to be full of mistakes. Not even one was done without error, fault or blunder. ⁵⁷ When we realize that all our past conduct has been in error, we understand all has been done for nothing. How is it possible for us to discern the hearts of others which are like inaccessible hills to us? ⁵⁸ Our dealing with the unreal world is lost in the twinkling of an eye. For who can expect to hold the horns of a rabbit in his fingers?

⁵⁹ The belief of our egoism, our personality consisting in our gross bodies, serves to convert the aerial intellect to a gross substance in a moment and make our mind a part of the solid body, just as a raindrop is frozen into a hailstone. ⁶⁰ Our intellect gives us the concept that our unreal bodies are real, just as the undying principle of the intellect happens to see its own death in our sleep. ⁶¹ As the unreal and insubstantial emptiness appears to be the blue sky, so we suppose this creation is attributed to Brahman, which is neither real nor quite unreal.

⁶² As emptiness is the inseparable property of vacuum, and movement is that of air, so creation is an inseparable attribute of God, one and the same with the essence of Brahman himself. ⁶³ There is nothing produced here as the world, nor is anything lost or annihilated in it. All this is like a dream to a sleeping man, which is a mere appearance and nothing in reality. ⁶⁴ The nonexistent earth and others are apparent only in their appearance. Then why do you bother to care or fear about being or not being of this world? The world is no more than a production and subversion of it in the region of Consciousness.

⁶⁵ The apparent body is no reality made up of the five elements. It is only a formation of the Divine Consciousness situated in the Divine Spirit. ⁶⁶ The instrumentality of the mind in the causation of the world is also untrue and absurd, owing to the union of two causes in one. ⁶⁷ All things are uncaused and not consecutive in the Divine Mind where they are eternally present at one and the same time, just as the whole series of the actions of a man from his birth to death appear in an instant of his dreaming states. ⁶⁸ All things are contained in and are as empty as vacant Consciousness. This spacious earth with her high hills of solid bases and all her peoples with their actions and motions are ever existent in their aerial forms in the knowledge of the aerial intellect of God. ⁶⁹ The world is a picture painted on the airy surface of the Divine Mind. Its various colors are derived from the intellect of God. It never rises or sets, nor does it ever become faint, nor does it fade or vanish away.

⁷⁰ The world is a huge wave of fluidity in the water of Consciousness. Nobody can say why it is so or how it is produced or how and when it subsides. ⁷¹ When the great emptiness of consciousness is calm and quiet, then the world remains in its form of an empty void. When the soul is quite thoughtless in itself, there can be no rise or fall of any object before it. ⁷² As we imagine mountains touching the skies and the sky encompassed by mountains, we suppose the presence of Brahman in all things of creation.

⁷³ By the application of a bit of their intelligence, yogis convert the world to empty air or fill the hollow air with the three worlds. ⁷⁴ As we imagine thousands of paradise cities of the perfected gods situated in the different regions of heaven, so there are numberless worlds scattered apart from one another in the infinite space of Divine Consciousness. ⁷⁵ Ocean currents whirl apart from one another and seem to make so many seas of themselves though they are composed of the same water. ⁷⁶ So numerous worlds, revolving separately in the emptiness of the Divine Consciousness, are all of the same nature, and not otherwise.

⁷⁷ The enlightened yogi views worlds above worlds in his clairvoyance. The sages relate how they can pass to the ethereal regions of the perfected spiritual masters. ⁷⁸ There are numberless imperishable beings and immortal spirits contained in the Supreme Spirit, just as endless worlds are situated in the hollow sphere of heaven. ⁷⁹ It is the intrinsic pleasure of the Divine Soul to scatter wandering worlds about it, just as the scented flower diffuses its immanent fragrance and spreads its flying pollen all around. They are not extraneous, but are born within itself like the lines and marks in a diamond or crystal. ⁸⁰ The fragrance of flowers, though mixed together in the air, are yet separate from one another. So all created bodies exists together in the air, all distinct in their natures.

⁸¹ Our fancies make air assume different shapes in the minds of men, such as gross material forms. Holy saints view them in their pure forms in the mind. ⁸² Neither gross materialists nor pure spiritualists are correct in their conceptions of things. But everyone has to feel according to his particular view and belief of a thing. ⁸³ By thinking the world is contained in the thought of Consciousness, it will be found to be no way different from it, than water is from its liquidity.

⁸⁴ Know time and the universe, with all the worlds contained in it together with the ego and you and all others, to be the one and very unity, which is the calm and quiet vacuum of the great Consciousness, the unborn and soul of God without decay. Therefore be not subject to passions or affections which do not appertain to the nature of God.

Chapter 38 — Disquisition of Nirvana — Quietism

¹ Vasishta continued:—

The intellect sees the world because of the fallacy of its understanding, just as a man sees mountains in the sky because of the delusion of his eyesight.² The doctrines that the world is a creation of Brahman or of the mind are both alike in substance in that they regard the world in an immaterial and not physical sense.³ The world that exists in our consciousness of it is the same as its internal knowledge. It does not exist outside of our consciousness, although it appears to be situated outside. The outward appearance is only our inner thought.

⁴ In our opinion, there is no difference between the two systems of interior and exterior knowledge of the world. Both rely upon our knowledge of them and both deny any reality to an exterior form.

⁵ Hence all things are the same as our intellectual knowledge of them. This knowledge is indistinct and unchanging in its nature, so the distinctions of the changing scenes of the world can have no place in it.

⁶ Therefore I adore that omniscience which is the soul of all, in which all things exist, from where all come to existence, which is all and displays all things in itself and pervades all infinity forever.

⁷ When the subjective intellectual power becomes united with the objective intelligible world, through intrinsic consciousness, then the organs of sense get the sensation of objects and not otherwise.

⁸ The intellect alone is both the subjective as well as the objective, both viewer and the view, the seeing and the sight. It comes to the same effect that the knowledge of all these is derived from and dependent upon the main intellect.⁹ If the subjective and objective are not alike in the intellectual soul, then the subjective and intellectual soul can have no perception of the objective and material world.¹⁰ Because the objective world is intellectual in nature, it is perceived in the subjective soul, just as a drop of water mixes with the body of waters owing to the similarity of their natures. This comes out of experience, not otherwise. Otherwise there is no combination of them, like two pieces of wood.¹¹ When there is no homogeneous affinity between two things, such as between intellect and a block of wood, there can be no union between them.

Two pieces of wood cannot know one another because they lack intellect.¹² As two pieces of wood have no knowledge of one another owing to their dull unconsciousness, so nothing unconscious can be conscious of anything, except the intellect which has knowledge of only intellectuals.¹³ The great intellectual soul beholds the world as one with itself in its intellectual light. It sees material bodies settled like a rock in it, without properties of life or motion.¹⁴ Life, understanding and other faculties are the products of the intellect's reasoning. They arise spontaneously in itself.¹⁵ The essence of Brahman exists and exhibits itself in the form of the quiet and unmoving universe. It is personified as the male agent of creation because his seminal seed resembles the minute seed of a fig fruit.

¹⁶ First there is a small seed which develops into a tree. But that first seed had another smaller seed from which it was produced. Thus the primary or initial seed is the smallest and is contained within and let out as an emanation of the Supreme Soul.¹⁷ Brahman is the first and minutest soul of all which gives seed to innumerable souls. The inner souls abiding in the spirit of God are known as spirit. The

grosser sorts known as things are wrongly considered as other than God, though they are of the same nature with their original.¹⁸ Whether placed above or below, a thing is the same and not different from itself. Everything is the very same Brahman no matter what state or form it may appear to us.

¹⁹ As gold in various forms of jewelry is nothing other than gold, so the unchanging nature of the unchangeable spirit of God continues the same in all the changing scenes and varieties in nature.²⁰ As the clouds of shadowy dreams that hang over your mind are in no way related to you, so the great bustle of creation and its dissolution bear no relation to my empty soul, nor do they disturb the even course of my mind.²¹ As the blueness and moistness attributed to the empty atmosphere of heaven are nothing in reality, and as the legions of spiritual masters spirits who are supposed to traverse the regions of air are only deceptions of our eyesight, so the spectacle of the world in only empty air and a fallacy of our vision.

²² The desire of the heart and the false fancy of the mind lead out from within us and bring forth the fruit of the world, just as dirty water at the bottom of the earth moistens the seed that in time produces a big tree.²³ A wise man who forgets his egoism becomes one with the Supreme Spirit. By reducing himself like a bit of rotten straw, he becomes a tiny particle of the Divine Soul.

²⁴ I find no one among gods, demigods and mankind in the three worlds who wishes to approach the Great Spirit who has the whole world as a hair upon his body.²⁵ He who knows the unity of the soul of the universe is free from the thought of a duality in every state of his life and wherever he may be situated.²⁶ Who has a great soul and views the world and everything in it as a mere emptiness and nothing in reality, how can he have any desire for unspiritual and sensible objects?²⁷ He who is indifferent and unconcerned with the endless particulars of the world, who views the existent and nonexistent in the same light, is truly a great soul and beyond all praise.

²⁸ There is no living being that lives or has any property forever. It is only the inner consciousness that shows the various appearances in the empty space of the mind.²⁹ In vain do men think of their life and death in this world of nothingness. Neither is anything in reality. Both are false as the flowing and ebbing of waters in the mirage of life.³⁰ Upon due examination, this error vanishes together with its cause, then it appears that there is nothing such as life or death outside the existence of the imperishable Brahman.

³¹ A man is said to have crossed the ocean of the world who has withdrawn from the sight of what can be seen, who is quiet and content with himself, and who while he is living reckons himself with the dead and as nothing.³² Our nirvana extinction is said to be the cessation of our mental actions, like extinguishing a burning flame. Nirvana is assimilation into the quiescent spirit of God and continuation in the mental tranquility of a holy saint.³³ Again, he is called the liberated who finds no delight either in ideas or phenomena, but remains quiet and aloof from everything that is an intangible emptiness.

³⁴ I speak of my ego because of my lack of reason, but reason proves there is no ego in me. Hence the word ego has no sense to me, and that makes the existence of the world quite invalid and void to me.

³⁵ Intellect is a mere vacuum. Our consciousness gives us knowledge of the nature of our inner understanding. The mind views external appearances agreeably to its internal ideas.

³⁶ The real entity of your soul will become truly blessed in itself when you get the mind freed from all its objects everywhere and always, and by doing every work in the name of God. ³⁷ Whatever you do or eat, anything you give or offer in sacrifice, and whatever you see, kill or desire, know them all to proceed from God. ³⁸ All that we call ourselves or yourselves or any other, what we name as space, time and sky, mountains and the like, all these together with all actions are supported and full of the power and spirit of God. ³⁹ What we see with our eyes and the thoughts of the mind, the world and its three times, and all our diseases, death and decay are phenomena appearing in the emptiness of Divine Consciousness.

⁴⁰ Remain if you can like a silent sage, unseen and unknown by men and without any desire, thought or effort on your part. Remain as a lifeless thing, and this is the extinction of a living being in Brahman.

⁴¹ Be freed from your thoughts and desires and remain fixed in the Eternal One without any care for anything. You may be busy or sit easy, like the air when it breathes or is calm and still. ⁴² Let your humanity be above feelings of desire or affections. Let your thoughts be directed by the rules of scriptures and your action by the motion of a clock. ⁴³ Look on all beings without the show of fondness or disfavor to anyone. Be an inconspicuous light of the world, resembling a lighted lamp in a picture, never to be directed by the men of the world.

⁴⁴ A man who has no desire or any object in view and who has no enjoyment in carnal or sensual enjoyments can have no delight except in his inquiries after truth by the light of the scriptures. He who has his mind purified by the teachings of the scriptures and the precepts of holy men finds the inscrutable truth shining vividly in his consciousness of it.

Chapter 39 — Vasishta's Sermon on Peace of Mind

¹ Vasishta continued:—

The man whose reliance on this world is really lessened, who is free from desire and unobservant of his religious vows, knows them all to be in vain.² Our egoism is like the vapor of our breath, falling and sticking on the surface of glass which, when taken under consideration, proves to be a causeless sight and in a moment vanishes to nothing at all.³ He who is released from the veil of delusion, who has numbed his rising wishes and efforts, whose soul is filled with heavenly nectar, is said to be happy in his very nature and essence.

⁴ An enlightened mind not shrouded by the mist of doubts or skepticism resembles the full moon by illuminating the sphere of its circle with the splendor of its intelligence.⁵ An intelligent man, freed from his worldliness and doubts, who has come out from behind the curtain of ignorance and received the light of truth, is known as the knowing soul, shining in the sphere of the autumn sky.⁶ A holy man is like the pure breeze of heaven that blows freely from the region of Brahma, without any aim and without its support. It is cool in itself, cooling and purifying everything by its touch.

⁷ The desire to have an unreality is to expect something that is a nothing in nature, such as dreaming of heaven or seeking the son of a barren woman.⁸ It is the same with belief in this imaginary world, which appears as something in existence. Such also is the nature of our desires which attribute a materiality to an aerial nothing.⁹ The world is an unreality even at present, so there can be no reality in a heaven or hell in the future. Yet the use of these words is as false as the negative expression of a barren woman's son or the flower of an ethereal tree.

¹⁰ The world is truly the form of Brahman himself. It is neither an actual nor an ideal existence, nor does it rest on any support. So we are at a loss to understand what is in reality.¹¹ By relying on the tranquil nature of the soul and confidence in yourself, you lose your reliance on the natures of things and avoid the troubles accompanying the whole creation and created beings.¹² The sight of the intellect, like the eyesight of men and the light of the stars of heaven, in a moment passes over millions of miles. In the same way, the sight of Divine Consciousness stretches all over the unlimited space of creation in an instant.

¹³ Divine Consciousness is as inconceivable as the womb of vacuum and as imperceptible as the calm and breathless air of the sky. Yet it is as joyous as a plant in full bloom.¹⁴ The learned know all living beings belong to the nature of that consciousness. Therefore men of good intellect and judgment place no faith in the creation of the world.

¹⁵ As we have no knowledge of the dreaming state in our sound sleep, or that of sound sleep in our state of dreaming, so is our error of the world's creation and annihilation.¹⁶ Error is incidental to the nature of things, and sleeping and dreaming are properties incidental to the material body. Hence neither do these nor the acts of creation and annihilation relate to the omniscient and self-sufficient intellect.¹⁷ Error is the unreal appearance of something. Error flies before examination, vanishing before it can be held.

The silver in a seashell is an unreality because you cannot get your expected silver from it.
¹⁸ Whatever is unattainable is a nothing. Whatever is wrongly supposed is impossible to be had. A

thing that is unobtainable by its very nature is never to be expected. Anything otherwise is contrary to nature.¹⁹ It is the nature of a thing to agree well with itself at all times. The invariability of anything can never admit a variety under any circumstance.

²⁰ All that is natural is attended with ease and delight. But the unnatural is full of pain and misery. Know and consider it well, and do what you think is best.

²¹ A minute seed containing a large tree is an example that applies to the formless spirit of God containing the form of the universe in itself. This is a statement of the Vedas.²² Hence visual sight and sensations, mental thought and understanding, consciousness of ego or self, and all other properties belonging to intellectual man are the transcendent spirit, just as fluidity is inherent in water. All these intellectual and spiritual properties are of an airy or empty nature.²³ As an embodied being discharges his bodily functions using his physical body, so spirit and spiritual beings conduct their spiritual functions like the air, without actually doing them.²⁴ It is by force and power of the spirit that we mute creatures are enabled to utter the words I, you, and the like which are mere meaningless sounds, like those emitted by a drum, and bear no sense.

²⁵ An appearance which vanishes upon closer inspection must be held as no appearance at all. So the world of forms and phenomena vanishes into the formless and invisible spirit of God. Nothing is real or substantial of itself.²⁶ Those who dream this world are dreaming men joined together with their dreams. They are never united with the spirit of God, nor do they join the society of holy spiritual guides like ourselves.²⁷ All these men are identical with me in spiritual light, being one with Brahman in the tranquil and empty nature of the very same spirit. But physically considered, they are different from me, in as much as they fluctuate in their busy course like vacillating winds.

²⁸ I who am full of the True One appear as a dream or a dreaming man to these day dreamers. While they in reality are as nonexistent and nothing to me as the dream of a man drowned in the depth of his sleep.²⁹ Whatever be their conduct in life, my business is only with Brahman and my living and reliance are upon only Brahman. Let others think and see whatever they like and do. They are all nonexistent and nothing to me.

³⁰ I am nothing myself, but belong to the all pervading essence of Brahman. By means of Divine Spirit the body appears as something and utters the word "I" and the like.³¹ The soul is pure consciousness, not subject to the contrary sense, with neither its desire for enjoyments or liberation. They who know the Lord have nothing else to desire.³² The bondage or liberation of men is dependent on their own dispositions. It is foolish to foster a great ambition here, as it is foolish to look for a sea in the hole of a cow's hoof on the ground.³³ By restraining our natures and reducing our wants, is possible to obtain our liberation here. Otherwise, no riches or friends or any endeavor can bring about the emancipation we eagerly seek.

³⁴ Consciousness is stretched over all our thoughts about this imaginary world, just as a drop of oil spreads over and diffuses itself in circles upon the surface of water.³⁵ As scenes seen in a dream seem pleasant in memory upon awakening, so the wise sage sees worldly sights and his egoism also in the same light of a dream.³⁶ It is only by the practice of yoga meditation that the impressions of the world are so erased from the mind as not to leave any trace behind, save that of an infinite and still emptiness.³⁷ Whenever the true nature of the soul appears with its solar blaze within us, it dispels the

mists of our irrational desires and displays an empty nothingness of all existence.³⁸ After desires are dead and gone and understanding is cleared of its ignorance, the soul shines forth within us with the light of a burning lamp.

Chapter 40 — On the Quiescence of the Soul

¹ Vasishta continued:—

The sight of things, the actions of the mind, the internal faculties and perceptions of the senses are all of a super-physical nature. The true states of these categories are far removed from our knowledge and present only a faint appearance to us.² The minuteness of the super-physical, non-Brahmic nature is extended in the forms of external objects, but this extended appearance of the outer world is a mere illusion.³ When this external nature disappears and subsides in the inner soul, then this phenomenal world is absorbed like a dream in the sound sleeping state of the soul.

⁴ Our enjoyments, our greatest ailments, our kindred and relations are our strongest bondages here on earth. Our wealth is for our harm and sorrow. Therefore hold yourself to yourself alone.⁵ Know your bliss consists in your communion with yourself and that you lose yourself by your familiarity with the world. Become one with the supreme emptiness. Be calm and quiet like it and do not disturb yourself like the turbulent wind.

⁶ I know not myself, nor do I understand what this visible and mistaken world may mean. I am absorbed in the calm and quiet Brahman. I feel myself as the sound Brahman himself.⁷ You see me as another person and address me with words “you” and the like in the second person. But I find myself as calm and quiet as the transcendent vacuum itself.⁸ You see false appearances in the empty sphere of the Divine Soul. They are produced there by the misconceptions of your mind. These errors continually arise in your mind like the mind’s own erratic apprehensions.

⁹ The tranquil soul of Brahman knows no effort of creation, nor does the nature of creation know the quiescent nature of Brahman. It is like a soundly sleeping soul knows no dream, nor does the dreaming man know the state of sound sleep.¹⁰ Brahman is ever wakeful and the world is nothing other than a waking dream. The living liberated man knows each phenomenon as a reflection of the ideal in Brahman’s tranquil understanding.¹¹ An intelligent man well knows the true state of things in the world, and holy men are as quiet in their souls as the autumn sky with a moving cloud.

¹² The false conceptions of one’s egoism or personality and the existence of the world are like the impression of a battle preserved in one’s memory or in his imagination. In both cases, truth and falsehood are found blended together.¹³ The phenomena of the world, which is neither exhibited in the Divine Spirit as an intrinsic or subjective part of itself nor has a viewer for itself, which is neither an emptiness nor solid, cannot be otherwise than a false conception of the mind.

Chapter 41 — Repose in One's Essential Nature

¹ Vasishta continued:—

It is absurd to find the sense of egoism or self personality so deeply rooted in human nature. Therefore it is right that you should extinguish this unnatural egoism of yours by correcting your own nature.

² This is done by enlightenment of understanding accompanied by detachment and distaste of the world. Understanding and detachment are associated with one another as the sun with its light.

³ There is no making or maker or act of this world, or any looker, looking or view of it. This stupendous world is altogether inadmissible, being only a picture on the plane of vacuum.⁴ There is nothing prominent in it. All is situated on a perfect level, which is the calm intellect of one unvarying Brahman.⁵ The Divine Soul exhibits the wonders of its Consciousness in the variegated colors of its imagination. No one can count the pictures of worlds painted on the plane of the infinite space of emptiness.⁶ All these aerial bodies are countless like flying atoms. They are continually dancing and playing their parts in the open arena of Brahman, just as players exhibit their various passions, emotions and gestures in a theatre.

⁷ The seasons dance in circles with their towering heads. The points of a compass turn around with their encircling arms. The lower region is the platform of this stage and the upper sky is the awning stretched on high.⁸ The sun and moon are the two playful and rolling eyes, and the twinkling stars are the glistening hair on their bodies. The seven regions of air are the members of the body and the clear and all adorned sky is the clean apparel on it.⁹ The seas encircling the islands are like bracelets and wristlets round their arms, and the girding mountains of lands are like girdles around their loins. Fleeting airs are the winds of their breath, constantly breathing to sustain the lives of living beings to support their bodies.¹⁰ Flowers, groves and forests form the wreathed decorations on their bodies. The sayings of the Vedas and Puranas are their script, the ceremonial acts are their action, and the results of their actions are the parts that all have to play.

¹¹ Thus all this is only a dance of puppet show presented before us with the play of waters gliding with the fluidity of Brahman and the vibration of playful breezes.¹² The cause of causes is the cause of unnatural movements of bodies. It is the ever wakeful intellect that remains sleepless in the sleeping state of nature, and the waking awakener of dreams in the non-deep sleep state of man.

¹³ Rama, remain sleepless in your sleeping state and reflect on the nature of things as you see them in your dream. Be steady when you are awake and never be drowned in your sleep or deceived by your beguiling dreams.¹⁴ The wise say that human liberation is when waking resembles sound sleep and there is no liking or cringing for anything.¹⁵ The living liberated man sees his God diffused throughout the universe, and not as its cause or instrument, nor any witness of its sight. He does not leave to look on outward phenomena, nor does he think of the inner ideal that has displayed the whole.¹⁶ He sees the world shining with the glory of God, and beholds it fair and perfect with the beauty and perfection of God.¹⁷ Viewed in the reality of Brahman, the unreal world becomes a reality. Then it seems to be as tranquil as the nature of God, and creation is seen in himself until at last all is lost in the womb of a void vacuum, as if hidden in the hollow cavern of a rock.

¹⁸ The universe is like the womb of a luminous gem. Though it is thickly peopled everywhere, yet it is

void like empty air. It is a nonentity and entity at the same time, something and nothing of itself.¹⁹ It is in actual existence and in potentiality to the minds of many, but to one who sees clearly, it appears like an extended reflection of the infinite mind of the One.

²⁰ As an imaginary city never disappears from imagination, so the reflection never vanishes from the mind of God in which all things are present at all times.²¹ As glistening gold glitters and scatters its rays all around without changing or wasting itself, so Brahman appears to shine in his creation, yet remains quiet and without decay in himself.²² The phenomenal world continues ever the same, though it is subject to constant productions and destructions of all beings. It appears unproduced and indestructible, as various and variegated as the very many beings in it.²³ Brahman is seated in his impenetrable tranquility in the form of the rising world without ever rising or setting himself. He is as free and void as emptiness and without any nature or property of his own. He is known to enlightened understanding.

Chapter 42 — Lecture on Duality within Unity; Worship of God; to Remain Still Is to Be Like God; Mistaken Renunciation Makes Thinks Worse; True Nirvana

¹ Vasishta continued:—

The mind is as calm and quiet as Consciousness. There can be no difference between them. When the Divine Mind is in its undeveloped and tranquil state, it is impossible to assign creation to it.² The burning lamp of understanding being extinguished, the false conceptions of the world vanish into the air. Sight and other mental operations are like waves in the water of consciousness.

³ The world bears the same relationship to the Supreme Soul as the fluctuation of the winds bear to air, and as the radiation of rays bears to light, which have no other causality except in themselves.

⁴ The world is inherent in the Supreme as fluidity is inherent with water and emptiness is inherent with air. But why and how they are so intimately connected with one another is quite inconceivable to us.

⁵ The world that is immanent in the vast emptiness of the great Intellect is manifest to our minds like brilliancy in a gem.⁶ Therefore the world appertains to the Supreme Intellect in the same manner as liquidity is related with water, fluctuation with air, and emptiness with the infinite void.⁷ As wind is related to air, so does the world relate to the Supreme Intellect. There is no reason to suppose a duality of any two to exist in the unity.

⁸ The world is manifest to the sight of the ignorant, but it is frail and nebulous in the estimation of the intelligent. However, the world is neither manifest nor mysterious to the wise who believe it to be an existence in the being of the self-existent unity.⁹ It is well known through knowledge that there is nothing in existence other than the sole Intellect, which is pure intelligence and has no beginning, middle or end.¹⁰ This is the great intellect of some and the holy spirit of others. It is the eternally omniscient Brahman according to some, and the infinite void of the vacuists. It is also called knowledge by the wise.¹¹ Some people understand this infinite and intellectual spirit in the sense of an intelligible being. Others suppose him to be knowable in themselves, and thus trying to know, become quite ignorant of him.

¹² Without the intellect there is no knowledge of what can be sensed or any faculty of reasoning, just as there is no air without space or movement.¹³ So it is the shadow of the great Intellect that makes our consciousness perceive the existence of the world. Whether the world is an entity or nonentity, there is no other cause of its knowledge except the intellect.¹⁴ It is owing to the unity of this duality that this sense of their identity is verified. There is no one who can make unity or duality the all pervading emptiness.¹⁵ There is only one universal, whole sphere of the empty sky, and the dualism of air and its winds is only words and nothing in reality.

¹⁶ The duality of the universe and its universal Lord is only a verbal and not a real distinction of the one positive unity of God. It is impossible for the self-existent soul to have a counterpart of itself, except its own consciousness.¹⁷ That which has the appearances of the world is no world in reality but a shadow of it. That which is limited by space and time cannot be the infinite and eternal sphere.

¹⁸ As the different forms of ornaments are related to the substance of gold, so the world is related to Brahman whose unity admits of no duality or the attribute of cause and effect.

¹⁹ If the world is only a creation of the imagination, then it is nothing other than a nothing, the emptiness of space and the fluidity of water. ²⁰ As the sky bears the appearance of the sky, so Brahman presents the sight of the world. Both of them being of the same kind of emptiness, there can be no duality or unity of the two in one. ²¹ Duality and unity are of the like kind, like the vast vacuum of itself. They are identical in their nature with the one all extended and transparent essence of the interminable Consciousness of God.

²² As all pebbles, clay dolls and marble statues have stony substance in them, and as there is no relation of cause or effect in anyone of them, so these varieties of beings have no difference in them from the nature of divine essence. ²³ It is impossible for emptiness to be anything other than emptiness, and the reflection of light is no different from the light source, so this creation resides in and radiates from the great Intellect. ²⁴ As images carved in a stone are of the same stone, so O wise Rama, upon insight, all these various forms of things in the world are lost in the substance of the all absorbing Consciousness of the great God.

²⁵ The delusion of your mind presents all this bustle and commotion of the world to your sight. Upon your right inspection of them, they must remain as silent and motionless as a block of wood and as imperceptible as to a man with closed eyes. ²⁶ As things absent from sight appear to be present in one's thought of them, both in waking and sleeping states, so the misconception of the mind presents phenomena to the sight of the open-eyed man. ²⁷ Hallucination of your mind makes you see absent objects as present before you, both when you are awake as well as asleep. But suppress your thoughts and you will be as inert as a stone, as if in the abstracted and sound sleeping states of your mind.

²⁸ However, you must not allow your mind to become as unconscious as a stone. Remain in your natural state and employ it in the service of your adorable object with the best offerings of your reason on all things about you. ²⁹ Adore the Supreme God of nature for the enlargement of your understanding. Worshipped with your right reason and good sense, He will soon reward you with the best boon of your transcendent bliss. ³⁰ The adoration of Indra, Upendra and the other gods, as opposed to that of God in spirit, is like worshipping rotten straw. Offering flowers and sacrifices are nothing compared to cultivation of reason and association with wise and learned men. ³¹ The Supreme God, the giver of all blessings, being worshipped in the true light of the spirit in one's own soul, confers his best blessing of liberation in an instant.

³² Why does the ignorant man resort to another when his soul is the sole Lord? Associate with the good, have your composure and content, and adore the Supreme Soul with your best reason. ³³ The worship of idols, pilgrimages and all sorts of devotion, together with all your charities, are as useless as offering scentless sirisha flowers and as harmful as fire, poison and the wounds of weapons are to the body.

³⁴ The actions of mean minded men are as useless as ash on account of their unreasonableness. Let them act with reason in order to render their deeds fruitful. ³⁵ Why don't you develop the reasoning powers in your mind through knowledge of the true natures of things and concentrate your desires in the Supreme Spirit? ³⁶ Only by divine grace does the mind have the faculty of reasoning. Therefore the power of reasoning is to be cultivated in the mind by sprinkling the ambrosial water of self-control over it. ³⁷ Until the fountain of error in the mind is dried up by the blaze of right knowledge, the

tendency towards material things continues to run over it everywhere.³⁸ Equanimity overcomes the sense of shame, sorrow, fear and envy. The conviction of the nonexistence of the world and all material things removes the possibility of their existence at anytime.

³⁹ If the world is the work of a cause, it must be the self-existent Brahman that is both cause and effect at once, just as the reflection is also the reflector, and the reflected knowledge of a pot or picture is nothing in reality.⁴⁰ Know this world to be the shadow of Consciousness, just as one's feature is seen within a mirror, but the idea of the shadow vanishes when one is acquainted with the original.

⁴¹ For lack of the objects of objective knowledge, there remains the only unknowable one who has the form of everlasting bliss. This soul of the immaterial spirit extends all over infinite space in its form of perfect tranquility.⁴² All knowledge, knowable and knowing are said to be quite mute and silent in their nature. Therefore it is necessary for you to remain as quite and calm as stones and the caves in rock.

⁴³ Remain like knowing and wise man, both when you are sitting or doing anything, because wise men know the unknown and are the personifications of true knowledge.⁴⁴ Remain as clear as the sphere of the sky. Be content with whatever may happen to you, whether you are sitting quietly or moving about or doing anything, and in every state of your life.⁴⁵ Wise men do what they have to do and whatever comes in their way, or give up and renounce all and everything and remain with their quiet and peaceful minds at every place.⁴⁶ Whether sitting in solitude or in silent meditation, let the wise man remain as quiet as a statue or a picture. Having repressed his imagination, let him see the world as an imaginary city or an airy nothing.⁴⁷ The waking wise man sees the rising world as sitting down in his state of sleep. Let him see the manifestations before his eyes like a man born blind who has no sight of anything before him.

⁴⁸ An ignorant man seeking his nirvana by renouncing the world has more cause for regret than peace of mind. Preaching good ideals serves to increase their ignorance rather than enlighten in the path of truth.⁴⁹ An ignorant man who thinks himself wise in his own conceit is deluded to greater ignorance by thinking himself successful with his ill success.⁵⁰ A man comes to ill success who strives to grow by improper means. The learned reckon all fanciful steps as no steps at all to success.⁵¹ It is wrong to resort to renunciation because of some transitory mishap that is always happening to humanity. The wise know that true nirvana is when a man has full knowledge of the errors of the world, complete disgust and distaste of all worldly affairs, and is therefore indifferent.

⁵² Rama, as you delight at the recital of tales, so should you should take pleasure in spiritual instructions with a melted heart and mind. Unless you know the transparent intellect and see it as diffused in the form of the infinite world, you cannot attain your extinction in it.

⁵³ The knowledge of God that you have gained from the Vedas is sheer ignorance and resembles the false notion of the world that is born blind on earth. Trample over that knowledge and do not fall into its errors. Know God in spirit and by your extinction into it, be exempt from future reincarnations.

Chapter 43 — On the Infinite Extension of Brahma

¹ Vasishta continued:—

The internal sense of egoism and the outward perception of the world vanish into unreality upon right inspection. Then the truth of self-consciousness appears and removes even the dullness of the dull headed.² He who is freed from the fever of ignorance, whose soul is cooled by the drink of good understanding, is known by the indication that they have no further thirst for worldly enjoyments.

³ It is useless to use many words in philosophical debates when the simple knowledge that one's individual ego does not exist is enough to lead him to nirvana.⁴ As waking men do not enjoy the pleasure of things seen in their dream, so wise people feel no enjoyment either for themselves or the world. The wise know they are as false as the sights in their sleep.

⁵ As one sees the illusion of a magic city in a forest, filled with the families of yaksha demons everywhere, so the living soul looks upon this world and all its contents.⁶ As the deluded soul sees demons and their houses as realities and stable in their nature, so it believes its individual personality as a reality and the unreal world as material.⁷ As the phantoms of demons are seen with their false shapes in the open desert, so we see all these creatures in the fourteen worlds around us.

⁸ He who knows himself to be a nothing and that the knowledge of his ego is an error, finds his illusion of a demon to be no such thing in reality. His mind melts into the condition of his intellect.

⁹ Be as quiet in your mind as you are sitting still before us. Renounce all your fears and fancies, all your giving and taking, together with the suppression of all your desires.

¹⁰ Perceptible phenomena are neither in actuality nor in potentiality. The whole extent of the objective world is identical with the subjective spirit of God. Or, if it is impossible for subjective reality to become the objective unreality, then tell me, how can the objective come to exist?¹¹ The humidity of spring season produces and diffuses itself in the vegetation of the ground. Similarly, the core and essence of intellect fills and exhibits itself in the form of creation.¹² If this appearance of the world is only the reflection of intellect, then why speak of its unity or duality? Know that the world is identical with the sole entity, and hold your peace and tranquility.¹³ Be full with empty intellect. Drink the sweet nectar of spirituality. Sit without fear and full of joy in the blissful paradise of nirvana.

¹⁴ Why do you men of false understandings wander about in the desert of this earth like vagrant deer?

¹⁵ O you men of blinded understandings! Why do you run so hurriedly with your unsatisfied thirst after the mirage of the world, only to be disappointed in your most confident expectations?¹⁶ Why do you, O foolish men, thirst after the mirage of the appearances and fancies of your minds? Do not waste your lives in vain struggles, or fall victims to your desires like deluded deer.¹⁷ Demolish the magic castle of worldly enticements by the stronger power of your reason. See how you can destroy the series of evils which at first sight appear as pleasures.

¹⁸ Do not make the mistake of looking at the blue vault of heaven as a reality. It is a mere show amidst the great emptiness of Brahman. You should fix sight on its true empty aspect.¹⁹ O you men who are as frail and fickle and liable to fall down like shaking dewdrops hanging on the edge of a leaf, regardless of your fates, do not sleep in the womb of this frail and mortal world.²⁰ Remain always, from first to last, in your true nature of calmness, without ever being unmindful of yourself. Remove

the faults of the subjective and objective from your nature.

²¹ The world which the ignorant know as a reality is utterly nonexistent to the wise. That one which is the true reality has no name. ²² Break the iron chains of desire which bind you fast in this world. Rise high above the heaven of heavens, like a lion climbing to the towering tops of mountains by using force to break loose from his imprisoning cage. ²³ The knowledge of "I" and "mine" is an error. Only peace of mind makes liberation. It is the essence of the yogi, wherever and however he may be situated.

²⁴ The tired pilgrim of the world has the following five stages for his rest, namely his self renunciation, his lack of any desire, and the absence of the three sorrows that result from his own fault, those of others, and the course of nature.

²⁵ The wise man is unknown to the ignorant and the ignorant are unknown to the wise. Ignorant and wise see the world in two opposite lights, each quite unknown to the other. ²⁶ Once the fallacy of the world has fallen from the mind, no more worldly things appear before the mind, just as a seafarer seeing one vast expanse of water about him does not see the inland water inlets which gush out of the sea as its offspring. ²⁷ After the error of the world disappears from the awakened mind of the tranquil yogi, he sits quite unconscious of it, as if it had melted into eternity. ²⁸ Like grass and straw burnt to ashes, we do not know where the ashes fly and vanish with the winds of the air. So the nature of the sage being deadened by detachment, his knowledge of the world goes to nothing.

²⁹ It is good to know the world as the imitation of the essence of Brahman. But the meaning of the word "Brahman" being Universal Soul, it does not apply to the sense of the changing world as the work of God. ³⁰ As the world appears to be everlasting and unchanging to the ignorant lad, so it seems coexistent with its eternal cause to the detached sage. ³¹ The wakeful sage keeps vigil at night when it is time for all beings to lie down in sleep. Daytime, when all creation is awake, is the night of retired saints. ³² The wise man is active in his mind while he seems to be sitting still and inactive in his body. When he is waking, his organs of sense are as dormant as those of figures in a painting. ³³ The wise man is as blind in his knowledge of the outer world as one who is born blind. The wise man has merely a faint idea of the world in his mind where it appears or not at times, like a dream in his slight and sound sleep.

³⁴ All worlds and worldly things lead to the sorrow of the ignorant who are unacquainted with and delight in untruth. They are busy with the objects of the senses and their thoughts about them, just as one with visions in his dream.

³⁵ As a wise man tastes no pleasure in his waking state, so must he remain unconscious of them in his sleep, continuing with undivided attention in the meditation of the Supreme Being. ³⁶ A wise man who has curbed his desire of worldly enjoyments and is liberated from its bonds remains with his cool and composed mind and enjoys the tranquility of nirvana without even his efforts of yoga meditation.

³⁷ As the course of water always run downward, never upward, so the course of the mind is ever toward the objects of sense, and sensible objects are the only delight of the mind. ³⁸ The mind's nature, with all its thoughts of internal and external objects, is the same as a great ocean full of its own currents and the streams of rivers that flow into it. ³⁹ As streams combine into the united flow of

a river, so all the internal and external, righteous and unrighteous thoughts of the mind run in an unchanging course.⁴⁰ Thus the mind appears as a vast and wide extended sea, rolling on with all its indistinct thoughts and feelings, just as the inseparable waters and waves of the sea.⁴¹ In this manner, the absence of one thing causes the extinction of both, just as in the example of air and its winds. If either is lacking, there is neither wind nor its ventilation.⁴² The mind and its working being one and the same thing, they are both controlled if one is brought under control.

Know this well, to develop one's mind, nobody should hold any earthly desire dear.⁴³ The mind gets its peace by true knowledge.

The mind of a wise man, with all its desires, is destroyed of itself without the aid of austerities.⁴⁴ As a man gets free of the fear of an enemy's hatred by destroying the image he created himself, so one is able to kill his mind by committing himself to the Divine Spirit.⁴⁵ A wise man sees the cosmos and chaos as accompanying with each other, though they appear separate. Birth and death and prosperity and adversity are mere errors. There is nothing else beside the one infinity.⁴⁶ As one has no knowledge of the dream of another sleeping by his side, as an adult man does not have a timid child's fear of a demon, and as a warrior knows no demon, so the wise sees no inanimate world before him.

⁴⁷ The ignorant think the wise are fools and the barren woman thinks of her child, so one unacquainted with the meaning of a word attempts to explain its sense.⁴⁸ Understanding is ever existent, without beginning or end, and nature is known to exist ever since creation has begun. The word mind is meaningless. Mind is undivided and unbounded in its nature.⁴⁹ Understanding resembles the water of the sea, and the mind and intelligence are similar to its clear waves. How can this fluid have an end, and what is the meaning of mind, but a shape of this psychic fluid?⁵⁰ All error is useless. Live to your nature for your good. Be of the nature of pure understanding and you will become as clear-sighted as the clear autumn sky.

⁵¹ After passing through the three states of waking, dreaming and deep sleep, there is no perception of the mind or mental operation for the withdrawn yogi. The knowledge of endless varieties of unrealities of creation is blown away and lost in the sight of the Everlasting One.⁵² Forsake the endless chain of phenomena and be attached to your nature of solid consciousness. All things, whether internal or external, are comprehended under its knowledge.

⁵³ Say, how can you separate objects from the mind as you do seed, branches and fruit from one another? What can be known cannot be known without their knowledge, and knowledge is no known category.⁵⁴ The endless varieties and particulars are still and quiet in the Divine Soul, which is the only entity and manifests itself as all. All objects being only ideas in the mind, and the mind being a negative also, they are all only errors of the brain.⁵⁵ The mind which is the framer of objective thoughts is a nothingness of itself and an error also. The Eternal Spirit being the solitary soul of all, it is useless to imagine the entity of the mind.

⁵⁶ The objective, being a false idea, is only a false apparition. Objects also having no cause for their creation also prove the subjective mind to be a falsity.⁵⁷ The mind is as fickle as flickering lightning and deludes us by the flashes of things of its own making.⁵⁸ The mind is nothing before knowledge of the Self-existent One. With that knowledge of the One, the mind no longer deceives us with its false shows. This world, which is the creation of the mind, disappears before the knowledge of the soul.

⁵⁹ Men vainly wish to take silver from sea shells and believe the negative world is a positive one, but such is found to be nothing before the light of reason. ⁶⁰ The error of egoism is opposed to the truth of nirvana, and error is the cause of only misery to mankind. Ego is truly as false as a mirage, a nonentity as emptiness itself.

⁶¹ The knowledge of the self or soul removes the error of egoism. By knowing and being full with the knowledge of the soul, one is absorbed with it, both internally and externally. ⁶² One who is unified with the Universal Soul resembles a wave that mixes altogether with the main water. The Divine Soul sends its essence to all, just as a tree supplies its sap to all parts from root to leaf. ⁶³ There is one unchanging soul that shines far beyond the reach of our knowledge in the same way as the clear vault of heaven appears to be millions of miles away from us. ⁶⁴ There is only one Unknowable and Infinite Being, and that is far beyond our knowledge of what can be perceived, and is purer and more rarefied than the all pervading emptiness. ⁶⁵ Therefore know that pure and holy one to be both the states of knowledge and what can be known, just as chilled clarified butter becomes as compact as stone.

⁶⁶ Divine Consciousness makes itself the object of its thought as a thinkable being. The soul thinks in itself as the mind, from eternity throughout the infinity of space. ⁶⁷ The unintelligent Nyaya school of philosophy maintains the unity and positive rest of God. Although they may not be mistaken in this position, yet it is wrong to separate omniscience from the being of Divine Unity.

⁶⁸ All great minded souls who are free from pride melt away into the inscrutable quiescence of God. Those who are unerring in divine knowledge find their eternal rest in samadhi, the renunciation of themselves to the Supreme Spirit.

Chapter 44 — Growing the Tree of Samadhi; the Deer-Like Mind

¹ Rama said, “O holy sage, describe the tree of samadhi in detail, together with all its vines, flowers and fruit which supply holy men with good refreshment throughout their lives.”

² Vasishta replied:—

Hear me describe the tree of samadhi, which always grows in the forest of holy people and is ever filled with luxuriant foliage and flowers and luscious fruit.

³ The learned say that somehow or the other, whether by culture or its own spontaneity, a dissatisfaction with the wilderness of this world grows in the heart of a reasonable man.⁴ Its field is the heart of the wise man, furrowed by the plough of prosperity, watered with delight day and night, whose channel is now flowing with sighs.⁵ The heart’s regret of the world is the seed of samadhi. It grows of itself in the ground of the humble heart of the wise in the forest land of reasonable men.

⁶ When the seed of humble reflection falls in the minds of magnanimous men, it must be diligently and untiringly watered with the following articles, namely:⁷ the society of pure, holy and detached men, who speak sweetly and kindly for the good of all others, and whose speech serves like the sprinkling of fresh water, milk or dewdrops on the seedling’s ground;⁸ and by irrigating with the sacred waters of the sayings of the holy scriptures, which serve to grow the seed through their cool and ambrosial moisture.

⁹ When the magnanimous soul perceives the seed of humble reflection has fallen in the mind, he must try to preserve and cultivate that seed with all diligence.¹⁰ This seed is to be grown by the fertilizer of austerities, by the power of using other means, by visiting and resting in places of pilgrimage and holy shrines, and by stretching perseverance as his fence around the garden of the seed.

¹¹ After the seed has sprouted, the duty of well taught man is to always protect it with the help of his consort, having contentment and cheerfulness.¹² Then he should keep birds off his expectations, protect the seedling from the vultures of his desire and cupidity, and chase away the fowls of his affection for others so they do not dart upon and pick up the seed.¹³ Then desire-promoted activity is to be swept away by gentle acts of piety serving as sweepers of vice and unrighteousness. Then the shades of ignorance are to be dispelled from this ground by the indescribable light of the sun of reason.

¹⁴ Wealth, women and all sorts of frail and fleeting enjoyments overtake this rising seedling of discrimination, just as darts of lightning issue from the clouds of unrighteousness.¹⁵ Such thunderbolts are prevented by the iron rod of patience and gravity, by the repetition of mantras, by holy ablutions and austerities, and by the trident of the three letter Om.¹⁶ In this manner the seed of meditation, being carefully preserved from neglect, sprouts forth in the seedling of discrimination with its handsome and prospering appearance.

¹⁷ The ground of the mind shines brightly with this brilliant seedling of discrimination. It gladdens the hearts of men in veneration of it, just as smiling moonbeams illuminate the sky.¹⁸ This seedling of discrimination shoots forth a couple of leaves that grow out of themselves. One of them is the knowledge of scriptures and the other is the society of the good and wise.

¹⁹ Let your fixedness support the stem and height of this tree and make your patience its covering bark. Through your detachment from the world, supply it with the moisture of detachment. ²⁰ The tree of godliness, nourished with the moisture of un-worldliness and watered by the rainwater of scriptures, attains its full height in course of short time. ²¹ Being thickened by the core of divine knowledge, the foundation of good society, and the moisture of detachment, this tree attains a fixity which is not to be shaken by the apes of passions and affections.

²² Then this tree shoots forth in luxuriant branches of wisdom which stretch far and wide with their fresh vegetation and green leaves, distilling their juicy sweets all around. ²³ These are the branches of frankness and truth, of constancy and firmness, of equanimity and unchangeableness, of calmness and friendship, and of kindness, self-respect and renown. ²⁴ These branches are adorned with the leaves of peace and tranquility and studded with flowers of good repute and fame. This tree of godliness becomes the parijata tree of paradise to the hermits of the forests.

²⁵ In this manner the tree of divine knowledge, filled with its branches, leaves and flowers, brings forth day by day the best and richest fruits of knowledge. ²⁶ It blossoms in clusters of the flowers of fame and is covered with leaves of bright qualities all over. It flows with the sweets of dispassion and its filaments are full of the dust of intelligence. ²⁷ It cools all sides like clouds in rainy weather and the heat of worldly anxieties, just as moonbeams assuage the heat of sunshine. ²⁸ It spreads the awning shade of harmony, just as clouds cast a cooling shadow below. It stretches a quiet composure over the mind, just as an extensive cloud spreads a still calm in the air. ²⁹ It builds a sound and sure basis for itself like rocks standing on their solid bases. It lays the foundation of future rewards on high and causes all blessings to attend upon it. ³⁰ As the tree of discrimination grows higher and higher, day by day, so it stretches a continuity of cooling shade over the forest of the hearts of men. ³¹ It diffuses a coldness that pacifies the heat below and makes the plant of the understanding shoot forth like a tender creeper sticking out of snow.

³² The deer-like mind, tired of its wandering about the deserts of this world, takes its rest and refuge under this cool shade, just as a weary traveler, worn out since birth in his journeys among men, comes to take his rest at last. ³³ This deer of the mind irritates its mouth by browsing on thorny brambles of the forest for food. It is hunted by its enemies the passions, which lay waiting like hunters to kill the soul, just as they slay the body of the deer for its skin. ³⁴ The deer-like mind, ever impelled by its vain desires, wanders all about the desert lands of this world seeking the poisonous water of the mirage of its egoism. ³⁵ It sees an large green valley at distance, and batters and shatters its body running after its vegetation. Harassed in search of the food and forage for its offspring, it falls headlong into the pit for its destruction. ³⁶ Being robbed of his fortune, put to bodily troubles, led by thirst of gain to the ever running stream of desires, man is at last swallowed up and carried away by the currents of waves

³⁷ Man flies far away for fear of being overtaken by a disease, just as the deer does for fear of a hunter, but man is not afraid of the hunter who is the fate that falls upon him unawares at every place.

³⁸ The timid mind is afraid of the shafts of bad fortune flying from every known quarter, of being hit by stones flung from the hands of enemies on every side. ³⁹ The mind is ever hurled up and down with the ups and downs of fortune. It is continually crushed under the millstone of his rising and setting

passions.

⁴⁰ One who follows after thirst without placing reliance upon the laws taught by the great falls headlong into the delusion of the world, just as one who suffers a scratch may as well be wounded over his body passing through beautiful, thorny vines.

⁴¹ Having entered into man's physical body, the mind is eager to fly away from it, but there is the uncontrollable elephant of sensuous desire who stuns it with its loud shrieks. ⁴² There is also the huge snake of worldly affairs which numbs the mind with its poisonous breath. Women on the face of the earth serve to enslave the mind in love to them. ⁴³ There is also the wildfire of anger, burning like stinging bile in the human breast, inflaming the mind with endless pain by its repeated recurrence in the breast. ⁴⁴ Desires clinging to the mind are like gnats and fleas biting and stinging it constantly. Its carnal enjoyments, desires and revelries are like jackals shrieking loudly. ⁴⁵ The mind is led by its actions to wander all about without any rest or profit, driven from place to place by tiger-like poverty staring grimly at its face. The mind is blinded by its affections for children and others, and at last it is lost in the hidden pitfall of death.

⁴⁶ Again, the mind trembles with the sense of honor and its fear of losing it, which like a lion strikes fear in its heart while struck with terror at the glaring of the wolf of death at its face. ⁴⁷ The mind is afraid of pride, just as a forester dreads dragons coming to devour him, fearing their appetites, open mouths and bloody teeth that threaten to engulf the mind in ruin. ⁴⁸ The mind should have no less fear of its female companions in youth, whose amorous embraces, like gusts of wind, threaten to hurl it headlong to repeated hell-pits.

⁴⁹ It seldom happens, O prince, that the deer-like mind finds its rests in the tree of godliness, just as the living beings do when they come from darkness to daylight. ⁵⁰ O you hearers, let your deer-like minds find that delight in the tree of the peace of samadhi, whose name is not even known to the ignorant who are deluded by their fickle and smiling fortunes that resemble the quivering smiles of flowers.

Chapter 45 — The Deer-Like Mind; Climbing the Tree of Life; Meditation in Samadhi

¹ Vasishta continued:—

O destroyer of enemies, the deer-like mind, having found rest in that sacred tree, remains quite pleased with it and never thinks of going to any other tree.² In course of time, the tree of discriminate knowledge brings forth its fruit which ripen gradually with the sweet substance of spiritual knowledge inside.³ The deer-like mind, sitting under the good tree of its meditation, beholds its outstretching branches hanging downward with loads of the fruit of merit and virtue.

⁴ It sees people climbing in this tree with great persistence and pains in order to taste these sweet fruit in preference to all others.⁵ Worldly people decline to climb the tree of knowledge, but those who have climbed high upon it never think of ever coming down from the high position which they have attained.⁶ He who has ascended on the tree of reason and knowledge to taste its delicious fruits, forgets the taste of his ordinary food and forsakes the bondage of his former deserts, like a snake casting aside his old skin.

⁷ The man who has risen to a high station, looks at himself and smiles to think how miserly he had passed for so long in his past life.⁸ Having mounted on the branch of fellow feeling and putting down the snake of selfishness under his feet, he seems to reign in himself as if he were the sole monarch over all.⁹ As the digits of the moon decrease and disappear in the dark fortnight, so the lotuses of his distress are lost in oblivion and the iron chains of his greed are rubbed out day by day.¹⁰ He does not pay attention to what is unattainable, nor does he care about what is not obtained. His mind is as bright as a clear moonlit night and the passions and affections of his heart are all quite cold.

¹¹ He sits pouring over pages of the scriptures, meditating in silence on their profound sense. He observes the course of nature with a broad view, from the highest and greatest objects to the mean and most minute.¹² He sits smiling, looking derisively upon the previously described sevenfold grounds of his past errors, full with thick forests of poisonous fruits and flowers.¹³ Having fled from the tree of death and descended from that of life, his aspiring mind rises by degrees to its higher branches like a quick flying bird. There he sits like a prince delighted in his elevated station.¹⁴ From there he looks down upon family and friends, wealth and property, as if they were from a former life or visions in his dream.¹⁵ He coldly views his passions, feelings, fears, hopes, errors and honors as actors playing out their various roles in the drama of his life.

¹⁶ The course of the world is like that of a rapid river running onward with furious and mischievous currents, laughing with its foaming wave breakers, now swelling high and then suddenly sinking.¹⁷ He does not feel any craving in his breast for wealth, wife or friends who live dead to his feelings like an unconscious corpse.¹⁸ His sight is fixed only on that single fruit on high, which is the holy and conscious soul or consciousness. With that one object in his sight, he climbs up to the higher branches of this tree of life.¹⁹ He remembers the blessings of the preceding steps of his yoga meditation, filled with the ambrosia of contentment. He remains as content at the loss of his riches as he had felt at their gain.²⁰ He is as displeased and annoyed with the callings of his life, whether private or public, as one who is untimely roused from his wholesome sleep.

²¹ A weary traveler, fatigued from his long and tiring journey, longs for rest from his labor. In the

same way, a man tired of his repeated journeys through life caused by his ignorance requires his rest in nirvana.²² As a wing lights a fire without the help of fuel, so let him light the flame of his soul within by the breath of respiration and become united with the Supreme Spirit.²³ Let him forcefully check his desires for anything that falls of itself before his sight, although he is unable to prevent his yearning eye from falling upon it.²⁴ Having attained this great dignity which confers the fruits of best blessings on man, the devotee arrives to the sixth stage of his devotion, whose glory no language can describe.

²⁵ Whenever he happens to meet with some unexpected good which fortune may present to him, he feels a dislike for it, like a traveler unwilling to trust a mirage in a barren desert.²⁶ The silent sage, full with divine grace within himself, attains a state of indescribable bliss similar to the sleep of a weary traveler exhausted from the bustle of the busy world.²⁷ Having arrived at this stage of devotion, the sage advances towards attainment of the fruit of spiritual bliss, like the aerial spirit of a spiritual master has descending upon Mount Meru, or a bird of air dropping down on top of a tree.²⁸ There he forsakes all thoughts and desires and becomes as free as the open sky. Then he takes, tastes, eats and satisfies himself feeding freely upon this fruit of spiritual bliss.

²⁹ Attainment of godliness or full perfection in life means day by day leaving every object of desire, living the entire day with perfect composure with one's self.³⁰ To attain such a state of perfection, do away with all distinctions and differentiations and remain in perfect union and harmony with all and everything. The learned say that this state of mind is the assimilation and approximation of the nature of God, who is ever pure and the one and same in all from eternity to eternity.

³¹ One disgusted with his desire of the world and its people, having abandoned desire for his wife and family and forsaken his desire to acquire riches, can only find his rest in this blissful state.³² The ultimate union of both intellect and true knowledge in the Supreme Spirit melts away all sense of distinction, just as the heat of the sun melts frozen snow.

³³ One who has known the truth is not like a bent bow which becomes straight after it is loosened. Rather, he is more like a curved necklace which retains its curve even after it is let loose on the ground.³⁴ As a statue carved on wood or stone is seen in bas-relief, so the world is manifest in the great pillar of the Supreme Spirit without being an existing entity or a non-existing one of itself.³⁵ We cannot form any idea in the mind how material exists in the immaterial spirit, nor is it proper in our ignorance to entertain any idea of what is the unknowable nature of the Self-existent One.

³⁶ Whoever has utmost indifference to phenomena is capable of knowing the invisible spirit. But the unenlightened soul is incapable of forsaking and forgetting phenomena.³⁷ Knowledge of phenomena is utter ignorance. Samadhi means never losing that which is never lost to consciousness and relying upon it.³⁸ When viewer and view are seen in the same light of identity, and so relied upon by the mind, then it is called the union of both into one. The yogi places his rest and reliance upon this belief.

³⁹ He who has known the truth finds a natural distaste for phenomena. Wise men use the word materialism for ignorance of truth.⁴⁰ Fools, ignorant of the truth, feed only upon the objects of sense, but the wise have a natural distaste for them. They who have the taste of sweet nectar cannot be

disposed to taste a sour porridge or a bitter drink.⁴¹ A man without desires, content in himself, is quite devoid of the triple desires described before. But a learned man who is not inclined to meditate is addicted to the increase of his wealth.

⁴² Self-knowledge results from the absence of lust. Whoever loses his self by his corruption has neither his self-possession nor any fixed position to stand upon.⁴³ A learned man, though he may employ all his knowledge, does not prosper in his meditation because his various desires divide him within, though he was made as the whole and undivided image of his maker.⁴⁴ But the soul freed from desires of itself comes to possess endless bliss by being dissolved in the Source through meditation, as if wingless mountains were fixed upon the earth.⁴⁵ As the soul becomes conscious of holy light in itself, it loses the sense of its meditation and is wholly lost in that light, just as a drop of clarified butter offered in sacred oblation is burnt away in the sacrificial fire.

⁴⁶ The complete renunciation of all objects of sense constitutes the peace and stillness of the mind. He who has accustomed himself to this habit is entitled to our regard as a venerable and holy sage.

⁴⁷ Truly, the man who has become proficient suppressing his appetite for worldly objects becomes so firm and calm in his holy meditation that not even the combined power of Indra, the gods and demigods can shake him from his meditation.⁴⁸ Therefore resort to the strong and firm refuge of meditation. Know that all meditations other than that of knowledge is as frail and fragile as straw.

⁴⁹ The word “world” is used to refer to ignorant people. The wise are not the subject of its meaning. The difference between the words ignorant and wise consists in the one forming the majority of mankind and the other their superiors.⁵⁰ Let wise men resort to and rest at that place where all meet in union in one self-shining unity, whether it be on the ground of the understanding of saintly spiritual masters or those of enlightened sages.

⁵¹ No one has yet been able to explain the unity or duality of the real or unreal. The way to learn it is first by means of scriptures, then by association with wise and holy men.⁵² The third and best means to nirvana is meditation, which is arrived at one after the other. Then it will appear that the immense body of Brahman takes upon itself the name and nature of the living soul.

⁵³ The world appears in various forms by the meeting of like and unlike principles. It becomes divided into eighteen regions by the omniscience of God who knows the past and the future.⁵⁴ Both the knowledge and the dislike of the world are attained by attainment of either one of them. The thoughts of our mind, flying with the winds in open air, are burnt away by the fire of knowledge.

⁵⁵ The worlds, like flying cottonwood seeds, flee into the Supreme Soul, but nothing is known about where they end up flying. Man's gross ignorance of man is not removed by knowledge, just as dense snow does not melt from a fire in a painting.

⁵⁶ Though the world is known to be an unfounded fallacy, yet it is hard to remove this error from the mind. On the other hand, the world increases with ignorance as ignorant men acquire more knowledge of it.⁵⁷ As the knowledge of the ignorant tends to increase their ignorance, so a wise man finds ignorant people's knowledge of the world to be meaninglessness.⁵⁸ The existence of the three worlds is known to us only as they are represented in our knowledge of them. They are built in emptiness like aerial cities stretched out before us in the empty dreams of our sleep.

⁵⁹ Knowledge of the world is as false as fanciful desires in the minds of the wise. For neither the existence of the world or even his own self-existence is perceptible in the understanding of a wise man. ⁶⁰ There is only the existence of one supremely bright essence which shines in our minds, resembling pieces of wet or dry wood in as much as they are moistened or dried by the presence or absence of divine knowledge. ⁶¹ To right understanding, the whole world with all its living beings appears as one with one's self, but men of dull understanding bear no mutual sympathy for one another. The knowledge of duality tends towards differences and disunion among men, but knowledge of oneness leads men to fellow-feeling and union. ⁶² The wise man possessing a greater share of wisdom becomes as one with the Supreme One. He does not consider the question of the being or nonexistence of the world. ⁶³ A man who has arrived at the fourth stage of yoga takes no notice of men's waking, dreaming or sleeping states. A reasonable man takes no account of the vain wishes of his heart and the false fancies of his mind.

⁶⁴ Hence the deer-like mind does not choose its annihilation for the sake of its liberation and has no reality in it. ⁶⁵ Thus the tree of meditation by itself produces the fruit of knowledge which is ripened by degrees and in course of time to its lusciousness. Then the deer-like mind drinks its sweet juice of divine knowledge to its fullness and becomes free from its chains of earthly desire.

Chapter 46 — On Samadhi Meditation

¹ Vasishta continued:—

After the Supreme Being, the object and fruit of meditation, is known as present in the mind and the bliss of release from flesh is felt within, then all sensations are lost altogether and the deer-like mind becomes spiritualized into the Supreme Essence.² Then the mind loses its deer-like quality of browsing thorns, just as the extinguished lamp loses its flame. It assumes a spiritual form and shines with an inexhaustible blaze.

³ In order to attain the fruit of its meditation, the mind assumes a firmness like that of mountains after their wings were mutilated by Indra's thunderbolts.⁴ Its mental faculties fly away and there remains only pure consciousness which is irrepressible, indivisible and full with the Supreme Soul.⁵ The mind, being roused to reasonableness, now rises as the sentient soul and dispenses its clear spiritual light from its identity with the uncreated and endless One.⁶ It remains in that state in perfect freedom from all wishes and strivings. It is assimilated into the everlasting spirit of God in its form of eternal contemplation.

⁷ Until we find that blessed state and know the great Brahman, the mind remains a stranger to meditation because it dwells on other thoughts.⁸ After the mind has obtained its union with the Supreme One, we know not where the mind has fled, or where our wishes and actions, our joys and grief, and all our knowledge fly away.

⁹ The yogi is seen to be absorbed solely in his meditation, sitting steadfast in his contemplation like a wingless and unmoving mountain.¹⁰ Disinterested in sensual enjoyments and numb to all sensibilities, adverse to the various sights and objects of senses, the yogi is pleased only with himself.¹¹ With his sensations numbed by degrees, his soul resting in tranquility, and his mind dead to the enticements of wealth and sensible objects, the yogi is pleased with himself.

¹² All men of right understanding are fully aware of the tastelessness of the objects of sense. They remain like human figures in painting, without showing strong affection or looking upon them.¹³ A man who is master of himself, his soul and his mind refuses to look upon earthly treasures because he has no desire for them. He is firmly fixed in his abstraction as if he were compelled to it by another's force.¹⁴ The soul immersed in meditation becomes as full as a river in rainy season. There is no power that can restrain the mind fixed in meditation.

¹⁵ The mind immersed in deep meditation has a cool aversion to all sensible objects and feels an utter detachment to all worldly affairs. Then it is said to be in samadhi.¹⁶ It is a settled distaste for the objects of sense that constitutes the core and essence of meditation. The maturity of this habit makes a man as firm as a diamond.¹⁷ Therefore a distaste for worldly enjoyments is the germ of meditation, while the taste for such pleasures binds a man tightly to the world.¹⁸ Full knowledge of truth and the renunciation of every desire at all times lead men to nirvana meditation and to the infinite joy of the divine state.

¹⁹ When there is renunciation of enjoyments, why think of anything else? When there is no such renunciation, what avails any other thought or meditation?²⁰ The intelligent sage who is free from enjoying phenomena is situated in steadfast meditation and in the enjoyment of continuous bliss.²¹ He

who is not delighted with phenomena is known as the most enlightened man. He who takes no delight in what can be enjoyed is considered a fully wise man.²² He who by nature is disposed to tranquility can have no inclination towards enjoyments. It is unnatural to indulge in carnal enjoyments. The subdued nature needs nothing to enjoy.

²³ Let men meditate after hearing a lecture, reciting the scriptures, repeating mantras and uttering their prayers. When tired with meditation, let them return to their lectures and recitals.²⁴ Sitting in meditation in an untiring mood, resting at agreeable ease with freedom from fear and care, and remaining in rapturous nirvana with a quiet and composed mind are like the fair autumn sky with its unclouded and serene aspect.

Chapter 47 — The First Step towards Liberation

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Hear now the manner and measures a yogi adopts to obtain release from his heavy burden and troubles of the world. ² The seedling of discrimination springs first in the mind from contempt for the world. ³ All good people take shelter under the wide stretching shade of this large tree, just as a weary and sunburned traveler rests under the cool shade of trees.

⁴ A wise man shuns the ignorant at a distance, just as the wayfarer casts aside sacrificial wood because the worshippers of gods observe only the ceremonious rites of holy ablutions, almsgivings, austerities and sacred oblations.

⁵ In his fair, just, polite and open behavior, and in his calm and pleasing countenance, a wise man resembles the fair moon with her ambrosial beams. ⁶ He acts with sound wisdom and prudence, is polite and civil in his manners, is prompt in serving and obliging others, is holy in his conduct and humorous in his discourse. ⁷ He is as clear, cold, soft and pleasing as fresh butter, and his company is delightful to people even at first encounter.

⁸ The deeds of wise men are as pure for mankind as the dews of moonbeams refresh and cool all of nature. ⁹ No one sleeps so delighted on a bed of flowers, a flower garden devoid of fears, as he who rests secure in the company of reasonable and pious men. ¹⁰ The society of holy and wise men, like the pure waters of the heavenly river, serves to cleanse the sins and purify the minds of the sinful. ¹¹ The society of the holy recluse and liberated men is as cooling as a house filled with ice and flowers. ¹² The great delight which a holy sage feels in his heart is not to be enjoyed in the company of apsara fairies, gandharva spirits, the gods, or any ordinary human kind.

¹³ A pious devotee attains knowledge and clear understanding by continued performance of proper acts. Then the significance of the scriptures is reflected clearly in the tablet of his mind, just as the reflections of objects are seen in a mirror. ¹⁴ Good understanding moistened by the instruction of scriptures grows in the mind of a holy man, just as a plantain tree grows in the forest. ¹⁵ The mind cleared by good judgment retains the clear impression of everything in it, just as a mirror reflects the images of objects on its surface.

¹⁶ A wise man whose soul is purified by the association with holy men, and whose mind is cleansed with the washing of scriptural instruction, is like a sheet of linen cloth flaming with fire. ¹⁷ A holy saint shines with the brightness of his presence just like the sun does with his golden beams, diffusing a pure light all around the world. ¹⁸ A wise man follows the conduct of holy sages and the precepts of the scriptures to imitate and practice them himself. ¹⁹ Thus by degrees, a beginner becomes as good as the great objects of his imitation and as full of knowledge as the scriptures themselves. Having then put down all the enjoyments of life, he appears to come out of a prison by breaking down his chains and fetters.

²⁰ He who has become accustomed to reducing his desires and enjoyments day by day resembles the crescent moon daily increasing in brightness. He enlightens his family just as the moon throws her luster over the stars about her. ²¹ A stingy miser is always as gloomy as the face of an eclipsed moon. He is never as smiling as the face of a liberal man, which is bright as the face of the moon when freed

from eclipse.²² The liberal man spurns the world as mere straw and becomes famous among the great for his generosity. He resembles the wish-fulfilling kalpa tree of paradise which yields the desired fruit to everybody.²³ Though one may feel some compunction in his mind at the willful abdication of his possessions, yet the wise man is happy with no property at all.

²⁴ Anyone who comes to know what he was and how he now is may laugh at his prior acts, just as a low savage remembering his prior births and comparing them with his present laughs in disgust.

²⁵ Even spiritual masters and holy saints look upon a yogi with wonder, full of esteem for him. They see him with delighted eyes like the moon rising over the earth.²⁶ A yogi, ever accustomed to despise all enjoyment and having attained right judgment, does not esteem anything that can be enjoyed in life, though it presents itself to him in the proper manner.²⁷ A holy man whose soul is raised and enlightened feels his former enjoyments to become as dull and tasteless as a luxuriant tree becomes dry and withered in autumn.²⁸ He resorts to the company of holy men for his greatest and lasting good, and becomes as sane and sound as a sick man becomes healthy by his abstinence and recourse to physicians.²⁹ Being then exulted in his mind, he dives into the deep sense of the scriptures like a big elephant plunging into a large lake of clear water.

³⁰ It is the nature of virtuous men to deliver their neighbors from danger and calamity and to lead them to their well being and prosperity, just as the sun leads people to light.³¹ A reasonable man is adverse to receiving anything from another and lives content with what is his own.³² He hates to taste others' delicacies because he is gratified by the nectar drink of contentment and prepares to abandon what he already possesses.³³ He is accustomed to give away his gold and money to beggars and beg his vegetarian food from others. By habitual practice of giving away whatever he has, he is even ready to part with the flesh of his body.³⁴ Truly a man of subdued mind and holy soul gets over the hidden traps of ignorance with as much ease as a running man leaps over a pothole.

³⁵ A holy man accustomed to despise the acceptance of wealth from others learns speedily to neglect the possession of any wealth for himself.³⁶ Thus aversion to wealth and others' possessions leads a wise and holy man by degrees to be adverse to retaining anything for himself.³⁷ There is no such trouble on this earth, nor any great pain in the torment of hell, as there is in the punishment of earning and accumulation of wealth.³⁸ Ah, how little are the money-making fools aware of the cares and troubles they have to undergo in their restless days and nights in their servitude for money.³⁹ All wealth is only lengthening sorrow. Prosperity brings adversity. All enjoyments are only ailments and thus every earthly good turns to its reverse.

⁴⁰ One cannot have a distaste for sensual enjoyments as long he thinks on the objects of sense, or as long as he has any craving for riches, which are the springs of all evils and harms in human life.⁴¹ He who has a taste for the highest heavenly bliss looks upon the world as a heap of straw, and riches as the fire that lights them ablaze. Avoid this fire and be cool and quiet.⁴² The meaning of wealth is known as the source of all evils in the world and the cause of all wants and disorders and even of diseases and death. It is also the cause of oppression and plunder, of agitation and the like, and their consequent poverty and famine.

⁴³ In this mortal world of death and diseases of living beings, there is only one elixir which gives

perpetual health and life to man, and this is contentment.⁴⁴ The spring season is charming, and so are the gardens of paradise, moonbeams and celestial ladies, but all combine only in contentment which alone is capable of yielding all delights.⁴⁵ The contented soul is like a lake during rains when it is full and deep, clear and cooling as the nectar drink of the gods.⁴⁶ An honest man is strengthened by his contentment and flourishes with full joy like a flowering tree is covered with blossoms in flowering season.

⁴⁷ As a poor ant, in its ceaseless search and hoarding of food, is likely to be crushed under the foot of every passerby, so a greedy and needy man is liable to be spurned for his constant wanderings after worthless gains and money.⁴⁸ A deformed and disfigured beggar is like a man plunged into a sea of troubles, buffeting in its waves without finding any support for rest or any prospect of ever reaching the shore.⁴⁹ Prosperity, like beauty, is as frail and fickle as the unstable waves of the ocean. What wise man can expect to find his reliance on prosperity or beauty, or have rest under the shade of the hood of a hideous serpent?⁵⁰ He who knows the pains that attend gaining, keeping and losing money, but still persists pursuing it, is no better than a brute and deserves to be shunned by the wise as unsociable.⁵¹ He who cuts down the growing grass of his internal and external appetites from the field of his heart by the means of the sword of detachment, gets it prepared for reception of the seeds of divine knowledge.

⁵² Ignorant people take the world for a reality and wise men also conduct themselves under this supposition although they are well aware of its unreality. This is owing to their neglect of practicing what they are taught to believe.

⁵³ The sum of the whole is that renunciation of the world leads men to the society of sages and study of the scriptures. Then by reliance on the holy precepts, one abandons his worldliness. At last, his firm dislike of the temporal leads him to seek his spiritual bliss.

Chapter 48 — The Nature of a Yogi; the Worship of the Lord God

¹ Vasishta continued:—

After a man comes to renounce the world, associates with holy men, has well digested the precepts of the scriptures, and has abandoned his carnal desires and enjoyments,² then, having a distaste for worldly objects, he gains the reputation of being a man of integrity, being outwardly an inquirer after truth and inwardly full of enlightenment.³ He does not long for wealth, but shuns it like one flies from darkness. He gives away whatever he has in hand, just as a man throws away dry, rotten leaves from his house.

⁴ Everyone is seen worn out with toil and care for the support of his family and friends throughout his life. Yet like a weary traveler laboring under his load, he is rarely found to cast off his burden as long he has strength to bear it.⁵ A man in full possession of his senses and sensible objects all about him is yet quite unconscious of them if he is possesses a calm, quiet mind.⁶ Wherever he remains, whether in retired solitude remote from his country or in a forest or sea or distant deserts or gardens, he is perfectly at home in every place.⁷ He is not in love with any place, nor dwells secure in any state whether it be the company of friends in a pleasure garden or in learned discussions in the assembly of scholars.⁸ Wherever he goes or stays, he is always calm and self-governed, silent and communing with the Self. Though well informed himself, yet he is always in search of knowledge in his inquiry after truth.

⁹ Thus by his constant practice, a holy sage sits on low ground or in water and rests himself in the Supreme One in the state of transcendent bliss.¹⁰ This is the state of perfect stillness, both of inner soul and of outward senses. A yogi remains quite unaware of himself with his consciousness of indisputable truth.¹¹ This transcendent state consists in the unconsciousness of sensible objects and the consciousness of an emptiness full with the presence of omniscience spirit.¹² The state of highest bliss is first one's concern with the knowledge of unity, and lastly his unconsciousness of himself and everything besides, whether of a void or substance.

¹³ A saint, mindless of everything and resting in his consciousness, has no desire for anything, but remains like a block of stone amidst the encircling water.¹⁴ The self-conscious person, having attained that state of perfection which shuts out all objective thoughts, remains silent and slow, quite unmindful of everything beside itself. He reposes in his own being like a human figure in a painting.

¹⁵ He who has known the one that is to be known sees in his heart all things as nothing. All magnitudes shrink into minuteness and the whole fullness appears like an emptiness to him.¹⁶ The knower of God no longer has knowledge of himself or the world. All space and time and existence appear as nonexistent before him.¹⁷ The seer who has seen the glory of God is situated in the region of light. Like a lighted lamp, he dispels his inner darkness and all his outward fears, hatreds and affections.

¹⁸ I bow down before that sun-like sage who is set beyond darkness on every side and is raised above all created things, whose great glory is never liable to be darkened.¹⁹ I cannot describe in words the most eminent state of a divine seer whose soul is filled with divine knowledge, whose mind is quite at rest, and whose knowledge of duality is wholly extinct.²⁰ Know, O most intelligent Rama, that the great Lord God is pleased to bless him with the bliss of his final nirvana as reward for his serving

him day and night with sincere devotion.

²¹ Rama asked, "Tell me, O chief of sages, who is this Lord God? How is he propitiated by our prayers and faith in him? Explain this mystery to me, for you are acquainted with all truth."

²² Vasishta replied:—

Know, O highly intelligent Rama, that the Lord God is neither at a distance nor unattainable. The Lord is the all knowing soul, and the soul is the great God. ²³ In Him are all things and from him have come all these. He is all and everywhere with all. He is immanent in and the same with all. He is everlasting and I bow down to him. ²⁴ From him comes out this creation, as well as all its change and dissolution. He is the uncaused cause of all which rise like winds in the hollow vault of heaven.

²⁵ All these creatures, the moving as well as inert, worship Him always, as well as they can and present Him the best offerings that they can find. ²⁶ So men by adoring Him in their repeated births, with all their hearts and minds and in the best manner that they can, at last propitiate the supreme object of their adoration. ²⁷ The great Lord God and Supreme Soul, being thus propitiated by their firm faith, at last sends his messenger to them, with his good will for their enlightenment.

²⁸ Rama asked, "Tell me, great sage, how does the Lord God and Supreme Soul send his messenger to man? Who is this messenger, and in what manner does he teach?"

²⁹ Vasishta replied:—

The messenger sent by the Divine Spirit is known by the name of wise discrimination (*viveka*, wisdom). It shines as coolly in the cave of the human heart as moonlight does in a clear sky. ³⁰ Wise discrimination awakens and instructs the brutish and lustful soul to wisdom and saves the unwise soul from the turbulent ocean of this world. ³¹ The Vedas and Vedic scriptures call this enlightening and intellectual spirit residing in the human heart the adorable cosmic sound of Om. ³² This Holy Spirit is propitiated daily by men and the naaga tribe, and by gods and demigods, by their prayers and oblations, by their austerities and almsgivings, and by their sacrificial rites and recitals of the scriptures.

³³ This Lord has the highest heaven for his crown and the earth and infernal regions for his footstools. The stars glisten like hairs on his body. His heart is the open space of the sky and all material bodies are like the bones of his body. ³⁴ He being the intellectual soul of all, spreads undivided everywhere. He is ever wakeful, seeing and moving everything as if they were his hands and feet, his eyes and ears, and the other organs of his body.

³⁵ The living or sentient soul, being awakened to wisdom by destroying the demon of the sensualistic mind, takes upon a bright spiritual form and becomes a spiritual being. ³⁶ Now shun the various wishes of your heart, which are ever changeful and full of evils, and exert your efforts to exult your soul to the state of meeting with divine grace.

³⁷ The rambling mind resembles a demon buffeted by the waves of the furious ocean that is the world. Only an enlightened soul shines brightly over the dark, dreary and dismal waste of the earth. ³⁸ See your mind is blown away by the gale of its greed to the vast waves of the ocean of the world, hurled to the deep cavity of its whirlpools from whose depth no man can rise again. ³⁹ You have only the

strong ship of your divine wisdom to bear you above the waves of your carnal desires and passions and get you across the sea of your ignorance.

⁴⁰ In this manner the Lord, being propitiated by his worship, sends discrimination as his messenger to sanctify the human soul, and thus leads the living being to his best and most blessed state through the gradual steps of holy society, religious learning, and right understanding of their esoteric and spiritual sense.

Chapter 49 — The World as Light from Gems; Total Detachment and Indifference

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Those who are staunch in their discernment of truth and firm in the abandonment of their desires are truly men of very great souls, conscious of their greatness in themselves.² The vast magnanimity of noble minded men and the fathomless depth of their understanding are even greater than the space occupied by the fourteen worlds.³ Wise men have a firm belief that the reality of the universe is a false conception. They are quite at rest from all internal and external accidents which overtake the ignorant, unaware man like sharks and alligators.

⁴ What reliance can there be in any hope or desire for anything in this world, which is as tempting and deceitful as the appearance of two moons in the sky, of water in a mirage, and the prospect of an illusory city in the air?⁵ Desires are as vain as the empty void owing to the nothingness of the mind in which they arise. Therefore the wise are not led away by their desires which they know have their origin in the unreal and vacant mind.

⁶ The three states of waking, dreaming and sound sleep are common to all living beings generally. But the state or nature of the Supreme Being is beyond those triple functions. It is all seeing and all knowing without being seen or known.⁷ The soul in its enraptured state sees the world as a collection of light issuing from gems of various kinds and the human soul as a reflection of that light, not as a solid or material substance.

⁸ The phenomenal world that presents its various appearances to eyesight is an empty void. The varieties of light and luminous bodies which appear in it are nothing other than reflections of the rays of the vast mine of brilliant gems which is hidden under it and shoots forth its glare in the open air.

⁹ Here there is no other substance in reality, neither the vast cosmos nor boundless emptiness itself. All this is the glare of that greatest of gems whom we call the great Brahman, whose glory shines all around us.¹⁰ The created and uncreated all is one Brahman alone and there is no variety or destructibility in these or in him. All these are formless beings. They appear as substantial in imagination only, just as sunbeams paint various figures in empty clouds in the air.

¹¹ Thus when the imaginary world appears to blend with the ethereal void, this solid mass of material world will vanish into nothing.¹² The whole wandering world is seen to be a perfect insubstantiality. It is quite impossible for it to have any property or attribute whatever, although they are usually attributed to it, because there is no probability of any quality belonging to an absolute nothing, just as it is impossible for a bird to find a resting place on a tree rooted in the sky.¹³ There is no solidity of anything, nor is there any emptiness at all. The mind itself is a nonexistence, but that which remains after all these is the only being in reality which is never nonexistent at anytime.¹⁴ The soul is one alone and without variation. It has consciousness of all varieties in itself and these are inherent in its nature, just as all the various forms of jewelry are ingrained in a lump of gold.

¹⁵ A wise sage who remains in his own essential nature finds his egoism, the consciousness of his mind, and the world all shrink into himself. It is difficult to describe the mind of a wise man which remains identified with the nature of the Self-existent Being.

¹⁶ Understanding is perplexed and confounded from observing things whose substance is hidden.

Understanding requires slow and gradual knowledge of truth through right reason and argument.¹⁷ By withdrawing the mind from its fascination with phenomena, the production of the god Viraj, and leading it to contemplate the spiritual cause of these works, true knowledge of the author of the present, past and future worlds can be attained.¹⁸ He is known as a wise sage whose well discerning soul has perceived the truth in itself, who has found his rest in the One Unity, and who has no perception of the visible world, and all its endless varieties which are attributed to Viraj.

¹⁹ All of what has been said here by way of advice is perceived by wise men through their intuition, just as the wise sayings of good people are self-evident.

²⁰ The substance of all this is that there is no size or magnitude of beings in general, nor its absence as an emptiness. Therefore there is neither a gross nor an airy mind, but the One that exists after all is the true and ever existent entity.²¹ This entity is Consciousness which is familiar with all phenomena in itself. Its manifestation in the form of our senses is filled with all our sorrows, while its disappearance leads to our bliss.

²² Being developed, it evolves itself into the shape of outward organs and takes the form of the gross body, just as liquid water consolidates by degrees to the bulky forms of islands and huge mountainous bodies.²³ This consciousness, absorbed by ignorance, assumes the gross form of mind and binds itself tightly to the physical body, just like a man seeing his aerial dreams as material substance.²⁴ In these states in which consciousness is converted to sensation, perception and other faculties, Consciousness remains the same and unchangeable though it is described with different words of human invention.²⁵ The soul remains the same both in its conception of mental thoughts and ideas, as well as in its perception of outward objects. It is not changed in either case, unlike the mind that sees its dreams within and objects outside.

²⁶ Consciousness resembles an empty substance. It is as unchangeable in nature as that of emptiness and eternity. The objects which present their ideas in the soul are like dreams that appear in the mind. They are nothing in reality.²⁷ The gross nature of external objects bears no relation to the pure internal intellect. Their impurity touch or pollute the purity of the soul. Therefore consciousness is not subject to the mutability of external nature.²⁸ Understanding never acquires the mutable state of the objects it dwells upon. It always remains in its immutable nature and is never in any other state or condition.

²⁹ The yogi who has attained extreme purity of understanding in the seventh or highest degree of his perfection becomes identified with consciousness and of the meaning of its presence or absence.

³⁰ The minds of ordinary people are impressed with idea of their materiality because they understand themselves as material bodies.³¹ They falsely take their fleeting minds, which are as pure as the clear sky, for a material object. In the same manner, players in a drama take upon themselves the false disguise of pisacha demons.

³² All error is corrected by the habit of unerring wisdom, just as the madness of a man is cured by his thinking himself as not a mad man.³³ The knowledge of one's falseness makes him get out of his error, just as the error of dreaming is lost upon one's coming to the knowledge that all he saw was mere dream.

³⁴ The reduction of our desires lessens our attachment to the world. Desire is a great demon which must be destroyed by the wise man. ³⁵ As the madness of men is increased by their habitual ravings, so the constant practice of abstinence diminishes his giddy insanity. ³⁶ As the passing or subtle human body is mistaken as physical in thought, so it is taken in a spiritual sense by the learned because of their understanding. ³⁷ The passing or subtle body, having taken the form of the living soul, is capable of being converted into the state of Brahman by the intense nurture of its understanding.

³⁸ If anything is produced according to its substance, and if anybody thinks himself according his own understanding, then how is it possible for a material being to take itself in a spiritual sense? ³⁹ A dispute over the use of words increases doubts. Following one's advice, the error is removed, just as evil is removed by chanting mantras rather than knowing their meaning. ⁴⁰ The world is thought to be identical with the thought it, so it is believed to be an immaterial and bodiless substance until in the end its substance is lost in the emptiness of Consciousness. ⁴¹ When the mind is quite at rest from all its internal and external thoughts, the real spiritual nature of the soul appears to light and manifests itself in the form of the cool and clear sky which must be held for one's rest and refuge.

⁴² A wise man will perform his sacrifice with knowledge, planting the stakes of his meditation in it, and at the conclusion of his all-conquering sacrifice, he will offer his renunciation of the world as his oblation to it. ⁴³ A wise man is always the same and equally firm in himself, whether he stands under a shower of rain or falling fire stones from above, whether he walks in a deluge storm, travelling all over the earth, or flying in the air. ⁴⁴ No one who is not practiced sitting in steadfast meditation can attain the station of a detached sage whose mind is tranquil by its lack of desire and has obtained its enclosure within itself.

⁴⁵ The mind can never derive that perfect peace and tranquility, whether from the study of scriptures, or attending on holy lectures and sermons, or by practice of austerities and self-control, as it does by its distaste for all external objects and enjoyments. ⁴⁶ The mind, like a bundle of hay, is burnt away by the fire of renouncing all worldly objects. This fire is lit by the breath of abandonment of all things, and fanned by the belief that all prosperity is followed by adversity.

⁴⁷ The perception of sensible objects casts a mist of ignorance in and all about the mind. Only one's knowledge shines like a brilliant gem within himself. ⁴⁸ Only Consciousness shines in this gloom, like a star in the sky. It looks over all mankind, naaga snakes, asura demons, and over mountains and in their caves. ⁴⁹ It is by the infusion of this Consciousness that all things move in the dull womb of the universe. They are whirling in the whirlpool of Consciousness. They are deriving their freshness from the enlivening power of that source. ⁵⁰ All living beings whirling in the great whirlpool of Consciousness are like weak little fishes encircled by the net of ignorance. They are swimming and gliding in the water of the vast vacuum, quite forgetful of their spiritual origin. ⁵¹ It is Divine Consciousness that shows itself in various forms within the sphere of itself, just as air presents the variegated forms of thickening clouds in the wide arena of the sky.

⁵² All living beings, when they are devoid of their desires, are of the same nature with their spiritual source. Desire makes the different states and causes them to fly about like the dry leaves, rustling in the air like hollow reeds. ⁵³ Therefore you must not remain like the ignorant, but rise above them by raising your mind to wisdom. This is to be done by calling the manly powers to your aid, then

overcoming your dullness to suppress the whole band of your rising desires, and next breaking the strong chains and prison-house of this world to devote your attention to your improvement in spiritual knowledge.

Chapter 50 — Description of the Seven Kinds of Living Beings; We Are Dream-Objects

¹ Vasishta added:—

The bodies of living beings seen to fill the ten sides of this world consist of the different classes of men, naaga serpents, sura deities, gandharva spirits, mountaineers and others.² Of these, some are waking sleepers, and others are waking in their imaginations only and therefore are called imaginative wakers. Some are only wakeful, while there are others who have been waking all along.³ Many are found to be strictly wakeful, and many also are waking sleepers both by day and night. There are some animals that are slightly wakeful, and these constitute the seven classes of living beings.

⁴ Rama said, “Sage, tell me for my satisfaction. What is the difference among the seven species of living beings? They appear to me to be as different as the waters of the seven seas.”

⁵ Vasishta replied:—

There have been some men in some former age and parts of the world who are known to have been long sleepers with their living bodies.⁶ The dream that they see is the dream of the existence of this universe. Those who dream this dream are living men and called as waking sleepers or day dreamers.

[“*O Rama, in a certain previous world cycle, in a certain corner of creation, some beings remained in a state of deep sleep, though alive. The dreams that they dream are what appears as this universe. They are in what is known as the dream-wakeful state. We are all their dream-objects. On account of the fact that theirs is a very long dream, it appears to be a real and wakeful state to us. And the dreamers continue to be jivas in all this. Because of the omnipresence of omniscient consciousness, everything exists everywhere. Therefore, we exist as the dream-objects of the dreams of those original dreamers.*” Venkatesananda, *Vasishta’s Yoga*.]

⁷ Sometimes a sleeping man sees a dream rising of itself before him by reason of some prior action or desire of the same kind arising in the mind. Such is the uncalled for appearance of anything or property to us. Therefore that they are called dreaming men.⁸ They who awaken after their prolonged sleep and dream are called awakened from their sleep and dream and are said to have gotten rid of them.⁹ I say we are also sleepers and dreamers among those sleeping men because we do not perceive the Omniscient One who by his omnipresence is present everywhere as the all in all.

¹⁰ Rama asked, “Tell me where those awakened and enlightened men are situated now that those kalpa ages in which they lived are gone along with their false imagination?”

¹¹ Vasishta replied:—

Those who have gotten rid of their false dreams in this world and are awakened from their sleep, pass to some other bodies which they meet with, agreeably to the fancies which they form in their imaginations.¹² Thus they meet with other forms in other ages of the world according to their own peculiar fancies. There is no end to the connections and ideas of fancy in the empty air of the mind.

¹³ Those who are said to be awakened from their sleep are those who have gotten out of this imaginary world, just as inborn insects come out of an old and rotten fig tree.

¹⁴ Hear now about those who are said to be waking in their fancies and desires. They are born in

some former age in some part of the world, completely restless and sleepless in their minds owing to some fanciful desire springing in them and to which they were wholly devoted.¹⁵ They also are those who are lost in meditation and subject to the rule of their greedy minds. They have lost all their former virtues and become strongly bound to their desires.

¹⁶ They whose desires have been partly awake from before and have gradually absorbed all the other better endeavors of their possessors are also said to be wakeful to their desires.¹⁷ They who after their former desires cease, indulge in some fresh wishes again, are not only greedy people themselves, but think that we also are of the same sort.

¹⁸ I have already told you about the vigils of their desires. Now know them to be dormant over their desires who bear their lives as they are life beings, dead to their wishes like ourselves. But hear further of those who are ever awake.¹⁹ The first patriarchs produced from the self-evolving Brahma are said to have been ever wakeful because they were immersed in profound sleep before their production.²⁰ But being subjected to repeated births, these ever wakeful beings became subject to alternate sleep and waking owing to their being subject to repeated work and repose.²¹ These again became degraded to the state of trees on account of their distasteful deeds, and these are said to be in a mindless state because of their lack of consciousness even in the waking state.

²² Those who are enlightened by the light of the scriptures and the company of wise men look upon the world as a dream in their waking state, and therefore are called waking dreamers by day.²³ Those enlightened men who have found their rest in the divine state and are neither wholly awake nor asleep are said to have arrived at the fourth stage of their yoga.

²⁴ Thus have I related to you the difference among the seven kinds of beings, such as that among the waters of the seven seas. Now be of that kind which you think to be the best.²⁵ After all, O Rama, give up your error of reckoning the worlds as real entities of themselves. As you have come to your firm belief in one absolute unity, get rid of the duality of emptiness and solidity and be one with that Primordial Consciousness which is free from unity and duality.

Chapter 51 — Admonition to Arrive at the Yoga of Ultimate Rest

¹ Rama said. “Tell me sage, what is the cause of mere waking for nothing? How does a living being proceed from the formless Brahman? That is equivalent to the growth of a tree in empty air.”

² Vasishta replied:—

O highly intelligent Rama, there is no work to be found anywhere which is without its cause. Therefore it is altogether impossible for anybody to exist here who is merely awake for nothing.

³ Like this, it is equally impossible for all other kinds of living beings to exist without a cause. ⁴ There is nothing that is produced here, nor anything which is destroyed. It is only for the instruction and comprehension of pupils that such words are used.

⁵ Rama asked, “Then who is it that forms these bodies, together with their minds, understandings and senses? Who is it that deludes all beings into the snares of passions and affections, and into the net of ignorance?”

⁶ Vasishta replied:—

There is nobody who forms these bodies at anytime, nor is there anyone who deludes the living beings in any manner at all. ⁷ There is only the self-shining soul, residing in his conscious self, which evolves in various shapes like water gliding on in the shapes of billows and waves. ⁸ There is nothing such as an external phenomenon. Consciousness shows itself as the phenomenon. It rises from the mind, like a large tree growing out of its seed. ⁹ O support of Raghu’s race, this universe is situated in this faculty of understanding just as images are carved in stone. ¹⁰ There is only one spiritual soul which spreads internally and externally throughout the whole extent of time and space. Know this world is the emanation of Divine Consciousness scattered on all sides.

¹¹ Know this as the next world by suppressing your desire for a future one. Rest calmly in your celestial soul even here. Do not let your desires range from here to there. ¹² All space and time, all the worlds and their motions together with all our actions are included under the province of the intellectual soul. The meanings of all these terms are never insignificant or nothing.

¹³ O Raghava! Only they who are well acquainted with the meanings of Vedic words and those keen observers who have ceased to look upon phenomena can comprehend the Supreme Soul, and not others. ¹⁴ It is impossible for those who have light minds buried in the depth of egoism to ever to come to the sight of that light of the Self. ¹⁵ The wise look upon the fourteen regions of this world, together with multitudes of their inhabitants, as members of this embodied spirit.

¹⁶ There can be no creation or dissolution without its cause, and the work must be consistent with the skill of its maker. ¹⁷ If the work is accompanied with its cause, and the work alone is perceptible without its accompanying cause, then it must be an unreality because we have no perception of its cause. ¹⁸ The product must resemble its producer, just as the whiteness of the seawater produces white waves and froths. The productions of the most perfect God must bear resemblance to his nature in their perfection. But the imperfect world and the mind not being so, they cannot be said to have proceeded from the all perfect one.

¹⁹ Therefore all this is the pure spirit of God, and the whole is the great body of Brahman. In the same

manner one clod of earth is the cause of many a pot, and one bar of gold becomes the cause of many ornaments.²⁰ As the waking state appears as a dream in dreaming on account of the forgetfulness of the waking state, so the waking state seems as dreaming even in the waking state of the wise.²¹ If what is seen is understood as a creation of the mind, it proves to be as false as water in the mirage. It proves at last to be a waking dream by the right understanding of it.²² By right knowledge all material objects, together with the bodies of wise men, dissolve like the bodies of clouds in their proper season.

²³ As the clouds disappear in the air after pouring their waters in rain, so the world disappears from the sight of men who have come to the light of truth and knowledge of the soul.²⁴ Like the empty clouds of autumn and the water of the mirage, the phenomenal world loses its appearance as soon as it is viewed by the light of right reason.²⁵ As solid gold is melted down to liquid by hot fire, so all phenomena melt away to an aerial nothing when they are observed by the keen eye of philosophy.²⁶ All solid substances in the three worlds become rarefied air when they are put to the test of a rational analysis, just like the stalwart apparition of a demon vanishes into nothing when the child awakes.

²⁷ Endless thoughts of images rise and fall of themselves in the mind. The image of the world is only a concept of the mind. There is no reality in it, nor is there anything which has any density or massiveness in it.²⁸ Knowledge and ignorance of the world consist only in the conceptions of the mind. When the knowledge of the world's existence disappears from understanding, then where is the idea of its massiveness anymore in the mind?²⁹ The world loses its bulk and solidity in our knowledge of the state of our waking dream. Its bulkiness turns to rarity, just as gold melts to liquid when put in fire.

³⁰ Understanding becomes dull and dense by degrees, just as liquid gold when left to itself, becomes solidified in a short time.³¹ Thus one who in his waking state considers himself to be dreaming and sees the world in its rarified state, comes to lessen himself with all his desires and appetites, just as a heavy cloud is uplifted in autumn.³² A wise man sees all the visible beauties of nature set before him to be extremely subtle, like in dreams, so he takes no notice or enjoyment of them.

³³ Where is this rest of the soul and where is this struggle for wealth? They abide in the one and same man like the meeting of sleep and wakefulness together, and the union of error and truth in the same person at the same time.³⁴ He who remains unaffected by the false imaginations of his mind acts freed from his false belief in the reality of the world.³⁵ Who is it, O high minded Rama, who takes pleasure in an unreality, or satisfies himself drinking the false water of a mirage?³⁶ The saintly sage who rests in his knowledge of truth looks upon the world an infinite emptiness surrounded by stars that shine like the light of a lamp set behind windows.

³⁷ The waking man knows everything to be void and blank, so the wanderings of his mind cease and he does not long for the enjoyment of anything.³⁸ There is nothing desirable in that which is known to be nothing at all. For who runs after the gold that he saw in his dream at night?³⁹ Everybody desists from desiring that which he knows to be only his dream. He is released from the bondage which ties the beholder to the object of this sight.

⁴⁰ The most accomplished man is not addicted to pleasure and is of a composed mind without pride. He is a man of understanding who is dispassionate and remains quiet without any care or struggle.

⁴¹ Distaste for pleasure produces a lack of desire, just as the flame of fire being gone, there is an end of its light. ⁴² The light of knowledge shows the sky as a cloudless and lighted sphere. But the darkness of error gives the world an appearance of a hazy fairyland. ⁴³ The wise man neither sees himself nor the heavens nor anything besides. His ultimate view is fixed upon the glory of God.

⁴⁴ The holy seer does not see himself or the sky or the imaginary worlds about him. He does not see the phantasms of his fancy, but sits quite unconscious of all. ⁴⁵ The earth and other existences, which are gazed and dwelt upon by the ignorant, are lost in the sight of the sage who sees the whole as empty and is unconscious of himself. ⁴⁶ There comes a calm composure and grace in the soul, resembling the brightness of the clear sky, and the yogi sits detached from all, as a nothing in himself. ⁴⁷ Unmindful of all, the yogi sits silent in his state of self-seclusion and exclusion from all. He is set beyond the ocean of the world, and the bounds of all its duties and action.

⁴⁸ The great ignorance which causes the mind's apprehension of earth, hills, seas and their contents, though these things appear to exist before the ignorant eye, is utterly dissolved by true knowledge.

⁴⁹ The wise sage stands unveiled before his light of naked truth, his tranquil mind freed from all skeptical doubts, and nourished with the nectar of truth. He is as firm and fixed in himself as a sturdy oak.

Chapter 52 — Description of Brahma

¹ Rama said, "Tell me, O sage, where does our knowledge of the world as distinct from God come from? How is this difference removed and refuted?"

² Vasishta replied:—

An ignorant man takes to his mind all that he sees with his eyes, and nothing that he does not see. He sees a tree with its outward branches and leaves, but does not know the root lying hidden from his sight.³ A wise man sees a thing by the light of the scriptures and uses it accordingly. But an ignorant fool takes and grasps anything as he sees it without considering its hidden quality.

⁴ Be attentive to the dictates of the scriptures and intent upon acting according to their teaching. Remain like a silent sage and attend to my words which will be an ornament for your ears.⁵ All these visible phenomena are false. They have no real existence. They appear like the flash of light in water and they are known by the name of ignorance.⁶ Attend for a moment and for my sake to the meaning of the instruction which I am now going to give you. Knowing this as certain truth, rely upon it.

⁷ A question which naturally rises of itself in the mind is where did all these come from and what are they. You will come to know by your own reflection that all this is nothing and not in existence.

⁸ Whatever appears before you in the form of this world, and all its fixed and moveable objects, and also all things of every shape and kind, are altogether impermanent and vanish in time into nothing.

⁹ The continual wasting and division of the particles of things indicates their unavoidable extinction at last, just as water slowly flowing by drops from a pot make it entirely empty in a short time.¹⁰ Thus all things are perishable, and as all of them are only parts of Brahman, it is agreed by those skilled in logic that Brahman is neither endless nor imperishable, nor even existent at this time.

¹¹ This conceit of atheists is like the intoxication of wine. Atheism cannot overpower our theistic belief because we know phenomena as things in a dream that have no real substance.¹² The phenomenal world is perishable, but not the Spirit which is not matter or destructible. This is consistent with the doctrines of the scriptures, which mean no other.

¹³ Whether what is destroyed comes to revive again is utterly unknowable to us. All that we can say by our inferences is that the restorations are very much like the former ones.¹⁴ It is impossible to believe that upon its dissolution, matter becomes emptiness. Again if there is an emptiness like before, then there could not have been a total dissolution.¹⁵ If the theory of the identity of creation and dissolution be maintained, then the absence of causality and effect supports our belief that they are one and the same thing.¹⁶ Emptiness being conceivable by us, we say that when everything is annihilated, everything is transformed or hidden in the womb of emptiness. If there is any other meaning to dissolution, let us know what it may be.¹⁷ Whoever believes that things which are destroyed come to be restored again is either wrong to call them annihilated or must accept that others are produced to supply their place.

¹⁸ Where is there any causality or consequence in a tree, which is only a transformation of the seed in spite of the difference of its parts, such as the trunk, branches, leaves and fruit?¹⁹ The seed is not inactive as a pot or picture, but exhibits its actions in the production of its flowers and fruit in their proper season.²⁰ Every system of philosophy maintains that there is no difference in the substance of

things. This truth is also upheld in spirituality. Therefore there is no dispute about it.²¹ Substance being considered to be an eternally inert form and of a plastic nature, it is understood to be of the essence of emptiness, both by right inference and evidence of scriptures.

²² Why the essential principle is unknown to us, and why we still have some notion of it, and how we realize that idea, are what I am now going to relate to you step by step.

²³ All these visible spheres are annihilated at the final dissolution of the world. The great gods also become extinct, together with our minds and understandings and all the activities of nature.²⁴ The sky is also undefined and time shrinks into a divisible duration. The winds also disappear and fire blinds into chaotic confusion.²⁵ Darkness also disappears and water vanishes into nothing. All things to which you can apply words grow into nothing and become void in the end.

²⁶ There remains the pure entity of conscious soul, completely unbounded by time or space, without beginning or end, decrease or waste, and entirely pure and perfect in its nature.²⁷ This one is unspeakable and indiscernible, imperceptible and inconceivable, without any name or attribute whatever. This is an utter void itself and yet the principle and receptacle of all beings and the source of all being and non-being.²⁸ It is not the air or the wind or understanding or any of its faculties. It is neither void nor nothingness. It is nothing and yet the source of everything. What can it be except transcendent emptiness?

²⁹ It is only a notion in the conception of wise. Otherwise, no one can conceive or know anything about it. Whatever definition or description others apply only repeats the words of the Vedas.³⁰ It is not time or space, or the mind or soul, or any being or anything else that can be said. It is not in the midst or at the end of any space or side, nor is it anything we can ordinarily know.³¹ This something is too translucent for common understanding, conceivable only by the greatest understandings by those who have retired from the world and attained the highest stage of yoga.

³² I have left out popular descriptions which the scriptures avoid. The expressions of the scriptures are displayed here like playful waves in the clear ocean.³³ There it is said that all beings are situated in the common receptacle of the great Brahman as the figures are exhibited in relief upon a massive stony pillar.³⁴ Thus all beings are situated and yet not situated in Brahman, who is the soul of and not the same with all, and who is in and without all existence.

³⁵ Whatever be the nature of the Universal Soul, it is devoid of all attributes. In whatever manner it is viewed, it comes at last to mean the very same unity.³⁶ It is all and the soul of all, and being devoid of attributes, it is full of all attributes. In this manner it is viewed by all.

³⁷ O intelligent Rama, as long as you do not feel the complete suspension of all your objects, you cannot be said to have reached the fullness of your knowledge, as indicated by your questions until then.³⁸ An enlightened man who has come to know the great glory of God has clear sightedness in his mind. He remains quiet seeing the inner being of his being.³⁹ Fallacies of "I", "you" and "he", the world and the three times are all lost in his sight of the great glory, just as many gold coins merge together in a lump of gold.

⁴⁰ Gold produces various kinds of coins. These worlds and their contents are not produced as things of a different kind from the nature of God.⁴¹ The detached soul always looks upon different bodies as

contained within itself and remains in relation to this dualism of the world like gold is related to various kinds of ornaments that are produced from it.

⁴² It is inexpressible by the words implying space or time or any other thing, though it is the source and seat of them all. It comprehends everything, though it is nothing of itself. ⁴³ All things are situated in Brahman like waves in the sea. All things are exhibited by him like pictures drawn by a painter. He is the substratum and substance of all, just as the clay of the pots which are made of it. ⁴⁴ All things are contained in it. They are and they are not there at the same time, neither distinct nor indistinct from the same. They are ever of the same nature, equally pure and quiet as their origin.

⁴⁵ The three worlds are contained in it, as uncarved images are concealed in wood, seen with joy even there by the future sculptor. ⁴⁶ The images become seen when they are carved and manifest on the stone pillar. Otherwise the worlds remain in that soul, just as undisturbed waves lie calmly on the surface of the sea. ⁴⁷ Divine Consciousness, like the sculptor, sees the worlds as divided and distinct when they are still undivided and indistinct before their creation. They appear to be shining and moving when they are dark and motionless on the outside. ⁴⁸ In this Brahman there is a combination of atoms that composes these worlds and makes them shine so brightly when no particle has any light in itself.

⁴⁹ The sky, air, time and all other objects said to be produced from the formless God are likewise formless of themselves. The Lord God is the soul of all, devoid of all qualities and change, without decay and everlasting, and named the most transcendent truth.

Chapter 53 — Knowing the Nature of Brahman is Nirvana

¹ Rama said, “How is there consciousness in conscious beings? How is there durability in time? How is vacuum a perfect void? How does inertness abide in dull material substances? ² How does fluctuation reside in air, and what is the state of things in the future, and those that are now absent? How does motion reside in moving things, and how do plastic bodies receive their forms? ³ From where comes the difference of different things and the infinity of infinite natures? How is there visibility in what is visible, and how does the creation of created things come to take place?

⁴ Tell me, O most eloquent brahmin, all these things one by one. Explain them from the first to last in such a way that they may be intelligible to the lowest understanding.

⁵ Vasishta replied:—

That endless great emptiness is known as the great and solid consciousness. This cannot be known other than as a tranquil and self-existent unity. ⁶ The gods Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva and others are reduced to their origin at the last dissolution of the world and there remains only that pure source from where they have sprung. ⁷ There is no cause to be assigned to this prime cause of all who is also the seed of matter and form, as well as of delusion, ignorance and error.

⁸ The original cause is quite transparent and tranquil, having no beginning or end. Subtle ether itself is dense and solid in comparison with its rarity. ⁹ It is not proper to call it nonexistent when it has an intellectual body, nor can it properly be called an existent being when it is completely calm and quiet.

¹⁰ The form of that being is as inconceivable as the idea of that little space of time which lies in middle of our thought of the length of a thousand miles, which the mind’s eye sees in a moment. ¹¹ A yogi, unconscious to the false and delusive desires and sights of objects that intrude upon internal mind and external vision, sees the transient flash of that light in his meditation, just as he wakes amidst the gloom of midnight. ¹² A man who sits with quiet calmness of mind without any joy or grief comes to feel the vibration of that spirit in himself, just as he perceives the fluctuation of his own mind.

¹³ That which is the spring of creation is the source of all plant life and that also is the form of the Lord. ¹⁴ He is the cause of the world which is seen to exist in him in all its varieties of fearful forms and shapes, all of which is a manifestation of himself. ¹⁵ These having no actual or real cause are no real productions or actual existences. Therefore there is no formal world or a duality coexistent with the spiritual unity. ¹⁶ That which has no cause can have no possible existence. The eternal ideas of God cannot be otherwise than mere ideal shapes.

¹⁷ Emptiness has no beginning or end and is no cause of the world. Brahman is formless, but the empty sky which presents a visible appearance cannot be the form of the formless and invisible Brahman.

¹⁸ Therefore he is that in which the form of the world appears to exist. Hence the Lord himself appears as that which is situated in the emptiness of his consciousness. ¹⁹ The world being of the nature of the intellectual Brahman, is of the same intellectual kind with him, though our error shows it otherwise.

²⁰ This whole world springs from that whole intellect and it exists in its entirety in that entire one. The completeness of that is displayed in the totality of this. The completeness of creation depends upon

the perfection of its cause.

²¹ The nirvana of sages is to know that one who is ever even and quiet, who has neither rise nor fall or any form of likeness, but remains in its translucent unity like the vast sky, and is the everlasting all, combining reality and unreality together in its unity.

Chapter 54 — There is no Cosmic Seed; only the Consciousness of God

¹ Vasishta continued:—

The world is a clear emptiness existing in the entity of the empty Brahman. It is like the visible sky in the empty sky, and it means the manifestation of Brahman.² The words “I” and “you” refer to the same Brahman seated in his undivided individuality. All things are seated calmly and quietly in him as if they were not seated there, though they shine by the same light.

³ The earth with its hills and mountains resembles the protrusions on the body of Brahman. The whole world remains as dumb as a block of stone in the body of Brahman.⁴ He views what is visible as he is no viewer of them. He is the maker of all without making anything, because they naturally exist with their different natures in the Supreme Spirit.⁵ This knowledge of the existence of all nature in the essence of God precludes our knowledge of the positive existence of anything else. Our ideas of entities or emptiness, of action and passion, all vanish into nothing.

⁶ The one solid essence of the everlasting one is diffused through all everywhere, just as the solidity of a stone stretches throughout its parts. All varieties blending into unity are always alike to him.

⁷ Life and death, truth and untruth, and all good and evil are equally indifferent in that empty spirit, just as endless waves continually rise and fall in the waters of the deep.⁸ The very same Brahman becomes divided into the viewer and the view, the one being the intellect and the other the living soul. This division is known in the dreaming and waking states of the living soul when the same is both subject and object in either state.⁹ In this manner the form of the world is exhibited as a vision in a dream in the sphere of the Divine Consciousness. From the beginning, the form of the world is manifest as the counterpart or representation of Brahman himself.¹⁰ Therefore know this world and all things in it are exactly of that spiritual form in which they are exhibited in the Divine Spirit. There is no variation in their spirituality owing to their appearance in various forms, just as there is no change in the substance of the moon during her different phases.

¹¹ All these worlds reside and wander amidst the quiet spirit of God in the same manner as waters remain and roll in waves in the midst of the calm surface of the ocean.¹² Whatever is manifest is manifested as the work, and that which is not apparent is the hidden cause of them. There is no difference between them in as much as both are situated in that spirit, their common center. A traveler is always going forward, yet is never moving from the center of the earth.

¹³ Hence the prime cause of creation is as nothing as the horns of a rabbit. Search for it as much as you can and you will find nothing.¹⁴ Whatever appears anywhere without its reason or cause must be a fallacy of vision and mind. Who can account for the truth of an error which is untrue itself?¹⁵ How and what effect can come to existence without its cause, and what can it be other than an error of the brain for a childless man to say he sees his son?¹⁶ Whatever comes to appearance without its cause is all owing to the nature of our imagination which shows the object of our desire in all their various forms to our view, just as our fancy paints fairylands in our minds.

¹⁷ As a traveler passing from one country to another still finds his body standing in the middle of this globe, so nothing departs from its nature. It only turns about that center.¹⁸ Understanding also shows many false and huge objects in its airy and minute receptacle. Examples are the many objects of

desire and the notion of mountains which understanding presents to us in our waking and dreaming states.

¹⁹ Rama asked, "We know well that the future banyan tree resides within the minute receptacle of its seed. Then why don't you say that creation was hidden in the same manner in the un-evolved spirit of God?"

²⁰ Vasishta replied:—

The seed in its material form contains the formless big tree in its undeveloped core. The seed develops into gigantic size by aid of auxiliary causalities.²¹ The entire creation is dissolved in the end. Tell me, what remains in the form of its seed? What ancillary causes are there to be found which cause the production of the world?

²² The pure and transparent spirit of God has no possible shape or figure in it. If it is impossible for even an atom to find a place in God, what possibility is there for a formal seed to exist in God?²³ So the reality of a causal seed being altogether untrue, there is no possibility of the existence of a real world, nor can you say how, from where, by whom or when it came into being.

²⁴ It is improper to say that the world consisted in a minute particle in the Divine Spirit, and quite absurd to maintain that it remained in an eternal atom. How is it possible that a body as big as a mountain could be contained in a minute thing as small as a mustard seed? It is therefore a false theory of the ignorant.²⁵ Had there been a real seed from eternity, it is possible for the world to be produced from it by causes inherent in it. But how could a real and formal seed be contained in the formless spirit of God? By what process could the material proceed from the immaterial?²⁶ Therefore that prime and transcendent principle exhibits itself in the form of the world and there is nothing which is ever produced from or reduced into it.

²⁷ The world is situated in its intellectual form in the emptiness of Consciousness. The human heart portrays it in its material shape. The pure soul views it in its pure spiritual light, but the perverted heart perceives it in a gross and concrete state.²⁸ It appears in the mind as empty air and fluctuates there with the vibration of the wind. There is no substantiality of the world in the mind, nor even an idea of its creation, as the word creation (*sarga*) is meant to express.²⁹ As there is emptiness in the sky and fluidity in water, so there is only spirituality in the soul which sees the world only in a spiritual light.³⁰ The world is a reflection of Brahman and as such it is Brahman himself, and not a solid or extended thing. It is without beginning or end and quiet in its nature, never rising or setting of itself.

³¹ As a wise man going from one country to another finds his body to be always situated in the middle of this globe, so the universe with all its remotest worlds is situated in the emptiness of the Divine Spirit.³² As fluctuation is innate in air and fluidity is inherent in water and emptiness is essential to vacuum, so this world is intrinsic in the Divine Soul without anything accompanying it.

³³ The empty phantom of the world is in the emptiness of Divine Consciousness, Divine Intellect. Being thus situated in the Supreme Soul, it has no rising or setting like that of the sun. Therefore knowing all these to be included in that vacuum, and there is nothing visible beside the same, cease viewing the phantoms of imagination and be as the very emptiness yourself.

Chapter 55 — The Spiritual Sense of the World

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Thought and its absence produce the gross and subtle ideas of the world which, in reality, was never created in the beginning for lack of a creator.² The essence of consciousness is not material so it cannot be the cause of a material thing. The soul cannot produce an embodied being, like seed bringing forth plants on earth.

³ The nature of man is to think of things according to his own nature. Hence intelligent mankind views the world in an intellectual light, while the ignorant take it in a gross material sense. The intellect is capable of conceiving everything in itself.⁴ The ethereal soul enjoys things according to its taste, and the intellect entertains the idea of whatever it thinks upon. The ignorant soul creates the idea of creation just as a drunken man sees many shapes in his intoxication.

⁵ Whenever the shape of a thing, which is neither produced nor existent, presents itself to our sight, it is a picture of the ideal figure which lies quietly in the Divine Mind.⁶ Empty Intellect dwelling in the emptiness of consciousness, as fluidity resides in water, shows itself in the form of the world like water displays itself in the form of waves upon its surface. So the world is the very same Brahman, just as the wave is the very water.

⁷ Worlds shining in empty air are like clear visions in a dream, or false appearances in the open sky to a dim-sighted man.⁸ The mirror of the intellect perceives the spectacle of the world in the same manner as the mind sees things in dream. Hence what is termed the world is only emptiness.⁹ The dormant Intellect is said to be awakened in its first acts of creation. Then follows the inaction of the intellect, which is the sleep and night of the soul.

¹⁰ As a river continues to run in the same course in which its current first began to flow, so the whole creation moves in the same unchanging course as at first, like the continuous current and rippling waves of rivers.¹¹ As the waves of river accompany the course of its waters, so the source of creation lying in the empty seed of airy Consciousness gives rise to its constant course, along with its ceaseless series of thoughts.

¹² The destruction of a man in his death is nothing more than the bliss of his repose in sleep. The resurrection of his soul in this world is also a renewal of his bliss.¹³ If there is any fear or pain in sin, it is equally so both in this life and the next. Therefore, the life and death of the righteous are equally blissful.¹⁴ Those who look on and salute their lives and deaths with equal indifference are men who have an unbroken tranquility of their minds. They are known as men of cool inner being.

¹⁵ As conscience becomes clear and bright after its impurity is cleansed and wiped from it, so shines the pure soul which they call the liberated and free.¹⁶ Upon the utter absence of our consciousness, there follows a total disappearance of our knowledge of phenomena. Then our intellect rises without a vestige of phenomena in it and without its knowledge of the world's existence.¹⁷ He who knows God becomes unified with the divine nature, which is neither thinkable nor of the nature of the thinking principle or intellect, or any thing thought of by the intellect. Being absorbed in meditation, he remains quite indifferent to all worldly pursuits.

¹⁸ The world is a reflection in the mirror of the intellect. It is exhibited in the transparent emptiness of

the Divine Spirit, so it is in vain to talk of bondage or liberty.¹⁹ The world is produced by the vibration of airy intellect. It is an act of intellect's imagination. It is pure airy spirit from where it has risen, and never in the form of the earth or anything else as it appears to be.

²⁰ There is no space or time or any action or substance here, except a single entity which is neither a nothing nor anything that we know.²¹ It is only a spiritual substance appearing as a thick mist to our sight. It is not empty or a substance but something purer and more clear than the transparent emptiness about us.²² It is formless with its apparent form, and an unreality with its seeming reality. It is entirely a pure intellectual entity appearing as manifest to sight like an aerial castle in a dream.

²³ Nirvana of a man is when his view of this extended, gross and impure world becomes extinct in its pure spiritual form in the emptiness of his mind. The vast and extensive world presenting all its endless varieties has no diversity in reality. It forms an infinite unity, like the empty space of the sky, and the fluidity of waters of the one universal ocean on the globe.

Chapter 56 — Story of Vasishta's Search for Seclusion and Hundred Year Meditation

¹ Vasishta added:—

Having proved that Consciousness is always and everywhere, in every manner the all in all, it becomes evident that it remains like the empty and translucent air in everything in the whole universe.

² Wherever there is Consciousness, there is also creation. Consciousness resides alike in void and in fullness. All things are full of Consciousness, and there is nothing whatsoever in existence beside this universal Consciousness. ³ Just like all created things appear in their imaginary forms in our dream, so the empty Consciousness alone appears in various forms of existence in our waking dreams.

⁴ Rama, listen to my story of the stone, which is as pleasant to taste as it is a remedy for ignorance. I will tell you what I have actually seen and done myself.

⁵ Being anxious to know the knowable one, I was fully resolved in my mind to leave this world and all its false usages. ⁶ After forsaking all the eagerness and restlessness of my body and mind, I remained a long while in a state of calm and quiet meditation for the sake of solitary peace and rest.

⁷ Then I thought of taking myself to some seat of the gods and sitting there quietly to continue my survey of the changing and transitory states of worldly things.

⁸ I thought, “I find all things quite tasteless to my taste, though they seem pleasant for a while. I never see anyone anywhere who is always content with his own state. ⁹ All things create only care and sorrow, with the acutest pains of remorse and regret. All these phenomena produce only evil from their appearance of good to those who see them. ¹⁰ What is all this that comes to our view? Who is their viewer and what am I who look upon these phenomena? All this is the quiet and unborn spirit which flashes forth in the empty sky with the light of its own intellect.”

¹¹ With thoughts like these, I sought to retire to a proper place where I might confine myself within myself, a place which might be inaccessible to the gods and demigods, and to the spiritual masters and other beings. ¹² I sought a place where I might remain unseen by any being, sitting quietly in unalterable meditation, placing my sole reliance on the one transparent soul, and getting rid of all my cares and pains.

¹³ Where could I find such a place entirely empty of all creatures where my mind would not be distracted by interruptions of the objects of my five external organs of sense? ¹⁴ I cannot choose the mountains for my seat. Whistling breezes of the forests, the dashing noise of waterfalls, and the flocking of wild animals serve to disquiet the mind without the capability of being stilled by human power. ¹⁵ Hills are crowded with hosts of elephants, valleys are filled with hordes of tribal peoples, and countries are full of hateful men more harmful than the poison of venomous serpents. ¹⁶ The seas are full of men and horrible beasts in their depths. Cities are disturbed with the noise of business and the agitation of citizens. ¹⁷ The foothills of the mountains and the shores and coasts of seas and rivers are as thickly peopled as the realms of the rulers of men. Even the summits of mountains and the caves of infernal regions are not devoid of animal beings.

¹⁸ Mountains sing with the whistling of breezes and trees dance with the motion of their leafy palms. Blooming flowers smile gently in the caves of mountains, in forest grounds and in low lands. ¹⁹ I

cannot go to river banks where mute fish live like silent munis in their caves, gently shaking water lilies by their giddy flirtation, because these places are also disturbed by the loud noise of whirlpools and roaring whirlwinds.²⁰ I can find no rest in barren deserts where howling winds raise clouds of dust, nor can I go to mountain waterfalls where the air resounds with the stunning noise of constant waterfall.

²¹ Then I thought of sitting in some secluded corner of a remote region of the sky where I might remain absorbed in holy meditation without disturbance.²² In this corner, I thought of making a cell in my imagination and keeping myself quite confined by a complete renunciation of all my worldly desires.

²³ With these reflections, I mounted high in the blue vault of the sky and found a vast space in its womb that knows no bounds.²⁴ There I saw spiritual masters wandering in one place and roaring clouds rolling in another. On one side I saw vidyadhara spirits and excellent yakska demons on another.²⁵ In one place I saw an aerial city and in another a region of rattling winds. I saw rain clouds on one side and raging yoginis in another.²⁶ There was the city of the Daityas hanging in the air on one side and the place of gandarva spirits appearing in another. The planetary sphere was rolling about in one way and the starry frame revolving at a distance.²⁷ Somewhere the sky was brushed over by flights of birds and great gales were raging in another part. Somewhere there appeared portents in the sky and elsewhere there were canopies of clouds formed in the heavens.²⁸ One part of heaven was filled with cities peopled by strange kinds of beings. The car of the sun was gliding on one side and the wheel of the moon was sliding in another.²⁹ One region of the sky was burning under the hot sun and another part was cooled by moonbeams. One part was intolerable to little animals and another was inaccessible owing to its intense heat.³⁰ One place was full of dancing demons and another with flocks of flying Garuda eagles. One region was deluged by doomsday rains and another was overrun by tempestuous winds.

³¹ Leaving these attended parts behind, I passed onward far and further until I reached a region entirely desolate and devoid of everything.³² Here the air was mild and no being was to be seen even in a dream. There was no omen of good, or anything indicating evil, or any sight or sign of world.³³ I saw myself in a solitary cell with some space, but without any exit, pleasing as a lotus bed.³⁴ It was not perforated by worms, but was as handsome as the bright disc of the full moon and as lovely as the beautiful features of lily and lotus, jasmine and mandara flowers.

³⁵ This abode of my imagination was inaccessible to all beings except me. I sat there alone with only my thoughts and the creations of my imagination.³⁶ I remained in lotus posture, quite silent and calm in my mind. Then, after acquiring spiritual knowledge, I rose from my seat after a hundred years.³⁷ I sat in unwavering meditation absorbed in samadhi. I remained as quiet as the calm stillness of air and as immovable as a statue carved in relief upon the face of the sky.³⁸ At last I found what I had long been searching for in earnest. At last the breath of my expectation returned into my nostrils.

³⁹ The seed of knowledge which I had sown in the field of my mind came to sprout forth of itself after the lapse of a hundred years.⁴⁰ My living soul was awakened to its intuitive knowledge, just as a tree left withered by the dewy season becomes revivified by the renewing moisture of spring.⁴¹ The hundred years which I passed in my meditation glided away as quickly as a single moment, because a long period of time appears a very short space to one who is intensively intent upon a single object.

⁴² My outward senses had expanded from their contracted state, just as withered trees expand themselves into flowers and foliage by the growing influence of spring.

⁴³ Then vital airs filled the organs of my body and restored my consciousness to their sensations. Soon after I was seized upon by the demon of my egoism, accompanied by its consort of desire, and these began to move back and forth just like strong winds shake sturdy oaks.

Chapter 57 — Vasishta's Stirring of Ego Dispelled by Certain Knowledge that All Is a Dream

¹ Rama asked, "Tell me, O most wise sage, how it is possible for the demon of ego to take hold of you, who is extinct in God? Please dispel my doubts here."

² Vasishta replied:—

O Rama, it is impossible for any being, whether knowing or unknown, to live here without a sense of his egoism, just as it is impossible for the contained to exist without its container.³ But there is a difference which you must know. The demonic egoism of a quiet minded man is capable of control by means of his knowledge of the scriptures.⁴ Childish ignorance raises up this idol of egoism, though it is found to exist nowhere, just as little children make dolls of gods and men, images that have no existence at all.⁵ This ignorance is also nothing of substance because it is dispelled by knowledge and reason, just as darkness is driven away by the light of a lamp.⁶ Ignorance is a demon dancing in the dark, a fiend that flies far away from the light of reason.

⁷ In absence of knowledge and reason, we grant the existence of ignorance, yet at best it is only a fiend of delusion, shapeless as the darkest night.⁸ The second rabbit [*in Indian tradition, the rabbit is considered sacred to the moon*] will be seen only when the second moon exists. Similarly creation is only possible when basic ignorance exists.⁹ Creation having no other cause, we do not know how ignorance finds a place in it, as impossible as a tree growing in the air.¹⁰ When creation began in its pure and subtle form in the womb of absolute emptiness, how is it possible for the material bodies of earth and water to proceed without a material cause?

¹¹ The Lord is beyond the mind and the six senses, yet it is the source of the mind and senses. But how could that formless and incorporeal being be the cause of material and corporeal things?¹² The seedling is the effect, germinating from the seed as its causal source. But how and where can you expect to see the sprout springing without the productive seed?¹³ No effect can ever result without its formal cause. Say, who has ever seen a tree springing and growing from empty air?¹⁴ Only imagination paints these prospects in the mind, just as the vapor of imagination shows you the sight of trees in empty air. So it is the temporary madness of the mind that exhibits these phenomena before your eyes, but which in reality have no substance in them.

¹⁵ So the universe when it appeared at its first creation, in the emptiness of Divine Consciousness, was all a collection of worlds swimming in empty air.¹⁶ It is the same as it shines in the spacious intellect of the Supreme Soul. It is divine nature itself which is called creation and which is an intellectual system having proceeded from the intellect, all the same divinity.¹⁷ The vision of the world presented in our dreams, a daily occurrence for us, furnishes us with the best example of this. In the dreaming state we are conscious of the sights of cities and hills all before our mental eyes.

¹⁸ The nature of Consciousness is the same as a dream. Consciousness sees the vision of creation like we see the appearance of uncreated creation before our eyes, all in the same manner as it appeared at first in the vast void.

¹⁹ There is only one incomprehensible intelligence, a purely unborn and imperishable being that appears now before us in the shape of this creation, as it existed with its everlasting ideas of infinite worlds before this creation began.²⁰ There is no creation here, or these globes of earth and others. It

is all calm and quiet with only one Brahman seated in his immensity.²¹ This Brahman is omnipotent because he instantly manifests himself in any manner without forsaking his purely transparent form.²² As our intellect shows itself in the forms of imaginary cities in our dream, so does the Divine Intellect exhibit itself in the forms of all these worlds at the beginning of their creation.

²³ The empty intellect is situated in the transparent and transcendent vacuum of the Intellect. Creation is a display of its own nature by an act of its thought in itself.²⁴ The entire creation exists in the clear emptiness of the Intellect. It has the same nature of spirit situated in the spirit of God.²⁵ The entire creation is only the diffusion of the same spiritual essence of God. There is no possibility that a material world or ignorance or egoism exists in the creation and pervasive fullness of the Supreme Spirit.

²⁶ Everything have I told you about the ending of your egoism and knowing the unreality of egoism serves to get rid of this false belief, like a child freed from his fear of a ghost.

²⁷ In this manner, as soon as I was fully convinced of the futility of egoism, immediately I lost the sense of my personality. Though I fully retained consciousness of myself, yet I was freed from my selfishness, like a light autumn cloud unloading its watery burden.²⁸ Our knowledge that a painting of a fire is ineffective to burn us removes the fear of being burnt by it. In the same way, connecting our fallacies of egoism and creation serves to remove the impressions of the subjective and objective from our minds.²⁹ Thus I was delivered from my egoism and my passions became tranquil. Then I found myself seated in a sky free of clouds in an uncreated creation.³⁰ I am no egoism, nor is it anything to me. Having gotten rid of it, I have become one with the clear intellectual vacuum.

³¹ In this respect, all intelligent men are of the same opinion as I am. It is well known to them that our idea of individual ego is as false as the fallacy of fire in a painting.³² Being certain of the unreality of yourself and of others, and of the nothingness of everything beside, conduct yourself in all your dealings with detachment and remain as silent as a stone.³³ Let your mind shine with the clearness of the vault of heaven, and be as impregnable to the excess of all thoughts and feelings as solid stone. Know that there is only one Intellectual essence from beginning to end, and that there is nothing to be seen except the one God who composes the whole fullness of space.

Chapter 58 — There Is Nothing Physical in God Who Is Consciousness

¹ Rama said, “O great sage, what an extensive, noble, grand and clear prospect you have exposed to my sight! ² I also find by my perception that the one and only abstract being fills the whole space at all times and places, and that this essence shows itself alike in every manner and form always and everywhere forever and always.”

³ “Sage, I still have some moral principles disturbing in my heart. I hope you will please remove them by explaining the meaning of your story of the stone.”

⁴ Vasishta replied:—

Rama, I will tell you the story of the stone in order to establish that this whole is existent in all times and in all places. ⁵ This story explains how thousands of worlds are contained within the compact and solid body of a stone. ⁶ This story will also show you how there are thousands of worlds in the great emptiness of elemental space. ⁷ From this story you will also find that in the midst of all plants and their seeds, and in the hearts of all living animals, and also in the heart of the elementary bodies of water, air, earth and fire, there is sufficient space containing thousands of productions of their own kinds.

⁸ Rama asked, “If you say, O sage, that all plants and living beings are full with the productions of their respective kinds, then why is it that we do not perceive the numerous productions which abound in the empty air?”

⁹ Vasishta replied:—

I have already told you, Rama, much about this first and essential truth. The whole of this creation which appears to our sight is empty air, existing only in emptiness. ¹⁰ In the first place, nothing was ever produced in the beginning, nor is there anything which is now in existence. All that appears as visible to us is nothing other than Brahman himself.

¹¹ There is no room for even an atom of earth to find its place in the fullness of Divine Consciousness which is filled with its ideal worlds. No material worlds exist in Brahman, who is of the form of pure emptiness. ¹² There is no room even for a spark of fire to have its place in the intellectual creation of God which admits of no gap or opening. These worlds do not exist in any part of Brahman who is entirely a pure emptiness. ¹³ There is no possibility for a breath of air to exist in the compact fullness of the intellectual creation of God, nor do any of these worlds exist except in the purely empty Consciousness of Brahman. ¹⁴ There is not even a bit of visible emptiness that finds a place in the intensity of the ideal creation in the Divine Mind, nor is it possible for any of these visible worlds to exist in the compact vacuum of the deity. ¹⁵ The five great elementary bodies have no room in the consolidated creation of God, which exists in its empty form in the emptiness of Divine Consciousness.

¹⁶ There is nothing created anywhere. Everything is the vacuum in the emptiness of the great spirit of God. ¹⁷ There is no atom of the great spirit of God, which is not full of created things. There is no creation, only the void in the emptiness of the Divine Spirit. ¹⁸ There is no particle of Brahman distributed in creation because the Lord is spirit, always full in himself. ¹⁹ Creation is the supreme

Brahman, and the Lord is creation itself. There is not the slightest trace of dualism in them, as there is no duality between fire and its heat.

²⁰ It is improper to say that this is creation and the other is Brahman, and to think them as different from one another, just as it is wrong to consider a tree and it being torn as two things from the difference in the sounds of the words. ²¹ There exists no difference between Brahman and creation when their duality disappears into unity, and when we cannot have any idea of their difference, unless we support the gross dualistic theory.

²² We know all this as one clear and transparent space, without beginning or end and quite indestructible and tranquil in its nature. Knowing this all wise men remain as silent as a piece of solid stone, even when they are employed in business. ²³ Look at this whole creation as extinct in God and see the visible world only as a vast void. Look upon your egoism and the world as mere fallacies. Behold the gods and demigods and the hills and everything else as imaginary appearances in our dream which spread their nothingness of delusion over the minds of men.

Chapter 59 — Vasishta Seeks the Source of a Sound, Describes Infinite Networks of Alternative Realities

¹ Rama asked, “Tell me, O sage, about what you did after you arose from your hundred years of samadhi in the cell of your aerial abode.”

² Vasishta replied:—

After I awoke from my trance, I heard a soft and sweet sound. It was slow but distinctly audible, clearly intelligible both in sound and sense.³ It was as soft and sweet as if it proceeded from a female voice, and musical to the ear. It was neither loud nor harsh owing to its feminine quality. I kept watching from where the words were heard.⁴ It was as sweet as the humming of the bees, and as pleasing as the tune of stringed instruments. It was neither the chime of crying nor some recitation, but like the buzzing of black bees known to men as the melody in vocal music.

⁵ Hearing this melody for a long time and vainly seeking its source, I thought, “It is a wonder that I hear the sound without knowing its author or from which of the ten sides of heaven it proceeds.⁶ This part of the heavens,” I thought, “is the path of the spiritual masters. On the other side I see an endless emptiness.”

I passed over millions of miles that way, and then I sat there awhile and reflected in my mind.⁷ “How could such feminine voice proceed from such a remote and solitary quarter? I see no vocalist with all my diligent search.⁸ I see the infinite space of the clear and empty sky lying before me. I find no visible being appearing to my sight in spite of all my diligent search.”

⁹ As I was thinking in this manner, looking repeatedly on all sides without seeing the maker of the voiced sound, I thought of the following plan.¹⁰ I must transform myself into air and be one with the empty vacuum. Then I would make some sound in the empty air, which is the receptacle of sound.¹¹ I thought of leaving my body in its posture of meditation, as I had been sitting before, and with the empty body of my intellect, mix with the empty vacuum like a drop of water mixes with water.¹² Thinking so, I was about to forsake my material frame by sitting in lotus posture and entering samadhi, shutting my eyes tightly against all external sights.¹³ Having given up my sensations of all external objects of sense, I became as void as my intellectual vacuum, preserving only the feeling of my consciousness in myself.

¹⁴ By degrees I lost my consciousness also. I became only a thinking principle. Then I remained in my intellectual sphere as a mirror of the world.¹⁵ Then with that empty nature of mine, I became one with the universal vacuum and melted away like a drop of water with common water, and mixed as an odor in the universal receptacle of empty air.¹⁶ Being assimilated to the great vacuum, which is omnipresent and pervades over the infinite space, I became like the endless void, the reservoir and support of all, although I was formless and unsupported myself.

¹⁷ In my formless space I began to look into multitudes of worlds and cosmic eggs that lay countless in my infinite and unconscious heart.¹⁸ These worlds were apart from, unseen by, and unknown to one another. They appeared with all their motions and manners as mere space to each other.¹⁹ As visions in a dream appear as solid to a dreaming man and as nothing to other sleeping people, so the empty space abounds with worlds to their observer, but these universes are invisible to each other.

²⁰ Many things are born to grow and decay and die away at last. What is present is reckoned with the past, and what was in the womb of the future comes to existence in numbers. ²¹ The imaginations of men build many magic scenes and many aerial castles and buildings, together with many a kingdom and palace in empty air. ²² Here there were many buildings with several apartments (idea principles) counting from unit to the digit. ²³ There were some structures constructed with ten or sixteen apartments (idea principles) and others which had two or three dozen doors attached to them. ²⁴ The entire ethereal space is full of the five primary elements which compose elementary bodies of single or double or triple natures. ²⁵ Some of these bodies are composed of four, five and six elements, and others of seven different elementary principles called the seven great elements. ²⁶ There are many supernatural natures which are beyond the power of your conception, and there are spaces of everlasting darkness without the light of the sun or moon.

²⁷ Some parts of the void were devoid of creation, and others were occupied by Brahma the creator. Some parts were under the dominion of the patriarchs and under influence of various customs.

²⁸ Some parts were under the control of the Vedas and others were ungoverned by regulations of scriptures. Some parts were full of insects and worms and others were peopled by gods and other living beings. ²⁹ In some parts the burning fires of daily oblations were seen to rise, and at others the people observed only the traditional usages of their respective tribes.

³⁰ Some parts were filled with water and others were the regions of storms. Some bodies were fixed in the remote sky and others were continually wandering and revolving. ³¹ Growing trees were blossoming in some parts and others were bearing fruit and ripening at others. There were grazing animals moving with their face downwards in some place and others were swarming with living beings.

³² The Lord alone is the whole creation and he only is the totality of mankind. He is the whole multitude of demons and he also is the entire multitude of insects and birds everywhere. ³³ He is not far from anything, but is present in every atom that is contained in his bosom. All things are growing and grown up in the cell of emptiness, like the layers of a plantain tree. ³⁴ Many things are growing unseen and unknown to each other, never thought of together. Such are the dreams of soldiers which are unseen by others. ³⁵ There are endless varieties of creations in the unbounded womb of vacuum, all of different natures and manners. There are no two things of the same character and feature.

³⁶ All men are of different scriptures, faiths and beliefs from one another, and these are of endless varieties. They are as different in their habits and customs as they are separated from each other in their houses and places. ³⁷ There are worlds above worlds and spheres of spirits over one another. There are a great many big elemental bodies like hills and mountains that come to our sight.

³⁸ It is impossible for understanding like yours to comprehend the unusual things which men like we speak about. ³⁹ We must derive the atoms of spiritual light which proceed from the sphere of emptiness as we feel the particles of mental light which issue from the orb of the sun of our intellect.

⁴⁰ Some are born to remain just as they are and become of no use to anyone at all. Others become somewhat like themselves as the leaves of forest trees. ⁴¹ Some are equal to others and many are unlike them. For some time they are alike to one another and at others they differ in their shapes and

nature.⁴² Hence there are various results of the great tree of spirituality, among which some are of the same kinds and others of different sorts.⁴³ Some of these are of short duration and others endure for longer periods. There are some that exist temporarily and others endure forever.⁴⁴ Some have no definite time to regulate its course and others are spontaneous in their growth and continuance.

⁴⁵ Different regions of the sky that lie in the hollow of boundless vacuum exist from unknown periods of time in a state beyond the reach of our knowledge.⁴⁶ These regions of the sky, this sun and these seas and mountains which are seen to rise by hundreds to our sights, are the wonderful display of our Consciousness in the sky, like a series of dreams in our sleep.⁴⁷ It is from our false notions and the false idea of a creative cause that we take the unreal earth and all other appearances as if they really exist.⁴⁸ Like the appearance of water in a mirage and the sight of two moons in the sky, these unreal phenomena present themselves to our view although they are altogether false.

⁴⁹ The imaginative power of Consciousness creates these images like clouds in the empty air. They are raised high by the wind of our desire, and roll about with our efforts and pursuits.⁵⁰ We see the gods, demigods and men flying about like flies and gnats about a fig tree. Its luscious fruits are seen hanging and shaking with the winds of heaven.⁵¹ It is only from the naturally creative imagination of Consciousness, like the playful nature of children, that cities of fairy shapes are shown in empty air.

⁵² The false impressions of "I", "you", "he" and "this" are as firmly fixed in the mind as the clay dolls of children are hardened in sunlight and heat.⁵³ Playful and ever active destiny works all these changes in nature, just as the pleasant spring season makes the forest fruitful with its moisture.

⁵⁴ Those called the great causes of creation are no causes, nor is creation created all. All is a perfect void. All has sprung of themselves in the emptiness of Consciousness.⁵⁵ They all exist in their intellectual form, though they appear to be manifest as otherwise. What is perceptible is all imperceptible, and what exists is altogether nonexistent.

⁵⁶ The fourteen worlds and the eleven kinds of created beings are all the same in the inner intellect, just as they appear to outer sight.⁵⁷ In their true sense, heaven and earth and the infernal regions and the whole host of our friends and foes are all empty nonentities though they appear to be very busy.

⁵⁸ All things are like inelastic fluid, just like the fluidity of seawaters. They are as fragile as sea waves inside, though they appear as solid substances on the outside.⁵⁹ They are the reflections of the Supreme Soul, just as daylight is that of the sun. They all proceed from and melt away into the empty air like gusts of wind.

⁶⁰ Egoistic understanding is the tree bearing the leaves of our thoughts. They are nonexistent like beings in a dream who seem separate from the dreamer.⁶¹ The rituals and their rewards prescribed in the Vedas and Puranas are like fanciful dreams occurring in light sleep. But they are buried into forgetfulness by them and are led up in the sound sleep like the dead.

⁶² Consciousness, like a gandharva spirit architect, is in the act of building many fairy cities in the forest of Brahman, lighted with the light of its reason, blazing as the bright sunbeams.⁶³ In this manner, O Rama, in my samadhi I saw many worlds created and scattered without any cause, just as a blind man sees many false sights in the open air.

Chapter 60 — Networks of Alternate Realities, Continued

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Then I went on forward to find the source of the ethereal sounds, continuing my journey onward in the empty region of my mental thoughts without any interruption from any side.² Far beyond me I heard the sound that came to my ears resembling the jingling thrill of the Indian lute. It became more distinct as I approached until I heard the metrical flow of sounds with a measure in it called *arya* [a two-line meter used in Sanskrit verses].³ In my meditation, as I glanced towards the source of the sound, I saw a lady as fair as liquid gold brightening that part of the sky.

⁴ She had necklaces hanging on her loose garments and her eyelashes were colored with lac dye. With loosened traces and fluttering locks of hair, she appeared like the goddess Lakshmi sitting in the air.

⁵ Her limbs were as beautiful and handsome as if were made of pure gold. Sitting on the wayside with the bloom of her youth, she was as fragrant as the goddess Lakshmi, beautiful in every part of her body.⁶ Her face was like the full moon and she was smiling like a cluster of flowers. Her face was flushed with her youth and her eyelids signified her good fortune.⁷ She was sitting under the vault of heaven, the brightness of her beauty blooming like the beams of the full moon. Decorated with ornaments of pearls, she walked gracefully towards me.

⁸ With her sweet voice, she recited the verses in *arya* rhythm, smiling as she recited them by my side in a high tone of her voice, saying,⁹ “I salute you, O sage, whose mind is freed from the evil inclinations of those who are deluded to fall into the current of this world, and to whom you are a support, like a tree standing on its border.”

¹⁰ Hearing this voice, I looked upon that charming face. Seeing the maiden with whom I had nothing to do, I disregarded her and went on forward.¹¹ Then I was struck with wonder, seeing the magic display of the mundane system, and was inclined to wander through the air and neglect the company of the lady.¹² With this intention in my mind, I left the ethereal lady in the air and assumed an aerial form to travel through the ethereal regions and scan the fantastic illusion of the world.

¹³ I went on seeing wonderful worlds scattered about in the empty sky. I found them no better than empty dreams or the fictions in works of imagination.¹⁴ I never saw or heard any of those creations and creatures that existed in former kalpa and great kalpa ages of the world.

¹⁵ I did not see the furious *pushkara* and *avarta* clouds of the great flood, or the ominous and raging whirlwinds of old. I heard no thunder claps that split mighty mountains and broke worlds asunder.

¹⁶ The fires of the end of the world that cracked Kubera’s palaces, and the burning rays of a dozen suns were seen no more.¹⁷ The lofty abodes of the gods hurled headlong on the ground, and the crackling noise of the falling mountains were no more to be seen or heard.¹⁸ The fires at the end of the world raged with tremendous roar all about, boiling and burning away the waters of the ethereal oceans, were now no more.¹⁹ There was no more hideous rushing of waters which flooded over the homes of gods, demigods, and men, nor swelling of the seven oceans which filled the whole world up to the face of the sun.²⁰ People all lay dead and unconscious of the universal flood, like men singing the battle alarm in their sleep.²¹ I saw thousands of Brahma, Rudras and Vishnus disappearing in the different kalpa ages of the world.

²² Then in my mental thoughts, I dived into those dark and dreary depths of time when there were no kalpa or yuga ages, no years and days and nights, no sun or moon, and no creation or destruction of the world. ²³ All these I saw in my intellect, which is all in all, to which all things belong, and which is in every place. It is the intellect which absorbs everything in itself and shows itself in all forms.

²⁴ O Rama, whatever you say to be anything, know that thing is only the intellect. This thing being rarer than subtle air, know it to be next to nothing. ²⁵ Therefore this empty air exhibits everything under the name of the world. As sound proceeding from empty air melts again into the air, so all things are only aerial and transcendent air. ²⁶ All these phenomena and their sight are simply false and pertain only to the empty intellect, exhibited as leaves of a tree in the sky. ²⁷ Intellect, consciousness and emptiness are identical and of the same nature with themselves, and this I came to understand from the entire absence of all my desires.

²⁸ These worlds linked together in the chain of the universe, lying within the limits of its ten sides, are only the one Brahman. The infinite emptiness, with all its parts of space and time and all forms of things and actions, are only the substance and essence of Brahman.

²⁹ In this manner, in the numerous worlds that manifested before me, I saw many great sages like myself, all sons of the great Brahma and named Vasishta, and other men of great holiness and piety.

³⁰ I saw many revolutions of the Treta Age with as many Ramas in them. I marked the rotation of many Satya and Dwapara Ages of the world, which I counted by hundreds and thousands. ³¹ From my common sense of concrete particulars, I saw this changing state of created things. But by the powers of my reflection and generalization, I found them all to be only the one Brahman, extended as infinite emptiness from all eternity.

³² It's not that the world exists in Brahman or he in this. Brahman is the uncreated and endless all himself. Brahman is whatever bears a name or is thought of in our understanding. ³³ He is like a block of silent stone that bears no name or description. It is of the form of pure light, which is also named the world. ³⁴ This light shines within the sphere of infinite intellect beyond the limit of our finite intelligence. It manifests itself in the form of the world, which is as formless and as unknown to us as anything in our dreamless sleep.

³⁵ Brahman is nothing other than himself. All else is only his reflection. His light is the light of the world, and shows us all things like sunlight. ³⁶ It is by that light that these thousands of worlds appear to view. It is by that light that we have understanding of heat in the moon and of cold in the sun.

³⁷ There are some creatures that see in the dark and not in daylight, such as owls and bats. There are men of the same kind. ³⁸ There are many here who are lost by their goodness, and others who prosper and ascend to heaven by their wickedness. Some come to life by drinking poison, and many die by the taste of nectar. ³⁹ Whatever a thing appears to be by itself, or whatever is thought of it in another's understanding, the same comes to occur and is presented to the lot of everyone, be it good or evil.

⁴⁰ The world is a hanging garden in the air, with all its orbs fixed as trees with their firm roots in it, yet rolling and revolving about like the shaking leaves and tossing fruits of this tree. ⁴¹ Sand, like mustard seeds crushed under stony oil mills, yield the fluid substance of oil. The tender lotus flower grows out of the clefts of rocks. ⁴² Moving images carved out of stone or wood are seen in the

company of celestial goddesses conversing with them.⁴³ The clouds of heaven are seen shrouding many things as their vests, and many trees are found to produce fruits of different kinds every year.

⁴⁴ All terrestrial animals are seen moving upon the earth in different and changing forms with different parts of their bodies and heads.

⁴⁵ The lower worlds are filled with human beings who are without the regulations of the Vedas and scriptures. They live without any faith or religion and lead their lives like beasts.⁴⁶ Some places are peopled by heartless peoples who are without feelings of love or desire. Others are not born of women but appear to be scattered like stones on the ground.⁴⁷ There are some places full of serpents that feed only on air. There are other places where gems and stones are taken with indifference, and others where many people are without greed and pride.⁴⁸ There were some beings who look on their individual souls and not on those of others, and other beings regard the Universal Soul that resides alike in all.

⁴⁹ As the hairs and nails and other parts of a person are parts of his same body, though they grow in different parts, so do all beings pertain to the one Universal Soul, which is to be looked upon in all.

⁵⁰ The one infinite and boundless vacuum seems like many skies about the different worlds which it encompasses. By exertion of divine energy, these empty spaces are filled with worlds.

⁵¹ There are some who are entirely ignorant of the meaning of the word liberation and move about like wooden machines without any sense in them.⁵² Some creatures have no knowledge of astronomical calculation and are ignorant of the course of time. Others are quite deaf and dumb and conduct themselves by signs and body movements.⁵³ Some are devoid of eyesight, so the light of the sun and moon are all in vain to them.⁵⁴ Some have no life in them. Others have no sense of smell. Some are quite mute and cannot utter any sound, while others are deprived of the sense of their hearing.⁵⁵ There are some who are entirely dumb, without the power of speech. Some have no sense of touch or feeling and are like unconscious blocks of stone.⁵⁶ Some have only their sense of conception without the organs of sense. Others manage themselves as foul pisacha demons and therefore are inadmissible in human society.

⁵⁷ There are some made of one material only and others have no solidity in them. Some are composed of watery substance and others are full of fiery matter.⁵⁸ Some are full of air and some are of all forms. All these are empty forms and are shown in the emptiness of understanding.

⁵⁹ So the surface of the earth, air and water swarm with living beings. Frogs live in the cave of stones and insects dwell in the womb of the earth.⁶⁰ There are living beings in vast bodies of water, as in lands, forests and mountains. So there are living creatures gliding in the other elements and air, like fish swimming in the air.⁶¹ There are living things peopling the element of fire, moving in fiery places where there is no water to be had. There they fly and move about like sparks of fire.⁶² The regions of air are also filled with other kinds of living beings. These have airy bodies like the bilious flatulency which runs all over the body.⁶³ Even the region of vacuum is full of animal life. These have empty bodies moving in their particular forms.

⁶⁴ Whatever animals are shut up in infernal caves, or skip aloft in the upper skies, and those that remain and wander about all sides of the air, these and all those which inhabit and move about the

many worlds in the womb of the great vacuum, were seen by me in the emptiness of my intellect.

Chapter 61 — Creation and Destruction Are Only Memory and Forgetfulness of the Intellect

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Our understandings catch the reflection of this universe from the face of Divine Consciousness, just like the waters of the deep receive the images of the clouds in the upper sky. It is this Consciousness which gives us life and guides our minds.² Our living souls and minds are of the form of the clear sky. These countless worlds are productions of empty emptiness.

³ Rama asked, “Tell me sage. After the universal annihilation when all kinds of beings were entirely liberated from the bonds of their bodies and their souls, what is created again, and from where is it undone again?”

⁴ Vasishta replied:—

Hear me describe how at the great destruction or deluge, all things together with the earth, water, air, fire and sky, and the spheres of heaven vanish and are liberated from their respective forms, and how this universe comes to appear again to our imagination.

⁵ After the destruction, only the indefinable spirit of God remains which the sages call the great Brahman and Supreme Consciousness. This world remains in the heart of that being, from which it is altogether inseparable and indifferent.⁶ He is the Lord, and all this that passes under the name of the world is contained in the nature of this heart. By his pleasure he exhibits to us the idea that we have of the world, which is not his real form.

⁷ Considering this well, we find nothing created or destroyed by him. The supreme cause of all is imperishable by his nature, so we know his heart is also indestructible and the great kalpa ages are only parts of himself.⁸ Only our limited knowledge shows us the differences and dualities of things. But upon examination, these are not to be found and vanish into nothing.⁹ Therefore there is nothing of anything that is ever destroyed to nothing, nor is there anything which is ever produced from Brahman who is unborn and invisible and always rests in his tranquility.¹⁰ He remains as the pure essence of consciousness in atoms of a thousandth part of the particles of simple emptiness.

¹¹ This world is truly the body of that great Consciousness. Then how can this mundane body come to be destroyed without destruction of the other also?¹² As consciousness awakes in our hearts, even in our sleep and dreams, so the world is present in our minds at all times and presents to us its airy or ideal form ever since its first creation.¹³ Creation is a component part of the empty intellect. Its rising and setting is only the airy and ideal operations of the Intellect. There is no part of it that is ever created or destroyed at anytime.

¹⁴ This spiritual substance of consciousness is never capable of being burnt or broken or torn at anytime. It is not soiled or dried or weakened at all, nor is it knowable or capable to be seen by those who are ignorant of it.¹⁵ It becomes whatever it has in its mind and, as it never perishes, the idea of the world and of all things in its mind are neither created nor destroyed in any way.¹⁶ It falls and revives only because of its forgetfulness and memory at different times. The rising and setting of an idea gives rise to the ideas of the creation and destruction of the world.

¹⁷ Whatever idea you have of the world, you become that yourself. Think it perishable, and you also

perish with it. But know it as imperishable, and you become imperishable also.¹⁸ Know then that the creation and great destruction of the world are only recurrences of its idea and forgetfulness, only two phases of consciousness.

¹⁹ How can the production or destruction of anything take place in the emptiness of airy consciousness? How can any condition or change be attributed to the formless intellect at all?²⁰ The great kalpa ages and all periods of time and parts of creation are mere attributes of consciousness. Consciousness is only an attribute of Brahman. They all merge into the great Brahman.

²¹ Consciousness is a formless and purely transparent substance. Phenomena are subject to its will alone. One sees an object appear according to the will or wish that he has in his mind, like the fairylands of imagination.

²² As the body of a tree is composed of its several parts of roots, trunk, branches, leaves, flowers, fruit and other things,²³ so the solid substance of the Divine Spirit, more translucent than the clear sky to which nothing can be attributed in reality, has creation and destruction as the different parts of its own essence.²⁴ The various states of pleasure and pain, happiness and misery, birth, life and death, and form and formless are only the different parts of the same spirit.²⁵ The whole body of this spirit is imperishable and unchangeable in its nature, so are all the parts and states of its being also.

²⁶ There is no difference in the nature and essence of the whole and its parts, except that one is more tangible to sight by its greater bulk than the other.²⁷ Our consciousness is the root of existence of a tree, so our consciousness is the root of our belief in the existence of God.²⁸ This consciousness shows us the varieties of things as something in one place and another elsewhere. It shows us creation as a great trunk and all the worlds as so many trees.²⁹ It shows somewhere the great continents like the branches of these trees and their contents of hills and plains as their twigs and leaves. Elsewhere it shows sunshine as its flowers and darkness as the black bark of these trees.³⁰ Somewhere it shows the concavity of the sky as the hollow of the tree and elsewhere the dissolution of creation as a vast desolation. It shows in one place the council of gods as a cluster of flowers and in another beings, like bushes and brambles and barks of trees.³¹ So all these are situated in formless and empty consciousness which is the great Brahman itself, and they all are nothing other than the same nature with Brahman.

³² There was a past world, here is the present one, and in another a would be creation in the future. All are only ideas of our minds known to us by our consciousness of them, which is as unchangeable in its nature as Brahman himself.³³ Thus there is no color or cloud or shades of light or darkness in the moon that can be attributed to the supreme and self conscious soul of Brahman that is as transparent as empty space.

³⁴ How can there be the taint of anything in the transcendent and transparent space? How can first, middle or last, or far and near attach to infinity and eternity?³⁵ Lack of comprehensive and abstract knowledge is the cause of attributing such and other qualities to divine nature. It is removed by right knowledge of the most perfect one.³⁶ Ignorance, known as such by recognition of truth, is removed by itself, just as a lamp is extinguished by the air which kindles the light.³⁷ It is certain that knowledge of one's ignorance causes its removal. Therefore knowledge of the unlimited Brahman makes him known as all in all.

³⁸ Thus Rama, have I explained to you the meaning of liberation. Deliberate on it attentively with your intellect and you will undoubtedly attain it. ³⁹ This network of worlds is uncreated and without its beginning, yet it is apparent to sight by means of the spirit of Brahman manifest in that form. Whoever contemplates the eight qualities of the Lord with the eye of his intellect becomes full with the Divine Spirit, although he is as mean as a straw in his living soul.

Chapter 62 — Identity of Intellect with the Intellectual World

¹ Rama asked, “Tell me sage, were you sitting in one place or wandering about in the skies when you saw all this with your empty and intellectual body?”

² Vasishta replied:—

I was filled with the infinite soul that fills and encompasses the whole space of vacuum. Being in this state of omnipresence, how could I be wandering from one fixed place to another? ³ I was neither seated in any place nor was I moving about anywhere. Therefore I was present everywhere in the empty air with my airy spirit, and saw everything in my self.

⁴ As I see with my eyes all the members of my body composing one body from head to foot, so I saw the whole universe in myself with my intellectual eyes. ⁵ Though my purely empty and intellectual soul is formless without any part like my body, yet the worlds formed its parts, neither by the soul’s diffusion in them nor by their being of the same nature and essence in their substance. ⁶ An example of this is your false vision of the world in your dream. You retain a real memory of the dream though it is an airy nothing.

⁷ As a tree perceives in itself the growth of leaves, fruits and flowers from its body, so I saw all these rising in myself. ⁸ I saw all these in me as the profound sea views the various marine animals in its depths and the endless waves and whirlpools and foam and froth continually floating over its breast. ⁹ In short, as all embodied beings are conscious of their own bodies, I was consciousness of all existence in my all knowing soul.

¹⁰ Rama, I still retain the memories of whatever I saw on land and water, and in the hills and valleys, as they are embodied with my body, and I still behold the entire of creation as if it were pressed into my mind. ¹¹ I see the worlds exposed before me lying within and without myself, just as they lay the inside and outside of a house, and my soul is full with all these worlds unified with my understanding.

¹² As water knows its fluidity, frost has its coldness, and air its ventilation, so the enlightened mind knows and scans the whole world within itself. ¹³ Whoever has a reasoning soul in him and has attained a clear understanding is possessed of the same soul as mine. ¹⁴ After understanding is perfected by absence of knowledge of subject and object, there is nothing that appears to him except the self same intelligent soul which abides alike in all.

¹⁵ As a man sitting on a high hill sees distant objects many miles away, so from my elevation of yoga meditation I saw with my clairvoyance all things situated far and near and within and without me.

¹⁶ As the earth perceives minerals, metals and all other things lying inside it, so I saw everything as identical with and nothing other than myself.

¹⁷ Rama asked, “Be this as it may, but tell me, O brahmin. What became of that bright eyed lady who was reciting the *arya* verses?”

¹⁸ Vasishta replied:—

That aerial lady who recited in the *arya* meter came courteously towards me and sat beside me in the air. ¹⁹ But she being as aerial as myself could not be seen by me in her form of spirit. ²⁰ I was of the aerial spirit and she also had an air-like body, and worlds appeared as empty air in my airy

meditation in an aerial seat.

²¹ Rama asked, "The body is the seat of the organs of sense and action of breathing. Then how could a bodiless spirit utter the sounds of articulate words composed in verse? ²² How is it possible for a bodiless spirit either to see or think of anything? Explain to me these inexplicable truths about the facts you have related."

²³ Vasishta replied:—

Seeing sights, thinking thoughts, and uttering sounds are all productions of empty air as they occur in our airy dreams. ²⁴ The sight of a thing and the thought of anything depend on the aerial intellect, as they do in our aerial dream. These sights and sounds are impressed in the hollowness of consciousness, both in waking as well as dreaming states. ²⁵ Not only sight, but whatever is the object of any of our senses and the whole world itself are the clear and open sky. ²⁶ The transcendent first principle has the form of unknowable intellect. It exhibits itself in the composition of the universe, which is truly its very nature.

²⁷ What proof do you have of the existence of the body and its senses? Matter is mere illusion, and as it is with another body, so it is with ours also. ²⁸ This is as that one, and that is as this. But the unreal is taken for the real, and the real is understood as an unreality.

²⁹ As the uses that are made of the earth in a dream, its paths and houses, prove to be false upon waking, made in empty air, so the applications made of the words "my", "your", "his" and the like made in our waking are all buried in forgetfulness in the state of sound sleep. ³⁰ All our struggles, efforts and actions in lifetime are as false and void as empty air. They resemble the bustle, commotion and fighting of men in dream, which vanish into nothing upon waking.

³¹ Do you ask where does this phenomenon of dreaming and all its different shapes and varieties come from? To this nothing further can be said other than it is the reproduction or memory of impressions.

³² In answer to this question, it can only be said that there is no other cause of its appearance to you other than the appearance of this world to you.

³³ We have the dreaming man presented to us from the very beginning of creation in the person of Viraj. This being is situated in open air with its aerial body in the shape of the dreamer and dream mixed up together. ³⁴ The word "dream" that I have used and presented to you is an example to explain the nature of the phenomenal world. It is to be understood as neither a reality nor an unreality, but only Brahman himself.

³⁵ Now Rama, I approached that lovely lady who became my loving companion in the form in which I saw her in my consciousness. ³⁶ I conversed with her ideal figure in my clairvoyant state, just as men seen in a dream talk with one another. ³⁷ Our conversation was of that spiritual kind, as between men in a dream. Our conversation was as airy as our persons and spirits.

So Rama, you must know the whole world affair is only an airy and fairy play. ³⁸ The world is a dream and the dream is an illusion of air. They are the same emptiness with only their names different. The illusion of waking daytime is called the world and the world of sleeping nighttime is called a dream. ³⁹ This scene of the world is the dream of the soul, or it is empty air or nothing. The clear understanding of God or his own essence is so displayed.

⁴⁰ The nightly dream needs a dreamer, and to see the “I”, “you”, “he” or anybody else needs a living person. But not so the day dream of the world which is displayed in the emptiness of clear Consciousness itself.⁴¹ As the viewer of the world is the clear emptiness of consciousness, so its view also is as clear as its viewer. The world being like a dream, it is as subtle as the rare atmosphere.⁴² The empty dream of the world appears of itself in the empty and formless intellect within the hollow of the mind and has no substantiality. Then how can it be said to be a material substance, when it is perceived in the same manner by the immaterial intellect?

⁴³ When the vision of world in a dream of a physical being such as ourselves proves to be only emptiness, how do you take it for a material substance? It is contained in its immaterial form in the incorporeal spirit and intellect of God. Why not call it an empty air when it resides like a dream in Divine Consciousness?⁴⁴ The Lord sees this uncreated world appearing before him as in a dream, something designed without any material cause or support.⁴⁵ The Lord Brahma called Hiranyagarbha has framed this creation in air, with the soft clay of his empty consciousness. All these bodies with numerous cavities in them appear created and uncreated at the same time.

⁴⁶ There is no causality, no created worlds, and no one occupying them. Know there is nothing and nothing at all. Knowing this, go on doing your duties to the end like a mute stone and care not whether your body may last long or be lost to you.

Chapter 63 — Identity of the Universe with the Universal Soul; Dreams within Dreams

¹ Rama asked, “O sage, how could you converse with the incorporeal lady? How could she utter the letters of the alphabet without organs of speech?”

² Vasishta replied:—

Of course, incorporeal bodies have no capability of pronouncing the letters of the alphabet, just as dead bodies are incapable of speech.³ Should there even be an articulate sound, yet there can be no intelligible sense in it and the sound must be unintelligible to others, just as a dream perceived by the dreamer is unknown to other sleepers in the same bed.⁴ Therefore, there is nothing real in a dream. It is really an unreality and the ideal imagery of Consciousness in empty air accompanied with sleep of its own nature.

⁵ The clear sky of the intellect is darkened by its imageries, like the moon by its blackness and the sky by its clouds. But these are as false as the song of a stone or the sound of a dead body.⁶ Dreams and images that appear in the sphere of the intellect are only appearances of itself, just as the visible sky is nothing other than invisible vacuum itself.⁷ Like dreams in sleep, this world appears before us in our waking state. In the same way, the invisible vacuum appears as visible. So the form of the lady was a shape of the intellect.

⁸ The very clever intellect in us exhibits all these varieties of exquisite shapes in itself, and shows this world to be as real and permanent as itself.

⁹ Rama asked. “Sage, if these be only dreams, how can they appear to us in our waking state? If they are unreal, why is it that they seem as solid realities to us?”

¹⁰ Vasishta replied:—

Hear how visionary dreams appear as substantial worlds. They are only dreams, never real, solid or substantial in any way.

¹¹ The seeds of our ideas play at random like dust in the spacious sky of Consciousness. Some are of the same kind and others different, producing like and unlike results.¹² Some are contained one under the other, like the skin of plantain trees. There are many others that have no connection with another and are quite unconscious and unknown to others.¹³ They do not see each other, nor do they know anything of one another, but as inert seeds they decay and moisten in the same heap.¹⁴ These ideas, being as void as vacuum, are not like shadows in the visible sky nor are they known to one another. Though they are of conscious shapes, yet they are as ignorant of themselves as if under the influence of sleep.

¹⁵ Those who sleep in their ignorance find the world appearing to them during the day in the shape of a dream. Then they act according to what they think themselves to be. So asura demigods in their dream think they are fighting and are defeated by the gods.¹⁶ They could not be liberated owing to their ignorance, nor were they reduced to the unconsciousness of stones, but remained dull and inactive within the imaginary world of their dreams.

¹⁷ Men laid up in the sleep of their ignorance, seeing the dream of the world before them, act according to their custom and observe how one man is killed by another.¹⁸ There are other intelligent

spirits who, being bound tightly to their desires, are never awakened or liberated from their ignorance, but continue to dwell in the imaginary world which they see in their daydream.¹⁹ Rakshasa demons who lie sleeping in the imaginary world of their dreams are placed by the gods in the same state as they were accustomed to be.²⁰ Say then, O Rama, what became of those rakshasas who were slain in their dreams by the gods? They could neither obtain their liberation owing to their ignorance nor could they be transformed to stones with their intelligent souls.

²¹ Thus this earth and its seas, mountains and peoples seen situated in it are thought to be as substantial as we think of ourselves by our prior ideas of them.²² Our imagination of the existence of the world is like that of other beings regarding it. They think of our existence in this world in the same light as we think of theirs.²³ To them our waking state appears as a dream and they think that we are dreaming men, just as we think they are. As we view their world to be imaginary, so they see ours as imaginary also.

²⁴ As other people have the idea of their existence only from their memories, so we have ours and they have theirs from the omnipresence of the intellectual soul.²⁵ As dreaming men think of their reality, so others think of themselves likewise. So you are as real as anyone of them.²⁶ As you see cities and people in your dream, so they continue to remain there in the same manner to this day because Brahman is omnipresent everywhere and at all times.

²⁷ By your waking from the sleep of ignorance and coming to the light of reason, these objects of your dream will be divested of their substantiality and appear in their spiritual light as manifestations of Brahman himself.²⁸ He is all and in all and everywhere at all times. So he is nothing and nowhere, not the sky or is he ever anything that is destroyed.²⁹ He abides in the endless sky and is eternal without beginning or end. He abides in the endless worlds and in the infinity of souls and minds.³⁰ He lives throughout the air and in every part of it, and in all orbs and systems of worlds. He resides in the heart of everybody, in every island and mountain and hill.³¹ He extends all over all districts, cities and villages. He dwells in every house and in every living body. He extends over years and ages and all parts of time.

³² In him live all living beings, those who are dead and gone, and those who have not obtained their liberation. All the detached worlds are attached to him to no end and forever.³³ Each world has its people and all people have their minds. Again each mind has a world in it, and every world has its people also.³⁴ Thus phenomena having no beginning or end are all only false conceptions of the mind. They are nothing other than Brahman to the knower of God who sees no reality in anything other than Brahman.

³⁵ There is only one consciousness that pervades this earth below and the heaven above, which extends over the land and water and lies in woods and stones and fills the whole and endless universe. Thus wherever there is anything in any part of this boundless world, they all inspire the idea of divinity in the divine, while they are looked upon as objects of the sense by the ungodly.

Chapter 64 — A Beautiful Vidyadhari Complains to Vasishta about Her Uninterested Husband

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Once I gently looked upon a graceful vidyadhari with lotus-like eyes, her sidelong glances darting like a string of malati flowers. I asked her with tenderness,² “Who are you sweet lady, who is as fair as the pollen of the lotus flower and comes to my company? Say, whose and what are you? Where do you live and where are you going? What do you desire of me?”

³ The vidyadhari replied:—

It is fitting, O silent sage, that you greet me in this way. I come to you with a grieving heart and I will lay my case confidently before you for your kind advice.

⁴ This worldly dwelling of yours is situated in a corner of the cell of the great vault of emptiness.

⁵ This dwelling house of the world has three apartments, namely earth, heaven and the infernal regions. In this house the great architect (Brahma) placed a young girl by name of fancy as a mistress of this dwelling.

⁶ Here the somber surface of the earth appears as the store-house of the world, encompassed with numerous islands surrounded by oceans and seas.⁷ The earth stretches on all sides extending ten thousand leagues with many islands in the midst of its seas and with many mines of gold underneath.

⁸ It is bright and visible, fair as the vault of heaven. It supplies us with all the objects of our desire and the luster of its gems competes with the starry heaven.⁹ It is the pleasure and promenade ground of gods, spiritual masters, and apsara nymphs. It abounds with all objects of desire, filled with all things for our enjoyment.¹⁰ The two polar mountains called the Lokaloka Ranges are at its two ends. The two polar circles resemble two belts at both extremities of the earth.

¹¹ One side of the Lokaloka Mountains is always covered by darkness, like the minds of ignorant people. The other side shines with eternal light, like the enlightened souls of the wise.¹² One side of these is as delightful as society with the good and wise, while the opposite is as dark as company with the ignorant and evil.¹³ On one side all things are as clear as the minds of intelligent men. On the other, there is an impenetrable gloom such as hangs over the minds of unlettered brahmins.¹⁴ On one part there is no sunshine or moonlight. One side presents the habitable world and the other shows the vast void and waste beyond the limits of nature.¹⁵ One side abounds with the cities of gods and the other with those of demons. One side lifted its lofty summits on high, the other bent below towards the infernal regions.

¹⁶ Somewhere eagles hover over valleys and at others, lands appear charming to sight, mountain peaks appearing to touch the celestial city of Brahma on high.¹⁷ Somewhere there appears a dismal and dreary desert forest with loud blasts of death hovering over them. At others there are flower gardens and groves with the vidyadharis of heaven sitting and singing in them.¹⁸ In one part there is a deep infernal cave containing horrible Kumbhanda demons. In another are beautiful Nandana pleasure gardens with the hermitages of holy saints.¹⁹ On one part hang eternal clouds roaring loudly like furious elephants, while rain clouds shower on the other. There are deep and dark caves in one part and thick forest trees on another.

²⁰ Laboring woodmen cut down the trees of woodlands inhabited by evil spirits on one side, driving away the devils by felling the woods where they haunt. The other is full of inhabited tracts with men more polished in their manners than the celestials of heaven. ²¹ Some places are laid desolate by their inhabitants and by driving and whirling winds. Others, secure from every harm, flourish in their produce. ²² Somewhere there are great and desolate deserts, dreary wastes dreadful with howling winds. In some places there are rippling lakes of lotus with rows of noisy cranes gracing their shores.

²³ In some places gurgling waters can be heard, and in others the growling of clouds. In others gay and merry apsara nymphs, turned giddy with their swinging, can be heard. ²⁴ On one side the landscape is troubled by horrible demons and is shunned by all other beings. On the other, the happy spirits of spiritual masters, vidyadharas and others are seen sitting and singing by the side of cooling streams. ²⁵ Somewhere rain pouring from clouds cause ever flowing rivers to encroach upon the lands. And there were light and flimsy clouds also, flying like sheets of cloth driven here and there by gusts of wind.

²⁶ There are lotus bushes on one side with swarms of humming bees fluttering about their leafy faces. Rosy reddish teeth of celestial damsels can be seen blushing with the stain of betel leaves on the other. ²⁷ In one place there is a pleasant gathering of people pursuing their various callings under the shining sun. In another is an assembly of hideous demons dancing in their demonic revelry in the darkness of night. ²⁸ Somewhere the land and its people are laid waste by devastations and portents befalling on them. Elsewhere the country is smiling with rising cities under the blessings of a good government. ²⁹ Sometimes a dreary waste distracts, and at others a beautiful population attracts the sight. Sometimes deep and dark caves occur to view and at others a dreadful abyss appears.

³⁰ Some spot is full of fruitful trees and luxuriant vegetation and another is a dreary desert devoid of water and living beings. Somewhere you see bodies of big elephants and at others groups of great and greedy lions. ³¹ Some places are devoid of animals and others peopled by ferocious rakshasa demons. Some places are filled with the thorny karanja thickets and others are full of lofty palm forests. ³² Somewhere lakes are as large and clear as the expanse of heaven, and at others there are vast barren deserts as void as the empty air. Somewhere there are tracts of continually driving sands, and at others there are excellent groves of trees flourishing all seasons of the year.

³³ This mountain has many a peak on its top, as high as ordinary hills elsewhere. Kalpa clouds are perpetually settled upon them, blazing with the radiance of gems by the colors of heaven. ³⁴ There are forests growing on milk-white and sunny stones of this mountain, serving as homes for foresters and always resorted to by lions and monkeys.

³⁵ There is a peak on the north of this mountain, with a grotto towards the east, and this cave affords me a secluded home in its hard and stony interior. ³⁶ There I am confined, O sage, in that stony prison-house, and there I have passed a series of yuga ages.

³⁷ Not I alone, but my husband also is confined in the same cave with me. We are doomed to remain imprisoned there, like bees closed up at night within the cup of a closing lotus flower. ³⁸ My husband and I have continued to live in the stony dungeon for a very long period of many years. ³⁹ It was our own fault that we do not obtain our release even now, but continue to remain there as prisoners

forever.⁴⁰ But sage, it is not only we who are confined in this stony prison-house. All our family, friends, and dependants are enslaved in the same stronghold without end.

⁴¹ An ancient person, my twice-born brahmin husband, is confined there in his dungeon. Though he has remained there for many an age, yet he has never moved from his seat.⁴² He is employed in his studentship and living as a celibate since boyhood. He listens to recitals of the Vedas and is steadfast in his observances without deviation.

⁴³ But I am not so, O sage. I am doomed to perpetual distress because I am unable to pass a moment without his company.⁴⁴ Hear now, O sage, how I became his wife and how there grew a sincere affection between us.

⁴⁵ When my husband was still a boy, he acquired a little knowledge by remaining in his own house.

⁴⁶ He thought in himself, "Ah, I am a Vedic brahmin. Can it be possible for me to have a suitable partner?"⁴⁷ Then, out of himself, he produced me with this beautiful figure, just like the bright moon causes moonlight to issue out of his body.

⁴⁸ Being thus produced from the mind of my husband, I remained as his mental consort and grew up in time like blossoms in spring, as beautiful as a mandara plant in bloom.⁴⁹ My body became as bright as the face of the sky by its nature. All my features glittered like the stars in heaven. My face was as fair as the full moon and attracted all heart towards it.⁵⁰ My breasts were swollen like flower buds and luscious like juicy fruit. My arms and the palms of my hands resembled two tender vines with their red leaflets.

⁵¹ I became the delight and captor of the hearts of living beings. The side long glances of my stretched antelope eyes infatuated all minds with a maddening passion of love.⁵² I was prone to the allurements and dalliance of love, and prompt in jokes, impulsiveness and disguised smiles and glances. I was fond of singing and music and was unsatisfied in my joy.⁵³ I was addicted to the enjoyment of all bliss, both in prosperity and adversity, both of which are alike friendly to me. I was never tempted by the delusive temptations of the one and never frightened by the threatening persecution of the other.

⁵⁴ I do not sustain the household of my brahmin lord alone, but I support the mansions of the inhabitants of all the three worlds because by being a mental being, I have access to all places far and near.⁵⁵ I am the legal wife of the brahmin, fit to propagate and support his offspring, and also fit to bear the burden of this house of the triple worlds.

⁵⁶ Now I am a grown young woman with swollen breasts. I am as giddy with my youthful gaiety as a cluster of flowers swaying in the air.⁵⁷ My husband, owing to his natural disposition of procrastination and studiousness, is employed in his austerities. In expectation of getting his liberation, he is delaying marriage to me to this day.⁵⁸ But I am advanced in my youth and fond of youthful dalliance. I burn in the flame of my passion for him, like a lotus flower in a fiery furnace.

⁵⁹ Though I am always cooling myself with the breezes of brooks and lotus lakes, yet I constantly burn throughout my body, like sacrificial embers reduced to ashes in the sacred fire place.

⁶⁰ I see gardens covered with flowers falling in showers from shady trees, but I burn as the land under the burning sands of a burning desert without shade.⁶¹ The soft gurgling of waters, the gentle breeze of lakes full with blooming lotuses and lilies, and the sweet sounds of cranes and water fowls are all

rough and harsh to me.⁶² Though decked with flowery wreaths and garlands and swinging upon my cradle of flowers, yet I think I am lying down on a bed of thorns.⁶³ Sleeping on beds made of the soft leaves of lotus and plantains, I find them dried under the heat of my body, powdered to ashes by the pressure of my body.

⁶⁴ Whatever fair, lovely, charming, sweet and pleasant things I come to see and feel, I am filled with sorrow at their sight and my eyes are filled with tears.⁶⁵ My eyes steam with tears from the heat of my inner bosom. They trickle and fall from my eyelids like dew drops on lotus leaves.⁶⁶ Swinging with my playmates on the hanging branches of plantain trees in our pleasure gardens, I think of the burning grief in my heart and burst out in tears. I cover my face with my hands.⁶⁷ I look at our gardens of cooling plantain leaves, scattered with snow all over. But fearing them as bushes of thorny brambles, I fly far away from them.

⁶⁸ I see the blooming lotus of the lake and the fond crane showing affection with its stalk-like arm, then begin to despise my youthful bloom.⁶⁹ I weep at seeing whatever is handsome and keep quiet at what is moderate. I delight in whatever seems ugly and I am happy in my utter unconsciousness of everything.⁷⁰ I have seen the fair flowers of spring and the hoarfrost of winter and thought them all to be only heaps of the ashes of lovelorn ladies, burnt down by the flame of love and scattered by relentless winds on all sides.⁷¹ I have made beds from the blue leaves of lotuses and other plants and covered myself with wreaths of snow white flowers. But I found them turning pale and dry by their contact with my body. So pity me, that my youthful days have all gone in vain.

Chapter 65 — The Vidyadhari Explains Her Frustration and Prays to Vasishta

The vidyadhari continues speaking to Vasishta:—

¹ After the lapse of a long time, I found my passions diminishing and I grew as detached to my susceptibilities as tender greens become juiceless and dry after autumn is over. ² Seeing my husband grown old and divested of all his receptivity and vigor, sitting quietly in his steadfast tapas with an unwavering mind, I thought my life is useless to me. ³ I thought that early widowhood, even premature death or rather a lingering disease or lasting misery is preferable to a woman living without a loving husband.

⁴ It is the blessing of life and a woman's greatest good fortune to have a young and loving husband who is of good and pleasant temperament and yielding in his manners. ⁵ A woman is given for lost who does not have a sweet and lovely spouse, just as understanding is lost when it is not filled with learning. Prosperity is in vain when she favors the wicked, and a woman lost to shame is in vain.

⁶ She is the best of women who is obedient to her husband. That is the best fortune which falls into the hands of the virtuous and good. That understanding is praised which is clear and ample, and that goodness is good which has a fellow feeling and equal regard for all mankind.

⁷ Neither disease nor calamity, nor dangers or difficulties can disturb the minds or afflict the hearts of a loving pair. ⁸ The prospect of the blossoming pleasure garden of Nandana and the flowery paths of paradise appear like a desert land to women who have no husbands, or husbands who are wicked and rude in their behavior. ⁹ A woman may forsake all her worldly possessions as having little value to her, but she can never forsake her husband, even for any fault on his part.

¹⁰ O chief of sages, you see all these miseries to which I have been subject these very many years of my puberty. ¹¹ But all this fondness of mine is gradually turning to indifference. I am pining and fading away as fast as a frost beaten lotus flower shrinks and shrivels for lack of its sap. ¹² Being now indifferent to the pleasure of my enjoyment of all things, I come to seek the bliss of my nirvana. I stand in need of your advice for my salvation. ¹³ Otherwise, for those unsuccessful in desires and ever restless and perplexed in their minds, buffeting and carried by the waves of deadly troubles, it is better to die than live in this world.

¹⁴ My husband, desirous of obtaining his nirvana, is now intent day and night upon subduing his mind by the light of his reason, just as a king is roused to conquer his foe in company with his princes.

¹⁵ Now sage, please dispel both his as well as my ignorance by your reasonable advice which may revive our memory of the soul. ¹⁶ My lord meditating solely on the soul, without my company or any thought about me, has created an indifference in me and a complete distaste for all worldly things.

¹⁷ I am now set free from the influence of worldly desires. I have equipped myself with the Khechari Mudra magic charm whereby I am able to fly through the air. ¹⁸ I have acquired the power of flight by means of this magic charm, and it is by virtue of this power that I am able to associate with spiritual masters and converse with you. ¹⁹ Having equipped myself with this magic charm, I have acquired the power to see all past and future events even though I remain in my house on earth, which is the basis and center of all the worlds.

²⁰ Having seen within my mind everything relating to this world, I have come to survey the outer

world. I have seen as far as gigantic Lokaloka Mountain.²¹ Before this, O sage, neither I nor my husband ever had any desire to see anything beyond our own home.²² My husband, completely occupied with meditating on the meanings of the Vedas, has no desire whatever to know anything relating to the past or future.²³ For this reason my lord has not been able to succeed to any station in life. It is only today that both of us desire to be blessed with the best state of humanity.

²⁴ Therefore we ask you, O venerable sage, to grant our request, as it is never in the nature of noble persons to refuse the prayer of their suppliants.²⁵ I have been wandering in the ethereal regions among hosts of perfected spiritual masters. I have not found anyone except you, O honorable sage, who may burn the thick gloom of ignorance.²⁶ The nature of good people is to do good to others, even without knowing the reason to have pity for their suppliants. So you, O venerable sage, should not refuse the petition of your suppliant.

Chapter 66 — The Vidyadhari's Description of the Inside of Her World inside Stone

¹ Vasishta said:—

Then, seated as I was in my imaginary seat in the sky, I asked the lady who was also sitting like me in the imaginary air,² “Tell me, O gentle lady. How could an embodied being like you live inside a block of stone? How could you move about within that impervious substance? What was caused you to live there?”

³ The vidyadhari replied:—

Wonder not, O sage, at this kind of home which is as habitable to us and inhabited by other creatures as the open and spacious world in which you live.⁴ There are the snakes and reptiles living and moving about the interior of the earth. There are huge rocks deeply rooted underground. Waters run in the bottom of the ground with as much freedom as winds flying in the open air.⁵ Oceans flow with the fullness of their waters and fish move slowly beneath and above their surface. There are infinite numbers of living creatures constantly born and dying in them.⁶ Waters glide inside the cavity of the mundane stone just like winds fly above. Here celestials move and wander in the air, and the earth and planets revolve with their unmoving mountains and other inert materials.

⁷ There are also gods, demigods and human beings moving in their respective circles within the womb of this stone. From the beginning of creation, waters of rivers run like those of the oceans.⁸ Again, since the beginning of creation the sun has been sending his beams from above and scattering them like lotuses on the lake-like land, while the dark clouds of heaven hover over them like a swarm of black bees fluttering upon those blooming blossoms.⁹ The moon spreads her light on all sides like sandal paste and thereby erases the darkness of night and covers the face of the evening star.

¹⁰ Sunlight is the lamp of his light in heavenly mansion, scattering its rays on all ten sides of the skies, conducted by means of the air.¹¹ The wheel of the starry firmament continually revolves in the air by the will of God, like a threshing mill turning about its central axle by means of a rope.¹² This circle of celestial bodies, revolving about its axis of the pole, kills all things under its clouds that look like two doors between heaven and earth, just as the wheel of fate grinds them to dust.¹³ The surface of the earth is full of hills and mountains and the bosom of the sea is filled with rocks and islands. The upper sky contains celestial abodes and demons occupy the lower regions below the ground.

¹⁴ The orbit of this earth resembles the earring of Lakshmi, goddess of the three worlds. The green orb of this planet is like the hanging gem of her ringlet, continually fluctuating with its people.¹⁵ Here all creatures are impelled by their desires to their mental and bodily activities, as if moved to and fro by flying winds, and thus are led to repeated births and deaths.¹⁶ The silent sage sits in calm meditation, just as the sky is unmoved with its capacity of containing all things within itself. But the earth is shaken and wasted by dashing waves, fire is put down by its blazing flame, and everything is moved about by the wind of its desires like a monkey.

¹⁷ All living beings abounding in earth and water, and those flying in the air, as well as those who live in hills or on trees, together with gods and demons are all alike doomed to death and rebirth, just like short lived insects, worms and flies.¹⁸ Time, the greatest slaughterer, destroys gods, giants, gandharva spirits and all else with its many arms of ages and yugas, and of years, months, days and

nights, just like a herder kills the cattle he has reared himself.¹⁹ All these rise and fall in the eventful ocean of time. Having leapt and jumped and danced a while, they sink in the abyss of the fathomless whirl of death from which none can rise again.²⁰ The gust of death carries away all sorts of beings living in the fourteen spheres of the world like dust and ashes to the hollow womb of air where they disappear like empty clouds in the autumn sky.

²¹ The high heaven, ever clad in the clean and clear attire of the atmosphere and wearing the framework of stars like crown on its head, holds the two lights of the sun and moon in either hand and shows us the works of gods in the skies.²² It remains unmoved forever, never changing its sides composed of the four quarters of heaven in spite of changes in the sky, the rushing of winds, the tremors of earth, the roaring of clouds, and the intense heat of the sun.²³ All things continue in their destined course, whether they are conscious or unconscious of these changes in nature, whether meteors and portents appear in the sky, the clouds roar, planets eclipse, or the earth trembles below.²⁴ The undersea fire sucks up the overflowing waters of the seven great oceans on earth in the same way as all-destroying time devours creatures in all the different worlds.²⁵ All things continue in their course like the continued motion of currents in the air. Namely, all earth-born worms move on and return to the earth, the birds of the air move and fly on all sides of the sky, fish swim and glide all about the waters, beasts return to their caves in earth and hills, and such is the case with the inhabitants of all continents and islands lying in the womb of this world.

Chapter 67 — The Vidyadhari Praises Continued Practice, the Force of Habit

¹ The vidyadhari continued, “If you, O sage, have any doubt about any part of my story, then please walk with me and see that home. There you will see many more wonders than what I have described.”

² Vasishta said:—

Upon this, I said, “well” and traveled with her on an aerial journey, just as the fragrance of flowers flies with the winds to an aerial nothing in which they are both lost forever.³ As I passed far and wide in the regions of air, I met with multitudes of ethereal beings and saw their celestial abodes.

⁴ Passing over regions traversed by celestials in the upper spheres of heaven, I arrived at a blank, white sky above the summit of Lokaloka Mountain.⁵ Then I passed into this pale sky and at last came out of it, just as the fair moon appears under the white canopy of heaven. Above me I saw the bright belt of the zodiac containing the golden spheres of the seven planets.⁶ As I was looking at that belt of the zodiac, I found it was like a crystal marble burning with fire. I could not discern any of the worlds that it encompassed.

⁷ Then I asked my lovely companion to tell me where were the created worlds, together with the gods and planetary bodies and stars, and the seven spheres of heaven.⁸ Where were the oceans and the sky with all its different sides? Where were the high and heavy bodies of clouds, the starry heaven, and the ascent and descent of the rolling planets?

⁹ “Where,” I asked, “are the rows of lofty mountain peaks and the marks of the seas upon the earth? Where are the circles and clusters of islands? Where are the sunny shores and dry, parched grounds of deserts?¹⁰ There is no reckoning of time here, nor any account of actions of men. There is no delusive appearance of a created world or anything whatever in this endless and empty void.¹¹ There are no different races of beings, such as the gods, demigods, vidyadharas, gandharvas, and other races of mankind. There is no sage or prince or of anything that is good or evil, or any heaven or hell, or day or night and their divisions into watches and hours.¹² There is no calculation of time and no knowledge of merit or demerit. It is free from the hostility between gods and demigods and the feelings of love and hatred.”

¹³ While I had been talking in this manner in my amazement, that excellent lady who was my guide in this maze spoke to me, her eyeballs rolling like a couple of fluttering black bees.

¹⁴ The vidyadhari said:—

I also do not see anything here in its former state. I find everything presenting a picturesque form in this crystal stone, like image in a mirror.¹⁵ Because of my preconceived ideas eternally engraved in my mind, I see the figures of all things in this. Your lack of preconceptions causes you to be blind to them.¹⁶ Your habit of thinking regarding the unity or duality of the sole entity, and your forgetfulness of our pure spiritual and intellectual bodies, made you were blind to the sight of reality, while I had a dim glimpse of it.

¹⁷ By my long habit of thinking, I have learnt to look upon this world like a vine in the sky. I never see it as you do to be a reality, but as a dim reflection of the ideal reality.¹⁸ Before, the world appeared conspicuously to my sight. Now I find it indistinct, like a shadow of it cast upon a glass.

¹⁹ Our prejudice in favor of an old false belief in the personality of the body makes us miss the ease of relying upon the spiritual body, and thus we have fallen into the deep darkness of delusion.

²⁰ Whatever we are habituated to think in our minds, the same grows and takes deep root in the heart under the moistening influence of the intellectual soul. The mind becomes of that nature, like the force of early habit forms a youth. ²¹ There is nothing likely to be brought about by the lessons of the best scriptures or the dictates of right reason unless they are applied and constantly practiced.

²² Your false speech regarding the nonexistence of the world in this empty space proceeded only from your constant habit of thinking the reality of the false world, which was about to mislead me also. Now be wise that you have overcome your previous prejudice and known the present truth. ²³ Know, O sage, that your habitual thinking of a thing as such makes it appear so to you, just as a mechanic master's art is by his constant practice under the direction of his teacher. ²⁴ The false conceptions of this thing and that, and of the existence of the material world, and the reality of one's egoism and personality, are all prevented by the culture of spiritual knowledge and by force of a constant habit of seeing all things in their spiritual light.

²⁵ I am only a weak and young disciple to you, and yet I see the stony world too well which you with your all-knowingness do not perceive. This is because of my habit of thinking it other than you are used to do. ²⁶ See the effect of practice which makes a dunce into a learned man and reduces a stone to dust. Look at the force of an inert arrow hitting a distant mark. ²⁷ In this manner the gloom of our ignorance and the disease of false knowledge are both dispelled by right reasoning and deep thinking, both of which are the effect of habit.

²⁸ Habit produces an enjoyment in the tastes of particular articles of food. Some have a taste for what is sour and pungent, while others indulge in what is sweet and tasty. ²⁹ A stranger becomes friendly by his continued stay in one's company, and so is a friend alienated by his living in an alien and distant land.

³⁰ Our spiritual body, perfectly pure, aerial, and full of intelligence, is converted to and mistaken for the gross material body by our constantly thinking of our materiality. ³¹ The impression of being a material body will fly away like a bird flies off in the air as soon as you come to know yourself to be a spiritual and intellectual soul, but it is the habit of thinking yourself as such that makes you really so.

³² All our meritorious acts are destroyed by a slight offensive act of demerit, and our prosperity flies away at the approach of adversity, but there is nothing which can remove our habit from us. ³³ All difficult matters are made easier by practice. Enemies are won over to friendship and even poison is made as delectable as honey by virtue of habit. ³⁴ He is reckoned as too mean and evil who does not accustom himself to practice whatever is good and proper for him. Without practice, he never acquires his object, but becomes as useless in the family as a barren woman.

³⁵ Whatever is desirable and good for one is to be gained with repeated effort all through one's lifetime, just as one's life, which is his greatest good in the world, is to be preserved with care until the approach of death. ³⁶ Whoever neglects to practice any act or art that is conducive to his welfare is prone to ruin and the torments of hell. ³⁷ Those inclined to meditation of the spiritual soul easily cross over the swollen rivers of this world, although they may be attached to it in their outward and

bodily practices.

³⁸ Practice is the light that leads one on the path of his desired object, just as the light of the lamp reveals a lost pot or cloth. ³⁹ The tree of repeated effort bears fruit in its time, just as the wish-fulfilling kalpa tree yields all the fruits of our desire, and as the hoarded capital of the rich is attended with great profit and interest. ⁴⁰ Habitual inquiry into spiritual truth serves as the sunlight to enlighten the nature of the soul. Otherwise our soul lies hidden in the darkness of the sunless night.

⁴¹ All animal beings are in need of certain food for the support of their lives, and these they have to obtain by continued search, never without it. Therefore the force of habit prevails in all places like the powerful sunshine. ⁴² All fourteen kinds of living beings have to live by habit of their respective activities. It is impossible for anyone to get its desired object without real activity. ⁴³ The repetition of the same action takes the name of habit, and habit is one's personal effort. It is impossible for anybody to do anything without any effort. ⁴⁴ Constant habit of action, joined with bodily and mental energy, is the only way to accomplish anything, and not otherwise.

⁴⁵ There is nothing impossible for the power of habit, which is as powerful as the strong sunbeams which give growth to everything on earth. Only habitual energy gives prosperity and courage to the brave on earth and water and mountains, and in forests and deserts.

Chapter 68 — Vasishta in Samadhi Sees the Pure Ideals from which Intellect Fabricates the Unreal World

¹ The vidyadhari continued:—

The habit of long practice, combined with the understanding and reflection, makes one proficient in a subject. So these applied to meditation of the spiritual and pure soul will cause the material world to vanish in the stone.

² Vasishta said:—

After the celestial vidyadhari had spoken in this manner, I retired to a cave in a rock where I sat in lotus posture and became absorbed in samadhi.³ Having given up all thoughts of corporeal bodies and continuing to think only of the intellectual soul according to the holy teachings of the vidyadhari, as I have related.

⁴ Then I saw a clear and fair intellectual void in me resembling the clarity of the empty vault of heaven in autumn.⁵ Through my intense application to meditate on the true one, my false view of phenomena entirely vanished within me.⁶ The intellectual sphere of my mind was filled with a transcendent light which knew no rising or setting but was always shining with a uniform radiance.⁷ As I looked into and through the light that shone in me, I could find neither the sky nor that great stone which I sought to find.⁸ Then I found the clear and thick blaze of my spiritual light seizing my outward sight, just as it had enraptured my inner vision.

⁹ As a man dreams seeing a huge stone in his house, so I saw the vast emptiness like a crystal globe situated in the clear atmosphere of consciousness.¹⁰ A dreaming man may think he is another person, but after he is awakened, he comes to know himself.¹¹ Those who dream themselves to be headless beings and remain so in this world can be of no good or use to themselves, though they have a little knowledge afterwards.¹² A man drowned in utter ignorance comes to right understanding in the course of time and in the end comes to know that there is no real entity except the essence of God.

¹³ Thus, when I saw the solid and transparent light which appeared like a crystal stone lying in the emptiness of Brahman, I could see no material thing like the earth or water or anything whatever in connection with it.¹⁴ Everything bore the same pure and spiritual form in which they were presented at their first creation in our ideas of them.¹⁵ All these bodies of created beings are only forms of Brahman considered in their primordial and spiritual and natural natures. The mind gives them the imaginary shapes of materiality in its fabricated dominion of the visible world.¹⁶ The spiritual form is the true essence of all things. All that is perceptible to the senses is mere fabrication of the original inventive mind.¹⁷ The prime creation was in the abstract and imperceptible to the senses. It was perceptible to the mind in the form of the ideals which the ignorant converted to phenomena.

¹⁸ A yogi, like knowing minds, sees all things in the abstract and in a general view. But the ignorant who are deprived of the power of abstraction and generalization fall into the errors of concrete particulars and deceptive phenomena.¹⁹ All sensation is only a temporary perception and presents a wrong impression in the mind. Know all conscious perceptions to be false and deluding. The concepts in the mind of a yogi are the true realities.

²⁰ O, the wonder of taking phenomena for invisible truth when we know that concepts, which are beyond the senses, are the true realities. ²¹ The subtle form of a thing first appears before the mind. Afterwards it is represented in various false shapes before us, and this is true of all material things in the world. ²² Whatever has not been before, has never been afterwards. As different ornaments of gold are nothing but gold itself, so pristine subtle ideas cannot have any gross material form.

²³ O the great ignorance of men that takes error for truth and falsehood as true. There is no way for the living soul to discern true and false except by right reasoning. ²⁴ The material body cannot be maintained by correct reason, but its immaterial essence is indestructible, both in this world and in the next. ²⁵ The error of materiality in the incorporeal, spiritual body presided over by the intellect is like the fallacy of a vast sea in the shining sands of a sandy desert.

²⁶ Consciousness of materiality, which one has in his spiritual and intellectual form, is like seeing the figure of a human body in a mountain peak. ²⁷ The false supposition of materiality in the spiritual entity of our being is like the error of seeing silver in the shells on the seashore, or sunshine on sands for water, or a second moon in the mist. ²⁸ O the wonderful effectiveness of error that represents the unreal as real and vice-versa. O the great power of delusion which springs from the unreasonableness of living beings.

²⁹ A yogi finds spiritual force and mental activity to be the two immaterial causes of all action and motion moving everything in both the physical and intellectual worlds. ³⁰ Therefore a yogi relies only on his internal perception and rejects those of his external senses. By comparison, common people run giddy drinking the vapors of the mirage of senses.

³¹ That which is commonly called pleasure or pain is only a fleeting feeling in the mind of men. It is of short duration. Genuine and lasting peace of mind, which has neither its rise or fall, is called true happiness.

³² Infer the super-conscious from what can be sensed and see the true source of your sensations manifest in your presence. ³³ Reject the sight of this triple world which your perception presents to your imagination, because there can be nothing more foolish than taking a delusion for truth. ³⁴ All these bodies and beings carry only their immaterial forms of mere ideas. Only the demon of delusion causes us to suppose their materiality. ³⁵ Whatever is not produced or thought of in the mind cannot present its figure to our sight. That which is no reality of itself cannot be the cause of anything else.

³⁶ When phenomena are nonexistent and unreal, what else is there that may be real? How can anything be said to be real whose reality is by the unreal and delusive senses? ³⁷ Phenomena being proved unreal, there can be no reality in perceiving or thinking about them. It is impossible for a spider to maintain its web before a storm that blows away an elephant. ³⁸ So likewise, visual evidence being proved false, there is no proof of any object of vision anywhere. There is only one unchanging entity in all nature whose solidity depends upon the consolidation of Divine Consciousness, like sea salt in solidified seawater.

³⁹ Like a dreamer dreams of a house on high hill in its ideal form, which is unknown and unseen to others sleeping with him in the same house, so we thought of that stone we have been talking about, and which is nothing other than the intellect. ⁴⁰ The intellectual soul exhibits a great many ideal

phenomena within itself, such as “this is a hill” and “this is the sky” and “this is the world” and “these are me and you,” all of which are as insubstantial as empty air.

⁴¹ Only men of enlightened souls can perceive these phenomena of intellect in themselves, not the unenlightened soul. It is like a person who listens to a lecture understands it, but not one who dozes through it. ⁴² All these false sights of the world appear true to an unenlightened person, just as the still trees and mountains seem to be dancing to an inebriated man.

⁴³ A yogi beholds one irrepressible form of God in all places, manifest before him in the form of his intellect. But the ignorant are deceived by their false guides to place their reliance on the objects of senses, in spite of their frail nature.

Chapter 69 — Vasishta and the Vidyadhari Awaken the Brahmin; He Explains Who Is the Vidyadhari

¹ Vasishta added:—

The world is without any form or substance, though it presents the appearance of such. It is seen in the light of the pure and imperishable essence of God through the keen sight of transcendental philosophy.

² The world is that quintessence which exhibits in itself the rare show of the cosmic mirror of Consciousness. The forms of hills and rivers are seen like pictures in a panorama, or like apparitions in empty air.

³ Then the vidyadhari entered that cosmic block by resistless efforts. Curious, I also penetrated it after her. ⁴ After that untiring lady made her way into the cosmos of Brahma, she took her seat before a brahmin and shone supremely bright in his presence.

⁵ She introduced him to me saying, “This is my husband and supporter with whom I have made my betrothal in my mind a long time ago. ⁶ He is now an old man and I also have attained my old age. Because he has delayed his marriage with me until now, I have become utterly indifferent about it at present. ⁷ He also has grown adverse to his marriage and desires to attain that supreme state in which there is no view or viewer, and which is also no airy emptiness. ⁸ The world is now approaching its dissolution and he has been sitting in meditation as silently and as immovable as a stone. ⁹ Therefore, O lord of saints, please awaken both him and me also. Enlighten and confirm us in the way of supreme bliss until the end of this creation and the recreation of a new one.”

¹⁰ Having said this to me, she awakened her husband and spoke to him saying, “Here, my lord, is the chief of saints who has come today to our home. ¹¹ This sage is the offspring of Brahma in another apartment of this worldly dome. He deserves to be honored as worthy guest according to the proper rite of hospitality. ¹² Arise and receive the great sage offering worship and water to him, because great persons deserve the highest regards and respects one can offer.”

¹³ The holy devotee awoke from his samadhi. His consciousness rose in himself like a whirlpool rises above the sea. ¹⁴ The courteous sage opened his eyes slowly, as flowers open their petals in spring after winter is over. ¹⁵ His returning senses slowly allowed him to move his limbs, just as the returning moisture of plants in spring makes new sprouts and branches shoot forth. ¹⁶ Gods, demigods, spiritual masters, and gandharvas immediately assembled around him from all sides, just as swans and cranes flock to a clear lake blooming with full-blown lotuses. ¹⁷ He looked upon me, the fair vidyadhari lady, and everyone else standing before him. Then in the sweet tone like the sound of Om (*pranava*), he addressed me as the second Brahma himself.

¹⁸ The brahmin said, “I welcome you to this place, O sage who sees the world like a ball placed in the palm of your hand and who resembles the great ocean in the vast extent of his knowledge. ¹⁹ You have come a long way to this far distant place. You must be tired from your long journey. Please sit in this seat.”

²⁰ As he said these words, I saluted him saying, “I salute you my lord.” Then I sat on the jeweled seat which he pointed out to me. ²¹ Then he was praised by the assembled gods and holy spirits standing before him, and received their worship, presents and adorations according to the rules and rites of

courtesy.²² Then as the praises and prayers of the assembled host ended, I approached the venerable brahmin and spoke to him.

²³ "How is it, O venerable sage, that this vidyadhari nymph has turned to me and tells me to enlighten you both with true knowledge? You are acquainted with whatever is past and all that is to take place.

²⁴ You sage are lord of all, fully acquainted with all knowledge. What does this silly woman want to learn from me and what do I want to learn from you?²⁵ Why did you produce her to become your spouse when you remained indifferent and never took her in wedlock?"

²⁶ The brahmin replied:—

O Saint, hear me to tell you how it came to be so with us, because it is right and fit to explain everything in full to the wise and good.

²⁷ There is an unborn and imperishable entity from all eternity and I am only a spark of that ever sparkling and brilliant intellect.²⁸ I am of the form of empty air or vacuum, situated forever in the Supreme Spirit. I am called the self-born in all the worlds that were to be created afterwards.²⁹ But in reality, I am never born, nor do I ever see or do anything in reality but remain as the empty intellect in the intellectual emptiness of the very same entity.³⁰ Addressing one another in the first and second persons is nothing but the sounds of waves of the same sea dashing against each other.

³¹ I who was of this nature became disturbed in time by feeling some desire rising in me and seeing that lady within the blaze of my intellect.³² I thought of her as myself, though she appears as another person to you and others. Though she is manifest before you, yet she lies hidden in me as my very self.

³³ I find myself to be that imperishable entity which abides in me as I abide in the Supreme Soul. I find my soul to be imperishable in its nature and delighted in itself as if it were the lord of all.

³⁴ Though I was thus absorbed in meditation, yet the memory of my former state produced in me a desire to reproduce, and over there, that vidyadhari is the incarnate divinity presiding over my will.

³⁵ She is the presiding divinity over my will who is standing here manifest before you. She is neither my wife nor have I betrothed her as such.³⁶ It is from the desire of her heart that she considers herself the wife of Brahma. For that reason she has undergone troubles before she got rid of her desires.

Chapter 70 — Words of the Brahmin Who Created the Worlds in Mundane Stone

¹ The brahmin related:—

Now as the world is approaching to its end, I am going to take my rest in the formless void of consciousness. This is why this divinity of worldly desires is drowned in deep sorrow.² I am about to forsake her forever. It is for this very reason, O sage, that she is so very sorry and sick in heart.

³ Being of an aerial form, when I become one with the Supreme Spirit, all my desires end and the great dissolution of the world takes place.⁴ That is why she pursues me with deep sorrow. For who is there so senseless that does not follow the giver of her being?

⁵ Now the time has come to end the Kali Yuga and the cycle of four ages. The dissolution of all living beings, Manus, Indras and other gods is near at hand.⁶ Today is the end of the kalpa and the great kalpa age. This day puts an end to my energy and will and makes me merge with the eternal and infinite emptiness.⁷ Now this personification of my desire is about to breathe her last, just like when a lake dries out, its lotus beds are also lost in the air.

⁸ The quiet soul, like the calm ocean, is always at a state of rest unless it is agitated by fickle desires, like the sea troubled by its fluctuating waves.⁹ An embodied being naturally has a desire to know the soul and to be freed from its prison.¹⁰ Thus this lady, being filled with spiritual knowledge and long practiced in meditation, has seen the world you inhabit and the four different pursuits of its inhabitants.

¹¹ Traversing through the regions of air, she has come to see the previously mentioned ethereal stone above Lokaloka Mountain which is our celestial home and the pattern for your world.¹² Both that world of yours and this home of ours rest on a great mountain which carries upon it many other worlds.¹³ With our discriminating eyesight, we also do not see them separately from one another, but behold them all combined in one in our abstract view of yoga meditation.

¹⁴ There are numberless worlds of creations in earth, water, and air and everything else under the sky, as if they were compressed or carved in the body of a huge block of stone.¹⁵ What you call the world is a mere fallacy. It resembles your vision of a fairy city in dream. It is a false name applied to an object that exists nowhere outside consciousness.¹⁶ They who have come to know the world as an airy vision of the mind are truly called wise men who are not liable to fall into error.¹⁷ By application and practice of yoga contemplation, some come to attain their desired object, such as this lady succeeded to gain your company.¹⁸ Thus the illusory power of the intellect displays these material worlds before us. Thus the everlasting Divine omnipotence manifests itself.

¹⁹ There is no action or any creation ever produced from anything or ever reduced to nothing. But all things and actions, together with our ideas of space and time, are only the spontaneous growth of consciousness.²⁰ Know that the ideas of time and space, of substance and action, as well as of the mind and its faculties, are the lasting figures and marks on the stone of consciousness, ever prominent in it without setting or being shaded at anytime.²¹ This consciousness is the very stone, either at rest or rolling on like a wheel. The worlds pertain to it as its properties and accompany it as motion does the wind.

²² The soul, being provided with its full knowledge of all things, is considered to be the solid world

itself. Though the soul is infinite in time and space, yet it is thought of as limited owing to its appearance in the form of the bound and embodied mind.²³ The unbound intellect appears as bound by its limited knowledge. Although it is formless, yet it appears in the form of the mind representing the worlds in it.²⁴ As the mind sees the form of an aerial city in its dream, so it finds itself in the form of this stone, with the worlds marked upon it in the daytime.²⁵ There is no rolling of planets in this universe and no running of streams here. There is no object existing in reality anywhere. They are all mere representations of the mind in empty air.²⁶ There are no kalpa or great kalpa ages in eternity. There is no substantiality of anything in the emptiness of our consciousness. There is no difference between the waves and bubbles from the waters of the sea.

²⁷ The worlds that appear to exist in the mind and before the eyes are, in reality, utterly nonexistent in the intellect which spreads alike everywhere as the all pervading and empty vacuum. And as all empty space in every place is alike and the same with infinite emptiness, so the forms of things appearing to the limited understanding are all lost in unlimited consciousness.

²⁸ Now Vasishta, go to your place in your own world. Have your peace and bliss in your own seat of samadhi. Give over your aerial worlds to empty air, while I myself go to the supreme Brahman.

Chapter 71 — Vasishta Describes a Final Dissolution of the World (1)

¹ Vasishta added:—

So saying, the brahmin Brahma sat in lotus posture and resumed his intense meditation in samadhi, as did his celestial companions also.² He fixed his mind on the pause placed at the end of half syllable “m”, the final letter of the holy mantra of omkara, and sat quietly with steady attention like an unmoved picture in a painting.³ His lustful consort, Desire, also followed his example. She sat reclined at the end of all her endless wishes, an empty and formless emptiness.

⁴ When I saw them growing thin for lack of their desires, I also reduced myself by means of my meditation until I found myself one with all pervading Intellect in the form of endless emptiness.⁵ I saw that as the desires of Brahma were drying up in himself, so I found all nature to be fading away with the contraction of the earth and ocean, together with the diminution of their hills and islands.

⁶ I saw trees and plants and all sorts of vegetables fading away with the decay of their growth. All creation seemed to come to its end in a short time.⁷ It seemed that the stupendous body of Viraj containing the whole universe was sick in every part. The great earth carried in his body was falling unconsciously into decline and decay.⁸ She was stricken with years, grown dull and dry without her mild moisture, wasting away like a withered tree in the cold season.⁹ As the unconsciousness of our hearts numbs our bodies, so did one’s loss of sensation produce the lack of consciousness of all things in the world.

¹⁰ The world was threatened by many a portent and ill omen on all sides, and men were hastening to hellfire, burning in the flame of their sins.¹¹ The earth was a scene of oppression and famine. Troubles, disasters and poverty waited on mankind everywhere. As women trespassed the bounds of behavior, so men sinned against the bounds of order and conduct.¹² The sun was hidden by mist and frost resembling gusts of ash and dust. People were greatly and equally afflicted by excess heat and cold, two opposites they did not know how to prevent.¹³ Low caste shudras were tormented by burning fires on one side and floods of rainwater on the other. Wars being waged devastated entire provinces.¹⁴ Tremendous omens were accompanied by falling mountains and cities and the loud cries of people upon the destruction of their children and many good and great men.¹⁵ The land burst into deep ditches where there had been no water channels before.

Peoples and the rulers of men indulged themselves in promiscuous marriages.¹⁶ All men lived like travelers and all paths were full of tailor shops. All women were engrossed with their hair and promiscuity. All rulers imposed head taxes on their people.¹⁷ All men lived by hard labor, farmers living only upon litigation. Women lived in impiety and impurity and the rulers of men were addicted to drinking.¹⁸ The earth was full of unrighteousness, its people misled by heretical doctrines and vicious scriptures. All wicked men were wealthy and fortunate and all good people in distress and misery.¹⁹ The evil non-aryans (foreigners) were the rulers of earth and respectable and learned men had fallen into disrepute and disregard. People were all guided by their evil passions of anger, greed, hatred, envy, malice, and the like.²⁰ All men were apostates giving up their religion, inclined to the faith of others. Brahmins were despised for their sermons and the evil inhabitants of border regions persecuted others.²¹ Robbers infested cities and villages, robbing temples of gods and the houses of

good people. There were parasites pampered with others' delicacies, but short lived and sick with their gluttony.²² All men indulging themselves in idleness and luxury and neglected their rituals and duties.

All quarters of the globe presented scenes of dangers and difficulties, sorrows and grief.²³ Cities and villages were reduced to ashes and districts were laid waste on all sides. The sky appeared to be weeping with vaporous clouds and the air disturbed by whirling tornadoes.²⁴ The land resounded with the loud crying and wailing of widows and unfortunate women. Those who remained were compelled to live by beggary.²⁵ The country was dry and destitute of water, lying bare and barren in all parts. The seasons were unproductive of seasonal fruits and flowers. So every part of this earthly body of Brahma was out of order and painful to him.

²⁶ Upon her approaching dissolution, there was a great famine on earth. The body of Brahma grew senseless owing to the loss of the watery element in all its canals of rivers and seas.²⁷ The spirit of Brahma being disturbed, there occurred a disorder in the course of nature. It brought on a transgression of good manners, as when the waters of rivers and seas overflow their boundaries.

²⁸ Then furious water surges began to break down their shores and run madly upon the ground, flooding the land and laying waste to woodlands.²⁹ Whirlpools whirled with harsh noise, turning about on every side with tremendous violence. Huge surges rose high to wash the face of heavy clouds in the sky.³⁰ Mountain caves were resounding to the loud roar of huge clouds on high and heavy showers of rain fell in torrents from the sky, flooding mountain tops far and near.

³¹ Gigantic whales rolled along with the whirling waves of the ocean. The bosom of the deep appeared like a deep forest with huge bodies of the whales floating on heaving waves.³² Mountain caves were scattered with the bodies of marine animals killed there by hungry lions and tigers. The sky glittered with marine gems carried on high by the rising waters.³³ The dashing of rising sea waves against the falling showers of the sky and the dashing of the whales against the clouds on high raised a huge uproar.³⁴ Elephants floating on flood waters washed the faces of the stars with the waters spouted from their trunks. Their jostling against one another hurled hills to the ground.³⁵ The loud surges of the sea dashed against the rocks on the shore let out a noise like the loud roar of elephants resounding in mountain caves.

³⁶ The nether sea invaded the upper sky. Its turbulent waves drove the celestials from their homes just like an earthly ruler attacks another and his triumphant host dispossesses the inhabitants with loud outcry.³⁷ Floodwaters covered the woods, both in the earth and air. Waves spread over the skies like the winged mountains of times past.³⁸ Loud winds broke the waves of the sea, driving them ashore like fragments of mountains. Splashing waters dashed against the rocks on the shore washing fossil shells on the coast.

³⁹ Twisting whirlpools sucked huge whales inside and flowed over falling rocks in their fathomless depth.⁴⁰ Huge whales were carried with the torrents and drowned in the depths of caves on mountain tops, and these they attempted to break with their hideous teeth.⁴¹ Tortoises and crocodiles hung from trees, their full length extended. The vehicles of Yama (buffalo) and Indra (elephant) stood terrified with erect ears.⁴² They listened to the fragments of rocks falling with hideous noise on the seashore and saw fish with their broken fins tossed up and down by the falling stones.

⁴³ The forests shook no more in their dancing mood, and the waters on earth were all still and cold. But the marine waters were flaming with an undersea fire emitting a dismal glare. ⁴⁴ The whales, afraid of the marine fires, fell upon the waters on mountain tops and competed with the earthly and mountainous elephants. ⁴⁵ Rocks carried away by the rapid current looked as if they were dancing on the tops of the waves. There was a loud concussion of swimming and drowned rocks as they dashed against the mountains on land. ⁴⁶ Men and wild animals sought protection on large mountains and in woods. Herds of wild elephant roaring loudly at a distance like trumpets. ⁴⁷ The infernal regions were disturbed by torrents of water, as by the infernal demons. The elephants of the eight quarters raised loud cries with their uplifted trunks. ⁴⁸ The nether world emitted a growling noise from their mouths of infernal caves. The earth, fastened to its polar axis, turned like a wheel on its axle.

⁴⁹ The overflowing waters of the ocean broke their bounds with as much ease as they tear marine plants apart. Breathless skies resounded to the roaring of the clouds all around. ⁵⁰ The sky was split into pieces and fell down in fragments. The regents of the skies fled far away with loud cries. Comets and meteors were hurled from heaven in the forms of whirlpools. ⁵¹ Fires and firebrands were seen burning on all sides of the skies, earth and heaven, flaming and flashing like liquid gold and luminous gems, and like vermillion colored snakes.

⁵² Many flaming and flying comet portents with burning crests and tails were seen flashing all about in the heaven above and earth below, flung by the hands of Brahma. ⁵³ All the great elementary bodies were disturbed and put out of order. The sun and moon and the gods of air (Pavana) and fire (Agni), together with the gods of heaven (Indra) and hell (Yama), were all in great confusion. ⁵⁴ Even the gods seated in the abode of Brahma were afraid of their impending fall when they heard the huge trees of the forests falling headlong with a tremendous crash.

⁵⁵ Mountains standing on the surface of the earth were shaking and tottering on all sides. A great earthquake shook the mountains of Kailash and Meru to the very bottom of their caves and forests.

⁵⁶ Ominous tornadoes at the end of the kalpa period overthrew mountains cities and forests, and overwhelmed the earth and all in general ruin and confusion.

Chapter 72 — Description of Viraj as God in the Form of Creation

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Now the self-born Brahma, having compressed his breath in his form of Viraj, the atmospheric air carried on the wings of wind, lost its existence.² The atmospheric air, the very breath of Brahma, being thus compressed in his breast, what other air could there remain to uphold the starry frame and the system of the universe?³ The atmospheric air, compressed with the vital breath of Brahma, meant that creation was about to come to its ultimate extinction.

⁴ The sky, being no more upheld by its support of the air, gave way to fiery bodies of meteors falling down on earth like starry flowers from the tree of heaven.⁵ The stars of heaven, being unsupported by the intermediate air, fell on the ground like the unfailing and impending fruits of our deserts, or the flying fates falling from above.⁶ The gross desire or the crude will of Brahma was now at its end at the approach of dissolution. There was an utter stop to the actions and motions of the spiritual masters, just like the flame of fire before its extinction.

⁷ World-destroying winds blew in the air like thin, flying scraps of cotton. Then the spiritual masters fell down mute from heaven after losing their strength and power of speech.⁸ The great fabrics of human wishes fell down with the cities of the gods. Mountain peaks were hurled headlong by shocks of tremendous earthquakes.

⁹ Rama asked, “Now sage, if the world is only a representation of the ideas in the mind of the great god Brahma or Viraj, then what difference do earth, heaven and hell make to him?¹⁰ How can these worlds be said to be the members of his body? How can it be thought that God resides in them with his stupendous form?¹¹ I well know that Brahma is the willful spirit of God and has no form of himself. So I take this world to be a formless representation of the will or idea in the Divine Mind. Please sage, explain this clearly to me.”

¹² Vasishta replied:—

In the beginning this world was not in existence and not in nonexistence either. There was the Eternal Consciousness which absorbed all infinity in itself, and the whole emptiness of space with its essence.¹³ This emptiness is known as the thought. The intellect, without forsaking its form, becomes the power of using the intellect itself.

¹⁴ Know this power of using the intellect to be the living soul which, being condensed, becomes the gross mind. But none of these essences or forms of existence have any form whatever.¹⁵ The emptiness of the intellect remains as the pure vacuum in itself forever. All this which appears as otherwise is nothing without the very same soul.¹⁶ The very soul assumes to it its egoism, and thinking itself as the mind, becomes soiled with its endless desires in its empty form.

¹⁷ Then this intellectual principle thinks itself to be the air by its own volition. By this false supposition of itself, it becomes of an aerial form in the open air.¹⁸ Then it thinks of its future gross form, and immediately finds itself transformed to an aerial body by its volition (*sankalpa*).¹⁹ Though the soul, spirit and mind are empty in their natures, yet they can assume aerial forms to themselves by their will, just as the mind sees imaginary cities. So the Lord takes upon any form it pleases.

²⁰ As the knowledge of our minds is purely of an aerial nature, so the intelligence of the all-intelligent Lord is likewise of an intellectual kind. He takes and forsakes any form as he supposes and pleases for himself. ²¹ As we advance in the knowledge of hidden truth, so we come to lose the perception of size and extension and know this extended world is a mere void, though it appears as a positive entity. ²² By knowledge of real truth, we get rid of our desires. By our knowledge of the unity and the absence of our egoism or personality, we obtain our liberation.

²³ Such is he, the supreme one. Brahman is the entity of the world. Know Viraj, O Rama, to be the body of Brahman, the form of the visible world. ²⁴ Desires or will and the false conceptions which rise in it have the form of empty vacuum. The same give birth to the world, which is then called the cosmic egg.

²⁵ Know all this is nonexistence. The forms you see are only the formation of your fancy. In reality there is nothing in actual existence. You and egoism are no entities at anytime. ²⁶ How can the gross world ever be attached to the simple Consciousness which is of the nature of a void? How can a cause or secondary cause ever be produced in or come out from a mere void? ²⁷ Therefore all this production is false and all that is seen is a mere falsity. All this is a mere void and nothing, falsely taken for something.

²⁸ It is only Consciousness that exhibits itself in the forms of the world and its productions, in the same manner as air creates its vibrations as winds in the very calm air itself. ²⁹ The world is either as something or a nothing at all, devoid of both unity and duality. Know the whole to lie in the empty emptiness of Consciousness, void and transparent as Consciousness.

³⁰ I am extinct to all these endless particulars and distinctions. Whether you take them as real or unreal, or be with or without your egoism, it is all nothing to me. ³¹ Be without any desire and quiet in your mind. Remain silent without fickleness in your conduct. Do whatever you have to do, or avoid it without anxiety. ³² The Eternal One, ever existent in our idea of him, is manifest also in phenomena which is no other than himself. But our imperfect idea of God has many things in it which are unknown to us and beyond our comprehension. Such is also with phenomena that are so perceptible to us.

Chapter 73 — More Description of Viraj, the God of Nature

¹ Rama said, "Sage, you have talked at length about our bondage and liberation, and also about our knowledge of the world as neither a reality nor an unreality, and that it neither rises nor sets but always exists as at first and ever before. ² I have well understood all your lectures on these subjects, yet wish to know more for my full satisfaction with the ambrosial drops of your speech."

³ "Tell me sage, how is there no truth or untruth to either a false view of the creation as a reality, or its view as a mere vacuum? ⁴ In such a case, I well understand what is the real truth. Yet I want you to say more about this for my comprehension of the subject of creation."

⁵ Vasishta replied:—

All this world visible to us, with all its moving and unmoving creatures, and all things with all their varieties occasioned by differences of country and climate, ⁶ together with the gods Brahma, Indra, Upendra, Mahendra, and the Rudras, are subject to destruction at the great dissolution of the world.

⁷ There remains something alone which is unborn and uncreated and without beginning which is ever calm and quiet in its nature. To this no words can reach, and of which nothing can be known.

⁸ As a mountain is larger and more extended than a mustard seed, so the sky is much more than a mountain. But the entity of emptiness is the greatest of all. ⁹ Again as the dust of the earth is smaller than a great mountain, so the stupendous universe is a minute particle compared to the infinite emptiness of God.

¹⁰ After the long lapse of unmeasured time in the unlimited space of eternity, and after the dissolution of all existence in the transcendent vacuum of the Divine Mind, ¹¹ the great empty Consciousness, unlimited by space and time, quite tranquil by being devoid of all desire and will, sees the minute world in aerial state in itself by its memory. ¹² The intellect inspects this unreality within itself as it were in its dream. Then it thinks on the sense of the word Brahman and beholds the expansion of these minute ideas to their intellectual forms.

¹³ It is the nature of consciousness to know the minute ideas contained in its sensations. Because it continues to look upon them, it is called their looker. ¹⁴ As a man sees himself dead in his dream, and the dead man sees his own death, so consciousness sees minute ideas in itself. ¹⁵ Hence it is the nature of consciousness to see its unity as a duality within itself, and to remain of its own nature as both subjective and objective by itself. ¹⁶ Consciousness is of the nature of emptiness and therefore formless in itself. Yet it beholds the minute ideas to rise as phenomena before it, and thereby the subjective viewer becomes the duality of the objective view also.

¹⁷ Then it finds its minute self springing out distinctly in its own conception, just as a seed is found to sprout forth in its seedling. ¹⁸ Then it has a distinct view of space and time, and of substance and its attributes and actions. But as these are yet in their state of internal conceptions, they have not yet received names. ¹⁹ Wherever the particle of consciousness shines is called place, whenever it is perceived is called time, and the act of perception is called action. ²⁰ Whatever is perceived is said to be the object. The sight of it is the cause of its perception, just as the light of a luminary is the cause of eyesight.

²¹ Thus endless products of consciousness appear before it, distinct from one another by their time, place, and action. All these appear as true, like the various colors in the sky. ²² The light of consciousness shines through different parts of the body. The eye is the organ whereby it sees, and the other organs of sense allow different sense perceptions.

²³ The intellectual particle, shining at first within itself, has no distinct name except that of *tanmatra* or its inward perception, which term has no more significance than empty air. ²⁴ But the shadow of minute consciousness falling upon empty air becomes the solid body which shoots forth into the five organs of sense owing to its inquiry into their five objects of form and the rest. ²⁵ The intellectual principle, in need of retaining its sensations in the brain, becomes the mind and understanding.

²⁶ Then the mind being moved by its vanity, takes upon it the name of egoism and is inclined to make imaginary divisions of space and time. ²⁷ Thus the atomic consciousness (the *jiva*) comes to make distinctions of time by giving them different names of present, past and future. ²⁸ Again, with regard to space, it calls one place as upper and another as lower and goes on giving different names to the sides of the one unchanging space in nature. ²⁹ It then comes to understand the meanings of words, and invents words signifying time and space, action and substance.

³⁰ Thus consciousness, having an empty form in the primordial vacuum, became the spiritual or subtle body of its own accord until it was diffused all over the world. ³¹ Having long remained in that state as it thought, it took the completely concrete material form through which it was transfused. ³² Though formed originally of air and perfectly pure in its nature, yet being incorporated in the false corporeal form, it forgot its real nature, just as solar heat in association with sand is mistaken for water. ³³ It then takes upon itself, and of its own will, a form reaching to the skies to which it applies the sense of word head to some part and feet to another. ³⁴ It applied to itself the sense of the words breast, sides to other parts by adopting their figurative sense and rejecting the literal ones. ³⁵ By thinking constantly on the forms of things, such as this is a cow and that is a horse, and their being bounded by space and time, it became familiar with the objects of different senses. ³⁶ The same intellectual particle likewise saw the different parts of its body which it called its hands, feet and the like as its outward members, and the heart and the like as the inner members of the body.

³⁷ In this manner the bodies of Brahma, Vishnu, the Rudras and other gods are formed. The forms of men and worms are also produced from the conception of them. ³⁸ But in fact there is nothing that is really made or formed. All things are now as they have ever been. All this is the original vacuum and primeval Consciousness. All forms are the false formations of fancy.

³⁹ Viraj is the seed producing the plants of the three worlds, which are productive of many more, just as one root produces many bulbs. Belief in creation puts a lock on the door of salvation. The appearance of the world is as that of a light and fleeting cloud without rain.

⁴⁰ This Viraj is the first male, rising unseen of his own will. He is the cause of all actions and acts.

⁴¹ He has no material body, no bone or flesh, nor is he capable of being grasped by anyone's hand.

⁴² He is as silent as a sleeping man who does not hear the roaring sea and clouds, the loud roar of lions and elephants, or the uproar of battle. ⁴³ He remains neither as a reality nor entirely as an unreality, but like an awaken man's idea of a warrior seen fighting in his dream. ⁴⁴ Although his huge

body stretches millions of miles, yet it is contained within an atom together with all the worlds that lie hidden in every pore of his body.⁴⁵ Though thousands of worlds and millions of mountains compose the great body of the unborn Viraj, yet they are not enough to fill it completely, just as a large quantity of grain is not sufficient to fill a winnowing basket.

⁴⁶ Though innumerable worlds are stretched in his body, yet they are only an atom compared to the infinity of Viraj, and all is contained in his body. Yet it occupies no space or place, but resembles a baseless mountain in a dream.⁴⁷ He is called the self-born and Viraj. Though he is said to be the body and soul of the world, yet he is quite empty himself.⁴⁸ He is also called Rudra and Sanatana, and Indra and Upendra also. He is likewise the wind, the cloud, and the mountain in his person.

⁴⁹ The minute particle of Consciousness, like a small spark of fire, inflates and spreads itself at first, then by thinking its greatness, takes the form of the thinking mind which with its self-consciousness becomes the vast universe.⁵⁰ Then being conscious of its inspiration, it becomes the wind in motion, and this is the air form body of Viraj.⁵¹ Then it becomes the vital breath from the consciousness of its inspiration and expiration in the open air.⁵² Then it imagines an fiery particle in its mind, just as children fancy a ghost where there is none, and this spark assumes the forms of luminous bodies in the sky.

⁵³ The vital breath of respiration is carried by turns through the respiratory organs into the heart from where it is carried on the wings of air to sustain the world, which is the very heart of Viraj.⁵⁴ This Viraj is the first principle of all individual bodies in the world and in their various capacities forever.⁵⁵ All individual bodies have their rise according to their different desires from this Universal Soul. As desires differ from one another in their outward shapes, so they are different also in their inner natures and inclinations.

⁵⁶ As the seed of Viraj first sprang forth in the nature and constitution of every individual being, it continues to do so in the same manner in the heart of every living, agreeably according to the will of the same causal principle.⁵⁷ The sun, moon and the winds are like the bile and phlegm in the body of Brahma. The planets and stars are like the circulating breath and drops of that god's spit.⁵⁸ The mountains are his bones and the clouds his flesh. But we can never see his head and feet, nor his body and skin.

⁵⁹ Know, O Rama, this world is the body of Viraj, an imaginary form by his imagination only. Hence the earth and heaven and all their contents are only the shadow of his Intellectual emptiness.

Chapter 74 — The Cosmic Body of Viraj, Continued

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Now hear more about the body of Viraj, which he assumed to himself of his own will in that kalpa epoch, together with the variety of its order and division and its various customs and usages.

² The transcendent empty sphere of consciousness makes the body of Viraj. It has no beginning, middle or end and it is as light as an aerial or imaginary form.³ Brahma, who is without desire, saw the imaginary cosmic egg appearing about him in its aerial form.⁴ Then Brahma divided this imaginary world of his in two. It was of a luminous form, from which he came out as a luminary, like a bird matured in its egg.

⁵ He saw one half of this egg rising high in the upper sky and the other half making the lower world, both of which he considered as parts of himself.⁶ The upper part of Brahma's egg is called the head of Viraj. The lower part is called his footstool. The middle region is called his waist.⁷ The middle part of the two far separated portions is of immense extent and appears like a blue and hollow vault all around us.⁸ Heaven is the upper roof of this hollow, similar to the palate of the open mouth. The stars which cover it resemble the spots of blood in it. The breath of the mouth is like the vital air which supports all mortals and the immortal gods.⁹ Ghosts, demons and ogres are like worms in his body. The cavities of the different worlds are like the veins and arteries in his body.¹⁰ The nether worlds below us are the footstools of Viraj. The cavities under his knees are like the pits of the infernal regions.¹¹ The great basin of water in the middle of the earth and the surrounding islands are like the navel and its pit in the center of the body of Viraj.

¹² The rivers with their swirling waters resemble the arteries of Viraj, with purple blood running in them. Asia is like his lotus petal heart, with Mount Meru as its outer layer.¹³ The sides of his body are like the sides of the sky. The hills and rocks on earth resemble the spleen and liver in the body of Viraj. The collection of cooling clouds in the sky is like the thickening mass of fat in his body.¹⁴ The sun and the moon are the two eyes of Viraj. The high heaven is his head and mouth. The moon is his essence and the mountains are the filth of his person.¹⁵ The fire is the burning heat and bile in his bowels. Air is the breath of his nostrils.¹⁶ The forests of kalpa trees and other woods and the serpent races of the infernal regions are the hairs and tufts of hairs on his head and body.¹⁷ The upper region of the solar world forms the head of Viraj's body. The zodiacal light in the curved hollow beyond the mundane system is the crest on top of Viraja's head.

¹⁸ He is the Universal Mind itself. He has no individual mind of his own. Being the sole enjoyer of all things, there is nothing in particular that forms the object of his enjoyment.¹⁹ He is the sum of all the senses. Therefore there is no sense beside himself. The soul of Viraj being fully conscious of everything, it is a mere fiction to attribute the property of any organ of sense to him.²⁰ There is no difference between the property of an organ and its possessor. The mind, in the person of Viraj, perceives all organic sensations without the medium of organs.

²¹ There is no difference between the doings of Viraj and those of the world. His will alone acts with many forces, both in their active and causal forms.²² All actions and events of the world are same as his. All our lives and deaths in this world conform to his will.²³ The world lives by his living and so

it dies with his death. Like air and its motion, so is the world and Viraj. They act or subside together.
²⁴ The world and Viraj are of the same essence, like air and wind. That which is the world is Viraj. What Viraj is, the very same is the world.

²⁵ The world is Brahma and Viraj. The names are synonyms according to its successive stages. They are only forms of the will of the pure and empty Consciousness of God.

²⁶ Rama asked, “Be it so that Viraj is the personified will of God and has the form of emptiness. But how is he considered in his inner person as Brahma himself?”

²⁷ Vasishta replied:—

As you consider yourself as Rama and situated in your body, so Brahma, the great father of all, is the willful soul in his body. ²⁸ The souls of holy men also are full with Brahma and their material bodies are like mere images of him. ²⁹ As your living soul is capable of fixing its residence in your body, so the self-willed soul of Brahma is far more able to reside in his body of the universe. ³⁰ If it is possible for a plant to reside in its seed and for animal life to dwell in the body, it must likewise be even more possible for the spirit of Brahma to dwell in a body of its own imagination.

³¹ Whether the Lord is in his consolidated form of the world or in his subtle form of the mind, he is the same in his essence, though the one lies inside and the other outside of us in his inward and outward appearance.

³² The holy hermit who is delighted in himself, remaining silent like a log of wood and quiet like a block of stone, remains with his knowledge of “I” and “you” fixed in the Universal Soul of Viraj. ³³ A holy and God knowing man is passionless under all persecution, just like an idol made with ropes of straw and string. He remains as calm as the sea after its howling waves are hushed. Though he may be engaged in a great many affairs in the world, yet he remains as calm and quiet in his mind as a stone is unperturbed in its heart.

Chapter 75 — Vasishta Describes a Final Dissolution of the World (2)

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Then, sitting in my meditation of Brahma, I cast my eyes around and saw a region before me.² It being midday, I saw a secondary sun behind me, appearing like a fire over a mountain on the horizon.³ I saw the sun in the sky like a ball of fire and another in the water burning as an undersea fire. I saw a burning sun in the southeast corner and another in the southern quarter.⁴ Thus I saw four fiery suns on the four sides of heaven, and as many in the four corners of the sky also.⁵ I was astonished to find so many suns all at once in all the sides of heaven. Their fires seemed to burn down their presiding divinities, Agni, Vayu, Yama, Indra and others.

⁶ As I was astonished looking at these unnatural appearances in the heavens above, suddenly there appeared a terrestrial sun before me, bursting out of the undersea regions below.⁷ Eleven of these suns were like reflections of the one sun seen in a prismatic mirror. They rose out of the three suns of Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva in the emptiness of the different sides of heaven.⁸ The same form of Rudra with its three eyes shone forth in the forms of the twelve burning suns of heaven.

⁹ In this manner the sun burnt down the world like fire burns the dry wood of the forest. The world was dried up of its moisture, as in the parching days of summer.¹⁰ The solar fire burnt away the woods without any literal fire or flame. The whole earth was dry as dust by this fireless heat.¹¹ My body became hot and my blood boiled from the heat of a wild fire, so I left that place of torrid heat and ascended to the remoter and higher regions of air.

¹² I saw heavenly bodies hurling like tops flung from the string held by a mighty hand. From my aerial seat I saw the rising of blazing suns in heaven.¹³ I saw the twelve suns burning the ten sides of heaven, and I also saw the extensive spheres of the stars whirling with incredible velocity.¹⁴ The waters of the seven oceans were boiling with a gurgling noise, and burning meteors were falling over the cities in farthest worlds.

¹⁵ Flames with splitting noise flashed upon distant mountains, making them flare with red color. Continuous lightning flashed upon great buildings all around, putting the canopy of heaven in a flame.

¹⁶ Falling buildings emitted a cracking and crackling noise all around and the earth was covered with columns of dark smoke like thick clouds and mists.¹⁷ Fumes rose like crystal columns appearing as small towers and spires upon the towers on earth. The loud noise of wailing beasts and men raised a gurgling sound all over the ground.¹⁸ Cities falling upon men and beasts made a hideous noise and huge heaps of debris on earth. Falling stars from heaven scattered fragments of gems and jewels over the earth.¹⁹ All human houses were in flames, bodies of men and beasts burning in their respective homes and houses. Noiseless outskirts of villages and towns were filled with the stink of dead and burning bodies.

²⁰ Marine animals were burnt under the warm waters of the seas. The cries of people within cities were hushed by the howling of the surrounding flames.²¹ The elephants of the four quarters of heaven fell down and rolled upon the burning ground, lifting hills with their tusks.²² Burning hamlets and houses were crushed and smashed under falling stones and hills, which made the mountain elephants yell aloud with their dying groans and agonies.²³ Heated by the sun, all living beings rushed and

splashed the hot waters of seas. Mountain vidyadharas fell down into the hollow bosom of mountains bursting from their volcanic heat.

²⁴ In some places, some grew tired of crying. Others resorted to yoga meditation and remained quiet. Serpent races were left to roll on burning cinders below and upon the earth. ²⁵ Voracious marine beasts like sharks and whales baked in drying channels and were driven to the whirlpools of the deep. Poor fishes attempting to evade the fire flew into the air by thousands and thousands. ²⁶ Burning flames rising high in the air, as if clad in crimson apparel and dancing, caught the garments of apsara nymphs in heaven. ²⁷ The devastating kalpa fire, wreathed with its flashing flames, began to dance all around with the loud sound of bursting bamboos and cracking trees, like the beating of drums and tambourines. ²⁸ The playful fire danced like an actor on the ruined stage of the world. ²⁹ The fire ravaged all lands and islands and desolated all forests and forts. It filled all caves and the hollow vault of sky until at last it reached the tops of the ten sides of heaven.

³⁰ It blazed in caves and over cities and in all sides of valleys and lands. It blazed over hills and mountain tops, the seats of the spiritual masters, and on the seas and oceans. ³¹ Flames flashing from the eyes of Shiva and the Rudras boiled the waters of lakes and rivers, burned the bodies of gods and demons, and those of men and serpent races. A harsh whispering sound arose from everywhere. ³² With columns of flaming fire over their head, people began to play by throwing ashes upon one another, like playful demons flirting with dust and water.

³³ Flames flashed forth from underground caves on earth and all things around them were reddened by their light. ³⁴ All sides of heaven lost their blue color under the vermillion color of the clouds hanging over them. All things lost their respective colors and assumed the rosy tint of the red lotus. ³⁵ The world appeared covered under a crimson canopy from the burning flames which spread all around, resembling the evening sky under the parting glories of the setting sun. ³⁶ Covered with spreading, burning fires, the sky appeared like a hanging garden of blooming asoka flowers, or like a bed of the red kinsuka blossoms hanging in the sky. ³⁷ The earth looked like it had been scattered with red lotuses and the seas seemed to be sprinkled with red dye. In this manner the fire blazed in many forms, with its tails and crests of smoke.

³⁸ The conflagration raged with its youthful vigor in the forest where it glared in many colors, like a burning scenery shown in a painting. ³⁹ The natural changes of sunrise and sunset disappeared from the Vindhyan Hills because of the constant burning of woods upon its summit. ⁴⁰ Flying fumes emitting flashes of fire appeared like the luster of the gems in the blue Sahya Mountain in the south. ⁴¹ The blue vault of the sky looked like a greenish blue lake, decorated with lotus-like firebrands all over. Flames of fire flashed over the tops of the cloudy mountains in air. ⁴² Flames of fire, with smoky tails that resembled the tail of a comet, danced about on the stage of the world like dancing actresses with loosened and waving hair. ⁴³ The burning fire burst the parched ground and flung its sparkling particles all around, like fried rice flying all about the frying pan in various colors. ⁴⁴ Rocks and woods, burning with a bursting and splitting noise, exhibited a golden color on the surface of the earth.

⁴⁵ All lands were crushed together with the cry of their inhabitants and all seas dashed against one another with foaming froths in their mouths. ⁴⁶ Waves shone in their faces with the reflection of the

shining sun upon them. They clashed against each other as if they were clapping their hands, and dashed with such force against the land that they broke down the rocks on the seashore.⁴⁷ The raging sea with his wavelike arms grasped earth and stone, as foolish men do in their anger, and devoured them in his hollow cell with a gurgling noise, as fools swallow their false hopes with vain weeping.

⁴⁸ The all destroying, harsh sounding fire melted rivers with their banks and the rulers of the spheres fell before the jets of heated water.⁴⁹ The ten sides of the compass were out of order and confounded together. All mountains, together with their woods, houses and caves, were reduced to liquid fire.

⁵⁰ By degrees enormous Mount Meru dissolved into snow by the heat of fire, and soon after the same fire melted down great Mount Himalaya like black lac-dye.

⁵¹ All things were cold and pinched in themselves, as good people are melted by the fear of the wicked, except Malaya Mountain which yielded its fragrance even in that state.⁵² A noble minded man never forsakes his nobleness, though he is exposed to troubles, because the great never afflict another, though they are deprived of their own joy and happiness.⁵³ Burn sandalwood, yet it will diffuse its fragrance to all living beings. The intrinsic nature of a thing is never lost or changed into another state.⁵⁴ Gold is never consumed or disfigured, though it is burnt in fire. Thus there are two things, namely aura and emptiness, that cannot be consumed by all destroying fire.⁵⁵ Those bodies are above all praise which do not perish at the destruction of all others. Emptiness is indestructible on account of its omnipresence, and gold is not subject to any loss owing to its purity.⁵⁶ The property of goodness alone is true happiness, and not passion or inertia.

Then the fiery clouds moved aloft as a moving forest, sprinkling ash showers of vivid flame.

⁵⁷ Mountainous clouds of fire accompanied with flames and fumes poured liquid fire around, burning away all bodies already dried up from heat and lack of water.⁵⁸ Dried leaves of trees floating high in the air were burnt away by flames instead of the rain of heavy clouds.

⁵⁹ The encompassing and gorgeous flames passed by Kailash Mountain without touching it, knowing it to be the seat of the dreaded god Shiva, in the manner of wise men flying from the mud and mire of sin.⁶⁰ Then the god Rudra growing furious at the final destruction of the world, shot the dreadful flame of his fiery third eye and burnt down sturdy trees and robust rocks to ashes with stunning cracklings.⁶¹ The foothills of mountains, crowned with flames of fire, moved forward as if to fight the fire with their stones and clubs made of tree clumps.⁶² The sky became like a bed of full blown lotuses and creation became a mere name like that of Agastya who departed and disappeared from sight forever.⁶³ The suffering idiot, on remembering the great dissolution, took the world to be at an end, as the fire consumes all objects like the unreality of the world.

⁶⁴ Falling thunderbolts pierced all bodies and glittering flames consumed all trees and plants. The winds blew with fiery heat burning everything, even scorching the bodies of the gods.⁶⁵ Wild fires raged loose among the trees in the forest. There were clouds of hot ash flying in the air. Smoky mists emitted red hot embers and fiery sparks. Darkness rose upward with fagots of fire falling from within. Gusts of wind blew with speed and force to help the destructive fire.

Chapter 76 — Vasishta Describes a Final Dissolution of the World (3)

¹ Vasishta added:—

Destructive winds blew and shook mountains by their force, filling the seas with tremendous waves and tearing the skies with cyclonic storms.² The force of winds made seas break their boundaries and run to the limitless oceans, just as poverty drives poor people to run to the rich.³ The earth, fried by fire, went under the overflowing waters and joined with the infernal regions lying below the waters of the deep.⁴ Heaven disappeared into nothing and the entirety of creation vanished into air. Worlds were reduced to emptiness and sunlight decreased to that of a star in the starry sphere.

⁵ From some opening in the sky appeared some hideous clouds called *pushkaravarta* and others in the forms of dreadful demons, roaring with tremendous noise.⁶ The noise was as loud as the bursting of the mundane-egg or the hurling down of a large building, and like the dashing of waves against one another in a furiously raging sea.

⁷ Loud sound resounding through air and water reechoing off city towers, deafening and stunning to the ear. Swelling on mountain tops, it filled the world with uproar.⁸ The sound, swelling as if in the conch-shell of the cosmic egg, echoed with triple clanging sounds from the vaults of heaven, sky and the infernal world.⁹ The supports of all distant sides swayed at their base. The waters of all seas mixed together as if to quench the thirst of the all devouring doomsday.¹⁰ The doomsday advanced as the god Indra mounted on the back of his elephantine clouds roared aloud amidst the waters contained in the ethereal ocean from the beginning.¹¹ The great doomsday was attended with a noise as loud as that of the churning of the ocean in olden days, or as that emitted by the revolving world or a hydrostatic engine of immense force.

¹² Hearing this roaring of clouds amidst the surrounding fires, I became quite astonished at the harsh creaking noise and cast my eyes on all sides to see the clouds.¹³ I saw no trace of a cloud in any part of the heavens. I only heard their roar and saw flashes of lightning in the sky with showers of thunderbolts falling from above.¹⁴ The flaming fire spread over millions of miles on all the sides of earth and heaven, burning everything in a horrible devastation.

¹⁵ After a little while, I discovered a spot at a great distance in the sky and felt cool air blowing on my body.¹⁶ I observed kalpa clouds appearing and gathering at a great distance in the sky, where there was no trace of the living fire perceptible to the naked eye.¹⁷ Then kalpa airs blew from the watery corner or western side of the sky, burning at last in blasts capable of carrying away the great mountains of Meru, Malaya and Himalaya.¹⁸ These winds blew away the mountainous flames and burning cinders like birds. The winds carried down the spreading sparks and drove away the fire from all sides.¹⁹ Clouds of fire disappeared from the air, like evening clouds. Then clouds of ash rose into the sky and the atmosphere was cleared of every particle of fire.²⁰ The air was blowing with fire passing everywhere and melting down the golden strongholds on flying Mount Meru.²¹ The mountains on earth burning, their flames spread all about like the rays of the twelve suns.²² The waters of oceans boiled with rage and the trees and leaves of the forest were burning with the blaze.²³ Cities and celestials, sitting on their happy seats in the highest heaven of Brahma, fell down with all their inhabitants of women, young and old people, all burnt by the flames.

²⁴ The end of period (*kalpanta*) fire of dissolution was mixed with the water of the lake of Brahma.
²⁵ Strong winds uprooted deep rooted mountains and rocks and plunged them headlong into the fiery swamp of the infernal regions. ²⁶ Chaotic clouds advanced like a troop of dark colored camels, moving slowly in the blue sky with a grumbling noise. ²⁷ They appeared from a corner of the sky, like a huge mountain flashing with lightning of gorgeous flames, filled with the waters of the seven oceans. ²⁸ These clouds were capable of tearing the great vault of the world with their loud uproar, splitting all sides of heaven standing upon their solid snow white and impregnable walls. ²⁹ The doomsday was like a raging ocean. The planets were the rolling islands in the whirlpools of their orbits. Quickly moving lightning strikes were like its shifting aquatic animals and the roaring of clouds was like the howling of its waters.

³⁰ The moon, being devoured by Rahu and burned away by the fiery comet, rose to heaven again and assumed the colder form of a cloud to pour down more moisture than her nightly beams and dews.

³¹ Lightning, like golden spheres in the frigid shapes found in the Himalayas, held all paralyzed waters, woods and hills. ³² After the clouds split the vault of heaven with their harsh crackling and thunder, they dropped down solid snow at first, which then melted to the form of liquid rain.

³³ There was a jarring of discordant sounds that rubbed upon the ear and proceeded from the bursting of woods by wildfire, and the harsh shrill sound of thunderclaps in the bellowing air, and the crackling and crackling and dashing and crashing of everything in the shattering world. ³⁴ There was a sharp and shrill noise arising from the warring winds blowing in a hundred ways, and drifts of bleak cold showers of driving snow covered the face of heaven.

³⁵ The vault of heaven, supported by the blue and sapphire-like pillars of blue skies on all sides, shattered the earth and its props of the mountains with big and heavy showers of flooding rain. ³⁶ The earth was bursting and splitting from the blazing furnaces of fires on all sides. The hearts of all living beings were torn by the loud rattling of thunderbolts from heaven. ³⁷ The rain that ruled long over the realm of the fiery earth was now going upward in the form of steam which the burning earth heaved from her surface like her sighs towards heaven. ³⁸ Now the vault of heaven appeared to spread with a network studded with red lotuses of the flying fires on high. Dark showers appeared like swarms of black bees, the raindrops like their fluttering wings.

³⁹ All sides of heaven resounded to the mingled clatter of hailstone and firebrands falling down simultaneously from mixed clouds of terrible and dreadful appearance. The scene all around was as dreadful to see as the mingled warfare of two dreadful forces with deadly arms and mixed bloodshed.

Chapter 77 — Vasishta Describes a Final Dissolution of the World (4)

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Hear now about the chaotic state of the world brought on by conflict of earth, air, water and fire with one another, and how the three worlds were covered by the great antediluvian floodwaters.

² Dark clouds flying in the air like pitch black ash spread over the world like a great ocean with whirlpools of rolling smoke. ³ The dark blaze of fire glimmered amidst flammables and converted all of them into heaps of ash which flew and spread over all the world. ⁴ The swelling sound of hissing showers rose as high as if they singing a song of their victory. ⁵ All five kinds of clouds assembled and all of them poured their waters profusely upon the ground. These were the ashy clouds, the grey clouds, the antediluvian clouds, the misty clouds, and the showering clouds.

⁶ Howling breezes shook the foundations of the world. The strong wind rose high to heaven and filled all space, carrying flames to burn down the cities of the gods on every side. ⁷ Winds dived deep into the depths of water, carrying and dispersing their frigidity in all directions, numbing the senses and deafening ears. ⁸ A loud noise filled the world raised by the constant fall of rain in columns from the vault of heaven, and by the roaring and growling of the kalpa fire. ⁹ The entire earth became one ocean filled with water falling like waterfalls from the clouds of heaven, resembling the torrents of Ganges and the currents of all rivers.

¹⁰ The canopy of antediluvian clouds, pierced by shining sunbeams above them, appeared like the leafy tuft at the top of a blackish palm tree, with clusters of lurid flowers peeping through the dark leaves. ¹¹ The all destroying tornado carried away the broken fragments of trees and rocks and the tops of towers and castles, dashing them against sky covered mountains, breaking them into pieces.

¹² Swift stars and planets clashed with rapid comets and meteors, striking sparks of fire and flame from their impacts, burning like fiery whirlpools in the air. ¹³ Raging, rapid winds raised the waves of seas as high as mountains that struck against rocks on the seashore, breaking and hurling them down with tremendous noise. ¹⁴ Deep dusky and showering clouds joined with wet antediluvian clouds cast bright sunlight into shade and darkened the air with their dark shadows.

¹⁵ Seas overflowed their beds and banks, bearing down broken fragments of rocks under their depths. They became dreadful and dangerous from the rocks falling and rolling down with their currents.

¹⁶ Huge sea surges carried fragments of rocks on their waves, raised aloft by cloud-tearing winds. They dashed against and broke down shores with deep and tremendous noise. ¹⁷ The antediluvian cloud then broke the vault of heaven asunder and split the ceiling of the sky with its loud rattling, then clapped together its oak-like hands to see the universal ocean which it had made. ¹⁸ Earth, heaven and infernal regions were torn to pieces, tossed and lost in the all devouring waters. All of nature was reduced to its original emptiness, as if the world was a vast depopulated desert.

¹⁹ Now the dead and half-dead, the burnt and half-burnt bodies of gods and demigods, of gandharva spirits and men saw one another in the general ruin. They fled and fell upon each other with their lifted arms and weapons and the speed of the winds. ²⁰ Antediluvian winds were flying like funeral ashes from the piles, or like the arjunavata disease of bile drives a person up and down in the air like a column of ash. ²¹ Heaps of stones collected in the air fell forcibly on the ground, breaking whatever

they struck, just as falling hailstones from heaven clatter out of season and shatter everything where they fall.

²² Rustling breezes howling in mountain caves resounded with a rumbling noise from the fall of the mansions of gods of every side. ²³ Winds growled with harsh sounds resembling the jarring noise of demons. Winds blowing in the woods appeared to be passing through windows. ²⁴ Cities and towns burned with the demonic fire, and the mountains and homes of the gods were blazing with solar flashes, sparks in the air flying like swarms of gnats. ²⁵ The sea roared with its whirling rain waters on the surface and boiling with undersea fire below, destroying great mountains below and the homes of the gods above.

²⁶ The conflict between waters and rocks demolished the cities of the rulers of earth and hurled down the homes of gods and demons, spiritual masters and gandharva spirits. ²⁷ Stones and all solid substances were pounded to powder. Firebrands were reduced to ash when flying winds blew them all about like dust. ²⁸ Homes of gods and demons being hurled down, their walls smashing together emitted a noise like that of clouds crashing or the jarring sound of metal upon metal.

²⁹ The sky was filled with people and buildings falling from the seven regions of heaven. The gods themselves were whirling in the air, like something fallen in a whirlpool of the sea. ³⁰ All things whether burned or not were swimming up and down in the ethereal ocean, like dry leaves tossed about by winds. ³¹ The air was filled with jarring and jingling sounds from fallen buildings hitting various metals and minerals in all the worlds.

³² Then the smoky and ashy clouds all flew upward, while the heavy, watery clouds lowered upon the earth. Again swelling waves rose high upon the water and the hills and all other substances sank below. ³³ Whirlpools wheeled against one another with gurgling noises. The old ocean was rolling on with gigantic mountains floating on it like clumps of leaves and shrubs.

³⁴ The good deities were wailing loudly and weary animals moved slowly. Comets and other portents flew in the air and the universe appeared dreadful and horrible. ³⁵ The sky was full of dead and half-dead bodies carried by the breezes into its broad expanse. It presented a grey and dingy appearance, like that of dry and discolored tree leaves. ³⁶ The world was full of water falling in profuse showers from the mountain peaks. Hundreds of streams flowed down the sides of mountains, carried all about by the breeze.

³⁷ Fire now ceased to rage with its hundred flames and the swelling sea ran over its boundary shores and overflowed its banks. ³⁸ A mass of grassy plants mixed with mud and mire appeared like a large island. Intellect appeared in the far distant emptiness, like lighting over a forest.

³⁹ The rains stopped, having extinguished the fires, but the rising fumes and smoke filled the air and hid heaven so that the existence of the prior world and the former creation was altogether forgotten from memory. ⁴⁰ Then there rose the loud cry of the extinction of creation and there remained only the one being who is exempt from creation and destruction. ⁴¹ Now the winds that had been constantly struggling to upset the world, continually filling the universe with their particles, like an unceasing supply of grain, also stopped. ⁴² The bodies of comets clashing against one another were reduced to sparks of fire resembling gold dust. These extinguished at last to ashes, filled the vault of heaven with

powdered dust.

⁴³ The orb of the earth and all its contents was shattered to pieces, rolling in large masses together with the fragments of the infernal worlds. ⁴⁴ Now the seven regions of heaven and those of the infernal worlds, being mixed up in one mass with the shattered mass of the earth and its mountains, filled the universal space with chaotic waters and antediluvian winds. ⁴⁵ Then the universal ocean was swollen with the waters of all its tributary seas and rivers. There was a loud uproar of rolling waters resembling the clamor of enraged madmen.

⁴⁶ Rain began to fall in the form of fountains and cascades, then it assumed the shape of falling columns or water spouts. At last it took a figure of a palm tree, pouring down its showers in torrents.

⁴⁷ Then it ran like the current of a river, flooding on all sides. Raining clouds made the surface of the earth one extended sheet of water. ⁴⁸ The flaming fire at last subsided, just like some very great danger in human life is averted by observing the precautions given in the scriptures and the advice of the wise.

⁴⁹ At last the vast vault of the mundane world became desolate of all its contents and submerged in water, just as a bael fruit loses its substance by being tossed about in play by the hands of children.

Chapter 78 — Vasishta Describes a Final Dissolution of the World (5)

¹ Vasishta continued:—

The rainstorm, falling hail and snow shattered the surface of the earth. The violence of the waters increased like the oppression of kings in the Kali Yuga.² Rainwater falling on the ethereal Ganges made it run in a thousand streams flowing with huge torrents higher than the mountains of Meru and Mandara.³ Here waves rose to the path of the sun and there waters sank down and lay dull in mountain caves. The dull element made the universal ocean, just as a fool made the sovereign lord of earth.

⁴ Great mountains were hurled down like straw into the deep and broad whirlpools of water. The tops of huge surges reached the far distant sphere of the sun.⁵ The great mountains of Meru, Mandara, Vindhya, Sahya and Kailash dived in the waters moving like fish and sea monsters. The melted earth set like its soil, and large snakes with their lotus-like hoods floated on the waters like plant stalks.⁶ Half-burned wood and floating plants were like its moss and bushes and the wet ash of the burned world was like the dirty mud underneath the waters.

⁷ The twelve suns shone like so many full blown lotuses in the large lake of the sky. The huge and heavy *pushkara* cloud, with its dark showers of rain, seemed like a blue lotus bed filled with the dark leaves.⁸ Raging clouds roared aloud from mountain sides, like foaming waves of the ocean. The sun and moon rolled like two pieces of sapphire over cities and towns.⁹ The gods, asura demons and people at large were blown up and carried into the air until at last they flew up and fell into the disc of the sun.¹⁰ Clouds rained in torrents with loud clattering noise, their currents carrying floating rocks into the distant sea as if they were mere bubbles of water.¹¹ Deluging clouds rolled in the air after pouring their water in floods on earth, as if they were in search of other clouds with their open mouths and eyes.

¹² Rushing tornados filled the air with uproar and with one gust of wind, blasted the boundary mountain from its bottom into the air.¹³ Furious winds collected the waters of the deep to the height of mountains, which ran with a great gurgling noise all about in order to flood the earth under them.

¹⁴ The world was torn to pieces by the clashing of bodies driven together by tempestuous winds which scattered and drove millions of beings over against one another in mingled confusion.

¹⁵ Hills floated on waves like bits of straw. Dashing against the disc of the sun, they broke it into pieces as if by throwing stones.¹⁶ The great void of the universe, spread with the great net of waters in its vast space, caught the great hills resembling big eels caught in fishing nets.¹⁷ Big animal bodies and whales, living or dead, rose, floated and plunged in the deep from the currents made by whirlpools.¹⁸ Those still alive floated about the tops of sinking mountains resembling the floating froths of the sea. Gods were fluttering over them like gnats and flies.¹⁹ The spacious firmament, filled with innumerable raindrops shining like bubbles of water in the air, appeared as the thousand eyes of Indra looking on the rains below.²⁰ Indra, the god of heaven with his body of the autumn sky and his eyes of bubbling raindrops, looked on the floating clouds in the midway skies flowing like the currents of flooded rivers.²¹ *Pushkara* and *avartaka* clouds with their world floods joined together in embrace, like two winged mountains flying in the air and clashing against one another.²² These

clouds, at last satisfied having devoured the world under their all swallowing waters, were now roaring loudly and flying lightly in the air, as if they were dancing with uplifted hilly arms.²³ Clouds were poured their floods of water and mountain tops were aflame in the midway sky. The huge snakes that had supported the earth were now diving deep into the mud of the infernal regions.

²⁴ The constant showers filled the three regions, like the triple stream of Ganges running in three directions. They drowned the highest mountains, whose tops floated like froth in the universal ocean.

²⁵ Floating mountains struck against the sphere of heaven and broke it into fragments. The vidyadharis of heaven floated like pretty lotuses on the surface of waters.²⁶ The universe was reduced to a universal ocean which roared with a tremendous noise. The three worlds, split to pieces, were carried away into the waters of the endless deep.

²⁷ There remained no one to save another. There was no one who was not swept away by the flood. For who can save us when all devouring time grasps up in his clutches?²⁸ There remained neither sky nor horizon. There was no upside or downward in infinite space. There was no creation or creature anywhere. All were submerged under one infinite sheet of water.

Chapter 79 — After Dissolution, Vasishta Sees the Gods in Nirvana; Creation Linked to Desire

¹ Vasishta resumed:—

Seeing the end of all, still I retained my seat in infinite emptiness. My eyes were captured by the sight of a glorious light shining like the sun's morning rays.² While I was looking at that light, I saw the great Brahma sitting like a statue carved in stone, intent upon his meditation of the Supreme One, surrounded by his transcendent glory.

³ I saw a multitude of gods, sages and holy persons: Brihaspati and Sukra, the preceptors of gods and demigods; the gods of wealth (Kubera) and death (Yama);⁴ the gods of water (Varuna), fire (Agni) and others, and companies of rishis, spiritual masters, sadhyas, gandharvas and others.⁵ They were all sitting in meditation, like figures in a painting. They all sat in lotus posture and appeared as lifeless and immovable bodies.⁶ Then the twelve suns met at the same center and they sat in the same lotus posture of meditation as the other gods.

⁷ Then after a while, I saw the lotus-born Brahma as if I saw the object of my dream after waking.

⁸ Then I lost the sight of the gods assembled in the world of Brahma, just as when great minded men lose sight of the most important objects of their desire. Nor did I see the aerial city of my dream upon my waking.⁹ Then the entire creation, which is only a pattern of the mind of Brahma, appeared like an empty desert to me, the earth as a barren waste upon the ruin of its cities.¹⁰ Gods and sages, spiritual masters and vidyadhari spirits were nowhere to be seen. They all had blended in the same void everywhere.

¹¹ Then, seated in my ethereal seat, I came to know by my perception that all of them had obtained their nirvana extinction.¹² With the extinction of their desires, they also became extinct, just as sleeping dreamers come to themselves after they are awakened from their illusory vision.¹³ The body is an aerial nothing appearing as a substantial something because of our desire. It disappears with the removal of our desire for it, like a dream vanishing from the sight of a waking man.¹⁴ The aerial body appears as real like any other image in our dream. Nothing remains of it when we know its unreal nature and the vanity of our desires.¹⁵ When we are awake in samadhi, we also have no consciousness of either our spiritual or physical bodies.

¹⁶ I use the example of something seen in our dream being false because it is well known to children and everybody and it is used in the Vedas and Puranas.¹⁷ Only a great imposter would deny the falsity of his ideas in dreams and support the reality of visible sights. Such a one deserves to be shunned, for who can wake the waking sleeper?¹⁸ What causes the physical body? Not the dream, because the bodies seen in a dream are invisible to the naked eye. This being true, it follows that there is no solid body in the next world.

¹⁹ Should there be other bodies after the loss of the present ones, then there would be no need of repeated creation of bodies if the original bodies were to continue forever.²⁰ Anything having a form is, of course, perishable. The position that there was another kind of world before is likewise untenable.²¹ If you say that the world was never destroyed and that understanding is produced of itself in the body in the same way as spirit is generated in fermented liquor,²² then your position is inconsistent with the doctrines of the Puranas, the Vedas, and other scriptures, which invariably

maintain the destructibility of all material things.

²³ Should you, O intelligent Rama, deny the acceptance of these scriptures, like the Charvakas, then tell me. What faith can be placed in the scriptures of those heretical teachings, which are as false as the offspring of a barren woman? ²⁴ The wise do not favor these heretical doctrines because of their destructive tendencies. There are many discrepancies in them, as you shall know from the few that I am going to point out to you.

²⁵ If you say the human spirit is like the spirit of liquors, then tell me what makes the departed spirit of a person who dies in a foreign country revisit his friends at home in the shape and form of a fiend?

²⁶ To this they answer that the apparition is only a false appearance. Granting such, why not recognize our own appearances to be equally false? ²⁷ It being so, how can you believe that the departed souls of men assume bodies in the next world, as said in the scriptures? ²⁸ There is no truth in the proof of a ghost, just as there is no proof of spirit in liquor. Hence if the supposition of the former is untrue, what faith is there in a future body in the next world?

²⁹ If the existence of spirits is granted from the common belief of mankind in them, then why not accept as true the doctrine of a future state of the dead, upon the testimony of the scriptures? ³⁰ If belief that a person is suddenly possessed by an evil spirit is any ground for reliance, why then should he not rest his belief in his future state, which is confirmed by the dogmas of the scriptures?

³¹ Whatever a man thinks or knows in himself, he supposes it to be true at all times. Whether his belief be right or wrong, he knows it correct to the best of his belief. ³² A man well knowing that the dead will live again in another world relies fully upon that hope and does not care to know whether he shall have a real body there or not. ³³ Therefore the nature of men is to have a preconceived opinion about their future existence. This with their growing desire to have certain forms of bodies for themselves, leads them to the error of seeing several shapes before them.

³⁴ Abstaining from this desire removes the disease of the errors of looker, looking, and the look. Retaining this desire leads us to see this apparition of the world always before us. ³⁵ So the feeling of desire led the Supreme Spirit of Brahma to create the world. But its abandonment causes our nirvana, while its retention leads us to the error of the world. ³⁶ This desire first sprang in the Divine Mind of Brahma and not in the immutable spirit of Brahma. I feel this desire rising now in me, seeing the true and supreme Brahman in all and everywhere.

³⁷ All this knowledge that you derive here is said to form nirvana by the wise. That which is not learnt here is said to constitute the bondage of the world. ³⁸ True knowledge is to see God everywhere. It is self-evident in our innermost soul and does not shine without it. ³⁹ Self-consciousness of our liberation is what really makes us so. The knowledge that we are bound to this earth is the source of all our sorrows and it requires great pains to remove it.

⁴⁰ The awakening of our consciousness of the world is the cause of our being enslaved to it. Our highest bliss is the dormancy of such awareness in the trance of samadhi. By being awake to the concerns of the world, you find the unreal appearing as real to you.

⁴¹ Lying dormant in holy trance, without the sluggishness of unconsciousness, is called our spiritual liberation. Our wakefulness to the outer world is said to be our state of bondage to it. ⁴² Now let your

nirvana be devoid of all desire, trouble, care and fear. Let it be a clear and continuous peace without consideration of unity or duality. Let it be like the spacious firmament, ever calm, clear and undisturbed.

Chapter 80 — Vasishta Describes a Final Dissolution; Appearance of Adipurusha (Rudra, Shiva); Various Numbers of Voids

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Afterwards the celestials who were present in the heaven of Brahma vanished and became invisible like a lamp with its burnt out wick.² The twelve suns disappeared in the body of Brahma. Their burning beams burnt away the heaven of Brahma, just as they had burnt down the earth and other bodies.³ Having consumed the seat and home of Brahma, they fell into the meditation of the Supreme Brahman and became extinct in him like Brahma, like a lamp extinguished for lack of oil.

⁴ Then the waters of the universal ocean invaded the celestial city of Brahma, flooding its surface like the shade of night fills the face of the earth with darkness.⁵ Now the whole world was filled with water, from the highest seat of Brahma to the lowest pit of hell. All was as full of water as a ripe grape is swollen with its juice.⁶ Waving waters rising like mountain tops blended with the flying birds of air and washed the seats and feet of the gods hovering over them. They touched the antediluvian clouds, which deluged rain over them.

⁷ In the meantime, from my aerial seat, I saw a dreadful appearance in the skies which horrified me altogether.⁸ It was a deep and dark chaos that embraced the entire sky in its grasp and appeared like the gloom of night accumulated from the beginning to the end of creation.⁹ This dark form radiated bright beams of millions of morning suns, resplendent like three suns together, steady lighting flashing.

¹⁰ Its eyes were dazzling and its face flashed with the blaze of a burning furnace. It had five faces, three eyes, and ten hands, each holding a trident of immense size.¹¹ It appeared before me with its body outstretched in the air, standing transfixed in the sky like a huge black cloud extending all over the atmosphere.¹² It remained on the visible horizon, below and out of the universal ocean of waters, the position and features of hands and feet and the rest of its body indistinctly marked in the sky.

¹³ The breath of its nostrils agitated the waters of the universal ocean like Vishnu's arms churning the Milky Ocean after the great flood.¹⁴ Then from the antediluvian waters arose a male being who would later be called the First Male, Adipurusha. He was the personification of collective ego, the causeless cause of all.¹⁵ He rose out of the ocean like a huge mountainous rock, then flew into the air with his big flapping wings extending over and enclosing the whole space of infinite emptiness.¹⁶ From his triple eyes and trident, I knew him to be Lord Rudra himself. I bowed down to him as the great god of all.

¹⁷ Rama asked, "Sage, why did Lord Rudra have that form? Why was he so gigantic and dark? Why did he have ten arms and hands, and five faces and mouths?¹⁸ Why did he have three eyes and such a fierce form? Was he absolute in himself or delegated by any other? What was his errand and what did he do? Was it a mere shadow of its substance?"

¹⁹ Vasishta replied:—

This being is named Rudra because he is the sum total of Egoism. He is full of self-pride and the form in which I saw him was clear emptiness.²⁰ This lord was of the form of vacuum and the color and brightness of emptiness. On account of being the essence of empty consciousness, he is represented as the blue sky.

²¹ Being the soul of all beings and being present in all places, he is represented in his gigantic form. His five faces represent his five internal organs of sense. ²² The external organs of sense and the five members of his body are represented by ten arms on both sides of his body. ²³ This lord of creation and all living bodies and mankind is absorbed in the Supreme One at the final dissolution of the world. When he is let out to pass from the unity, he appears in this form.

²⁴ He is only a part of the Eternal Soul. He has no visible body or form of his own. He is thought of in this form I have described by the false conception of men. ²⁵ Having proceeded from the emptiness of Consciousness, Lord Rudra is set in the material vacuum. He also resides in the form of air in the bodies of living beings. ²⁶ The aerial Rudra becomes exhausted in course of time, then by forsaking animated bodies, he returns to the reservoir of eternal rest and peace.

²⁷ The three eyes of Rudra are the three qualities, the three times, the three intellectual faculties of the mind, understanding and egoism, the three Vedas, and the three letters of the sacred syllable of Aum.

²⁸ The trident of Rudra is his scepter, held in his hand to imply his dominion over the three worlds.

²⁹ He is represented as having a living body and soul to indicate his personality and personification of the egoism of all living beings, and that there is no living body apart from himself.

³⁰ His nature and business is to provide for all living creatures according to their wants and deserts. Therefore he manifests in the form of Shiva, which is Divine Consciousness in the form of air. ³¹ This lord, having destroyed and devoured the whole creation at the end, rests in perfect peace and becomes of the form of pure air and the blue sky. ³² After affecting the destruction of the world, he drinks the universal ocean. Then being quite satisfied, he rests in perfect peace and inaction.

³³ Afterwards as I saw him drawing the waters of the ocean into his nostrils by the force of his breath.

³⁴ I saw a flame of fire flashing out from his mouth and thought it was the flash of the latent fire of the water drawn in him by the breath of his nostrils. ³⁵ Rudra, the personified Ego, remains in the form of latent heat in undersea fire and continues to suck up the waters of the ocean until the end of a kalpa epoch.

³⁶ The waters then enter the infernal regions like snakes entering holes beneath the ground, and the antediluvian winds entered his mouth in the form of the five vital airs, just as the winds of heaven have their recess in hollow sky. ³⁷ Lord Rudra then goes on to swallow and suck up the marine waters, just as bright sunlight swallows the gloom of the dark night. ³⁸ At last there appears a calm and quiet emptiness in the blue sky, resembling the wide ocean filled with flying dust and smoke, devoid of any being or created thing, and stretching from the world of Brahma to the lowest abyss of hell.

³⁹ I described four different spheres of empty void, bearing no vestige of anything moving or stirring in them. Listen to me, O son of Raghu, and you will hear what they were.

⁴⁰ One of these lay in the middle of the air and was sustained in it without any prop or support, like particles of fragrance floating in the air. This was Rudra in the form of the blue sky. ⁴¹ The second was lying far away and appeared like the curved, hollow vault of the sky over this earth. It was a part of the mundane system and below the seven spheres of the hell regions. ⁴² The third was a region above the mundane sphere. It was invisible to the naked eye owing to its great distance beyond the

blue sky.⁴³ Then there was the surface of the earth with its lower hemisphere of the watery regions. It was traversed by the great Himalaya Mountain which was the seat of the gods and surrounded by islands, sands and shores surrounded by sea.

⁴⁴ There is another sphere, lying at the furthest distance from the other circles of the world, which comprises the infinite space of emptiness. It extends unlimited like the unbounded and transparent spirit of God.⁴⁵ This was the remotest sphere of heavens that I could observe. There was nothing else observable on any side, beside and beyond the limits of these four spheres or circles.

⁴⁶ Rama asked, "Tell me, O venerable sage, is there any sphere or space beyond what is contained in the mind of Brahma? Then tell me what and how many of them are there? What are their boundaries and how are they situated and to what end and purpose?"

⁴⁷ Vasishtha replied:—

Know Rama, that there are ten other spheres beyond this Brahmanda world. Of these, the first is the sphere of water lying beyond the two parts of the earth. It is ten times greater than the land which it covers, just as the shadow of evening spreads over the sky.⁴⁸ Beyond that is the sphere of heat, which is ten times greater in extent than that of water. Far from this is the region of the winds, whose circle is ten times larger than that of solar heat and light.⁴⁹ Next to these is the sphere of air, which is ten times as wide as the circuits of the winds. It is the highest sphere of transparent air and is said to comprise the infinite emptiness of the Divine Spirit.⁵⁰ Afar and aloft from these, there are some other spheres also, whose circles extend to the distance of ten times above one another in the vast infinity of space.

⁵¹ Rama said, "Tell me, O chief of sages, who holds up the water of the deep below and supports the air of the sky above the world? How they are held up?"

⁵² Vasishtha replied:—

All earthly things are upheld by the earth, as water supports the leaves of lotuses upon it. Every part depends upon the whole, just as a child depends upon its mother.⁵³ Hence everything runs to and is attracted by whatever is larger than it, and situated nearer to it than others, just as the thirsty man runs to and is attracted by the nearby water.⁵⁴ So all metallic and other bodies depend upon the close union of their parts, which being joined together, are as inseparable from one another as arms and legs are attached to a person's body.

⁵⁵ Rama asked, "Tell me sage, how do the parts of the world exist together? How are they joined together? How are they separated from one another and destroyed in the end?"

⁵⁶ Vasishtha replied:—

Whether the world is supported by someone or not, and whether it remains fixed or falls off, in reality it is an insubstantial form, like a city in a dream.⁵⁷ What falls away or remains fixed on some support? It is seen in the same manner as our consciousness shows it to us.⁵⁸ The world is contained in and shown by the intellect in the same manner as wind is contained in and let out of air, and as the sky presents blueness and other airy appearances.⁵⁹ These habitable worlds forming the universe are only imaginary cities and creations of Consciousness. They are only airy representations of the airy

mind, just as the formless sky is represented in empty emptiness, and appearing in various forms to us.

⁶⁰ The nature of our intellect is to give many things to our consciousness and to make us unconscious of their disappearance by day and night.⁶¹ An innumerable series of thoughts are constantly employing our minds when we are sitting and at rest, and so they are flying off and returning to us by day and night.

⁶² All things appear to approach their dissolution to one who knows their destructibility and their ultimate extinction at the end of a kalpa period. All things seem to be always growing in the emptiness of the mind of one who is familiar with only their growth.⁶³ All our thoughts appear in the vacuum of our minds like the vaporous chains of pearls seen in the autumn sky. They are both as false and fleeting as the other, and yet they press so very thick and quick on our sight and minds that there is no counting them.

Chapter 81 — The Dance of Kali, Bhairavi

¹ Vasishta related:—

Afterwards, O Rama, I saw the same Rudra standing in the same sky dancing with a hideous form.
² This body became so big as to fill the whole atmosphere, and as deep and dark black as to cover the ten sides of the sky under the shadow of its dark appearance.³ Its three eyes flashed with the flaming lights of the sun, moon and fire. His body, black as the fumes of a dark flame, was as silent as the ten sides of the naked sky.⁴ The eyes blazed with the flame of the undersea fire and the arms were as big as the huge surges of the sea. The blue body seemed like the consolidated form of waters rising from the blue universal ocean.

⁵ As I was looking upon this enormous body, I saw a form like that of its shadow rising from it, jumping about as if dancing.⁶ I was thinking in my mind, “How could this shadow appear in this dark and dreary night when the heavens were hidden under darkness and there was no light shining in the sky?”⁷ As I was reflecting in this manner, in the foreground of that ethereal stage I saw a strong phantom of a dark dingy female with three eyes, prancing and dancing and glancing all about.

⁸ She was of a large and lean stature with dark black complexion. Her flaming eyeballs burned like fire. She covered with wild flowers all over her body.⁹ She was as inky black as pasted pitch and as dark as the darkest night. Her body of darkness looked like the image of primeval night.¹⁰ With her horrid and wide open jaws, she seemed to view the spacious vacuum of air. With her long legs and outstretched arms, she appeared to measure the depth and breadth of open space on all sides.

¹¹ Her frame was faint, as if reduced by long enduring fast, and it stooped lower and lower as if pressed down by hunger. It was wavering to and fro, like a body of dark clouds is driven backward and forward by driving winds.¹² Her stature was so lean and long that it could not stand by itself. Like a skeleton, it was supported by bands of ribs and arteries to keep it from falling.¹³ In a word, her stature was so tall and towering that it was by my daily journey in the upper and lower skies that I came to see the top of her head and the base of her feet.

¹⁴ After this I saw her body. Held together by its complicated bands of tendons and arteries, it looked like a bush of tangling thickets and thistles.¹⁵ She was wrapped in vests of various colors and her head was decorated by luminaries, like a headdress of lotus flowers. She was encompassed by the pure light of heaven and her robe flashed like fire enflamed by the breath of winds.¹⁶ The lobes of her long ears were adorned with rings of snakes and earrings of human skulls. Her knee bones were as prominent as two dried gourd shells and her two dark mammary glands hung loosely upon her chest.

¹⁷ The braid of hair on the top of her head was adorned with feathers of young male peacocks and defied the crowned head of the lord of the gods and the circle of his discus.¹⁸ Her moonlike teeth cast their luster like moonbeams. They glistened amidst the dark ocean of chaotic night, just as moonbeams play upon the surface of waves of the dark blue deep.

¹⁹ Her long stature rose like a large tree in the sky. Her two limbs resembled two dry gourds growing upon it and as she turned about in the air, these clattered like the rustling of a tree by a breeze.²⁰ As she danced about in the air, her dark arms lifted on high, they resembled the rising of the waves of the dark ocean of eternity.²¹ Now she lifts one arm and then many more, and at last she displays her

countless hands to play her part in the playhouse of the universe.²² Now she shows only one face and then another, and afterwards many more without end in order to represent her various and infinite parts in the vast theater of the world.²³ Now she dances on one foot, then instantly on both feet. She stands on a hundred legs in one moment and on her numberless feet at another.

²⁴ I understood this person to be the figure of chaos. The wise name her Goddess Kali or eternal night.

²⁵ The sockets of her triple eyes flashed with a flame like that of the furnace of a fire engine. Her eyebrow was as glaring and flaring as burning Indranila Mountain.²⁶ Her cheek bones were as frightful as two high hills projecting over her hideous open mouth, which appeared like a mountain cave capable of swallowing the whole world.²⁷ Her shoulder blades were as high as two mountain peaks piercing the starry frame where they were decorated by clusters of stars, like strings of pearls.

²⁸ She danced with her outstretched arms resembling the waving branches of trees. She displayed the brightness of her nails, like that of blooming blossoms upon them, or like so many full moons shining under the blue sky.²⁹ As she turned and tossed her dark hands on every side, she looked like a dark cloud moving in the sky. The luster of her nails appeared to shed the splendor of stars all around.

³⁰ The face of the sky resembled a forest filled the black trees of her two dark arms. Her outstretched fingers, looking like the twigs of trees, were covered by the blossoms of their pearly nails which waved like flowers in the blue sky.

³¹ With legs taller than the tallest palm and tamara trees, she stalked over the burning earth and put to shame the largest trees that grew upon it.³² The long and flowing hairs on her head reached and spread over the skies. They formed black coverings for the dark elephantine clouds moving about in the empty air.³³ From her nostrils she breathed a rapid gale of wind which carried mountains aloft in the air and blew great gales in the sky resounding with loud sounds of thunder from all sides of its boundless spheres.³⁴ The breath of her nostrils and mouth blew in unison all about the circle of the universe and kept the great sphere in its constant rotation, as if with regular harmonic tones of progression.

³⁵ Then, as I looked on her attentively, I saw that her stature was enlarging with her dancing, until at last I found it to fill the whole space of the air and sky.³⁶ As long I continued to observe her dancing, I saw great mountains hanging all about her body like a string of jewels.³⁷ Dark antediluvian clouds formed a black costume about her body, and the phenomena of the three worlds appeared as the various decorations that adorned her body.³⁸ The Himalaya and Sumeru Mountains were like her two silver and golden earrings and the rolling worlds looked like ringing bells and belts about her waist.

³⁹ The ranges of the boundary mountains were like the chains and flower wreaths upon her body, and cities, towns, villages and islands were like the leaves of trees scattered about her.⁴⁰ All the cities and towns of the earth appeared as adornments on her body, and all the three worlds and their seasons and divisions of time were as ornaments and garments upon her body.

⁴¹ She had the streams of the holy Ganga and Yamuna Rivers hanging down like strings of pearls from the ears of her other heads. The virtues and vices decorated her ears.⁴² The four Vedas were her four breasts which flowed with sweet milk like her sweat. The doctrines of other scriptures flowed like milk from their nipples.⁴³ Her armor and arms, the various weapons such as sword, shield, spear and

club which she carried, decorated her body like wreaths of flowers.⁴⁴ The gods and all fourteen kinds of animal beings were situated like lines of hair on her body in her form of animated nature itself.

⁴⁵ Cities, villages and hills situated in her body all joined in their merry dance with her in the expectation of being restored to life in the same forms again.⁴⁶ The unstable moving creation which rested in her appeared to me as if situated in the next world, dancing with joy in the hope of its restoration of life.

⁴⁷ Chaotic Kali, having devoured and assimilated the world in herself, danced with joy like a peacock with a snake in its belly that it has greedily eaten at the appearance of a dark cloud.⁴⁸ The world continued to remain and exhibit its real form in her wide extended figure like the shadow of a thing seen in a mirror, and the locations of countries shown on a map.⁴⁹ I saw her sometimes standing still, with the whole world and all its forests and mountains moving and dancing in her body, and all forms repeatedly reduced and produced from her.⁵⁰ I saw the harmonious vibration of the whole in the mirror of that body. I saw the repeated rising and setting of the world in that circle, without its utter extinction.⁵¹ I marked the revolution of the stars and the rising of mountains within its perimeter, and I observed the host of gods and demigods assembling and dispersing on her in time, just as flights of gnats and flies are driven to and fro by the winds in open air.

⁵² All these heavenly bodies and these islands in the ocean were moving around her like the flying wheels of a broken war-car. They whirled up and down about her like rocks and wood in a whirlpool.⁵³ She was clad in the robes of blue clouds, rolled up and folded by the breezes of air. The cracking of wood and bones under her feet answered the sound of her footsteps and anklets.⁵⁴ The world filled with the noise of the concussion and separation of its objects, and the tumult of worldly people appeared like passing shadows in a mirror, or like the entrance and exits of actors in a play on stage.⁵⁵ The high-headed Meru and the long armed boundary mountains seemed to be dancing about her like moving clouds, and the forest trees seen in the clouds seemed to perform their circular dance all around.⁵⁶ High-swelling seas heaved their waves to heaven, carrying with them the uprooted woods from the coasts on high, then throwing them down and sinking them in the waters below.⁵⁷ Cities were seen rolling with a tremendous noise in the waters below. No traces of houses or towers or any human homes were found beneath.

⁵⁸ As chaotic night was thus wandering at random, the sun and moon, with their light and shade, found shelter in the tops of her nails where they sparkled like threads of gold.⁵⁹ She was clad in the blue covering of the clouds, adorned with necklaces of frost and icicles. Worlds hung about her like the trickling dewdrops of her perspiration.⁶⁰ The blue sky formed a veil about her head, the infernal region her footstool, the earth her bowels, and the several sides were so many arms on her.⁶¹ The seas and their islands formed the cavities and pimples on her body. Hills and rocks made her rib bones and the winds of heaven were her vital airs.

⁶² As she continued her dancing, huge mountains and rocks swung and reeled about her gigantic body like her attendant satellites.⁶³ Mountain trees turning around her appeared to weave garlands and dance about, congratulating her for commencing a new kalpa cycle.⁶⁴ Gods and demigods, hairless serpents and worms, and all hairy bodies are only component parts of her body. Being unable to

remain motionless while she is in motion, they all turned round with her.

⁶⁵ She weaves the three-fold cord of the sacred thread, consisting of acts, sacrifices and knowledge, which she proclaims aloud in the thundering voice of the triple Vedas. ⁶⁶ Before her, there is no heaven or earth. One becomes the other by its constant rotation like the wheel of a vehicle. ⁶⁷ Her wide open nostrils constantly breathe out harsh currents of her breath which give rise to the winds of air and their loud roaring and whistling. ⁶⁸ Her hundred-fold arms revolving in all four directions give the sky the appearance of a forest filled with the tall heads of trees and their branches, shaken by a furious tornado in the air.

⁶⁹ At last my steady eyesight grew tired seeing the varieties of productions from her body and their movements resembling the manners of an army in warfare. ⁷⁰ Mountains were seen rolling as if by an engine and the cities of the celestials fell downward. All these appearances were observed to take place in the mirror of her person. ⁷¹ Meru Mountains were torn and carried away like branches of trees and the Malayas were tossed about like flying leaves. The Himalayas fell down like dewdrops and all earthly things were scattered like straw. ⁷² Hills and rocks fled away and the Vindya Mountains flew like aerials in the air. Forests rolled in whirlpools and stars floated in the sea of heaven like swans and geese in lakes below. ⁷³ Islands floated like straws in the ocean of her body and seas were worn like a bracelet on her. The homes of the gods were like lotus flowers blooming in the large lake of her person.

⁷⁴ As we see the images of cities in our dream and a fair sky light in the darkness of night, so I saw all things in her dark body as vividly as if shining in broad daylight. ⁷⁵ All things, even immovable such as mountains, seas and trees, appeared moving and dancing in her body. ⁷⁶ Wandering worlds danced in the great circle of her spacious body as if they were mere straw in the vast ocean of creation. Thus the sea rolled on mountains and high hills pierced the hollow of heaven above. This heaven, with its sun and moon, turned below the earth. The earth with all its islands, mountains, cities, forests and flower gardens danced in heaven around the sun. ⁷⁷ Mountains wandered in the surrounding sky and the sea passed beyond the horizon. Cities and all human houses traversed the skies. Rivers and lakes passed through other regions like objects reflecting themselves in different mirrors or like a storm-tossed branch is hurled far away. ⁷⁸ Fish glided in the desert air as they swam in the watery plain. Cities were situated in empty air as firmly as if fixed on solid earth. Clouds raised waters to heaven, then were driven back by winds to pour their waters on mountain tops.

⁷⁹ Groups of stars wandered about like lights from a thousand lamps in the sky. They seemed to shed gems with their rays as they rolled, or scatter flowers from all sides on the heads of gods and aerial beings. ⁸⁰ Creations and destructions accompanied her like fleeting days and nights, or like jewels of brilliant black gems on her body. They were like two fortnights resembling her white and black wings. ⁸¹ The sun and moon were the two bright gems on her body and clusters of stars formed her necklaces of lesser gems. The clear sky was her white dress and flashes of lightning formed the brocaded fringes of her garment. ⁸² As she danced her giddy dance of destruction, she threw worlds together under her feet like anklets, making a jingling sound like that of her trinkets.

⁸³ In her warfare with the jarring elements, rolling on like waves of the ocean and darkening the daylight as by the waving swords of warriors, she listened to the tumult of all the worlds and their

peoples.⁸⁴ The gods Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, together with the rulers of sun, moon and fire and all other gods and demigods who shine in their respective offices, were all made to fly before like a flight of gnats with the speed of lightning.

⁸⁵ Her body is a collection of conflicting elements and contrary principles: creation and destruction, existence and non-existence, happiness and misery, life and death, and all injunctions and prohibitions.⁸⁶ The various states of production and existence, and the continuance of action and motion and their cessation which appear to take place in her body, as they do in all physical beings, together with the earth's revolution and all other worlds in empty air, are all only false delusions of our minds because there is nothing in reality except a boundless emptiness.⁸⁷ Life and death, peace and trouble, joy and sorrow, war and truce, anger and fear, envy and enmity, faith and distrust and all other opposite feelings accompany this worldly life. They dwell together in the same body like gems stored in a chest.

⁸⁸ The intellectual sphere of her body abounds with ideas of multifarious worlds which appear like phantoms in the air, or like fallacies of vision to a dim sighted man.⁸⁹ Whether the world is unmoving in the intellect or a passing phenomenon of outward vision, it appears both as stable and as moving, like the reflection of objects in a revolving mirror.⁹⁰ All worldly objects fluctuate like the changing shows in a magic play. They forsake their forms and assume others as quickly as the fickle desires of whimsical children are ever shifting from one object to another.

⁹¹ Combinations of causal powers cause the production of bodies. Their separation effects their dissolution. In the same way, accumulation of grain makes a granary and their removal tends to its disappearance.

⁹² The goddess now appears in one form, then in another. Now she becomes as small as a thumb, then in a moment she fills the sky.⁹³ That goddess is all in all. She is changed through everything in world. She is the cosmos itself and also the power of the intellect. She fills the whole curved hallow vault of the sky with her form of pure emptiness.⁹⁴ She is the intellect that embraces all, whatever is contained in the three worlds and in all three times. She expands the worlds contained in her, like a painter draws figures pictured in his mind.⁹⁵ She is the all comprehensive and plastic nature or form of all things. Being one with the intellectual spirit, she is equally as calm and quiet as the other. Being thus uniform in her nature, she is changed to endless forms in the twinkling of her eye.⁹⁶ All these phenomena appear in her like lotuses and carved figures marked in a hollow stone. Her body is the hollow sphere of heaven. Her mind is full of all forms appearing like waves in the depth of sea, or like objects reflected in a crystal stone.

⁹⁷ The very furious goddess Bhairavi, the consort of the dreaded god Bhairava, the lord of destruction, was thus dancing about with her fierce forms filling the whole firmament.⁹⁸ On one side the earth was burning with fire issuing from the eye on the forehead of all destroying Rudra. On the other was his consort Rudrani, dancing like a forest blown away by a hurricane.⁹⁹ She was armed with many weapons, such as a spade, a mortar and pestle, a club, a mace, and others which adorned her body like a garland of flowers.¹⁰⁰ In this manner, she danced and scattered the flowers of her garlands all around in her acts of destructions and recreation.¹⁰¹ She hailed god Bhairava, the ruler of the skies, who joined her dancing with his form as big and tall as hers.

¹⁰² May god Bhairava with his associate goddess Kalaratri (Chaotic Night) preserve you all in their act of heroic dance, with the beating of loud drums and the blowing of their buffalo horn, as they drink their bowls of blood and are adorned with wreaths of flowers hanging down from their heads to the breasts.

Chapter 82 — All Phenomena Are Void; Shiva

¹ Rama asked, “Sage, who is this goddess dancing her act of destruction? Why does she carry pots and fruit like flower garlands on her body? ² Are the worlds completely destroyed at the end, or do they become extinct in the goddess Kali and reside in her body? When does her dance come to an end?”

³ Vasishta replied:—

Neither is he male nor female, nor was there dancing by one or a duality of the two. Such being the case and the nature of their action, neither has any form. ⁴ That which is without beginning or end is the Divine Consciousness alone which in the manner of infinite emptiness is the cause of all causes.

⁵ The uncreated and endless light exists from eternity and extends over all space. This calm and quiet state of ethereal space is known as Shiva or tranquil, and its change to confusion at the end is called Bhairava or the dreadful.

⁶ It is impossible for pure and formless consciousness to remain alone and aloof from its association with plastic nature, just as it is unlikely to find any gold existing without some form or other. ⁷ How can intellect exist without its intelligence, or pepper without its pungency? ⁸ Consider whether there can be any gold without a form of a bracelet or something else, or how a substance can exist without its substantial property or nature? ⁹ Say, what is the extract of the sugarcane unless it has sweetness? You cannot call it sugarcane juice unless you taste sweet flavor.

¹⁰ When the intellect is devoid of its reasoning, you can not call it the intellect. Nor is the empty form of the intellect ever liable to any change or annihilation. ¹¹ Emptiness admits of no variety. It only retains its identity as emptiness. In order to assume diversity, the void must remain a void. ¹² Therefore the unchanged and undisturbed essential essence must be without beginning and unlimited, full of all potency in itself. ¹³ Therefore the creation of the three worlds and their destruction, the earth, the firmament and the sides of the compass, together with all acts of creation and destruction are the random phenomena of emptiness.

¹⁴ All births, deaths, delusions and ignorance, being and not being, together with knowledge and dullness, restraint and liberty, and all events whether good or evil, ¹⁵ knowledge and its want, the body and its loss, temporariness and long durations in time, together with mobility and inertia, and egoism and you and all other things are That alone. ¹⁶ All good and evil, goodness and badness, ignorance and intelligence, together with durations of time and space, substance and action, and all our thoughts, fancies, and imagination, ¹⁷ the sight of the forms of things and the thoughts of the mind, the action of the body, understanding and senses, the elements of earth and water, fire, air and vacuum extending all about us, ¹⁸ these and all others, proceed from the pure intellectual emptiness of the Divine Spirit which resides in its empty form in everything and is always without decay and decrease.

¹⁹ All things exist in pure emptiness and are as pure as emptiness itself. There is nothing beside this empty air, though they appear as real as a mountain does in our hollow dream. ²⁰ The intellectual spirit, which I have described as transcendent void, is the same as what we call soul (*jiva*), the everlasting, and Rudra, the eternal. ²¹ He is adored as Vishnu by some and as Brahma the great

progenitor of men by others. He is called the sun and moon, and Indra, Varuna, Yama, Kubera and Agni also.²² He is the wind, the cloud and sea, the sky, and everything that there is or is not, whatever manifests itself in the empty sphere of Consciousness.

²³ In this manner all things appear under different names and are taken to be true by the ignorant eye. They all vanish into nothing in their spiritual light which shows them in their pure intellectual natures.

²⁴ In the understanding of the ignorant, the world appears separate from the spirit. But to the intellectual soul, the emptiness of the intellect is known to be situated in the Divine Spirit. Therefore there is no distinction of unity and duality to the knowing mind.

²⁵ The living soul is tossed about like a wave in the ocean of the world. It runs the course of repeated births and deaths until it comes to know the nature of the Supreme Spirit, when it becomes as immortal and perfect as the eternal soul and the same with it.²⁶ By this knowledge of the Universal Soul, the human soul attains its perfect tranquility. It no longer sees itself as a fluctuating wave in the ocean of the world, but sees itself and everything else to be as calm and quiet as the eternal and infinite spirit of God.

Chapter 83 — All Is Shiva

¹ Vasishta added:—

I have already told you that Shiva is the representation of empty consciousness and that Rudra is dancing all about.² The forms attributed to them are not real, only representations of the grosser aspects of intellectual emptiness.

³ With my intellectual and clear vision, I saw that sphere of intellect in its clear, bright and clear light. But it did not appear so to others who, in their ignorance, saw it as dark as the black complexion of the associate goddess.⁴ At the end of the kalpa cycle, I saw the two apparitions of delusion appearing before me. One was furious Rudra and the other ferocious Bhairava. I knew them both to be only delusion, creatures of my mistaken fancy.⁵ The great deep opening seen to exist in the empty sphere of the Consciousness is supposed to be a vast void represented as dreadful Bhairava.⁶ We can have no conception of anything without knowing the relation, the significant term and its meaning. For that reason I related this to you, as I found it to be.

⁷ Rama, know that whatever idea is conveyed to the mind by a word's meaning, the power of delusion presents the very same like a magical appearance before the outward sight.⁸ In reality there is no destruction and no destructive power of Bhairava or Bhairavi. All these are only false conceptions floating in the empty space of the intellect.⁹ These appearances are like those of cities in dream, or warfare shown in our imagination. They are like the paradise realms of one's imagination, or our feelings upon some pathetic and ear-stirring description.¹⁰ As the dream city in the sky is seen in the field of fancy and strings of pearls seen hanging in the empty air, and as mists and vapors darken the clear atmosphere, so there are troops of fallacies flying all about the firmament of the intellect.¹¹ But the clear sky of pure intellect shines of itself in itself. When it shines in that state, it shows the world in itself.¹² The soul exhibits itself in its intellectual sphere in the same manner as a figure seen in a picture. The soul also manifests in the raging fire of final destruction.

¹³ I have told you about the formlessness of the forms of Shiva and his consort Shivani. Now listen as I tell you about their dance, which really was no dancing.

¹⁴ Sensation cannot exist anywhere without the action of the power of the intellect's reasoning, just as it is impossible for anything to be a nothing or appear other than what it is.¹⁵ Therefore the powers of sensation and perception are naturally united with all things, just as Rudra and his consort who are blended together like gold and silver in one and the same metal.¹⁶ Whatever is sensation and wherever it exists, it must be a sensible object and have motion as its natural property.¹⁷ Whatever is the action of the Intellect, whose consolidated form is named Shiva, that is also is the cause of our motions. As these are moved by our will and desires, they are called the dance of the intellectual power.¹⁸ Therefore the furious form and dance of Rudra which Shiva assumes at the end of a kalpa is the vibration of Divine Intellect.

¹⁹ Rama asked, "In the sight of the right observer, this world is nothing in reality. Anything that remains in any sense is destroyed at the end of the kalpa.²⁰ Then how does it happen at the end of the kalpa, when everything is lost in the formless void of emptiness, that this consolidated form of intellect known as Shiva remains and thinks in itself?"

²¹ Vasishta replied:—

O Rama, if you entertain such a question, then hear me tell you how you can get over the great ocean of your doubts regarding the unity and duality of God.

²² The subjective soul then thinks of nothing, but remains quite tranquil in itself resting in the solid emptiness of its omniscience, just like and unmoving and mute stone. ²³ If it reflects at all on anything, it is only on itself because it is the nature of consciousness to dwell calmly in itself. ²⁴ As consciousness appears to itself like an inner city that it sees within itself in a dream, so there is nothing in real existence anywhere except the knowledge that is inherent in consciousness.

²⁵ The Divine Soul, knowing everything in its empty intellect, sees the manifestation of the universe at the time of creation by the simple development of itself. ²⁶ The intellect develops itself of its own nature, within its empty cell at first, then in a moment envelops this false universe in itself, and at his will at the time of its destruction. ²⁷ The intellect expands itself in itself in its natural state of vacuum. It transmits itself likewise into its conceptions of “I” and “you” and all others. ²⁸ Therefore there is no duality or unity, or any empty emptiness either. There is neither an intelligence nor its lack or both together. There neither I (subject) nor you (object). ²⁹ There is nothing that ever thinks of anything, or anything whatever that is thought of that has its own nature. Therefore there is nothing that thinks or reflects, but all is quite rest and silence.

³⁰ The unalterable steadiness of the mind is the ultimate samadhi of all scriptures. Therefore the living yogi should remain in his meditation like the silent and immovable stone.

³¹ Now Rama, remain to discharge your ordinary duties as they are required upon you by the rules of your race. But continue to be quiet and steady in your spiritual part by renouncing all worldly pride and vanity. Enjoy a peaceful composure in your mind and soul, like that of the serene, calm and clear hollow vault of the sky.

Chapter 84 — Description of Kali, Shiva and Shakti; All Ideas Are Real

¹ Rama asked, "Tell me sage, why is Goddess Kali said to be dancing about? Why is she armed with axe and other weapons and decorated with wreaths of flowers?"

² Vasishta replied:—

The vacuum of consciousness is called both Shiva and Bhairava. It is this intellectual power that is called Kali and its consorting mind.³ As wind is one with its vibratory energy, and fire is identical with its heat, so consciousness is identical with its vibratory energy.⁴ As wind is invisible even in its act of vibratory motion, and heat is unseen even in its act of burning, so consciousness is imperceptible in spite of its acting. Therefore consciousness is called Shiva, the calm and quiet.

⁵ It is because of the wonderful power of Shiva's vibration that he is known to us, and without which we could have no knowledge of his existence. Know this Shiva is the all powerful Brahman, who is otherwise a motionless being, unknowable even by the learned.⁶ His vibration is the power of his will which has spread out this visible appearance, just as the will of an embodied, living man builds a city according to his thought.⁷ The will of Shiva creates all this world from its formless state. This creative power is the Intelligence of God and the intellect of living being.

⁸ This power also takes the form of nature in her formation of creation. She is called creation she assumes on herself the representation of the phenomenal world.⁹ She is represented with a crest of undersea fire on her head and to be dry and withered in her body. She is said to be a fury on account of her furiousness, and called the lotus form from the blue lotus-like complexion of her body.

¹⁰ She is called Jaya and Siddha because she is accompanied by victory and prosperity at all times.

¹¹ She is also called Aparajita (invincible), Virya (mighty) and Durga (inaccessible). She is also called Uma because she is composed of the powers of the three letters of the mystic syllable Aum.

¹² She is called the Gayatri hymn because it is chanted by everybody, and Savitri also from her being the progenitor of all beings. She is also named Saraswati because she gives us an insight into whatever appears before our sight.¹³ She bears the name of Gauri because of her fair complexion and Bhavani because she is the source of all beings and because of her association with the body of Bhava, or Shiva. She is also called the letter A in Aum to signify her being the vital breath of all waking and sleeping bodies.

¹⁴ Uma also means the digit of the moon on the forehead of Shiva which enlightens the worlds. The bodies of God Shiva and Goddess Uma are both painted blue and black because they represent the two hemispheres of heaven.¹⁵ The sky appears dark and bright from the two complexions of these gods who are situated in empty forms in the space of the great emptiness itself.

¹⁶ Though they are formless as empty airs, yet they are conceived as the first-born of the void. They are figuratively attributed with more or less hands and feet and holding as many weapons in them.

¹⁷ Now know the reason why they attribute many weapons and instruments to the goddess. It is no more than showing her as the patron of all arts and their employments.

¹⁸ She is identical with the Supreme Soul. She is its power of self meditation from all eternity. She assumes the shapes of the acts of sacred ablutions, religions, sacrifices, and holy gifts as her primal

forms in Vedas.¹⁹ She is of the form of the blue sky, comely in appearance. She is the beauty of phenomena. She is the motion of all objects and the varieties of their movements are the various modes of her dancing.²⁰ She is the agent of Brahma in his laws of the birth, decay and deaths of beings. All villages, cities, mountains and islands hang on her agency like a string of gems about her neck.

²¹ She holds together all parts of the world by her power of attraction and infuses her force as momentum as if into the different parts of her body. She bears the various names of Kali, Kalika and others according to her various functions.²² As the one great body of the cosmos, she links together all its parts like her limbs to her heart and moves them all about her, though this formless body of force has never been seen or known by anybody.

²³ Know this ever vibrating power is never different or unconnected from the quiet motionless spirit of Shiva the changeless god. The fluctuating winds are never apart from the calm vacuum in which they abide and vibrate forever.²⁴ The world is a display of the glory of God, just as moonlight is a manifestation of the brightness of the moon which is otherwise dark and obscure. So the Lord God is ever tranquil and quiet without any change or decay in his works.²⁵ There is not the least shadow of fluctuation in the Supreme Soul. It is the action of this agency that appears to be moving us.

²⁶ The tranquil spirit of the god Shiva is that which returns itself from action and reposes in its understanding apart from its goddess, the active energy which possesses the intellect.²⁷ The intellect resting in its natural state of understanding is called Shiva. The active energy of intellectual power is what passes under the name of the great goddess of action.

²⁸ That bodiless power assumes the imaginary forms of these worlds with all the peoples that are visible in daylight.²⁹ This power supports the earth with all its seas and islands, and its forests, deserts and mountains. It maintains the Vedas, scriptures, sciences and the hymns with its limbs.³⁰ It ordains the injunctions and prohibitions and gives the rules of auspicious and inauspicious acts and rites. It directs sacrifices and sacrificial fires and the modes of offering cakes and oblations.³¹ This goddess is adorned with sacrificial implements, like the mortar and pestle, and the post and ladle. She is also carries many weapons of warfare such as the spear, arrows, lance,³² mace and many throwing weapons, accompanied by horse and elephants and valiant gods. In short she fills the fourteen worlds and occupies the earth with all its seas and islands.

³³ Rama said, "I ask you sage, to tell me now whether the thoughts of creation in the Divine Mind existed in the Divine Soul, or they were incorporated in the forms of Rudra and which are false and fictitious?"

³⁴ Vasishta replied:—

Rama, she is truly the power of the Intellect, as you have rightly said. Everything that she thinks is all true as her thoughts.³⁵ Thoughts that are subjective and imprinted in the inner intellect are never untrue, just as the reflection of our face cast in a mirror cannot be a false shadow.

³⁶ Those thoughts are false which enter into the mind from without, such as the physical body. These fallacies are removed upon our right reflection and by means of our sound judgment.³⁷ But in my opinion, the firm belief of the human soul in anything whatever is reckoned as true by everyone. The

picture of a thing in a mirror, the representations of things seen in a dream, and the creatures of our imagination are all taken as true and real by everyone for the time, and for their usefulness to him.

³⁸ But you may object and say that things that are absent and at a distance from you are no way useful to you. Yet they cannot be said to be nonexistent or unreal because they come to use when they are present before us. ³⁹ As the productions of a distant country become of use when they are presented before us, so the objects of our dreams and thoughts are equally true and useful when they are present in view. So also every idea of a definite shape and meaning is a certain reality.

⁴⁰ As an object or its action seen by anyone is believed to be true by its observer, whatever thought passes in his mind is thought to be true by him. But nothing seen or thought of by another is ever believed by someone else as true to him. ⁴¹ Therefore, the embryo of the creation is contained forever in the power of Divine Consciousness. The entire universe is ever existent in the Divine Soul and it is wholly unknown to others. ⁴² All that is past, present, and ever to be in future, together with all desires and thoughts of others forever really exist in the Divine Spirit, else it would not be the Universal Soul.

⁴³ Only adepts in yoga practice acquire the power of looking into others' hearts and minds, just as others come to see different countries by traveling over the barriers of hills and valleys. ⁴⁴ As the dream of a man fallen into deep sleep is not disturbed by moving his bed, so the fixed thought of anyone is never lost by his moving from place to place. ⁴⁵ So the movements of Kali's dancing body cause no fluctuation in the world that is contained within it, just as the shaking of a mirror makes no alteration in the reflection which is cast upon it.

⁴⁶ The great bustle and commotion of the world, though seeming real to all appearance, yet is only a mere delusion in sober reality. It was delusion whether it moves or not. ⁴⁷ When is the city seen in our dream said to be a true and when is it pronounced as false? When is it said to exist and when destroyed? ⁴⁸ Know the phenomenal world exposed before you is only mere illusion. It is your sheer fallacy to see unreal phenomena as sure realities. ⁴⁹ Know that your conception of the reality of the three worlds is as false as the aerial castle of your imagination or the air-drawn city of your fond desire. It is like the vision in your dream, or any conception of your error.

⁵⁰ The endless error that tightly binds the mind forever is "I" the subjective and the other is the objective world. It is a gross mistake like that of the ignorant who believe the endless sky to be bounded and take it for blue. The learned are released from this blunder.

Chapter 85 — Relation of Shiva and Kali

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Thus the goddess was dancing with her outstretched arms, which with their movements appeared to make a shaking forest of tall pines in the empty sky.² This power of the intellect, which is ignorant of herself and ever prone to action, continued to dance with her decorations of various tools and instruments.³ She was arrayed with all kinds of weapons in her thousand arms, such as the bow and arrows, the spear and lance, the mallet and club, the sword and all sort of missiles. She was familiar with all things whether in being or not being, and was busy at every moment of passing time.⁴ She contained the world in the vibration of her mind, just as airy cities exist in the power of imagination. She herself is the world, just as imagination itself is the imaginary city.

⁵ She is the will of Shiva, as fluctuation is innate in the air and as air is still without its vibration. So Shiva is very quiet without his will or volition.⁶ The formless volition becomes the formal creation in the same manner as the formless sky produces the wind which vibrates into sound. So does the will of Shiva bring forth the world out of himself.⁷ When this volitional energy of Kali dances and plays in the emptiness of the Divine Mind, then all of a sudden the world comes out, as if by union of the active will with the great void of the Supreme Mind.⁸ Being touched by the dark volitional power, the Supreme Soul of Shiva is dissolved into water, just as an undersea fire is extinguished by its contact with seawater.⁹ No sooner did this power come in contact with Shiva, the prime cause of all, the same power of volition is inclined and assumes the shape of nature, converted to some physical form.

¹⁰ Then forsaking her boundless and elemental form, she took upon herself the gross and limited forms of land and hills, then beautiful gardens and trees.¹¹ She became like the formless void and became one with the infinite emptiness of Shiva, just like a river with its impetuous velocity enters into the immensity of the sea.¹² Then she became as one with Shiva by giving up her title of Shiva, and this Shiva the female form became the same with Shiva the Purusha who is the formless void and perfect tranquility.

¹³ Rama asked, “Tell me sage, how can sovereign goddess Shiva obtain her quiet by coming in contact with the supreme god Shiva?”

¹⁴ Vasishta replied:—

Rama, the goddess Shiva is the will of god Shiva. She is called nature and famed as the great Illusion of the word.¹⁵ This great god is said to be the lord of nature and Purusha also. He is of the form of air and is represented in the form of Shiva, which is calm and quiet like the autumn sky.¹⁶ The great goddess is the energy of the Intellect and its will also. She is ever active as force put in motion. She abides in the world in the manner of its nature and wanders all about in the manner of the great delusion.¹⁷ As long as she is ignorant of her Lord Shiva, she ranges throughout the world who is ever satisfied with himself, without decay or disease, without beginning or end or a second to himself.¹⁸ But as soon as this goddess becomes conscious of herself as the same as the god of self-consciousness, she is joined with her Lord Shiva and becomes one with him.

¹⁹ Nature coming in contact with the spirit forsakes her character of gross nature and becomes one

with the sole unity, just as a river joins the ocean.²⁰ A river falling into the sea is no longer a river but the sea. Its water joining with seawater becomes the same salty water.²¹ So a mind inclined to Shiva is united with him and finds its rest there, just as iron becomes sharpened by returning to its quarry.

²² As the shadow of a man entering into a forest is lost amidst the shade of the wilderness, so the shades of nature are all absorbed in the shadow of the Divine Spirit.²³ But the mind that remembers its own nature and forgets that of the Eternal Spirit has to return again to this world and never attains its spiritual bliss.

²⁴ An honest man dwells with thieves so long as he knows them not as such. But as soon as he comes to know them as so, then he is sure to shun their company and fly from the spot.²⁵ So the mind dwells with unreal dualities as long as it remains ignorant of the transcendent reality. But as it becomes acquainted with the true unity, he is sure to be united with it.²⁶ When the ignorant mind comes to know the supreme bliss that attends the state of its self-extinction or nirvana, it is ready to rest it like an inland stream runs to join the boundless sea.²⁷ The mind roaming remains bewildered in its repeated births in the tumultuous world so long as it does not find its ultimate bliss in the Supreme, to whom it may fly like a bee to its honeycomb.

²⁸ Who would forget his spiritual knowledge having once known its bliss? Who forsakes the sweet having had once tasted its flavor? Say Rama, who would not run to enjoy the delicious nectar, which pacifies all our sorrows and pains, prevents our repeated births and deaths, and puts an end to all our delusions in this darksome world?

Chapter 86 — Vasishta Describes the Stone: Creation as Images in Unchanging God; All Things Are Repetitions of Themselves

¹ Vasishta added:—

Rama, hear how this whole world resides in the infinite void and how the airy Rudra which rises from it is freed from his deluded body and finds his final rest in it.

² As I stood looking upon that block of stone, I saw the aerial Rudra and the two upper and nether worlds marked over it, remaining quiet at rest. ³ Then in a moment, that airy Rudra saw the two partitions of the earth and sky within the hollow of vacuum, his eyeballs blazing like the globe of the sun. ⁴ Then in the twinkling of an eye and with the breath of his nostrils, he drew the two partitions to him and threw them into the horrible abyss of his mouth. ⁵ Having devoured both divisions of the world as if they were a morsel of bread, he remained alone as air and one with the universal air about him.

⁶ Then he appeared like a piece of cloud, then the size of a small stick, and afterwards the size of a thumb. ⁷ I saw him become transparent like a piece of glass which at last became as minute as to melt into the air and vanish altogether from my microscopic sight. ⁸ Being reduced to an atom, it suddenly disappeared from view and, like an autumn cloud, became invisible. ⁹ In this manner did the two gates of heaven disappear from my sight, the wonders of which I had been viewing with so much concern and delight.

¹⁰ The cosmos being thus devoured like grass by a hungry deer, the firmament was quite cleared of everything. It became as transparent, calm and quiet as the serene vacuum of Brahman himself. ¹¹ I saw only one vast expanse of intellectual sky without any beginning, middle or end. It resembled the dreary waste of ultimate dissolution, a vast, desolate desert.

¹² I also saw the images of things drawn upon that stone as if they were the reflection of things in a mirror. Then remembering the heavenly vidyadhari and seeing all these scenes, I was lost in amazement. ¹³ I was amazed, like a clown coming to a royal city, to see that stone again far clearer than ever before. ¹⁴ This I found to be the body of goddess Kali in which all the worlds seemed to be inscribed like on a slab of stone. I saw these with my intellectual eyes, far better than they appear to the supernatural sight of the gods. ¹⁵ On that stone I saw everything that ever existed in any place, though it seemed to be situated at a distance from me. Yet I recognized it as the very stone (Divine Consciousness).

¹⁶ I saw only this stone. There was nothing of the worlds it contained so clearly. The stone remained forever in the same unchanging state, with all worlds lying concealed in it. ¹⁷ It was stainless and clean, fair and clear as an evening cloud. I was struck with wonder at the sight, then started my meditation again.

¹⁸ I looked to the other side of the stone with my contemplative eye and found the bustle of the world lying dormant at that place. ¹⁹ I saw it full of the great variety of things, as described before. Then I turned my sight to look into another side of it. ²⁰ I saw it abounding with the very many creations and created worlds, accompanied with their tumults and commotions as I had seen before. Whatever place I thought of and sought for, I found them all in the same stone. ²¹ I saw fair creation as if it were a

pattern cast upon a mirror. I felt a great pleasure exploring the mountainous source of this stone.²² I searched in every part of the earth and traversed through woods and forests until I passed through every part of the world, as it was exhibited in that stone.²³ I saw them in my understanding and not with my visual organs. Somewhere I saw the first born Brahma, the lord of creatures.

²⁴ Then I saw his arrangement of the starry frame, the spheres of the sun and moon, and the rotations of days and nights and of seasons and years. I also saw the surface of the earth with its population here and there.²⁵ I saw level land somewhere and the great basins of the four oceans elsewhere. I saw some places quite unpopulated and unproductive and others abounding with sura and asura races.

²⁶ Somewhere I saw assemblies of righteous men, with their manners and conduct as those of the pure Satya Yuga. Elsewhere I saw the company of unrighteous people following the practices and usages of the corrupt Kali Yuga.²⁷ I saw forts and cities of demons in certain places, with fierce and continuous warfare going on all along among them.²⁸ I saw vast mountainous tracts without a pit or pool in them anywhere. I saw elsewhere the unfinished creation of the lotus-born Brahma.²⁹ I saw some lands where men were free from death and decay, and others with moonless nights and bare headed Shivas in them.³⁰ I saw the Milky Ocean unchurned, filled with the dead bodies of gods, and the ocean horse and elephant, the Kamadhenu cow, the physician Dhanvantari and the goddess Lakshmi, together with the undersea poison and ambrosia, all lying hidden and buried therein.³¹ I saw in one place the body of gods assembled to baffle the attempts of the demons and the devices of their leader Sukra. In another I saw the great god Indra entering into the womb of Diti, the mother of demons, and destroying the unborn brood inside.

³² It was on account of the unchangeable course of nature that the world was brilliant as ever before, unless some things were placed out of their former order.³³ The everlasting Vedas ever retain their same force and sense, and never did they feel the shock of change by the revolution of ages or even at the *kalpanta* dissolution of the world.³⁴ Sometimes the demons demolished parts of the heavenly abodes of gods and sometimes the paradise of Nandana Garden resounded with the songs of gandharvas and kinnaras.³⁵ Sometimes a friendship was formed between the gods and demons. In this manner I saw the past, present and future commotions of the world.

³⁶ Then I saw in the body of the great soul of the worlds (Paramatma) the meeting of Pushkara and Avarta clouds.³⁷ There was an assembly of all created things in peaceful union with one another in one place. There was a collision of gods, demigods and sovereigns of men in the one and same person.³⁸ There was the union of the sunlight and deep darkness in the same place, without their destroying one another. There were dark clouds and their flashing lightning also in the same place.

³⁹ There were the demons Madhu and Kaitabha residing together in the same navel-string of Brahma. There were the infant Brahma and the lotus bud in the same navel of Vishnu.⁴⁰ In the ocean of the universal deluge, where Krishna floated on the leaf of a banyan tree, chaotic night ruled the along with him and spread its darkness over the deep.

⁴¹ There was only one vast void in which all things remained unknown and undefined, as if they lay buried and asleep in the unconscious womb of a stony grave.⁴² Nothing could be known or inferred of anything in existence. Everything seemed to be submerged in deep sleep everywhere. The sky was filled by darkness resembling the wingless crows and wingless mountains of old.⁴³ On one side the

loud sounds of thunder were breaking down the mountains and melting them by the fire of flashing lightning. In another, floodwaters were sweeping away the earth into the deep.⁴⁴ In certain places there were the wars of the demons like Tripura, Vritra, Andha, and Bali. In others there were terrible earthquakes owing to the shaking of the furious earth supporting elephant in the regions below.⁴⁵ On one hand the earth was shaking on the thousand hoods on the infernal serpent Vasuki, which trembled with fear at the *kalpanta* deluge of the world. On the other the young Rama was killing rakshasa demons and their leader Ravana.⁴⁶ On one side was Rama frustrated by his adversary Ravana.

I saw these wonders, now standing upon my legs on earth, then lifting my head above the mountain tops.⁴⁷ I saw Kalanemi invading one side of the sky where he stationed the demons by ousting the gods from their heavenly seats.⁴⁸ In one place I found asura demons defeated by the gods who preserved the people from their terror. In another the victorious son of Pandu, Arjuna, with the aid of lord Vishnu, protected the world from the oppression of Kauravas. I saw also the slaughter of millions of men in the Mahabharata war.

⁴⁹ Rama asked, "Tell me sage, how I had been before in another age, and who were these Pandavas and Kauravas who existed before me?"

⁵⁰ Vasishta replied:—

Rama, all things are destined to revolve and return over and over again as they had been before.⁵¹ As a basket is filled repeatedly with grains of the same kind, or mixed sometimes with some other sorts, so the very same thoughts and ideas with their same or other associations recur repeatedly in our minds.

⁵² Our ideas occur to us in the shape of their objects as often as the waters of the sea run in their course as waves beating upon the banks. Thus our thoughts of ourselves, yourselves and others frequently revert to our minds.⁵³ No thought ever comes to mind which has not been a previous thought in the mind. Though some seem to appear in different shapes, it is simply owing to our misapprehension of them, just as the same seawater seems to show various shapes of its waves.

⁵⁴ Again, a delusion presents us with many appearances that never come to existence. This shows us an infinite series of things coming in and passing and disappearing like magic shows in this illusive world.⁵⁵ The same things and others of different kinds appear and reappear to us in this way. Thus they move around in cycles.

⁵⁶ Know all creatures are like drops of water in the ocean of the world. They are composed of the period of their existence, their respective occupations, understanding and knowledge, and accompanied by their friends and properties and other surroundings.⁵⁷ All beings are born with every one of these properties at their very birth. But some possess them in equal or more or less shares, compared with others.⁵⁸ But all beings differ in these respects, according to the different bodies in which they are born. Though some are equal to others in many of these respects, yet they come to differ in them in course of time.⁵⁹ Being at last harassed in their different pursuits, all beings attain either to higher or lower states in their destined times. Then being shackled to the prison houses of their bodies, they have to pass through endless varieties of births in various forms. Thus the drops of living beings have to roll about in the whirlpool of the vast ocean of worldly life for an indefinite period of time, which nobody can gainsay or count.

Chapter 87 — Vasishta Describes the Infinity of the World Shown in His Material Body

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Afterwards as I directed my attention to my own body for a while. I saw the un-decaying and infinite spirit of God surrounding every part of my material frame.² Pondering deeply, I saw the world was seated and shooting forth within my heart, just as grains sprout in a granary from rainwater dropping into it.³ I saw the formal world, with all its sentient as well as insensitive beings, rising out of the formless heart resembling the shapeless embryo of the seed.⁴ As the beauty of phenomena appears to view as one awakens after sleep, so only the intellect gives sensation to one who is waking from his sleep.⁵ So there is conception of creation in the same soul before its formation or bringing into action. The forms of creations are contained in the emptiness of the heart, and in no other separate emptiness whatever.

⁶ Rama asked, “Sage, your assertion of the emptiness of the heart made me understand it in the sense of infinite space of emptiness, which contains the whole creation. Please to explain to me more clearly, what do you mean by your intellectual emptiness which you say is the source of the world?”

⁷ Vasishta replied:—

Hear Rama, how once in my meditation I thought myself as the self-born (*svayambhu*) god in whom existed the whole. There was nothing born except by and from him. I will also describe how I believed the unreal as real in my revelry, like an air-built castle in my dreaming.

⁸ As I had been looking at that sight of the great kalpa dissolution with my aerial spiritual body, I found and felt the other part of my body was infused with the same sensibility and consciousness.⁹ As I looked at it for a while, with my spiritual part, I found it purely aerial and endowed with a slight consciousness of itself.¹⁰ The empty intellect found this elastic substance to be of a subtle and rarefied nature, such as when you see external objects in your dream, or remember the objects of your dream upon waking.

¹¹ This ethereal air, having its primary powers of intellect and consciousness (*chit, samvid*), becomes the intellect's process of understanding and consciousness. Then from its power of reflection, it takes the name of reflection. Next from its knowledge of itself as air, it becomes the airy egoism. Then it takes the name of understanding (*buddhi*) because of its knowledge of itself as plastic nature and its forgetfulness of its former spirituality. At last it becomes the mind, from its minding many things that it wills.¹² Then, from its powers of perception and sensation, it becomes the five senses, to which are added their fivefold organs upon the perversion of the subtle mental perceptions to grossness.

¹³ As a man roused from his sound sleep is subject to flimsy dreams, so the pure soul, losing its purity upon its entrance in the gross body, is subjected to its accompanying miseries.¹⁴ Then the infinite world, appears all at once to those who say it is an act of spontaneity, or as a sequence of events by others.¹⁵ I conceived the whole in the minute atom of my mind. Being myself like empty air, I thought the material world was contained in me in the form of intelligence.

¹⁶ The nature of emptiness gives rise to the currents of air. So it is natural for the mind to assign a form and figure to all its ideas, by the power of its imagination.¹⁷ Whatever imaginary form our imagination gives to a thing at first, there is no power in the mind to remove it.¹⁸ Hence I believed

myself as a minute atom, although I knew my soul to be beyond all bounds. Because I had the power of thinking, I thought myself as the thinking mind, and no more.

¹⁹ Then with my subtle body of pure intelligence, I thought of myself as a spark of fire. By thinking so for a long time, I became at length of the form of a gross body. ²⁰ Then I felt a desire to see all that existed about me and I had the power of sight immediately supplied to my gross body. ²¹ In this manner I felt other desires and had their corresponding senses and organs given to me. Now I will tell you, O race of Raghu, their names and functions and objects as they are known among you.

²² The two holes of my face through which I began to see are called the two eyes with their function of sight. They have the visible phenomena of nature for their objects. ²³ When I see is what I call time and how I see that is called its manner. The place where I see an object is simple emptiness and the duration of the sight is governed by destiny. ²⁴ The place where I am situated is said to be my location. When I think or affirm anything, I say the present time. As long I feel the shining of my intellect, so long do I know myself as the intellectual cause of my action. ²⁵ When I see anything, I have its perception in me. I also have my conviction that what I see with my two eyes is not empty emptiness, but of a substantial nature. ²⁶ These two eyes are the organs with which I saw and felt the world in me, the keys to the visible world.

Then I felt the desire to hear what was going about me. It was my own soul which prompted this desire in me. ²⁷ Then I heard a swelling sound, like that of a loud sounding conch, reaching me through the air, where it is naturally carried and through which it passes. ²⁸ The organs by which I heard the sound are my two ears. The sound is carried by the air to the ear where it enters the ear-holes with a continuous hissing.

²⁹ Then I felt a desire to feel. The organ whereby I came to it is called the skin. ³⁰ Next I came to know the medium whereby I had the sensation of touch in my body. I found the air conveyed that sense to me. ³¹ As I remained conscious of the property of feeling or touch in me, I felt the desire to taste, then had the organ of taste given to me. ³² Then my empty self contracted the property of smell by the air of its breath. Thereby I had the sense of smell given to me through the organs of my nostrils.

Being thus furnished with all the organs of sense, I found myself to be imperfect still. ³³ Being thus confined in the net of my senses, I found my sensual desire increasing quickly in me. ³⁴ The physical sensations of sound, form, taste, touch and smell are all formless and untrue. Though they appear to be actual and true, yet they are really false and untrue. ³⁵ As I remained ensnared in the net of my senses and considered myself a conscious being, I felt my egoism in me, that with which I am now addressing you. ³⁶ The sense of egoism growing strong and compact takes the name of understanding. This being considered and mature comes to be called the mind. ³⁷ Being possessed of my external senses, I pass for a sentient being. Having my spiritual body and soul, I pass as an intellectual being in an empty form.

³⁸ I am more rare and empty than the air itself. I am as the emptiness itself. I am devoid of all shapes and figures and I am irrepressible in my nature. ³⁹ As I remained at that spot, with this conviction of myself, I found myself endowed with a body and it was as I now look. ⁴⁰ With this belief, I began to utter sounds. These sounds were as empty as those of man dreaming he is flying in the air. ⁴¹ This was

the sound of a new born babe uttering the sacred syllable Aum. From them it has become the custom to pronounce this word at the beginning of sacred hymns.⁴² Then I uttered some words like a sleeping person. These words are called the Vyahrites which are now used in the Gayatri hymn.

⁴³ I thought that I had become like Brahma, the author and lord of creation. Then with my mental part or mind, I thought of creation in my imagination.⁴⁴ Finding myself containing the mundane system within me, I thought I was not a created being at all because I saw the worlds in my own body and nothing besides without it.⁴⁵ Thus the world being produced within my mind, I turned to look minutely into it. I found there was nothing in reality except an empty void.⁴⁶ So it is with all these worlds that you see. They are mere void, nothing other than your imagination of them. There is no reality whatever in the existence of this earth and all other things that you see.

⁴⁷ The worlds appear as the waters of the mirage before the sight and to the knowledge of our consciousness. There is nothing outside the mind. The mind sees everything in the pure emptiness of the Divine Mind.⁴⁸ There is no water in the sandy desert, and yet the mind thinks it sees it there. So the deluded sight of our understanding sees the baseless objects of delusion in the burning and barren waste of infinite void.⁴⁹ Thus there is no real world in the Divine Spirit, yet the erring mind of man sees it falsely to be situated there. It is all owing to the delusion of human understanding that naturally leads us to groundless errors and fallacies.

⁵⁰ The unreal appears as the real extended world to the mind in the same manner as an imaginary utopia appears before it, and as a city is seen in the dream of a sleeping man.⁵¹ One knows nothing of the dream of another sleeping by his side, without being able to penetrate his mind. The yogi sees it clearly by his power of looking into the minds of others.

⁵² One knows this world who can penetrate the mundane stone where it is represented as the reflection of something in a mirror, which in reality is nothing at all.⁵³ Although the world appears as an elemental substance to the naked eye, yet when it is observed in its true light, it disappears like Lokaloka Mountain hidden under everlasting darkness.⁵⁴ He who sees creation with his spiritual body and his eyes of discernment finds it filled with the pure spirit of God which comprehends and pervades throughout the whole.⁵⁵ The eyes of perception see the extinction of the world everywhere because they see only the presence of the Divine Spirit and nothing that is not the spirit, and therefore nothing.⁵⁶ What the clear-sighted yogi perceives through his conclusive reasoning is that transcendent truth which is hard to be seen by the triple-eyed Shiva, or even by the god Indra with his thousand eyes.

⁵⁷ But as I looked into the emptiness of the sky filled with its multitudes of luminous bodies, I saw the earth full with the variety of its productions. Then I began to reflect that I was the lord of all below.

⁵⁸ Then thinking that I was master of the earth, I became joined with the earth as if it were one with me. Having forsaken my empty intellectual body, I thought myself as the sovereign of the whole.

⁵⁹ Believing myself as the support and container of this earth, I penetrated deep into its bowels and thought all its hidden mines were parts of me. So I took whatever it contained both below and above it to be the same with me.⁶⁰ Being thus endowed in the form of the earth, I became changed to all its forests and woods, which grew like hairs on its body. My bowels were full of jewels and gems and my back was decorated by many a city and town.⁶¹ I was full of villages and valleys, of hills and

dales, and of infernal regions and caves. I thought I was the great mountain chain connecting the seas and their islands on either side.⁶² The grassy vegetation was the hairy cover of my body and the scattered hills as pimples on it. The great mountain tops were the crests of my crown, or the hundred heads of the infernal snake Shesha.⁶³ This earth was freely joined by all living beings, came to be parceled by men, and at last oppressed by belligerent kings and worsened by their lines of fighting elephants.

⁶⁴ The great Himalaya, Vindhya and Sumeru Mountains had all their tops decorated with the falling streams of Ganges and others, sparkling like their pearly necklaces.⁶⁵ Caves and forests, the seas and their shores furnished it with beautiful scenes. Desert and marsh lands supplied it with clean linen garments.⁶⁶ The ancient waters of the deluge receded to their basins and left the pure inland reservoirs decorated by flowery banks and perfumed by the scented dust of trampled flowers.

⁶⁷ The earth is ploughed daily by bullocks and sown in the dewy and cold season. It is heated by solar heat and moistened by rainwater.⁶⁸ The wide level plains are its broad breast. The lotus lakes are its eyes, the white and black clouds are its turbans, and the canopy of heaven is its dwelling.⁶⁹ The great hollow under Lokaloka Mountain forms its wide open mouth and the breathing of animated nature makes the breath of its life.⁷⁰ It is surrounded all about and filled inside by beings of various kinds. It is peopled by gods and demons and men on the outside, and inhabited by worms and insects in its inner parts.⁷¹ In the organic poles and cells of its body, it is infested by snakes, asura demons, and reptiles. Aquatic animals of various kinds populate all its oceans and seas.⁷² It is filled in all its various parts with animal, plant and mineral substances of infinite varieties, and it is plenteous with provisions for the sustenance of all sorts of beings.

Chapter 88 — Further Description of the Earth within Vasishta

¹ Vasishta related:—

Hear you men what I conceived afterwards in my consciousness as I was looking in my form of the earth and considered the rivers running in my body.

² I saw in one place a number of women lamenting loudly on the death of somebody. I also saw the great rejoicing of certain females on the occasion of their festive rejoicing. ³ I saw a terrible scarcity and famine in one place, with the seizing and plunder of the people, and I saw the profusion of plenty in another and the joy and friendliness of its people. ⁴ In one place I saw a great fire burning down everything before me, and in another a great flood over the land drowning its cities and towns in one common ruin. ⁵ Somewhere I saw a busy body of soldiers plundering a city and carrying away their booty and fierce rakshasa demons bent on afflicting and oppressing the people.

⁶ I saw reservoirs full with water running out to water and fertilize the land all around. I saw also masses of clouds issuing from mountain caves, tossed and carried by the winds afar and aloft in the sky. ⁷ I saw the outpourings of rainwater, the uprising of vegetation, and the land smiling with plenty. I felt within myself a delight which made the hairs on my body stand upright. ⁸ I also saw many places, hills, forests and homes of men, and also deep and dreadful dens with wild beasts and bees in them. Here there were no footprints of human beings. They avoid those places for fear of falling in those terrible caves.

⁹ In some places I saw wars waged between hostile hosts and others where armies were sitting at ease in glad conversation with one another. ¹⁰ I saw some places full of forests and others of barren deserts with tornadoes howling in them. I saw marshy grounds with repeated cultivations and crops in them. ¹¹ I saw clear and swirling lakes frequented by cranes and herons, smiling with blooming lotuses. I saw barren deserts with heaps and piles of grey dust collected together by winds. ¹² I saw some places where rivers were running, rolling and gurgling in their play, and at others, the grounds were moistened and sown and shooting forth in buds and sprouts.

¹³ In many places I also saw little insects and worms moving slowly in the ground. They appeared to me to be crying out, “O sage, save us from this miserable state!” ¹⁴ I saw a big banyan tree rooting its surrounding branches in the ground. I saw many parasite plants growing on and about these rooted branches. ¹⁵ In some places huge trees were growing upon rocks and mountain tops, embracing one another with their branching arms shaking like the waves of the sea. ¹⁶ I saw the raging sun sending his drying rays and drawing the moisture from shady trees, leaving them to stand with their dried trunks and withered, leafless branches.

¹⁷ I saw the big elephants living on the summits of mountains, piercing sturdy oaks with the strokes of their tusks which, like the bolts of Indra, broke down, felled and hurled them below with hideous noise. ¹⁸ In some places many tender sprouts grew with joy as the green blades of grass, or like the erect hairs rising on the bodies of saints, enrapt in their reveries and sitting with their closed eyelids.

¹⁹ I saw the homes of flies and leeches and gnats in the dirt, and of bees and black bees on the petals of lotus flowers. I saw big elephants destroying lotus bushes, just as the ploughshare overturns the furrows of earth. ²⁰ I saw the excess of cold when all living beings were shriveled and withered in

their bodies, when waters froze to stone, and keen and cold blasts chilled the blood of men.

²¹ I have seen swarms of weak insects crushed to death under the feet of men, and many others diving and swimming and gliding in the waters below, and others to be born and growing therein. ²² I saw how water enters seeds and moistens them in the rainy season, and these put forth their hairy shoots on the outside, growing as plants in the open air. ²³ I smile with the smiling lotuses when they are slightly shaken in their beds by the gentle winds of heaven. I parade with the gliding of rivers to the ocean of eternity for final extinction.

Chapter 89 — Phenomena as Reproductions of Memories

¹ Rama said, "Tell me sage. In your curiosity to observe the changes of earthly things and affairs, did you see them in their earthly shapes with your physical body or in their ideal forms in the imagination of your mind?"

² Vasishta replied:—

It was in my mind that I thought I became the great earth. All the things that I saw were only the simple conceptions of the mind. They could not possibly have a material form.³ It is impossible for the surface of the earth to exist without its conception in the mind. Whatever you know as either real or unreal, know them all to be the work of your mind.

⁴ I am the pure empty consciousness which is the essence of my soul. The expansion of this intellectual soul is called its will.⁵ Will becomes the mind and the creative power Brahma, and it takes the form of the world and this earth also. This empty mind is composed of its desires and assumes to itself whatever form it likes.⁶ In this way my mind stretched itself at that time and put forth its desires in all those forms as it liked. From its habitual capacity of containing everything, it evolved itself into the shape of the wide-stretched earth.⁷ Hence the sphere of the earth is nothing other than the evolution of the mind. It is only an unintelligent counterpart of intelligent consciousness.⁸ Being empty itself, it remains forever as such in infinite emptiness. But by being considered as a solid substance by the ignorant, they have altogether forgotten its intellectual nature.

⁹ The knowledge that this globe of earth is stable, solid and extended is as false as the general impression of blueness in the clear and empty sky, and this is the effect of a deep-rooted bias in the minds of men.¹⁰ It is clear from this argument that there is no such thing as the stable earth. It is of the same ideal form as it was conceived in the mind at the first creation of the world.¹¹ As a city in a dream and consciousness in emptiness, so the Divine Consciousness dwells in the form of the creation within emptiness.

¹² Know the three worlds in their intellectual light. They are like the aerial palace of childish fancy and hobby. Know this earth and all visible appearances to be the creatures of imagination.¹³ The world is a copy or reproduction of the intellectual Spirit of God. It is not a different kind of production of the Divine Will. In fact it has no real or positive existence at all, although it may appear as solid and substantial to the ignorant.

¹⁴ The unreal visible world is known only by the ignorant who are unacquainted with its real intellectual nature. Only he who is acquainted with its true nature knows well what I have been preaching to you all this time.¹⁵ All this is the thinking of Divine Consciousness, the manifestation of the Supreme Self in itself. The visible world which appears as something other than the Supreme Soul is inherent in that same Soul.

¹⁶ As a sparkling stone exhibits the various colors of white, yellow and others without their being infused in the stone, so Divine Consciousness shows this creation in all its various aspects within its empty sphere.¹⁷ The spirit does not do anything or change its nature. Therefore this earth is not a mental or a material production.¹⁸ Empty Consciousness appears as the surface of the earth. But of itself it has no depth or breadth. It is transparent on its surface.¹⁹ Its own nature shows itself as

anything wherever it is situated. Though it is clear like the open air, yet it appears as the earth by its universal inherence and permeation in all things.

²⁰ This globe of land and water appearing as something other than the Great Consciousness is in the very same form as it is pictured in the mind, like the shapes of things appearing in our dream. ²¹ The world exists in empty spirit, and the Divine Spirit also being empty, there is no difference in them. The ignorant soul makes the difference, but it immediately vanishes before the intelligent soul.

²² All material beings that have been or are to be in the past, present and future are mere errors of vision, like the false appearances in our dreams and the air-built cities of imagination. ²³ The beings that now exist and are to come into existence and the earth itself are of the same nature of a universal fallacy, instead of the Divine Spirit pervading the whole.

²⁴ I and all others who are included in this world have the visible perceptions of all things as they are preserved in our memory.

²⁵ Rama, know only Divine Consciousness, as the Supreme Soul and essence of all existence without decay which sustains the whole in its person without forsaking its spirituality. Knowing the whole world is contained within you, which is not different from the Supreme Soul, you shall be exempt and liberated from all.

Chapter 90 — Description of Water in Creation

¹ Rama said, “Tell me sage, what else did you see on the surface of the earth?”

² Vasishta replied:—

With my waking soul, I thought as if in sleep that I was assimilated to land. I saw many groups of lands scattered on this earth. I saw them in my mysterious vision, then I reflected on them in my mind.

³ As I saw those groups of lands lying everywhere before my intellectual vision, the outer world receded from my sight. All dualities were quite lost and hushed in my tranquil soul. ⁴ I saw those groups like so many places lying in the expanded spirit of Brahman which was a perfect void, quite calm and unresponsive to all agitations. ⁵ Everywhere I saw large tracts, great and solid as the earth itself.

But I found them in reality to be nothing more than empty dreams appearing in the vacant mind. ⁶ Here there was no diversity or uniformity, nor was there any entity or nothingness either. There was no sense of my egoism also, but all blended in an indefinite void. ⁷ Though I conceived myself to be something in existence, yet I perceived it had no personality of its own and its entity depended on that one sole Brahman who is uncreated and ever without decay. ⁸ Thus these sights were like appearances in dream in the empty space of consciousness. It is unknown how and in what form they were situated in the Divine Mind before they were exhibited in creation.

⁹ Now, as I saw those tracts of land in the form of so many worlds, so I also saw large bodies of water. ¹⁰ Then my active spirit became like the inert element of water called seas and oceans in which waves lay and played with a gurgling noise. ¹¹ These waters constantly flowed bearing loads of grass and straw, and bushes of plants and shrubs and trunks of trees which float like bugs and leeches crawl and creep on your body. ¹² These are carried by whirling waters like small insects and worms into the crevices of caves, and from there thrown into the womb of whirlpools whose depth is beyond all comparison.

¹³ Currents of waters flowed with leaves and fruits of trees in their mouths while floating vines and branches served as necklaces. ¹⁴ Drinkable water, taken by the mouth, went into the hearts of living beings producing different effects on the humors of animal bodies according to their properties at different seasons. ¹⁵ Water descended in the form of dew sleeping on leafy beds in the shape of icicles, shining under moonbeams everywhere and always without interruption. ¹⁶ Water ran with irresistible course to many lakes and brooks. It flowed in the currents of rivers unless stopped by some embankment.

¹⁷ The waters of the sea, like ignorant men on earth, ran up and down in search of its proper course, but failing to find it, they tumbled and turned about in whirlpools of doubts. ¹⁸ I saw water on mountaintops which, though it rested on high, yet fell owing to its restlessness in the form of waterfalls where it was dashed into a thousand splashes.

¹⁹ I saw water rising from the earth in the form of vapor on high, then mixing with the blue ocean of the blue sky, or appearing like blue sapphires among the twinkling stars of heaven. ²⁰ I saw waters ascending and riding on the backs of clouds, there joining with lightning as their hidden consorts,

shining like the blue god Vishnu mounted on the back of the ancient serpent Shesha.

²¹ I found this water both in atomic and elementary creations, as well as in all gross bodies on earth. I found it lying unperceived in the very grain of all things, just as omnipresent Brahman inheres in all substances. ²² This element resides in the tongue which perceives the flavor of things from their particles and conveys the sense to the mind. Hence I believe the feeling of taste relates to the soul and its perception, and not to the physical senses. ²³ I did not taste this spiritual taste by means of the body or any of its organs. It is felt only in the inner soul and not by the perceptions of the mind which are misleading and therefore false and unreal. ²⁴ There is this flavor scattered everywhere in the taste of seasonal fruits and flowers. I have tasted them all and left the flowers to be sucked by bees and butterflies. ²⁵ Again the sentient soul abides in the form of this liquid, in the bodies and limbs of all the fourteen kinds of living bodies. ²⁶ It assumes the form of rain showers and mounts on the back of driving winds. Then it fills the whole atmosphere with a sweet aromatic fragrance.

²⁷ Rama, remaining in my state of sublimated trance withdrawal, I perceived the particulars of the world in each individual and particular particle. ²⁸ Remaining unknown and unseen by anybody, I perceived the properties of all things with my physical senses, as I marked those of water appearing as gross matter. ²⁹ Thus I saw thousands of worlds repeatedly rising and falling like the leaves of plantain trees. ³⁰ Thus did this material world appear to me in its immaterial form as a creation of Consciousness presenting a pure and empty aspect. ³¹ Phenomena is nothing. We have only the mental perception of this world. This also vanishes into nothing when we know this all to be a mere void.

Chapter 91 — Description of Fire in Creation; Astral Travel

¹ Vasishta related:—

Then I believed I was identical with light. I saw its various aspects in the luminous bodies of the sun and moon, in the planets and stars, and in fire and all shining objects.

² This light by its own excellence becomes the light of the universe. It is as brilliant as the mighty monarch before whose all surveying sight the thievish darkness of night flies at a distance.³ This light, like a good prince, takes upon the likeness of lamps and reigns in the hearts of families and houses in a thousand shapes to drive off the thievish night and restore the properties of all before their sight.⁴ Being glad to lighten all worlds, it brightens the globes of the sun, moon and stars who with their rays and beams dispel afar the shade of night from the face of the skies.⁵ It dispels the darkness that bereaves all beings from their view of the beauties of nature.

It dispenses useful light which brings all to the sight of visible phenomena.⁶ It is an axe to the root of the black tree of night. It adds a purity and value to all things. It gives value to all metals and minerals and makes them so dear to mankind.⁷ It reveals all sorts of colors, such as white, red, black and others. It is light that causes colors like parents cause children.⁸ This light is in great favor with everyone upon this earth. Therefore it is protected with great fondness in all houses, just like they protect their children in homes with earthen walls.

⁹ I saw a slight light even in the darkness of hell. I saw it partly in the particles of dust which compose all bodies on the surface of the earth.¹⁰ I saw light, the first and best of God's works, to be eternally present in the homes of the celestials. I saw it as the lamp of the mansion of this world, which before had been a great deep of waters and darkness.¹¹ Light is the mirror of the celestial gods in all the quarters of heaven. Like the winds, it scatters the dust of frost from before the face of night. It is the essence of the luminous bodies of the sun, moon and fire, and the cause of the red and bright colors of the face of heaven.¹² It exposes grain fields to daylight and ripens their grain by dispelling darkness from the face of the earth. It washes the clear bowl of heaven and glitters on its dewy waters.

¹³ Because light gives existence and brings all things to view, it is said to be the younger brother of the transcendent light of Divine Consciousness.¹⁴ The light of the sun revives the lotus bed of the actions of mortals and is the life of living beings on earth. It is the source of our sight of the forms of all things, just as the intellect is that of all our thoughts and perceptions.¹⁵ Light decorates the face of the sky with numberless gems of shining stars. Sunlight divides the days, months, years and seasons in the course of time, and makes them appear like passing waves in the ocean of eternity.¹⁶ This immense universe bears the appearance of the boundless ocean in which the sun and moon revolve like rolling waves over the scum of this muddy earth.

¹⁷ Light is the brilliance of gold and the color of all metals. It is the glitter of glass and gems, the flash of lightning, and the vigor of men in general.¹⁸ It is moonshine in the nocturnal orb and the glittering of glancing eyelids. It is the brightness of a smiling face and the sweetness of tender and affectionate looks.¹⁹ It gives significance to gestures of the face, arms, and eyes and the frowning of eyebrows. It adds a blush to maiden faces from the sense of their invincibility.

²⁰ The heat of light makes the mighty spurn the world like bits of straw, break an enemy's head with a

slap, and strike the heart of a lion with awe.²¹ This heat makes hardy and bold combatants fight each other with drawn and jangling swords, clad in armor clanking on their bodies.²² It gives the gods their antagonism against the demons and makes the demonic races antagonistic to the gods. It gives vigor to all beings and causes plants to grow.

²³ All these appeared to me like a mirage in a desert. I saw them like apparitions in my mind. This scene of the world was situated in the womb of emptiness. These scenes, O bright eyed Rama, appeared to me like an optical illusion.²⁴ Then I saw the glorious sun above, stretching his golden rays to all ten sides of the universe, flying like a garuda bird in the sky. I also saw this speck of the earth looking like a country estate surrounded by the walls of its mountains.²⁵ The sun turned about and lent his beams to the moon and to the undersea fire beneath the dark blue ocean. The sun himself stood like the great lamp of the world giving daylight on the stand of the meridian.

²⁶ I saw the moon rising as the face of the sky, a lake of cooling and sweet nectar inside. Moonlight appeared like the soft and sweet smile of the dark goddess of night, and like the glow of the nightly stars.²⁷ The moon is compared to all beautiful objects in the world. The moon is companion of the evening star and the most beloved night object for women and the blue lotus.

²⁸ I saw twinkling stars like clusters of flowers in the tree of the skies, delighting the eyes and faces. They appeared to me like flocks of butterflies flying in the fair field of the firmament.²⁹ I saw many shining gems washed away by waters, tossed about by the waving arms of the ocean. I saw many jewels in the hands of jewelers, balanced in their scales.

³⁰ I looked into the undersea fire lying latent in the sea, and the currents moving silvery shrimp in whirlpools. I saw the golden rays of the sun shining like the filaments of flowers upon the waters, and I also saw lightning flashing among clouds.³¹ I witnessed the auspicious sacrificial fire blazing with indescribable light. I noted its burning flame, splitting and cracking sacred wood with a crackling and clattering noise.³² I saw the luster of gold and other metals and minerals, and I found how they are reduced to ashes like learned men overpowered by ignorant fools.³³ I observed the brightness of pearls, which gave them a place in the form of necklaces on women's breasts, as on the necks and chests of men and demons, and of gandharva spirits and chiefs of men.

³⁴ I saw the firefly with which women adorn their foreheads with bright spots, but which are trod upon as worthless by ignorant passers. Hence the value of things depends on their situation and not their real worth.³⁵ I saw flickering lightning in unmoving clouds and fickle shrimp gliding upon the waters of the calm ocean. I also heard the harsh noise of whirlpools in the quiet and noiseless sea and marked how restlessness consorted with calmness.³⁶ Sometimes I saw soft flower petals used as lamps to light bridal beds in inner apartments.

³⁷ Being then exhausted like an extinguished lamp, I became as dark as black pigment and slept silently in my own cell, like a tortoise with its limbs contracted.³⁸ Being tired with my travel throughout the universe at the *kalpanta* end of the world, I remained fixed among the dark clouds of heaven, like the elephant of Indra living there in company with his lightning.³⁹ At the end when the worlds were dissolved and waters absorbed by the undersea fires, I kept myself dancing in the ethereal space, which is devoid of its waters.

⁴⁰ Sometimes I was carried on high by burning fire with its teeth of sparks and flaming arms, its flying fumes resembling the disheveled hairs on its head. ⁴¹ The fire burnt down straw-built houses, fed upon animal bodies, and consumed the eight kinds of wood ordained in sacrificial rites. ⁴² I saw sparks of fire emitted from the red hot iron hammered by the strokes of blacksmiths. They were rising and flying about like golden brickbats to hit the hammerer.

⁴³ In another place I saw the whole universe lying invisible for ages in the womb of a stony, cosmic egg.

⁴⁴ Rama said, "Tell me sage. How did you feel confined in the stone? Was it pleasure or pain to you and the rest of beings?"

⁴⁵ Vasishtha replied:—

A man falls into sleep with the dullness of his senses, yet he has his airy intellect fully awake in him. In the same way that outward unconsciousness is filled with intellectual consciousness. ⁴⁶ The great Brahman awakens the soul when the body lies as unconscious as the dull earth. So the sleeping man remaining in his lethargic state has his internal soul full with the Divine Spirit.

⁴⁷ Because the earthly or physical body of man is truly a falsity without reality, it appears like a visual phantom to the sight of the spectator. But in reality it is one with unchanged spirit of God. ⁴⁸ Knowing this certain truth, whoever views these all as an undivided whole sees the five elements as one essence, and the subjective and the objective as the same. ⁴⁹ Having assimilated myself into the pure spirit of Brahman, I viewed all things in and as Brahman because there is none beside Brahma that is or can be or do anything from nothing. ⁵⁰ When I saw all these visible phenomena as manifestations of the same Brahman, then I left myself also situated in the state of Brahman himself. ⁵¹ On the other hand, when I reflected myself as combined with the fivefold material elements, I found myself reduced to my dull nature, incapable of intellectual reflection and the conception of my higher nature.

⁵² I thought as if I was asleep in spite of my power of reasoning intellect. Being thus overtaken by my sleepy unconsciousness, how could I think of anything of a transcendental nature?

⁵³ He whose soul is awakened by knowledge loses the sense of his physical body and raises himself to his spiritual form by means of his purer understanding. ⁵⁴ A man having his sentient and spiritual body, either in the form of a minute particle or larger size as one may wish, remains perfectly liberated from the chains of his body and his bondage in this world. ⁵⁵ With his intelligent and spiritual body, a man is able enter the impenetrable heart of a hard stone, or to rise to heaven above or descend to the regions below.

⁵⁶ Hence, O Rama, having my intelligent and subtle body, I did all that I told you with my essence of infinite understanding. ⁵⁷ In my entrance into the hard stone and my passages up and down the high heaven and the nether world, I experienced no difficulty anywhere. ⁵⁸ With my subtle and intelligent body, I passed everywhere and felt everything as I used to do with my physical body.

⁵⁹ A person going of his own accord in one direction and wishing to go in another immediately finds himself then and there by means of his spiritual body. ⁶⁰ Know this spiritual and subtle body to be no other than your understanding. Now through your own intelligence you can well perceive yourself to be of that imperishable form. ⁶¹ Thinking one's self as empty Consciousness abiding in the sun and all

visible objects, the spiritually minded person comes to know the existence of only his self. All else beside himself is nothing.

⁶² But how is it possible to see the visible world as nonexistent? The answer is that it appears as real as the unreal dream to the sleeping person, but vanishes into nothing upon his waking. Reliance on the nonexistent world is the belief of ignorant man in falsehoods. This reliance is confirmed by habit, although it is not relied upon by others who know the truth. ⁶³ This reliance is as vain as the vanity of our desires and the falsity of our aerial castle building, all of which are as false as the marks of waves left on the sands of beaches, or the marking of anything with charcoal, which is neither lasting nor perceptible to anybody.

⁶⁴ We see woodlands blooming with full blown flowers and blossoms. But these sights are as deluding as the sparks of fire presenting the appearance of a flower garden in fireworks. ⁶⁵ These fireworks, prepared with so much labor, burst suddenly at the slight touch of fire, then are blown away as soon as the prosperity of cheats.

⁶⁶ Rama, I saw the growth of the world to be as false and fleeting as the appearance of light in particles of dust. All these appearing like so many things of themselves are in fact nothing other than the appearances of hills and cities in the emptiness of the mind in our dreams at sleep.

Chapter 92 — Description of Air in Creation, the Universal Spirit

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Now in my curiosity to know the world, I thought myself as transformed into the form of the current air, and by degrees extended my essence all over the infinite extent of the universe.² I became a breeze with a desire to see the beauty of lovely plants all about me and to smell the sweetness of the fragrant blossoms of kunda, jasmine and lotus.

³ I carried about the coolness of falling rains and snows and dew drops, with a view to restore freshness to the exhausted limbs of tired and weary laborers.⁴ My spirit in the form of the current winds carried about the essences of medicinal plants and the fragrance of flowers, and carried away loads of grass, herbs, vines and plant leaves all around.⁵ My spirit travelled as the gentle warm breeze in the auspicious hours of morning and evening to awaken and lull lovely maids to sleep. Again, it took the tremendous shape of a tornado in storms, breaking down rocks and carrying them away.

⁶ In paradise it is covered with the reddish pollen of mandara flowers. In the mountains it is white with white frost and snows. In hell it burns in infernal fires.⁷ In the sea it has a circular motion with swelling waves and revolving whirlpools. In heaven it carries aloft and moves the clouds, both to cover and uncover the mirror of the moon hidden behind them.⁸ In heaven it has the name of *prabha* air and it holds up the starry frame and guides the course of legions of stars and the cars of their commanding generals, the post of gods.

⁹ It is considered to be the younger brother of thought owing to its great velocity. It is formless but moves over all forms. Though intangible, yet its touch is as delightful as cooling sandalwood paste.

¹⁰ It is old with the white frost it bears on its head, it is youthful spreading the fragrance of spring flowers, and it is young when it is quiet and still.¹¹ Here it travels at large, loaded with the fragrance of Nandana Garden. There it moves freely carrying the perfumes of the grove of the gandharva Chitraratha to tired persons and worn out lovers.

¹² Though fatigued with its work of raising and moving the constant waves of the cooling and purifying stream of Ganges, yet it is ever alert to lull the work of others, being quite forgetful of its own weariness.¹³ It gently touches its brides of spring plants bending down under the load of their full blown flowers, ever shaking their leafy hands, flitting eyes of fluttering bees resisting its touch.

¹⁴ The fleeting air, after drinking dew drops flowing from the moon and being fanned by the cool breath of lotuses, buried its weariness in its soft bed of clouds.

¹⁵ Like the swiftest steed of Indra, he carries the powder of all flowers to him in heaven and becomes a companion with Indra's elephant, who is giddy with the fragrance of his ichor.¹⁶ Then blew the winds with the soft breath of shepherd's horns, driving clouds away like cattle, blasting showering raindrops that set down the dust of the earth.¹⁷ It is perfumed with the fragrance of flowers flying in the air. It is the birth brother of all sounds which proceed from the womb of emptiness. It runs in the blood and humors, within the veins and arteries of bodies, and is the mover of the limbs of persons.

¹⁸ It dwells as life within the hearts of human bodies and is the only cause of all their vital functions. It is ever on its wing. Being omnipresent throughout the world, it is acquainted with the secrets of all

the works of Brahma.

¹⁹ It is the plunderer of the rich treasure of scents and the supporter of ethereal cities. It is the destroyer of heat and, as the moon, darkness. This air is the Milky Ocean that produces the fair and cooling moon. ²⁰ It forms islands and preserves the machine of living bodies by conducting the vital airs. ²¹ It is always present before us, yet it is invisible in itself, like an imaginary palace or oil in palm seeds or chains on the legs of infuriated elephants.

²² It blows away all the mountains at the end of the world in a moment. It marks waves with their whirls and collects the sands of rivers. ²³ It is false in appearance as water in a cloud of smoke, or a whirlpool in it. It is as invisible as the streams above the sky and lotuses growing in the lakes of the blue ethereal sky. ²⁴ In its form of wind gusts it is covered with bits of rotten grass. It opens lotus blossoms by its gentle breeze and showers down rains in its form of sounding blasts. ²⁵ Its body is like a wind instrument at home, and like an elephant in the forest of the sky. It is a friend to the dust of the earth and a wooer of flowers in woods and gardens.

²⁶ It is always busy in its various acts of solidification and drying, of upholding and moving, and of cooling the body and carrying perfumes. It is constantly employed in these six-fold functions to the end of the world. ²⁷ It is as fleet as light and skillful in extracting juices like penetrating heat. It is ever employed in the acts of contraction and expansion of the limbs of bodies, at the will of everybody.

²⁸ It passes unobstructed through the avenues of every part of the city of the body. By its circulation in the heart, distribution of bile, and blood vessels, it preserves the functions of life. ²⁹ It is expert in repairing the losses of the great citadel of the living body by removing its excrements and replacing its gastric juices, and the formation of its blood and fat, and flesh, bones and skin.

³⁰ I looked through every particle of the body by means of circulating air, just as I viewed every part of the universe by means of the encompassing air. I conduct this body of mine because of my vital airs. ³¹ The winds carry innumerable particles on their back, as if they were so many worlds in the air. In fact, nothing is carried by them when there is nothing but an utter negative emptiness everywhere.

³² I saw all bodies including those of the gods like Hari and Brahma and the gandharva and vidyadhara celestials. I saw the bright sun and moon, of fire and Indra and others. ³³ I saw seas, oceans, islands and mountains stretching as far as the visible horizon. I also saw other worlds and the natures and actions of their inhabitants. ³⁴ I saw heaven and earth and the infernal regions and noted their peoples and their lives and deaths. ³⁵ I saw various kinds of beings composed of the five elements. In the form of air I traversed throughout the universe like a bee entering the petals of a lotus flower. ³⁶ In my aerial form, I passed through bodies of all physical beings composed of earth, water, air and fire. I sucked the juice of all animal bodies and drank the moisture of trees drawn by their roots.

³⁷ I passed over all cold and solid bodies and liquid sandalwood paste. I rested in the cool lunar disc and lulled myself on beds of snow and ice. ³⁸ I tasted the sweets of all seasonal fruits and flowers in the tree gardens of every part of this earth. I drunk my fill in the flower cups of spring and left shelters for the honey drink of bees. ³⁹ Then I rolled on the high and soft beds of clouds spread out in the wide

fields of the sky, and I slept on soft and downy wings of clouds like a place bedded by heaps of butter.⁴⁰ I rested on flower petals, green tree leaves of trees, and on the soft bodies of heavenly nymphs without any lust on my part.

⁴¹ I played with lily and lotus blossoms in their beds and bushes. I joined with cackling geese and swans in their pleasure lakes.⁴² I moved with the flow of streams and the rippling waters of lakes and channels. I carried the globe of the earth on my back, all her mountains like hairs upon my body.

⁴³ The wide extent of hills and mountains and long streams falling from them, together with all the seas and oceans, were all like pictures reflected in the mirror of my body.⁴⁴ All the terrestrials and celestials that lived and moved at large upon my body appeared to be moving and flying about me like lice and flies.

⁴⁵ By my favor the sun received the various colors with which he shines and which he diffuses to the leaves of trees in the different colors of red, black, white, yellow and green.⁴⁶ The earth is situated with the seven seas surrounding the seven great continents, like so many bracelets on men's wrists.

⁴⁷ I was delighted at the flight of celestial vidyadari maidens, just as I see gladness within myself.

⁴⁸ The earth's rivers of pure water and its solid hills and rocks were like the veins and blood, and flesh and bones of my body.⁴⁹ I saw innumerable elephantine clouds and countless suns and moons in the starry frame of the sky, just as I see flights of gnats and flies in the emptiness of my mind.

⁵⁰ In my minute form of the intellect, O Rama, I held the earth with its footstools of the nether regions upon my head.⁵¹ I remained in my sole empty and spiritual state in all places and things at all times and as my own free agent, and yet without my connection with anything whatsoever.⁵² In this state of my spirituality I had the knowledge of both the intellectual and material worlds, and of all finite and infinite, visible and invisible, and formal and formless things.⁵³ I saw a thousand worlds and mountains and seas in my own spirit. They appeared like carved statues and engravings in the empty tablet of my mind.⁵⁴ I carried many hidden and visible worlds in my spiritual body. They showed themselves as clearly to my innermost soul as if they were reflections of real objects in a mirror.

⁵⁵ So in my empty soul I perceived the four elemental bodies of earth, air, fire and water in the same manner as we see the delusive objects of our dream in the emptiness of our intellect.⁵⁶ In that state of my trance, I also saw innumerable worlds rising before me in each particle of matter, appearing to fly before me in the hollow space of vacuum.⁵⁷ I saw a world in every atom flying in empty air, just as we see many creations of our dreams, and many creatures in those dreams.

⁵⁸ I myself became the globe of the earth and the clusters of islands as their pervading spirit, though my spirit never comes in contact with anything at all.⁵⁹ With my earthly body I suck rainwater and the waters of the seas in order to supply moisture for trees to produce juicy fruits for the food of living beings.

⁶⁰ When I came to pure understanding and the clairvoyance of my intellectual sight, I found that the millions of worlds and worldly things disappeared from my view and united in a single unity.⁶¹ This is a miracle of the intellect that strikes wonder in us, that the miracles of the inner mind manifest themselves as external sights before our eyes.

⁶² I felt it painful to think of the existence of nothing anywhere. But I found out the truth, that there is

nothing in reality except one spiritual substance which displays all these wonders in itself.⁶³ There is only one Universal Soul without decay and the continuous cause of all producing and living throughout the whole. As my soul awakened to knowledge, I saw this whole in the soul of Brahman.

⁶⁴ Awakened to the knowledge of the Universal Soul as the all and everywhere, omnipresent and all supporting, I became unconscious of all objects and was myself lost in the all subjective unity.

⁶⁵ Continuous creations appear to rise in the empty, wide vastness of pure Divine Spirit. But the extinction of these extinguishes the burning flame of worldliness in the mind and extends the knowledge of all these ideal particulars into that of one infinite and ever existent entity.

Chapter 93 — A Siddha Master Comes to Vasishta's Aerial Home

¹ Vasishta continued:—

As my mind was turned from the sight of phenomena and employed in meditation of the only One, I found myself suddenly transported to my holy cell in the air.² There I lost the sight of my own body. I did not know where I was sitting. Suddenly the sacred person of a spiritual master, an aerial siddha saint, appeared sitting in front of me.

³ He sat in deep meditation, entranced in his thought of the Supreme Spirit. His appearance was as bright as the sun and his body shone like flaming fire.⁴ He sat quiet and steadily in lotus posture, absorbed in meditation, having no idea of his body and no thought of anything in his mind.⁵ His body was smeared with ash and his head was erect upon his shoulders. He sat quietly with great ease, his face bright and his posture stable.⁶ The palms of both his hands were lifted up and set open below his navel. Their brightness caused his lotus petal heart to be as full blown as sunshine expands lotuses in lakes.⁷ His eyelids were closed and his eyesight was weak in that he saw all phenomena only in one light of whiteness. His eyes seemed to be sleepy like closing petals of a lotus at the close of the day.⁸ His mind was calm in all its thoughts, like the sides of the horizon in their stillness, and his soul was as unperturbed as the serene sky freed from a storm.

⁹ I could not see my own body, yet I could plainly see that of the saint placed before me. Then I reflected with the clear-sightedness of my discernment.¹⁰ “I find this great and perfect siddha saint in this solitary part of the firmament and I believe him to be as absorbed in his meditation as I am at ease in this lonely spot.¹¹ It is very likely that this saint, being earnest in his desire for deep meditation and finding my secluded hut favorable, has come here of his own accord.¹² He thought that I had cast off my mortal body and because of his deep attention, could not perceive that I had returned to it. So he threw away what he thought was my dead body and took up residence in this hut of mine.”

¹³ Seeing the loss of my body here, I thought of going back to my own home (*Saptarshi Mandalam*, the world of the Seven Rishis). As I was attempting to go there, I renounced my attachment to the lonely hut.¹⁴ This hut had dilapidated over time, leaving only an empty void. The saint who had taken my place inside also lost his place for lack of the hut and fell downward in his meditative mood.¹⁵ Thus I lost that lonely hut together with the loss of my fond desire for it, just as an imaginary city vanishes with the dream and desire which presented it to view.

¹⁶ The meditative saint then fell down from it, like rain falling from a cloud, or winds blowing a small cloud in empty air, or like the moon traversing the sky.¹⁷ He fell on the earth like a heavenly spirit falls to earth after the reward for his meritorious acts, and like an uprooted tree falls to the ground.¹⁸ So when wishing for a stable life and home, we see both ending suddenly, as it happened to the falling siddha.

¹⁹ Seeing the falling siddha, I felt a kind of concern for him. In the flight of my mind, I came down from heaven in my spiritual form to that spot on earth where he had fallen.²⁰ He fell on the wings of air currents which conveyed him whirling like in a whirlwind beyond the limits of the seven continents and their seven-fold oceans, to a place known as the land of gold and the paradise of the gods.²¹ He fell from the sky in the same lotus posture in which he had been sitting, his head and upper

body erect owing to the upward motion of his *prana* and *apana* breaths.²² Though hurled from such height and carried such distance, yet he did not wake from the mental inactivity of his samadhi, but fell down unconscious like a stone and as lightly as a bale of cotton.

²³ I was greatly concerned for his sake and in my anxiety to waken him, I roared loudly from my place in the sky like a cloud, and I also showered a flood of rainwater on him.²⁴ I threw hailstones, flashing like lightning, to waken him. I succeeded to bring him to sense like clouds rouse the peacock in rainy season.²⁵ His body flushed and his eyes opened like a blooming flower. The drizzling rains enlivened his soul, as the driving rain makes the lotuses of lakes bloom.

²⁶ Finding him awake and sitting before me, I cast my calm look upon him and very politely asked him about the prosperity of his spiritual concerns.²⁷ I said, "Tell me, O great sage, who are you? Where do you live and what do you do here? How is it that you are so unaware of your state, in spite of your fall from such a great distance?"

²⁸ Being addressed by me in this manner, he looked steadfastly at me, then remembering his visit at my hut, he replied to me in a voice as sweet like that of a chataka cuckoo to loud sounding clouds.²⁹ The sagely siddha said, "You sage, shall have to wait awhile until I recollect myself and my former state. Then I will relate the latter incidents of my life."³⁰ So saying he fell to the recollection of his past incidents, then having them in his memory, he related the particulars to me without any reserve, as if they happened that same day.³¹ Then he spoke to me in a voice as soft and cooling as sandalwood paste and moonbeams. The words were as blameless and well spoken, pleasing to my ears and captivating of my soul.

³² The siddha said:—

Now I come to know you, sage. I greet you with reverence and beg you to pardon my intrusion, as it is the nature of the good to forgive others' faults.³³ Know me, O sage, to have long enjoyed the sweets of the gardens of the gods in the form of a butterfly, like a bee sucking honey from lotus flowers in a lake.³⁴ I fluttered over a running stream and found it swelling with sounding waves at pleasure. Then seeing it whirling with horrid whirlpools, I began to reflect with sorrow in my mind.³⁵ Such is the sight of the troubles in this ocean of the world. The sight overwhelms me with sorrow and grief. I have become like a thirsty and grieving swallow that wails aloud at a lack of rainwater.

³⁶ I find my chief delight consists in consciousness. I perceive no pleasure in worldly enjoyments. Therefore I must rely only upon my intellectual speculations and abide without any anxiety in the unclouded sphere of my spiritual bliss.³⁷ I see there is no real pleasure here, only what is derived from our sensations of the sensible objects. I find no lasting delight in these, that I should depend upon them.³⁸ All this is either the emptiness or fabrications of the intellect. Why should I be deluded by these false appearances, as a madman or a deluded mind is apt to do?

³⁹ The phenomena of the senses are like poison that causes unconsciousness, like women delude men and provoke their passions. All sweets are only bitter and all pleasures are only a sort of pleasing pain.⁴⁰ This body which is subject to sickness and decay, its mind as fickle as a shrimp, is hourly watched by relentless death, just as an old crane lurks after swimming fish for his prey.⁴¹ The frail body, being subject to instant extinction, is like a bubble of water in the ocean of eternity. It also

resembles the flame of a lamp burning brightly before us but which can be extinguished in a moment.

⁴² What is life other than a stream of water running between the two shores of birth and death? It flows with the currents of passing joys and grief, swells with the waves of incidents, and whirls with the whirlpools of dangers and difficulties. ⁴³ It is muddied by the pleasures of youth and whitened with the hoary froths of old age. It casually emits a few bursting bubbles of joy and gladness which float for a fleeting moment. ⁴⁴ It runs with the rapid torrent of custom making a harsh noise of current choices. It is overcast by the roaring clouds of envy and anger and overflows the earth in its liquid form. ⁴⁵ The expression stream of life is as pleasing to the ear as the expression stream of water is soothing to the soul. But its waters are constantly boiling with the heat of the triple sorrows and abounding with whirlpools of illusion and greed that carry us up and down for ever more.

⁴⁶ The course of the world is like that of a river which carries away present things on its back and brings with its current what was unforeseen and unexpected. It is thus full of these events. ⁴⁷ All that was present before us is lost and carried away. It is vain to regret their loss. Whatever was never thought of before comes to pass. But what reliance can we have on any of them?

⁴⁸ The waters of all the rivers on earth continually pass away and are filled in turn from their sources. But the water of life in the river of the body, once gone, is never replenished from any source.

⁴⁹ Changes in fortune are constantly turning like a potter's wheel over the destinies of people, affecting some person or another at every moment in this ocean of the world. ⁵⁰ A thousand thieves and enemies of our estate are constantly wandering about to rob us of our properties, and nothing helps whether we sleep or wake to ward them off.

⁵¹ The particles of our lives are wasting and falling off every moment. Yet it is a wonder that nobody is aware of the loss of the days of his life, as long as he has only a little while to live. ⁵² The present day is reckoned as ours, but it soon passes like previous past ones. Ignorant of the flight of days, nobody thinks about the duration of his life until he comes to meet with his death. ⁵³ We have lived long to eat and drink, to move about from place to place, and to travel in foreign lands and woods. We have felt and seen all sorts of happiness and sorrow. Say what more is there that we can expect to have for our share?

⁵⁴ Having well known the pain and pleasure of grief and joy and experienced their changes and the reverses of fortune, I am fully impressed with the idea of the impermanence of all things and therefore keep from seeking anything. ⁵⁵ I have enjoyed all enjoyments and seen their impermanence everywhere. Yet I found no satisfaction or distaste for anything, nor felt my cool renunciation for them anywhere.

⁵⁶ I wandered on the tops of high hills and travelled in the airy regions on the summits of Mount Meru. I travelled to the cities of many rulers of men, but met with nothing of any real good to me anywhere.

⁵⁷ I saw the same woody trees, the same kind of earthly cities, and the same sort of fleshy animal bodies everywhere. I found them all frail and transitory, full of pain and misery as never to be liked.

⁵⁸ I saw that no riches or friends, and no relatives or enjoyments of life were able to preserve anyone from the clutches of death. ⁵⁹ Man passes away as soon as rainwater glides down mountain glades. He is carried away by the hand of death as quickly as a heap of hollow ash is blown away by the wind.

⁶⁰ No enjoyment is desirable to me. The attraction of prosperity has no charm for me when I find my life is as transient as the passing glance of a loving woman. ⁶¹ How and where and whose help shall we seek, O sage, when we see a hundred evils and imminent death hanging over our heads every day?

⁶² Our lives are as frail as falling leaves upon the withered woods of our bodies. The moisture they used to derive is soon dried up and exhausted. ⁶³ I passed my life in vain desires and expectations and derived nothing that is of any intrinsic good or profit to me.

⁶⁴ My delusion is at last removed and I see it is useless to carry the burden of my body any longer. I find it better to place no reliance upon it rather than lowering ourselves by depending on it. ⁶⁵ All prosperity is only adversity because of its transitory and illusive nature. Therefore the wise, accounting it as such, place no reliance on the vanities of this world.

⁶⁶ Men are sometimes led by the directions and prohibitions of the scriptures, like objects carried by rising and falling waters. ⁶⁷ The poisonous air of worldliness contaminates the sweet scent of reason in the mind of man. Worldliness is harmful to a person like a caterpillar in a flower bud corrodes the future flower. ⁶⁸ The vanities of the world are usually taken for realities, as all other unrealities in nature are commonly taken for actualities. ⁶⁹ Men are moving about with their bodies upon earth with as much haste as rivers running to the seas. Thus the great mass of mankind here is seen in pursuit of the sensible objects of desires.

⁷⁰ The desires of our hearts run to their objects with the speed of arrows flying from an archer's bow. But they never return to their seat in the heart or the bowstring, like ungrateful friends forsaking us in our adversity. ⁷¹ Our friends are our enemies, like blasts of wind that blow us away. All our relations are our bonds and chains and our riches are only causes of our poverty. ⁷² Our pleasures cause our pains and prosperity is the source of adversity. All enjoyments are sufferings and in the end all fondness tends towards distaste and dislike. ⁷³ All prosperity and adversity tend only to our temporary joy and misery. Our life is only a prelude to our extinction. All these are the display of our unavoidable delusion.

⁷⁴ As time glides on, it shows a man various sights of joy and misery. The poor creature lives only to see the loss of his friends and to complain at his hapless and helpless longevity. ⁷⁵ Enjoyment of pleasures is like playing with the fangs of a deadly serpent. They kill you as soon as you touch them and they disappear from your sight whenever you look at them.

⁷⁶ Life is spent without any attempt to attain that perfect state which is obtained without any pain or struggle. Instead, life is employed every day in the hardships of acquiring perishable, worthless things. ⁷⁷ Men bound to their carnal desires are exposed every moment to shame and the insults of the rich, like wild elephants tied with strong chains at their feet. ⁷⁸ Our fortunes and favorites are not only as frail and fickle as passing waves and bubbles, they also are deadly like the fangs of a snake. Who is there so silly as to take rest under the shadow of the hood of enraged serpent?

⁷⁹ Granted, the objects of desire are pleasing and the gifts of prosperity are very charming. Still, what are they and this life other than the fickle glances of a mistress' eyes? ⁸⁰ Those who enjoy pleasures now must come to feel them quite tasteless at the end and fall into the hell-pit at last. ⁸¹ I take no delight in riches worshipped only by the vulgar, always subject to disputes, earned with labor, kept

with great care, and yet as unstable as the winds.⁸² Fortune which is so favorable for a while, turns to misfortune in a moment. She is very charming to her possessor, but she is as fickle by nature as the fleeting flash of lightning.⁸³ Riches are like flatterers, very flattering at first and as long as they last, but as fleeting as those deceitful cheats who mock us upon their loss.⁸⁴ The blessings of health, wealth and youth are as impermanent as the fleeting shadows of autumn clouds. The enjoyments of sensual pleasures are destructive at the end.

⁸⁵ Say, who has remained the same to the end of his journey in this world, even among the great? The lives of men are as fleeting as dew drops trickling on the edges of tree leaves.⁸⁶ Our bodies decay in time, our hair turns grey with age, and teeth fall off. All things in the world wear out except our desires which know no decrease or decay.⁸⁷ Carnal enjoyments, like wild beasts, end up decaying us in the forest of the body. But the poison plant of our desire growing in that forest is always flourishing.

⁸⁸ Our boyhood passes as quickly as our infancy and our youth passes as quickly as our boyish days. Here there is an equal impermanence seen in both the comparison and the object compared.⁸⁹ Life melts away as quickly as water trickling out of our palms. Like the current of a river, it never returns to its source.⁹⁰ The body passes away as hurriedly as a hurricane sweeps in the air. It vanishes even before we see it, like a wave or a cloud, or as fast as the flame of a lamp.

⁹¹ I have found unpleasantness in what I thought to be very pleasant, and found the unsteadiness of what I believed to be steady. I have known the unreality of what I took to be real and hence I have become distrustful and disgusted of the world.⁹² The ease and rest that attend the soul and the cool detachment of the mind can never be obtained in any enjoyment that the upper or nether world can ever give anybody.⁹³ I find the pleasurable objects of my senses still allure me to their trap, just as a fruit or flower entices the foolish bee to fall upon it.

⁹⁴ Now after a long time, I am quite released from my selfish egoism. My mind has become indifferent to the desire of future rewards and heavenly bliss.⁹⁵ I have long found rest in my solitary bliss of emptiness. I have come here, like you, to this ethereal cell.⁹⁶ Afterwards I learned that this cell belonged to you. But I never thought that you would return to it.⁹⁷ I saw a lifeless body and thought it to be the frame of a spiritual master and saint who, having left his mortal body, became absorbed in his nirvana.

⁹⁸ Sage, what I have just told you is my story. I am seated here as I am and you can do whatever you may like with me.⁹⁹ Until a spiritual master sees all things in his mind and considers them well in his clear judgment, he is incapable of seeing the past, present and future in his clairvoyance, even though he be as perfect as the nature of the lotus-born Brahma himself.

Chapter 94 — Conclusion of Siddha Story; Vasishta Travels like a Pisacha; Description of Pisachas, Origin from Brahma

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Now as we were at a place of great extent, as bright as the golden sphere of heaven, I spoke to the siddha as a friend. ² I said, “Sage, it is true what you said, that it is the lack of due attention which prevents our comprehensive knowledge of the present, past, and future. But it is a defect not only of yours and mine, but of the minds of all mankind in general. ³ I say so from my right knowledge of the defects and fallibility of human nature. Or else sage, you would not have to fall from your aerial seat. But pardon me, I am equally fallible also. ⁴ Therefore, rise from this place and let us go to the aerial abode of the siddha spiritual masters where we were seated before, because one’s own seat is the most pleasant to man and self-perfection is the best of all perfections.”

⁵ So saying, we both got up and rose as high as the stars of heaven. We directed our course in the same way as a flying traveler or a stone flung in the air. ⁶ Then we took leave of each other with mutual farewells and each of us went to the place that was desirable to him. ⁷ I have now related to you fully the whole of this story, whereby you may know, O Rama, the wonderful occurrences that happens to us in this ever changeful world.

⁸ Rama said, “Tell me sage, how and with what form of body did you did travel about the regions of the spiritual masters when your mortal frame was reduced to dust?”

⁹ Vasishta replied:—

Ah! I remember it, and I will tell you the details about how I wandered throughout these worlds until I arrived at the city of the Lokapala (Guardians of the World) gods and joined with the hosts of spiritual masters traveling in the regions of the midway sky. ¹⁰ I travelled in the regions of Indra without being seen by anybody because since losing my material frame, I was passing in my spiritual body. ¹¹ O Rama, I had become of an aerial form in which there was neither receptacle nor recipient beside the nature of empty and intellectual soul. ¹² I was neither the subject nor the object of perception by persons like yourself, who dwell on material objects alone. Nor did I make any reckoning of the distance of space or succession of time.

¹³ The soul (the aerial form) is concerned with the thinking principle of the mind, not the various material objects composed of earth and the other elements. The soul is like the meditative mind or ideal man that meddles with no material substance. ¹⁴ It is not pressed or confined by material things, but is always busy with its reflections. The soul deals with beings in the same way as men in sleep do with the objects of their dream.

¹⁵ Rama, know that the simile of dreaming to explain the doctrine of the reasoning intellect is quite irrefutable, although it is refuted by others. ¹⁶ As the sleeping man thinks he is walking and acting in his dream, without such actions being perceived by others, so I thought that I walked before and saw the aerial beings without their seeing me. ¹⁷ I saw all other terrestrial bodies lying manifest before me. But nobody could see me hidden from their sight in my spiritual form.

¹⁸ Rama asked, “Sage, if you were invisible to the gods, owing to your bodiless, empty form, then how could you be seen by the siddha in the Kanaka land? How could you see others without having

eyes of your own?"

¹⁹ Vasishta replied:—

We spiritual beings view all things by means of our inner knowledge of them, just as other people see the things they desire to see and nothing for which they have no desire.²⁰ All men, though possessed of pure souls, forget their spiritual nature by being too deeply engaged in worldly affairs and unspiritual matters.

²¹ I wished that this siddha person could have sight of me. So according to my wish, I was observed by him, because every man obtains what he earnestly desires.²² Men being negligent in their purposes become unsuccessful in their desires. But being strong to my purpose and never swerving from my pursuit, I succeeded in gaining my desired object.²³ When two persons are engaged in the same pursuit, or one of them is opposed to the views of the other, the effort of the stronger effort is crowned with success and that of the weaker effort meets with failure.

²⁴ Then I travelled in my spiritual body through aerial regions of the Lokapala regents of the sky. Passing by the celestial city of the siddha spiritual masters, I saw people with manners quite different from my former habits.²⁵ Then I began to observe their strange manners in ethereal space and being unseen by anyone there, I distinctly saw everybody there and their mode of life and dealings. I was amazed.

²⁶ I called them aloud, but they neither heard nor gave heed to my voice. They appeared to me like empty phantoms, like the images of our dreams and visions.²⁷ I tried to lay hold of some of them, but my hands could grasp none. They evaded my touch, just like the ideas of images in the human mind.

²⁸ Thus Rama, I remained like a demoniac pisacha spirit in the abode of the holy gods. I thought I had been transformed into a pisacha spirit in the open air.

²⁹ Rama asked, "Tell me sage. What kind of beings in this world are pisachas? What are their natures and forms? What are their states and occupations?"

³⁰ Vasishta replied:—

I will tell you, Rama, what sort of beings the pisachas are in this world, because it is rude on the part of a teacher not to answer the questions of the audience.

³¹ The pisachas are a sort of aerial being with a subtle body. They have hands and feet and other body parts like you do, and they see all things as you do.³² Sometimes they assume the form of a shadow to terrify people. At other times they enter peoples' minds in an aerial form in order to mislead them to error and wicked purposes.³³ They kill weak bodied people, eat their flesh, and suck up their blood. They lay a siege about the mind and destroy men's vitals, internal organs, strength and lives.

³⁴ Some of them have aerial forms, some have the form of frost, and others are like imaginary men with airy forms that we see in our dreams.³⁵ Some have the form of clouds and others a nature like the winds. Some carry illusory bodies. But all of them possess mind and understanding.

³⁶ They do not have any tangible form that we can hold or that they can use to hold anyone else. They are merely empty airy bodies, yet conscious of their own existence.³⁷ They are susceptible of feeling the pain and pleasure occasioned by heat and cold. But they are incapable of the actions of eating,

drinking, holding, or supporting anything with their spiritual bodies.³⁸ They possess desire, envy, fear, anger and greed, and they are also liable to delusion and illusion. They are capable of being subjugated through the spell of mantras, the charm of drugs, and through other rites and practices.³⁹ It is likewise possible to see and control some of them by means of incantations, captivating exorcisms, amulets, and spirit chanting invocations.

⁴⁰ They are all the progeny of fallen gods. Therefore some of them carry the forms of gods also. While some have human forms, others are like serpents and snakes in appearance.⁴¹ Some have forms similar to dogs and jackals, and some are found living in villages and woods. There are many that reside in rivers, mud and mire, and hell pits.

⁴² I told you all about the forms and homes and doings of pisachas. Now hear me now tell you about the origin and birth of these beings.

⁴³ Know that an omnipotent power of its own nature exists forever. It is unintelligible Consciousness itself and it is known as Brahman the great.⁴⁴ Know this as the living soul, which being condensed becomes ego. The condensation of egoism makes the mind.⁴⁵ This Divine Mind is called Brahma, which is the empty form of the Divine Will. Brahma is the insubstantial origin of this unreal world, which is as formless as the hollow mind.

⁴⁶ So the mind exists as Brahma, whose form is that of formless emptiness. It is the form of a person seen in our dream, which is an entity without reality or physical body.⁴⁷ It was devoid of any earthly material or elemental form, and existed only in an immaterial and spiritual form. For how is it possible for the principle of will existing in empty air to have a material body?

⁴⁸ Rama, as you see an aerial city in the imagination of your mind, so the mind of Brahma imagines itself as Virinchi, the creator of the world.⁴⁹ Whatever one sees in his imagination, he considers it to be true for the time. Whatever is the nature and capacity of any being, he knows all others to be of the same sort as himself.⁵⁰ Whatever the empty soul sees in its empty sphere, the same it knows to be true, just as the spirit and the mind of Brahma exhibit this ideal world as a reality.⁵¹ Thus the contemplation of the present spectacle of the world as ever existing at all times strengthens the belief in its reality, like that of a protracted and romantic dream.

⁵² The long meditation of Brahma in his spiritual form of the creative power, presented to him the ideas of multitudes of worlds and varieties of creations, of which he became the creator.⁵³ The ideal, being perfected, grew compact and took a tangible form which afterwards was called the world and all the many varieties of which it is composed.

⁵⁴ This Brahma, the creative mind, is the same as Brahman the Supreme Soul. These two are forever identical with the uncreated soul and body of the universe.⁵⁵ These two (Divine Spirit Brahman and mind Brahma) are always one and the same being, like the sky and its emptiness. They forever abide together in unity, like the wind and its movement.

⁵⁶ The Divine Spirit sees the phenomenal world as a phantom, nothing real, just as you see the unreality of a figure of your imagination.⁵⁷ This Brahma then displayed himself in the form of a material body named Viraj consisting of the fivefold elements of earth, water and the rest as the five solid and liquid parts of his person.⁵⁸ As this triple nature (soul, mind and material frame) of the god

is no more than the variation of his will, so it represented itself as the one or the other in its thought only, and not in reality.⁵⁹ Brahma himself is empty consciousness. His will consists in the emptiness of consciousness. Therefore the production and destruction of the world resemble the rise and fall of figures in the dreaming state of the human mind.

⁶⁰ As the Divine Mind of Brahma is a reality, so its parts and contents are also real and its acts or productions of the sun, moon, and stars, as well as their rays, the Marichis, are also real.⁶¹ Thus the existence of the world and all its contents is called the dominion of the mind which is only an unsupported emptiness, like the emptiness of the unsupported sky on high.⁶² As a city seen in dream is insubstantial and a hill formed in imagination is a mere void, so both Brahma and his world are like the transparent sky, having no shape or substance of them.⁶³ So the world is only a reflection of Divine Consciousness. It is ever existent without decay. Belief in a beginning, middle or end of creation is as false as the sight of the ends and midpoint of skies.

⁶⁴ Tell me, Rama, whether you find any material substance growing in the empty space of your mind or any other person's mind. If you find no such thing there, then how can you suppose it to exist in the emptiness of Divine Consciousness and in the emptiness of the universe?⁶⁵ Then tell me why and from where feelings and passions, such as anger, affection, hate and fear, take their rise? All these are of no good to anybody, but rather harmful to many.⁶⁶ In truth I tell you that these are not created things, yet they seem to rise and fall of themselves, like our wrong notions of the production and destruction of the world. These are only eternal ideas, equally eternal with the eternal mind of God.

⁶⁷ The vast extent of infinite void is full with the clear water of Divine Consciousness. But being soiled by our imaginary conceits, this produces the dirt of false realities.⁶⁸ The boundless space of Divine Consciousness is filled with the empty spirit of God which, being the primary productive seed of all, has produced these multitudes of worlds scattered about and rolling like stones in the air.

⁶⁹ There is really no field and no seed which is sown there in reality. Nor is there anything which is ever grown or produced. But whatever there is exists forever as the same.

⁷⁰ Now among the scattered seeds of souls, there are some that grow mature and put forth in the forms of gods. Others are of a bright appearance and become intelligences and saints.⁷¹ Those that are half mature become human beings and naaga races. Still others are put forth in the forms of insects, worms and vegetables.⁷² Those seeds which are bloated and choked and become fruitless at the end, these produce the wicked pisachas, which are bodiless bodies of empty and aerial forms.⁷³ It is not that Virinchi or Brahma made them so of his own accord or will. They became so according to the desire which they created in themselves in their prior existence.

⁷⁴ All existent beings are as insubstantial as the Consciousness in which they exist. They all have their spiritual bodies which are quite separate from the material forms in which you behold them.⁷⁵ It is by your long habit that you have contracted the knowledge of their materiality, just as it has become habitual with us to think ourselves to be waking in our dreaming state.⁷⁶ All living bodies are accustomed to think of their physicality and to live content with their frail and base material forms. In the same way, pisachas are habituated to pass gladly in their ugly forms.

⁷⁷ Some men look upon others and know them as well as villagers know and deal with their fellow

villagers. But they resemble people living together as seen in a dream.⁷⁸ Some meet with many men, like in a city constructed in dream, and are quite unacquainted with one another because of their distant homes and different nationalities.⁷⁹ In this manner, there are many races of beings of whom we are utterly ignorant, such as pisachas, kumbhandas, pretas, yakshas and others.

⁸⁰ As the waters on earth collect only in the lowlands, so pisachas and demons dwell only in dark places.⁸¹ Should a dark pisacha dwell in bright midday light, upon a sunny shore or open space, it darkens that spot with the gloominess of its appearance.⁸² Even the sun is unable to dispel that darkness. Because a dark demon is so delusive and evades human sight, no one can discover the place where he makes his home.⁸³ As the sun and moon and the furnace of a burning fire appear bright before our eyes, so on the contrary the home of pisachas is ever hidden by impenetrable darkness which no light can pierce.

⁸⁴ The pisachas are naturally of a wonderful nature that vanishes like sparks of fire in daylight and become lighted again in the dark.

⁸⁵ Now Rama, in the course of this discourse I have fully described the origin and nature of the pisacha race, and how then I had become like one of them in the regions of the regents of the celestials.

Chapter 95 — Description of Vasishta's Bodies

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Having my ethereal intellectual body, which was quite free from the composition of the five elements, I travelled about in the air like a pisacha ghost, seeing all and seen by none.² I was not perceived by the sun or moon or by the gods Hari, Hara, Indra and others. I was quite invisible to the spiritual masters, gandharvas, kinnaras and apsaras of heaven.

³ I was astonished to realize, like any honest person who is a stranger in another's house, that the residents of the place did not perceive me, though I advanced towards them and called them to me.

⁴ Then I thought to myself that as these ethereal beings were seekers of truth like me, it was right that they should see me among them in their ethereal abode.⁵ Then they began to see me standing before them. They felt astonished at my un-thought appearance, just as the spectators are startled at the sudden sight of a juggler's trick in some magic show.⁶ Then I managed myself as I should in the house of the gods. I sat quietly in their presence and addressed and approached them without any fear.

⁷ Those who saw me and were unacquainted with the details of who I was, thought that I was only an earthly being known as Vasishta.⁸ When I was in sunlight by the celestials in heaven, they took me for the enlightened Vasishta, who is well known in the world.⁹ As I was seen afloat in the air by the aerial spiritual master siddhas, they called me by the name of the aerial Vasishta.¹⁰ The watery sages who rose from amidst the waters of the deep saw me and called me the watery Vasishta, from my birth in the water.¹¹ I came to be known under different names by different sets of beings. Some called me the earthly Vasishta, and others named me the luminous, the aerial, and so forth according to their own kind.

¹² Then in course of time, my spiritual body assumed a material form which sprang from within me and of my own will.¹³ That spiritual body and this material form that I have were equally aerial and invisible because it was only in my intellectual mind that I perceived the one and the other.¹⁴ Thus my soul, the pure intellect, appears sometimes as emptiness and at others shining as the clear sky. It is transcendent spirit without any form. It takes this form for your benefit.

¹⁵ The liberated living soul is as free as the empty spirit of Brahman, although it may deal with others in its physical body. The liberated bodiless soul remains as free as the great Brahman himself.

¹⁶ As for myself, I could not attain the station of Brahma, though I practiced the rules to obtain my liberation. Being unable to attain a better state, I have become the sage Vasishta that you see before you.¹⁷ Yet I look upon this world in the same light of being immaterial as the sage sees the figure of a person in his dream. It appears to him to have a material form, though it is a formless nonentity in reality.¹⁸ In this manner the self-born god Brahma and others, and the whole creation at large, present themselves as visions to my view, without their having any entity in reality.

¹⁹ Here I am the self-same empty and aerial Vasishta appearing as an imaginary shape before you. I am habituated to believe myself over grown, as you are accustomed to think of the density of the world.²⁰ All these are only empty essences of the self-born Brahma, and as that god is no other than the Divine Mind, so is this world nothing more than a production of that mind.²¹ The appearance of me, you and others, together with that of the whole world, proceeds from our ignorance. It is like the

apparitions of empty ghosts before deluded children, appearing as solid realities to your sight.

²² Being aware of this truth, it is possible for you to grow wise in course of time. Then your delusion is sure to disappear, just as our worldly bonds are cut off by renouncing our desires and affections.

²³ Our knowledge of the density and reality of the world is dispelled by true wisdom in the same way our desire of a jewel in a dream is dispelled upon waking.²⁴ The sight of phenomena immediately vanishes from view as we arrive to the knowledge of truth, just as our desire of deriving water from a mirage disappears with our knowledge of the falsity of the view.

²⁵ Reading this *Vasishta Maharamayana* is sure to produce the knowledge of self-liberation in its reader, even during his lifetime in this world.²⁶ The man whose mind is addicted to worldly desires and thinks its vanities are his real good leads a life of misery like those of insects and worms. He is unfit to be born as a human being in spite of all his knowledge of this world and all his holy devotion.

²⁷ The liberated man, while he lives, considers the enjoyments of his life to be no enjoyment at all. But the ignorant person only values his temporary enjoyments instead of his everlasting bliss.²⁸ By reading this *Maharamayana*, there arises a coldness in the mind resembling a frost falling on spiritual knowledge.

²⁹ Liberation is the cold detachment of the mind and our bondage consists in the passions of our minds and hearts. Yet the human race is quite opposed to cold detachment and, in their foolishness, men diligently pursue only temporal welfare, much to the astonishment of the wise.³⁰ Here all men are subject to their senses and addicted to the increase of wealth and family, all to the injury of each other. Yet it is possible for them to be happy and wise, if they will only reflect well upon the true meaning of spiritual scriptures.

³¹ Valmiki says:—

After the sage had said these words, the assembly broke with the setting sun and mutual salutations to perform their evening devotion. They made their ablutions as the sun sank down into the deep, and again went back to the court with the rising sun at the end of the night.

Chapter 96 — Summation of the Story of the Stone; Nothing Exists or Does Not Exist

¹ Vasishta resumed:—

O intelligent Rama! I have described at length the story of the stone which shows you plainly how all these created things are situated in the emptiness of Divine Consciousness,² and how nothing whatever exists at anytime or place or in the air except the one undivided intellect of God which is situated in itself, like salt and water mixed together.

³ Know Brahman as Consciousness which presents many imaginary shows of itself in the dream which is inseparable from itself.⁴ God being the Universal Spirit and creation full of manifestations, it is not inconsistent to the nature of the universal and immutable soul to contain endless varieties of manifestations in the infinite emptiness of Divine Consciousness without any change in itself.

⁵ There is no self-born creative power as Brahma or its creation of the world. The world is only a production of the dreaming intellect. It is situated in our consciousness, just as the dreams are imprinted in the memory.⁶ As the city seen in your dream is situated intellectually in yourself, so the entire universe, from its creation to its annihilation, is situated in Divine Consciousness.⁷ As there is no difference between gold and the gold mountain of Meru, or between the dreamed city and the mind, so there is no difference whatever between the intellect and its creation.

⁸ Only consciousness exists and not the world of its creations, just as the mind exists without the gold mountain of its dream.⁹ As the mind shows itself in the form of the formless mountain in its dream, so the formless Brahman manifests itself as the world of forms, which is nothing in reality.
¹⁰ Consciousness is all this vacuum, uncreated, unbounded and endless, neither produced nor destroyed in thousands of the great mahakalpa ages.

¹¹ This intellectual vacuum is the living soul and Lord of all. It is the ego without decay and embraces all the three worlds in itself.¹² The living body becomes a lifeless carcass without this aerial form intellect. Consciousness is neither broken nor burnt with the fragile and burning body, nor is there any place to extract the empty intellect from the body.¹³ Therefore there is nothing that dies and nothing that ever comes to being. Consciousness being the only being in existence, the world is only a manifestation of itself to the mind.

¹⁴ Consciousness alone is the embodied and living soul and should it ever be supposed to die, then the son would be thought to die by the death of the father because the one is only a reproduction of the other.¹⁵ Again the death of one living soul would involve the wholesale death of all living creatures, and then the earth would be void of all its population.

¹⁶ Therefore, O Rama, no one's intellectual soul has ever died anywhere up to this time. Nor has there ever been any country devoid of a living soul.¹⁷ Knowing that I am one with the Eternal Soul and the body and its senses are not mine, I do not know how I or anyone else could ever die at anytime.¹⁸ He who knows that he is the purely intellectual soul, and yet ignores it and thinks to himself that he is dying like a mortal being, truly is the destroyer of his soul and casts himself into a sea of troubles and misery.

¹⁹ If I am the intellectual soul, without decay and everlasting, as transparent as the open air, then tell

me, what is life or death to me, and what does my happiness or misery mean in any state? ²⁰ Being the empty and intelligent soul, I have no concern with my body. Anyone conscious of his soul who forgets to believe himself as such is truly a destroyer of his soul. ²¹ The wise consider a foolish man who has lost his consciousness of being the purely empty soul to be a living dead body.

²² The knowledge that I am the intelligent soul and the bodily senses are not essential to me is what leads me to attain to the state of pure spirituality, which neither death nor misery can deprive. ²³ He who remains firm, relying upon the pure intellectual soul, is never assailed by disasters, but is unaffected by sorrow as a block of stone to a flight of arrows. ²⁴ Those who forget their spiritual nature and place their trust in the body are like foolish people who ignore gold and collect ashes.

²⁵ The belief that I am the body, its strength and its perceptions falsifies my faith in these and destroys my reliance on the spirit. But my trust in the spirit confirms my faith in spirit by removing my belief in the body and its senses. ²⁶ The belief that I am pure empty consciousness, quite free from birth and death, is sure to dispel all illusions of feelings and passions and affections. ²⁷ Those who neglect the sight of empty consciousness, unable to see their bodies in the light of the spirit, deserve the name of physical beasts and are receptacles of only physical desires and passions.

²⁸ He who knows himself to be unbreakable and unburnable like a solid and impenetrable stone, not in his unreal body but in his consciousness, cares little for his death. ²⁹ O the delusion that spreads over the sight of clear-sighted sages who fear total annihilation at the loss of their bodies. ³⁰ When we are firmly settled in our belief in the indestructible nature of empty consciousness, we are led to regard the fire and thunder of the last day of destruction in the light of a shower of flowers over our heads.

³¹ I am imperishable consciousness and nothing that is perishable. Therefore the wailing of a man and his friends at the point of death appears as a ridiculous comedy to the wise. ³² That I am my inner intelligence and not the outer body or its sensations, is a belief that serves as an cure against the poison of all grief and sorrows. ³³ That I am empty consciousness without any annihilation and that the world is full of intelligence, is a sober truth which can never admit any doubt.

³⁴ Should you suppose yourselves to be anything other than consciousness, then tell me, you fools. Why do you vainly talk of the soul and what do you mean by it? ³⁵ Should the intelligent soul be liable to death, then it is dead with dying people every day. Then tell me how you live and are not already dead with the departed souls of others? ³⁶ Therefore the intelligent soul neither dies nor comes to life at anytime. It is only a false idea of the mind to think it is living or dying; it never dies.

³⁷ As the intellect thinks to itself, so it beholds the same within itself. It goes on thinking in its habitual mode. It is never destroyed in its essence. ³⁸ It sees the world in itself, and is likewise conscious of its freedom. It knows all that is pleasurable or painful without changing from its unalterable nature at anytime or place. ³⁹ It is liable to delusions through knowledge of its embodiment, but by knowledge of its true nature, it becomes acquainted with its own freedom.

⁴⁰ There is nothing whatever that is produced or destroyed at anytime or in any place. Everything is contained in the sole and self-existent Consciousness, displayed in its clear and empty sphere.

⁴¹ There is nothing real or unreal in the world. Everything is taken in the same light as it is displayed by Consciousness. ⁴² Whatever the intelligent soul thinks to itself in this world, it retains the ideas of

them in the mind. Everything is judged by one's consciousness of it. Something which one thinks to be poison, another believes to be nectar.

Chapter 97 — Different Beliefs Lead to the Same Unity; Examples of Self-realized

¹ Vasishta continued:—

The world is only a vision of the Supreme Soul situated in the emptiness of the Divine Mind. The world appears in our consciousness as the idea of Brahman.² The delusion of the visionary world, being too tangible to our view, has kept the Supreme Spirit out of our sight, just as the spirit of the wine is kept hidden in the liquor, though it can never be lost.

³ Our belief in the endless emptiness and in the absence of any positive existence in reality, necessarily results because we discard unreal phenomena as delusion and we recognize the real as incomprehensible.⁴ The principal source is that the embodied Consciousness, called the soul, is the supreme cause, and the world proceeds from the unknown principle. The truth of this view of the creation rests wholly upon the opinion of the philosopher Kapila.

⁵ The Vedantists believe that the visible world is the form of the all pervasive spirit of God. This opinion regarding the formal world and its inherent principle depends solely upon the conception of these philosophers.⁶ The position of the Positive and Atomic philosophers of the Nyaya system is that the world is a collection of particles. All these doctrines are relied upon and maintained by the best belief of every party.⁷ Some believe that both present and future worlds are as they are seen and thought to be. The spiritually minded person looks upon the world neither as an entity nor a nonentity.

⁸ Others acknowledge only the outer world and nothing which is beyond their eyesight. These Charvaka atheists do not believe even in the existence of the intelligent soul within their bodies.

⁹ There are others who, seeing the constant changes and fluctuations of things with time, attribute omnipotence to time and have become concerned with time with a belief of the vanishing away of the world.¹⁰ The belief of foreigners regarding the resurrection of the soul from the grave, which is built on the analogy of a sparrow flying away from its imprisonment, has gained a firm ground in the minds of men in these countries, and is never doubted by any of them.

¹¹ The tolerant sage looks at all apparent differences alike and takes them in equal light. They know that all these varieties in the world are only manifestations of the one all pervading and unchanging soul.¹² The nature of the world is to go on in its course, so it is natural for the wise to entertain these various opinions regarding the world. The truth, however, is quite mysterious and hard find by inquiry. But it is certain that there is an all-creative power guided by intelligence and design in all its works.

¹³ That there is one creator of all is the truth arrived at by all godly men and truthful minds. Whoever is certain of this truth is sure to arrive at it without any obstruction.¹⁴ That this world exists and a future one also are the firm beliefs of the faithful, and that their sacred ablutions and oblations to that end never go for nothing. Such assurance on their part is sure to lead them to the success of their object.

¹⁵ Reality is an infinite emptiness. That is the conclusion arrived at by the Buddhist. But there is nothing to be gained by this inquiry, nor any good to be derived from a void nothingness.¹⁶ It is Divine Consciousness that everyone seeks, just as they seek a priceless gem or the kalpa, wish fulfilling tree of life. This fills our inner soul with the fullness of the Divine Spirit.

¹⁷ The Lord is neither emptiness nor non-emptiness. It is not a nonentity as some maintain. He is omnipotent, and this omnipotence does not abide in him, nor is it without him, but is the same as he.

¹⁸ Therefore let everyone rely upon his own belief until he arrives to the true and spiritual knowledge of God. By doing so he will obtain the reward of his faith and therefore he must refrain from fickleness.

¹⁹ Therefore consult with the learned and judge with them about the right course. Then accept and follow what is best and correct and reject all what proves to be otherwise. ²⁰ A man becomes wise by knowledge of scriptures, by practicing the conduct of the good, and by associating with the wise and good, wherever such persons may be found. ²¹ He who serves and attends upon the preachers of sacred scriptures and those who practice good and moral conduct is deemed a wise man, and his company also is to be resorted to by the wise. ²² All living beings are naturally impelled towards whatever tends to their real good, just as the nature of water is to seek its own level. Therefore men should choose the company of the good for their own best good.

²³ Men are carried away like bits of straw by the waves in the eventful ocean of the world. Their days pass as rapidly as dew drop falling from blades of grass.

²⁴ Rama asked, "Tell me sage, who are those far seeing persons who, sensing this world to be full of weeds and thorns, come at last by their right judgment to rest in the state of indescribable bliss?"

²⁵ Vasishtha replied:—

Scriptures state that among all classes of beings, there are some such persons whose presence sheds a luster as bright as broad daylight. ²⁶ Beside them are others who are quite ignorant of truth, tossed about and whirled up and down like straw by the whirling waters of the dangerous whirlpool of ignorance in the dark and dismal ocean of this world. ²⁷ These are drowned in their enjoyments, lost from the bliss of their souls. They are ever burning in the flames of worldly cares.

Some such are among the gods who are burning on high like mountain trees inflamed by wildfire.

²⁸ Proud demigods were vanquished by hostile gods, cast down into the abyss by Narayana like big elephants into the pit with the ichor of their giddiness. ²⁹ Gandharva songsters show no sign of right reason in them. Being giddy with the wine of melody, they fall into the hands of death just like silly stags caught in a snare. ³⁰ Vidyadharas are mad with their knowledge and do not esteem the esoteric and grand science of divinity for their liberation. ³¹ Yakshas, impregnable themselves, are ever apt to injure all others on earth. They exercise their harmful powers chiefly upon helpless infants, old men, and other weak and infirm people. ³² Then there are the huge and elephant-like rakshasa demons who have been repeatedly destroyed by Vishnu and will be utterly eradicated by you like a herd of sheep by a powerful lion. ³³ Pisacha cannibals are always in quest of human prey. They devour their bodies like fire consumes offerings. Therefore they are in utter darkness of spiritual knowledge. ³⁴ The naaga race that dwells underground resembles stalks of lotuses drowned under the water, or tree roots buried in the earth. Therefore they are quite unconscious of truth. ³⁵ Those of the asura race dwelling in underground cells are like worms and insects groveling in dark underground, utterly ignorant of any knowledge or discrimination. ³⁶ And what must we say of foolish mankind who like the poor ants, are moving busily by night and day in search of a morsel of bread?

³⁷ All living bodies are running up and down in vain expectations, unconsciously gliding over them like drunken men indulging in bad desires, vices and actions. ³⁸ The knowledge of pure truth never enters into the mind of men, just as dust flying over the surface of water never sinks in the water.

³⁹ The holy vows of men are blown away by the blasts of their pride and vanity, just as the husks of rice are blown off by the wind of the threshing mill. ⁴⁰ Other people without true knowledge are like sorcerers and shudra lower castes. They are addicted to the carnalities of eating and drinking and roll like insects in stink, stench, mud and mire.

⁴¹ Among the gods, only Yama, Surya, Chandra, Indra, Rudras, Varuna and Vayu, are said to live liberated forever. So are Brahma, Hari, Brihaspati and Shukra. ⁴² Among the patriarchs, Daksha, Kasyapa and others are said to be living liberated. Among the seven sages, Narada, Sanaka and the goddess-born Kumara are liberated forever. ⁴³ Among the Danava demons, there were also some who had their emancipation. These were Hiranyaksha, Bali, Prahlada and Sambara, together with Maya, Vritra, Andha, Namuchi, Kesi, Mura and others. ⁴⁴ Among rakshasas, Vibhisana, Prahasta and Indrajit are held as liberated, as are Sesha, Takshaka, Karkotaka and some others among the naaga serpent race.

⁴⁵ The liberated are entitled to dwell in the worlds of Brahma and Vishnu, and in the heaven of Indra. There also are some ancestral spirits of the pitris, siddhas and saddhyas who are reckoned as liberated. ⁴⁶ Among the human race, there are some who are liberated in their lifetime. There are a few princes, saints and brahmins whose names are preserved in the sacred records.

⁴⁷ There are living beings in multitudes on all sides of us in this earth, but very few are enlightened with true knowledge. There are unnumbered trees and forests growing all around us, bearing their fruit and flowers and foliage to no end. But there is scarcely a desire-yielding kalpa tree to be found among them.

Chapter 98 — Praise of Good Society

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Those among the judicious and wise who are indifferent and unconcerned with the world, and have surrendered to God resting in His state of supreme bliss, have all their desires and delusions stopped and their enemies lessened in this world.² Such a man is neither gladdened nor irritated at anything, nor does he engage in any matter or employ himself in the accumulation of earthly effects. He does not annoy anybody, nor is he annoyed by anyone.³ He does not bother his head about theism or atheism, nor torment his body with religious austerities.

He is agreeable and sweet in his behavior and pleasing and gentle in his conversation.⁴ His company gladdens the hearts of all, just as moonlight delights the minds of men. He is prudent in all affairs and the best judge in all matters.⁵ He is without any anxiety in his conduct, polite and friendly to all. He patiently manages all his outward business, but remains quite cool in his inner mind.⁶ He is learned in the scriptures, taking delight in their exposition. He knows all people both past and present. He also knows what is good and bad and is content with whatever comes to pass on him.

⁷ The wise act according to the established custom of good people and refrain from what is opposed to it. They gladden all men with their free advice, just as the warm breeze entertains them with the freely given scent of flowers. They afford a ready reception and table to the needy.⁸ They treat the needy that come to their doors with respect, just as the blooming lotus entertains the bee that rests on it. By their endeavors, they attract the hearts of people to save them from their sins.

⁹ They are as cold as any cooling thing, like the clouds of rainy season, and are as quiet as rocks. They are capable of removing the disasters of people by their meritorious acts.¹⁰ They have the power to prevent impending dangers of men, just as mountains keep the earth from falling at an earthquake. They support the failing spirit of men in their calamitous circumstances and congratulate them on their prosperity.¹¹ Their faces are as pleasant as the fair appearance of the moon and they are like the well wishers of men, like loving consorts. Their fame fills the world like flowers of spring in order to produce fruit for the general good.

¹² Holy men are like the spring season. Their voices are like the notes of kokila nightingales, delighting all mankind. Their minds are like profound oceans, undisturbed by turbulent waves or whirlpools of passions and thoughts of other people.¹³ They pacify others' troubled minds by their wise counsel, just as cold weather calms turbulent seas and puts their noisy waves to rest.¹⁴ They resemble robust rocks on the seashore, withstanding the force of the dashing surges of worldly troubles and afflictions that overwhelm and bewilder the minds of mankind.¹⁵ Only good people seek out these saintly men in times of utmost danger and distress. These and the like are the signs whereby these good hearted people are distinguished from others.

¹⁶ Let the weary traveler, in his tiresome journey through this world that resembles the rough sea filled with huge whales and serpents, rely only upon his maker for his rest.¹⁷ There is no other means to pass over this hazardous ocean without the company of the good which, like a sturdy vessel, safely carries him across. There is no reasoning required to prove it so. It must be so.

¹⁸ Therefore do not remain like a dull bear in its den, vainly worrying over your sorrows. Seek refuge

in the wise man who possesses any of these virtues. That is your remedy and leave all other concerns.

¹⁹ Mind not his fault but respect his merit. Learn with all diligence, beginning in your youth, to discern the good and bad qualities of men. ²⁰ First of all, improve your understanding by all means and by the company of the good and by careful study of the scriptures. Serve all good people without minding their faults. ²¹ Shun the society of men who are conspicuous for some great and incorrigible crime. Otherwise it will change the sweet composure of your mind to bitterness and disturbance.

²² This I know from my observation, the righteous turning to unrighteousness. This is the greatest of all evils, when the honest turn to dishonesty. ²³ This change and falling off of good men from their moral righteousness have been seen in many places and at different times. Therefore it is necessary to choose the company of only the good for one's safety in this and salvation in the next world.

²⁴ Therefore no one who is to be regarded with respect and esteem should live far from the society of the good and great. The company of the good, though slightly sought, is sure to purify the newcomer with the flying fragrance of their virtues.

Chapter 99 — Consciousness in Plants, Insects and Animals

¹ Rama asked, "Truly we have a great many ways to relieve our pains, such as our reason, the teachings of the scriptures, the advice of our friends, and the society of the wise and good. There are also the applications of mantras and medicines, charitable giving, performances of religious austerities, going to pilgrimages and resorting to holy places. ² But tell me. What is the state of brute creations such as worms and insects, birds and flies, and the other creeping, crawling and bending animals? Like us, are they not also susceptible to pain and pleasure? What means do they have to remedy their pains and evils?"

³ Vasishta replied:—

All creatures, whether animal or vegetable, are destined to partake of the particular enjoyments that are allotted to their respective shares, and they are ever tending towards that end. ⁴ All living beings, from the noble and great to the mean and minute, have their appetites and desires like us. The difference lies in their lesser or greater proportion compared to us.

⁵ Great Virat-like big bodies are moved by their passions and feelings. So also little puny tribes of insects are fed by their self love to pursue their own ends. ⁶ See the unsupported birds of the sky, flying and falling in the air. They are quite content wandering in emptiness without seeking a place for their rest. ⁷ Look at the constant efforts of the little ant in search of its food and hoarding its store like we do for the future provision of our families, never resting content for a moment. ⁸ Little mollusks, minute as atoms of dust, yet are quick in quest of its food like a swift eagle in pursuit of its prey in the sky.

⁹ As we pass our time in the world thinking of ourselves — our egoism and mine and of this and that — so it goes on with every creature having its selfish thoughts and cares for its own kind. ¹⁰ The lives of filthy worms are spent like ours in their struggle and anxious care for food and provisions, at all places and all times for the duration of their lives in the world.

¹¹ Plants and trees are somewhat more awakened in their state of existence than mineral productions, which continue dead and dormant forever. But worms and insects are as awakened from their dormancy as men in order to remain restless forever. ¹² Their lives are as miserable as ours upon this earth of sin and pain. Their deaths are as desirable as ours in order to set us free from misery after a short-lived pain.

¹³ As a man sold and transported to a foreign country sees with wonder all things that are not his own. So it is with brute animals that see all strange things in this earth. ¹⁴ All animals find everything on earth to be either as painful or as pleasant to them as they are to us also. But they do not have the ability like us to distinguish what is good from what is harmful to them. ¹⁵ Brute animals are dragged by their bridles and nose-strings like men sold as slaves to labor in distant lands have to bear all sorts of pains and privation, only animals are not able to communicate or complain to anybody. ¹⁶ Trees and plants and their seedlings are subject to pains and troubles like us, when our thin-skinned bodies are annoyed by stormy weather, or assailed by gnats and bugs while trying to sleep.

¹⁷ And as we mortals on earth have our knowledge of things, and the wisdom of forsaking a famine-stricken place for our welfare elsewhere, so it is with the animals and birds to migrate from lands of

scarcity to those of plenty.¹⁸ The delightful is equally delectable to all. The god Indra as well as a worm are both inclined towards what is pleasurable to them. This tendency to pleasure proceeds from their own choice. This freedom of choice is not denied to any but is irresistible in all. He who knows his free will is altogether free and liberated.

¹⁹ The pleasure and pain arising from passions and feelings and from enjoyments in life, as well as the torments of diseases and death, are alike to all living beings.²⁰ The exceptions are the knowledge of things and that of past and future events and the arts of life. All the various kinds of animals are endowed with all other animal faculties and inclinations like those of mankind.²¹ The drowsy plant kingdom, the dormant mountain, and other unconscious natures are fully conscious within of an empty intellectual power on which they exist.

²² But there are some who deny the consciousness of an intellectual spirit in the dormant and fixed bodies of trees and mountains, and they allow the consciousness of the empty intellect in only a very slight degree in moving animals and in the majority of the living and ignorant part of mankind.²³ The dense state of mountains and the sleepy nature of the plant creation, being devoid of the knowledge of dualism, have no sense of the existence of the world except that of a nonentity or mere emptiness.

²⁴ Knowledge of the world is accompanied with utter ignorance of its nature, or with agnosticism. For when we do not know ourselves or the subjective, how is it possible for us to know the objective world?²⁵ The world is ever situated in a state of dumb sluggishness, like a dull block of wood or stone. It is without beginning or end and without an opening in it. It is like the dreaming wakefulness of a sleeping man.²⁶ The world exists in the same state as it did before its creation. It will continue to go on forever even as now because eternity is always the same both before and after.²⁷ It is not the subjective or the objective, not the full or emptiness, and not a mute substance or anything whatever.

²⁸ Remain as you are and let me remain as I am. Freed from pleasure or pain in our state of emptiness, we find nothing existent or nonexistent here.

²⁹ Say, why do you forsake your state of absolute nothingness? What do you get from your imaginary city of this world? It is all calm and quiet without, just as your empty consciousness is serene and clear within you.³⁰ The lack of right knowledge causes our error of the world, but as soon as we come to detect this false knowledge of ours, this error flies away from us.³¹ The world being known as a dream without any reality, it is as vain to place any reliance on it as it is to place one's affections on the son of a barren woman, or to confide in such a one.³² Even in a dream we can recognize that we are dreaming of a false world, so what faith or confidence can we place in the world on coming to know its nothingness upon waking?³³ What is known in the waking state could not be otherwise in sleep. Whatever is known in the later hour of coming to its knowledge, the same must have been its previous state also.

³⁴ There are the three times of present, past and future. Our knowledge of these proceeds from our ignorance of endless duration, which is the only real tranquil and universal substratum of all.³⁵ As waves crashing against one another do no harm to the waters of the sea, so the destruction of one body by another does no injury to the inner soul which is ever impregnable and also indestructible.³⁶ The empty Consciousness within us gives rise to the false conception of our bodies. Therefore the loss of

the body or its false conception affects neither our intellect nor ourselves.

³⁷ The waking soul sees the world situated in the emptiness of Consciousness, as it were in its sleep. This of creation in the mind, being devoid of materiality, is very much like a dream. ³⁸ The ideas of material things are produced in the beginning of creation from their previous impressions left in the intellect. The world being only a dream or work of imagination, it is an error of the brain to take it for a reality. ³⁹ Traces of prior dreams and reminiscences are preserved in the memory or mind and appear and reappear in it, representing their aerial shapes as substantial figures.

⁴⁰ This error has taken possession of the mind in the same manner as the untrue is taken for truth. Meanwhile the transcendent and clear truth of the omniform soul is rejected as untrue. ⁴¹ In reality there is only Divine Consciousness that has existed forever. The most certain truth is that Brahman is all in all, therefore the doctrine of memory and forgetfulness goes to nothing. ⁴² Sheer ignorance devoid of this spiritual knowledge views things only in their material light, and in this realization lies true knowledge which breaks open the door of ignorance. ⁴³ At last nothing remains after expulsion of the error of materiality, only the pure spirit of God who is both the viewer and the view, and the subjective and objective in himself.

⁴⁴ As the reflection of anything falling on a mirror shows itself within itself, so the world shines of itself in the emptiness of Divine Consciousness, the reflection of anything else being ever cast upon it.

⁴⁵ As the reflection of a thing exhibits itself in its manifestation, though nobody is there to look at it, so the world is shown in Divine Consciousness, though the same is invisible to everyone.

⁴⁶ Whatever is found as true, both by reason and proof, must be the certain truth. All else is mere semblance of it, and not being actual can never be true. ⁴⁷ Though the knowledge of the material world is proved to be false and untrue, yet it is found to mislead us, just as the act of sleep walking does in our sleep and dreaming state.

⁴⁸ The light of the Divine Luminary casts its reflection into Consciousness and displays the intellectual sphere supremely bright. Tell me therefore, what are we and this spectacle of the world anymore than a rehash or a print of that archetype? ⁴⁹ If there is a rebirth after our death, then what is it that is lost to us? Should there be no rebirth after death, then there is a perfect tranquility of our souls by our utter extinction and emancipation from the pains of life and death. Or if we have our liberation by the light of philosophy, then there is nothing here that is the cause of any sorrow in any state whatsoever.

⁵⁰ Only an ignorant man knows the state of the ignorant. The wise are quite ignorant, just as only fish know the perilous state of a deer that has fallen amidst the waves and whirling currents of the sea. ⁵¹ It is only the open sphere of Divine Consciousness that represents the diverse images of "I", "you", "he" and this and that in its hollow space, just as a tree shows the different forms of its leaves, fruit and flowers in its all producing body or stem.

Chapter 100 — Refutation of Atheism, Material Determination

¹ Rama asked, "Please tell me, sage, what are your arguments for relieving the miseries of this world against the position of others who are attached to it? ² They say that a living being is happy as long as the fear of death is out of his view, and there is no reappearance of the dead who are reduced to ashes."

³ Vasishta replied:—

Whatever certain belief one has, he finds it in his consciousness. That he feels and conceives accordingly is a truth well known to all mankind. ⁴ As the sky is firm, quiet and omnipresent, so also is the omnipresence of Consciousness. They are considered to form a duality by the ignorant dualist, while the wise take them as the one and same thing from the impossibility of conceiving the coexistence of two things from eternity.

⁵ It is wrong to suppose the existence of a chaos before creation began. That would be assigning another cause to creation when it has proceeded from Brahman, who is without cause and is diffused in his creation. ⁶ Those who do not acknowledge the meaning of the Vedas and the final great dissolution are known as men without a revelation and religion. We consider such men to be like dead. ⁷ We agree with those whose minds are settled in the undisputed belief of the scriptures, that all this is Brahman or the varied God himself. ⁸ As our consciousness is ever awake in our minds without any intermission, so Brahman that constitutes our consciousness is ever wakeful in us, whether the body lasts or not.

⁹ If our perceptions produce our consciousness, then man must be very miserable indeed because the sense of a feeling, other than that of the ever blissful state of the soul, is what actually makes us so.

¹⁰ Knowing the universe to be the splendor of intellectual emptiness, you cannot suppose the knowledge of anything, or attach the feeling of any pleasure or pain to an empty nothing. ¹¹ Hence men who are quite certain and conscious of the entirety and pure unity of the soul can never find feelings of sorrow or grief arising in any way, like the dust of earth rising to the sky filling its sphere with foulness.

¹² Whether the consciousness of unity is true or not in all men, yet the common notion of it, even in the minds of children, cannot be discarded as untrue. ¹³ The body is not the soul or any other thing of which we have any conception. Consciousness is everything and the world is as consciousness conceives it to be. ¹⁴ Whether it is true or not, yet we have the conception of our bodies by means of this. It gives us conceptions of all things in earth, water, and heaven independent of their material forms, as we see the aerial forms of things in our dreams. ¹⁵ Whether our consciousness is a real entity or not, yet it is this power which is called the conscious soul. Whatever is the conviction of this power, the same is received as positive truth by all.

¹⁶ The authority of all the scriptures rests upon the proof of consciousness. The truth which is generally arrived at by all must be acknowledged as quite certain in my opinion also. ¹⁷ Therefore the consciousness of atheists, corrupted by their misunderstanding but later purified by right reasoning, likewise produces good results. ¹⁸ But a perverted conscience or corrupt understanding is never reproved by any means, whether by performance of pious acts at anytime or place, or by study of

Vedas, or by pursuit of other things.¹⁹ Errors of understanding reoccur in an unprincipled man as often as they are corrected from time to time. Say therefore, what other means can there be to preserve our consciousness from fallacy?

²⁰ Self-consciousness is the soul of man. In proportion to its firmness or weakness, the happiness or misery of man increases or decreases accordingly.²¹ If there is no consciousness in men, including those who are conscious of the Divine Essence and are sought by the pious for their liberation from the bonds of the world, then this world would appear like a lifeless, dumb block of stone, or a dark and dreary desert.²² The knowledge of nature or gross materialism which rises in the mind of man because of his lack of self-consciousness is like the dark ignorance one has in his sleep.

²³ Rama asked, "Sage, what about the atheist who denies the end of the ten sides of heaven, who does not believe in the destruction of the world, but believes only in what exists without thought of what does not exist,²⁴ who does not perceive the perfect wisdom displayed throughout the universe, but sees only whatever is visible, without knowing their destruction?²⁵ Tell me sage, what are their arguments about relieving the evils of the world? Remove my doubts to increase of my knowledge in this important truth."

²⁶ Vasishta replied:—

I have already given my reply to your question regarding the nonbelievers. Now hear me reply with regard to your second question touching the salvation of the soul.

²⁷ O best of men, Rama, you have said that the human soul is made of consciousness alone.²⁸ This intelligence is indestructible, so it is not destroyed with the destruction of the body. It is joined with the Divine Consciousness without fail. If the (subtle) body is indestructible, then there is no cause for sorrow at its temporary loss.

²⁹ Intelligence is said to be divided into various parts in the souls of men and the different parts of their bodies. If it is so, then intelligence is destroyed with the destruction of individual souls and the physical body.³⁰ The self-conscious soul that is liberated in the living state does not have to return to earth after death. But consciousness which is not purified by divine knowledge cannot be freed from its reincarnation.³¹ Those who deny the existence of consciousness are doomed to the gross ignorance of stones for this disbelief.³² As the knowledge of sensible objects keeps the mind in utter darkness, so the death of such persons is calculated as their final bliss because they no longer have to feel or see the visible world anymore.³³ Men of pure understandings who have lost the sense of their corporeality are never to be reborn on earth anymore. But those of dull understandings become like gross physical bodies immersed in impenetrable darkness.³⁴ To intellectual philosophers who view the world as an aerial city in his dream, the world presents its aspect as a phantom and nothing else.

³⁵ There are some who maintain the stability and others who assert the frailty of the world and everything else. But what do they gain by these opinions? The knowledge of either does not increase human happiness or lessen mortal misery.³⁶ The stability or instability of the greatest or least of things makes no difference in any of them whatever. They are all like the radiating rays of the intellect, though they appear as extended bodies to the ignorant.

³⁷ Those who hold that the essence of consciousness is unlimited, but unconsciousness is limited, and

maintain the permanence of the one and the impermanence of the other, talk mere nonsense like the babbling of children.³⁸ They are the best and most venerable of men who know the body to be the product of and encompassed by the intellect. They are the meanest among mankind who believe the intellect to be the product and offspring of the body.

³⁹ Consciousness (personified as Hiranyagarbha or Brahma the Divine Spirit) is distributed into the souls of all living beings. The infinite space of emptiness is like a network or curtain in which all animals live, flying within its ample expanse like gnats and flies, rising up and sinking below or moving about like shoals of fish in an endless ocean.⁴⁰ As this Universal Soul thinks of creating various species, so it conceives them within itself, like seeds conceive future plants in themselves which later develop.⁴¹ Whatever a living being thinks of or conceives, the same quickly springs forth from it, and this truth is known even to children.

⁴² As vapors fly in the air and waters roll in the ocean, forming whirlpools and waves of various kinds, so the lives of living beings are continually floating in the vacuum of Divine Consciousness.

⁴³ As the emptiness of Consciousness presents the sight of a city to a man in his dream, so the world presents its variegated aspects since its first creation to the sight of the day dreaming man.⁴⁴ There were no supporting causes of material bodies at the first formation of the world. It rose spontaneously of itself as the empty sights appear in our dream.⁴⁵ As in a city seen in dream, its houses and their apartments, come to appear gradually to sight, so the dream becomes enlarged and expanded and divided by degrees to our vision.

⁴⁶ All this creation is only the emptiness of Consciousness. There is no duality or variety in it. It is one even plane of intellect, like the open sky, without any spot or place attached to it.⁴⁷ The moonlight of Consciousness diffuses its coolness on all sides and gladdens the souls of all beings. It scatters the beams of reasoning intellect all around, and casts its reflections in the image of the world.

⁴⁸ The world, as it is now visible to us, lies forever in the mind of God in the same empty state as it was before its creation. It is to be reduced to nothing upon its final destruction. It is the twinkling, or the opening and closing of the intellectual eye, that this empty shadow of the world appears and disappears amidst the universal vacuum of the Divine Mind.⁴⁹ Whoever views this world in any light, it appears to him in the same manner. As the world depends only upon Consciousness, it is shown in various forms according to the fancy of its observers.

⁵⁰ The minds of the intelligent are as pure as the clear sphere of the summer sky. Pure hearted and holy people think themselves as nothing other than their intellects, or only as intellectual beings.⁵¹ These pious and holy people are free from ignorance and the faults of society. They share the gifts of fortune as it falls to them by the common lot of mankind. They continue in the conduct of their worldly affairs like some working machine.

Chapter 101 — Consciousness Is Self-Evident; No Reason to Fear Death

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Consciousness is the soul of the body and is situated everywhere in the manner as I have described. There is nothing so self-evident as Consciousness.² It is the clear expanse of the sky and it is the vision of the viewer and the viewed. It composes and encompasses the whole world, therefore there is nothing to be had or lost without it.

³ The philosophers of the atheistic school of Brihaspati do not believe in a future state because they are ignorant of it. They believe in the present from their knowledge of it. Thus knowledge or consciousness is the basis for their belief, so we bear no favor or disfavor to their doctrine.⁴ The world is only a name for the dream produced in the vacuum of our hidden knowledge. Tell me. What is the need for a disputant to argue his one-sided view of the question?⁵ Our consciousness well knows internally what is good or bad and therefore acceptable or not. The pure soul is manifest in the clear emptiness of air where there is neither this or that view of it exhibited to anyone.

⁶ The conscious soul is immortal, O Rama. It does not have any form like a rock or tree or any animal. Consciousness is a mere void. All being and not being are like the waves and whirling waters in its ocean of eternity.⁷ We are all floating in the vacuum of consciousness — you, I and he as well as any other. None of us is ever liable to die, because consciousness is never susceptible of death.

⁸ Consciousness has nothing to be conscious but of itself. Therefore, O lotus eyed Rama, where can you get a duality, except the single subjectivity of Consciousness?⁹ Tell me, O Rama, what is the product or offspring of the empty Intellect? Tell me also if that Intellect could die, from where could we and all others proceed?¹⁰ Tell me what sort of beings are these atheistic disputants, the Saugatas, Lokayatikas and others, if they are devoid of their consciousness, which they so strenuously deny and disallow?

¹¹ This empty consciousness is the same as what is called Brahman. Some call it knowledge and others an empty vacuum.¹² Some call it the spirit, like that of alcoholic liquors, and others use the term embodied spirit (*purusha*). Others call it the empty Intellect, and Shaivites give it the names of Shiva and the soul.¹³ Sometimes it is called only the Intellect, which makes no difference between it and other attributes. The Supreme Soul is ever the same in itself regardless of the name expressed by the ignorance of men.

¹⁴ Be my body as big as a hill or crushed to atoms like dust, it is no gain or loss to me in any event because I am the same intellectual body and being forever and ever.¹⁵ Our sires and grand sires are all dead and gone, but their intellects and intellectual parts are not dead and lost with their bodies. For in the case of their death, we would not have their rebirth in us.

¹⁶ The empty intellect is neither generated nor destroyed at any time. It is uncreated and imperishable at all times. Say how and when could the eternal void disappear from existence?¹⁷ The infinite and indestructible sphere of Consciousness displays the scene of the universe in its ample space of emptiness. It is without the changes of rising or setting and is ever existent in the Supreme Soul.¹⁸ The Intellect represents the reflection of the world in its clear sphere, like a crystal mountain reflects a wildfire in its translucent space. The Intellect rests forever in the vacuum of the Supreme Soul which

is devoid of beginning, middle or end.

¹⁹ As the shades of night obscure the phenomena from sight, so the clouds of ignorance darken the bright aspect of the universe as it is represented in the soul divine. ²⁰ As the waters of the ocean roll of themselves in the forms of waves and currents, so does the Intellect exhibit the spectacle of the universe of itself and in itself from all eternity. ²¹ The Intellect itself is the soul of the body, and like air is never extinct or wanting anywhere. Therefore it is vain to be in fear of one's death at anytime.

²² It is a great joy to pass from one into another body. Therefore you fools, why do you fear and grieve to die when there is every cause to rejoice at it? ²³ If there is no rebirth after death, then it is a completion devoutly to be wished because it eases and releases from heart-burning disease and dread of being and not being, and their repeated sorrows and miseries. ²⁴ Therefore life and death are neither for our happiness or sorrow because neither is anything in reality, only the representations of the intellect.

²⁵ If the dead are to be reborn in new bodies, it is a cause of rejoicing and sorrowing. The death or destruction of a decayed body for a sound one is considered a change for better. ²⁶ If death conveys the meaning of the ultimate dissolution of a person, it is desirable even in that sense because our pains cease altogether. Or if death is used to mean one's rebirth in a new body and life, then it must be a cause of great rejoicing. ²⁷ If death is dreaded for fear of the punishment awaiting vicious deeds, then this is no different from life where we suffer penalties for our guilt here. Therefore refrain from doing evil for your safety and happiness in both worlds.

²⁸ You all are always crying for fear that you will die, but none of you is ever heard to say that you are going to live again. ²⁹ What is the meaning of life and death, and where are the lands where these are seen to take place? Do they not occur in our consciousness alone, and turn about in the vacuum of the mind? ³⁰ Remain firm with your conscious souls. Eat and drink and act your part with detachment. For being situated in the midst of emptiness, you can have nothing to ask or wish for. ³¹ Being carried away in the reverie of your dream, and enjoying the gifts of time and changing circumstances, live content with what is got without fear, and know this to be the holiest state.

³² Regardless of the intervening evils that overtake us in every place and time, the holy sage conducts himself with equanimity throughout the tumults of life, like a sleeping man. ³³ The holy sage is neither sorry at his death nor glad of his life and longevity. He neither likes nor hates anything, nor does he desire anything whatever. ³⁴ The wise man, who knows all that is knowable, manages to live in this world like an ignorant simpleton. He is as firm and fearless as a rock, and reckons his life and death as rotten and worthless straw.

Chapter 102 — The Life of the Awakened; Feigning Wisdom

¹ Rama asked, “Tell me sage. After a holy man is acquainted with the supreme essence that is without beginning or end, what perfection does he seek?”

² Vasishta replied:—

Hear the high state arrived at by a holy man after he has known the knowable, and how such a man conducts his life throughout the whole course of his existence.

³ He lives apart from human society in his solitary retreat in the woods. The stones of the valleys, the trees of the forest, and young antelopes are his friends, family and associates. ⁴ He considers the most populous city to be a lonely desert. His disasters are his blessings and all his dangers are celebrations to him. ⁵ His pains are his pleasure and his meditations are like musings to him. He is silent in all his dealings and quiet in all his conduct through life. ⁶ He is as asleep in his waking hours and remains as if dead to himself while he is living. He manages all his affairs with a coolness, as if he were engaged in nothing.

⁷ He is pleasant without tasting any pleasure. He is friendly to his fellow beings without any selfish interest of his own. He is strict with himself but always kind to others. He has no desire for anything, but has a full desire for the common welfare. ⁸ He is pleased with others’ conduct without having any course of action for himself. He is devoid of sorrow, fear and care, yet he is always seen wearing a sad appearance. ⁹ He afflicts nobody, nor is he afflicted by anybody. Though full with his private afflictions and privations, he is ever pleasant in company. ¹⁰ He is neither delighted with his gain nor depressed at his loss nor desirous to get anything. Though there may be causes for him to feel joy and sorrow, yet they are never visible on his face. ¹¹ He sympathizes with the unhappy and congratulates happy people. But his collected mind is always invincible in every circumstance of life.

¹² His mind is not inclined to acts other than those of righteousness, as is the habit of noble-minded men by their nature, and not any effort on their part. ¹³ He is not fond of pleasantries nor is he addicted to dullness. He does not run after wealth, but lacks desire and is finished with all cravings. ¹⁴ He abides by the law and acts accordingly, whether he is pinched by poverty or rolling in riches. He is never dejected or elated at the unforeseen good or bad events of life.

¹⁵ Wise men are seen joyful or sorrowful at times, without changing the quietness and serenity of their nature at anytime. They act the part of players on the stage of the earth. ¹⁶ Those who know the truth bear no affection for greedy relatives and false friends, as if they were looking at bubbles of water.

¹⁷ Without the affection of the soul, they bear full affection in their hearts for others.

The wise man remains quite possessed of himself, while showing his paternal affection to all. ¹⁸ The ignorant are like winds passing over running streams. They slightly touch the poisonous pleasures of their bodies, like winds touching the rising waves, and at last are drowned in the depths of their sensuality. ¹⁹ But the wise man outwardly deals alike with all with perfect coolness and stillness of his soul within. He seems outwardly to be engaged in business, but his inner mind is wholly disengaged from all worldly concerns whatsoever.

²⁰ Rama asked, “But how can a true sage of such nature be distinguished from the many pretended

ones, and the ignorant also, who falsely assume such a character only to beguile others? ²¹ Many hypocrites wander about like horses, wearing the false costume of devotees, pretending true devotion to religion."

²² Vasishta replied:—

Rama, I say that such a nature, whether it is real or pretended, is the best and highest perfection of man. I know that the learned in Vedic knowledge always view this state as the model of perfection.

²³ Those who are dispassionate and unconcerned with acts still manage to conduct their secular affairs and actions, like those who are moved by their passions. Though they are adverse to criticism, yet they cannot help but criticize the ignorant because of their compassion towards them.

²⁴ Visible phenomena are all imprinted in the mirror of their minds, like the reflected shadows of buildings. They look upon phenomena with full knowledge of their shadowiness, just as they perceive the fallacy of laying hold of a lump of gold in a dream. ²⁵ There is a coolness pervading their minds, altogether unknown to others, just as the sweet fragrance of sandalwood is unperceived by brutes at a distance.

²⁶ Only those who know the knowable and are equally pure in their minds can distinguish hypocrites from other people, just as only a snake can trace the course of another snake.

²⁷ They are the best of men who hide their good qualities from others. For what man is there who will expose his most precious treasure in the market with the raw produce of his land? ²⁸ The reason to conceal rare virtues is to keep them unnoticed by the public. The wise who lack desire for reward or reputation have nothing to gain or expect from the public. ²⁹ Rama, know that solitude, poverty, disrespect and disregard of men are more pleasing to the peaceful sage than mankind's most valuable gifts and honors. ³⁰ The indescribable delight which attends on the wise man from his conscious knowledge of the knowable is inexpressible in words and is invisible to others, as is its knower also.

³¹ The egoist wishes men to know his qualification and honor him for it, and not those who are beyond egoistic feelings. ³² It is possible even for the ignorant to reap the results of their practices, such as rising and moving about in the air by means of mantras, and the power of certain drugs that are adapted to those ends. ³³ He who can makes effort for any particular end succeeds in accomplishing that end whether he is a clever or ignorant man.

³⁴ Tendencies towards good or evil are implanted in the bosom of man as results of the acts of their past lives. These come to display themselves in action at their proper time, just as sandalwood emits its latent fragrance in its season all around. ³⁵ He who is prepossessed with the knowledge of his individual ego, coupled with his desire for enjoyment of phenomena, takes up the practice of khechari yoga [*the practice of placing the tongue above the soft palate and into the nasal cavity*] whereby he ascends in the air and gains the reward of his action.

³⁶ The wise man who has nothing to desire knows such practices to be as false as empty air. He refrains from displaying his actions, which he knows at best is only casting to the winds. ³⁷ He derives no good from observing practical yoga, nor does he lose any of his holiness by not observing them. He has nothing to gain from anybody and loses nothing at the loss of anything. ³⁸ There is nothing in earth or heaven, or among the gods or anywhere else, which may be desirable to the

magnanimous or to one who has known the Supreme Soul.³⁹ What is this world to him who knows it to be only a heap of dust and who considers it no better than straw? Then what can be in the world which could possibly be desirable to him?

⁴⁰ The silent sage, whose soul is full of knowledge and whose mind is quite at rest without fondness for human society, remains content in the state as he is, quite satisfied with whatever occurs to him.

⁴¹ He is always cool within himself and reserved in his speech. Eternal truths form the ground work of his mind which is as full and deep as the ocean, and whose thoughts are as bright as daylight.⁴² He is full of cool composure in himself, like a pleasant lake resting with its clear waters. He also gladdens all others about him, like the fair face of the full moon cheers the spirits of all.⁴³ The mandara groves of Nandana paradise, with their woodlands scattered with the dust of their blossoms, do not delight the soul as much as the wise sayings of pundits cheer the spirit.

⁴⁴ The moon diffuses its cooling beams and the spring season scatters its fragrance around. The concise sayings of the wise and great scatter their sound wisdom all about, serving to elevate and enrich all mankind.⁴⁵ The substance of their sayings proves the appearance of the world to be as false as a magic show. They inculcate the prudence of wearing out worldly cares day by day.

⁴⁶ The wise saint is as indifferent to the suffering of heat and cold in his own body as if they were disturbances in the bodies of other men.⁴⁷ In his virtues of compassion and charity, he resembles the fruitful tree which yields its fruits, flowers, and all to the common use, and exists itself only upon the water it sucks from the ground or receives from heaven.⁴⁸ This tree gives to all whatever it possesses of its own body. By virtue of its unsparing munificence to all creatures, this tree lifts its lofty head above them all.

⁴⁹ One seated in the palace of knowledge has nothing of sorrow for himself, but he pities the sorrows of others, just as a man seated on a rock takes pity on miserable men groveling in the earth below.

⁵⁰ A wise man is tossed about like a flower by the rolling waves in the eventful ocean of this world. He is set at rest as soon as he gets over it and reaches the shore on the other side.⁵¹ He laughs with the calmness of his soul at the same unvaried course of the world and its people. He smiles to think on the persistence of men in their habitual error and folly.

⁵² I am amazed to see these deviant men wandering in the mazes of error, fascinated by the false appearances of the phenomenal world as if they were spell-bound to visible phenomena.⁵³ I have learnt to spurn the eight kinds of prosperity as mere straw. They are of no real good, but rather are causes of evil to men. Though I am inclined to laugh at them, yet I refrain from my habitual disposition of tolerance and patience.

⁵⁴ I see some men living in mountain caves and others frequenting holy places. Some live at home with their families and others travel as pilgrims to distant shrines and countries.⁵⁵ Some roam about as vagrants and mendicants and others remain in their solitary hermitage. Some continue as silent sages, observing their vow of silence, and others sit absorbed in meditation.⁵⁶ Some are famous for their learning and others as students of law and divinity. Some are princes and others their priests, while some are as ignorant as blocks of stone.⁵⁷ Some are adept in their exorcism of amulets and collyrium, and others are skilled in sorcery with the sword, rod and magic wand. Some are practiced

in their aerial journey, others in other arts, and some in nothing like ignorant low caste shudras.
⁵⁸ There are many who are employed in ceremonial observances and others have abandoned rituals altogether. Some are fanatical in their conduct and others indulge themselves in wandering and travel.

⁵⁹ The soul is not the body or its senses or powers. It is neither the mind nor the mental faculties, nor the feelings and passions of the heart. The soul is Consciousness which is ever awake and never sleeps or dies.⁶⁰ It is never broken or consumed, not soiled or dried up. It is immortal and omnipresent, ever steady and immovable, infinite and eternal.

⁶¹ The man who has his soul awakened and enlightened is never contaminated by anything, regardless whatever state or wherever he may happen to be.⁶² Whether a man goes down to hell or ascends to heaven, or traverses through all the regions of air, or is crushed to death or pounded to dust, the immortal Consciousness which abides in him without decay never dies with his body or suffers any change with the changes of the body. He remains quite as quiet as still air, which is the uncreated deity itself.

Chapter 103 — Consciousness Creates Both Knowledge and Ignorance; Praise for the *Yoga Vasishta*; — Impossibility of Causation or Materiality

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Consciousness, without beginning or end, the indescribable light and its reflection shining forever serenely bright, is never destroyed or extinguished in any way.² Such is Consciousness and such is the soul which is also indestructible. For if it were destroyed at all at anytime, there could be no recreation of the world or any rebirth of human souls.³ All things are subject to change and have many varieties. But not so Consciousness, which is ever immutable and always perceived to be the same in all individuals.

⁴ We all feel the coldness of frost, the heat of fire, and the sweetness of water, but we have no feeling of any kind regarding Consciousness, except that we know it to be quite clear and transparent like open air.⁵ If the intellectual soul is destroyed with the destruction of the body, then why should you lament its loss? Why not rejoice at its annihilation which releases you from the pains of life?⁶ The loss of the body involves no loss on the empty intellect. Living friends can see the departed souls of savages hovering as ghosts over cemeteries.⁷ Should the soul exist for the same duration as the body, then why does a dead body, while it is still not rotten and is entire, not move about?⁸ If seeing ghosts is a feeling inherent within the mind, then tell me. Why does a man not often see ghosts, except on the occasion of the death of his friends?⁹ Should it be a misconception inborn with the mind to see the ghosts of departed friends, then tell me. Why don't you see the ghosts of friends who die in a distant country, but only of those who die before your eyes?

¹⁰ Hence Consciousness, being the soul of all and everywhere, is not confined in any place. It is known to be of the same nature as everyone thinks it to be.¹¹ It is unconfined and unrestrained anywhere, and is of the nature of one compact consciousness that is felt by all, and is the cause of our knowledge of all things.¹² There can be no other which may be supposed to be the prime cause of all at the beginning of creation. Should there be any other that is supposed to be such, let the philosophers now declare it before me.

¹³ There was nothing uncreated before creation, nor was there anything created in the beginning. The duality that now presents itself in the form of the universe is only a reflection of unity.¹⁴ Phenomena are no more than reflections or copies of ideas and our impression of phenomena being a visible something is as false as all other false sights mistaken for true reality.¹⁵ Phenomena are a wonderful display of almighty power exhibited in the sphere of Divine Consciousness. Wakeful understanding sees these visible phenomena as one sees sights in dream, but never in the ignorance of sound sleep.

¹⁶ Even knowledge and ignorance amount to the same thing because the difference is only verbal and not real. Nothing visible to the eye is substantial in its essential nature.¹⁷ Whatever was thought and said to be seen by others is the effect of their error and lack of reason. Now if they are disproved by right reason, where can you find the visible anymore?

¹⁸ Therefore employ your reasoning to investigate spiritual knowledge. Your diligent and persevering inquiry will secure to your success in both worlds (knowledge and ignorance).¹⁹ Inquiry into spiritual knowledge will dispel your ignorance, but you will never be successful without constant

practice.²⁰ Leave aside all anxieties and their causes and devote every bit and moment of time observing one's sacred vows day by day. The study of sacred scriptures with due attention leads a man to his welfare in both worlds.²¹ Whether one is proficient or not in his spiritual knowledge, he may still improve on it by constant discussion of the subject with his superiors.²² Whoever requires this precious treasure must exert effort to attain it, or else he must leave off altogether if he tired in his pursuit.²³ He must keep from reading heretical works and study authentic scriptures. Then he will gain peace of mind as one obtains victory in warfare.²⁴ The course of the mind, like that of a stream of water, runs in the channels of wisdom and of folly, forming a lake wherever it runs more rapidly, and settling as in its bed.

²⁵ There was never a better scripture than this, nor is any like this now in existence or likely to be in fashion in the future. Therefore let the student reflect well upon its teachings to improve his understanding.²⁶ Whoever studies it well will find his mind instantly elevated with superior knowledge, unlike the effect of a curse or blessing which comes too late upon its recipient.

²⁷ Knowledge of this scripture is calculated to do you more good than you can derive from the tender care of a father or mother or the efficacy of your pious actions.

²⁸ Know, O gentle Rama, that this world is the prison of your soul and its bondage is the poisonous pain of your mind. There is no release or relief other than through the knowledge of your soul.²⁹ The dark illusion of gross ignorance has misled you to a sense of your individual ego. Only by reflecting upon the meaning of the scriptures can you be freed from your deplorable state.

³⁰ The world is a hollow cave in which the horrible snake of illusion lies in ambush. Illusion feeds on the empty air of vain enjoyments that appear pleasant to taste at first, but prove to be as fleeting as empty air in the end.³¹ It is a pity that your days fly past as quickly as the wind and you are unaware as they come and go. While you are occupied with your activities, you are fostering your own death with your negligence.³² We all live in death, our lives sustained by alternate hopes and fears until the few days of our lives end in death.³³ The approach of death is attended with extreme pain and remorse. The inner parts of the body are separated from the outer, and the outer must be smeared with dust such as sandalwood paste.

³⁴ They who purchase wealth and honor at the expense of their lives are grossly ignorant and false. They avoid gaining their permanent bliss by the teachings of the scriptures.³⁵ Why should a man bear the feet of his evil enemies on his head when he can attain his highest station of divine bliss in the sphere of his intellect, and with little or no pain?³⁶ O men, forsake your vanity and ignorance, your persistence in the course of your baseness, then by the knowledge of the great soul you will gain your redemption from the sufferings of the world.³⁷ I am preaching to you constantly, day and night, only for the sake of your own good. Take my advice to turn your souls to the eternal soul by forsaking the knowledge of your egoism for that of your souls.³⁸ If now you neglect to take steps to cure the evil of your impending death, then O silly man, what preparation can you make for the hour of death when you are on your sickbed?

³⁹ There is no other work for true knowledge of the soul except this. Therefore this must be acceptable to you as well as we accept collecting sesame seeds for their oil.⁴⁰ This book will light your spiritual knowledge, just as a lamp lights up a dark room. Drink it deep and it will enliven your soul. Keep it

by your side and it will please you like a consort.⁴¹ A man having self-knowledge, but untaught in the scriptures, has many things unintelligible and doubtful which he will find clearly expounded here in the sweetest language.⁴² This is the best among the principal works of the scriptures. It is easily intelligible and delightful. There is nothing new here, only what is well known in spiritual philosophy.

⁴³ Let a man read the many stories contained in this book with delight. He undoubtedly will find this book the best of its kind.⁴⁴ Whatever has not yet been explained in full light, even to scholars learned in all the scriptures, will be found clearly explained in this book, just as they find gold appearing amidst sand.

⁴⁵ The authors of scriptures are not to be despised at anytime or in any country, but the reader should employ his reason and judgment to dive into the true meaning of the writing.⁴⁶ Those who are led by their ignorance or envy, or moved by their pride and delusion to disregard and neglect this scripture through their lack of judgment, are to be regarded as killers of their souls, unworthy of the company of the wise and good.

⁴⁷ I know you well, Rama, and I know my audience and each of your capacities to learn and my capacity to instruct you. I like to teach you these things because of my compassion for you, as I am naturally communicative and kindly disposed to my listeners.⁴⁸ I see your understanding develop and therefore I am interested in communicating my knowledge to you. I am a man and not a gandharva or rakshasa. Therefore I bear a fellow feeling towards you all.⁴⁹ I see you all as intelligent beings, pure in your souls. I have become this friendly to you because of these merits in you.

⁵⁰ Now my friends, learn speedily to realize the truth of your detachment to everything that you see in this world.⁵¹ Whoever neglects to remedy his diseases of death and hell fire in this life, what will he do to avert them when they are irremediable and when he goes to a place where no remedy is to be found?⁵² Until you feel a distaste for everything in this world, you will not find an end to your desires.⁵³ O great intellects, there is no other means to elevate your soul other than subjugating your desires to the minimum.⁵⁴ If you think there is anything in this world that is of any good to you, it will only serve, at best, to bind your soul, and then it will disappear like the horns of a rabbit.

⁵⁵ All earthly goods seem to be good when they are untried and least understood. But whatever seems something in the end proves to be no such thing, or tends to your ruin.⁵⁶ All worldly existences prove to be nothing by right reasoning. But how they are real and what they are, whether self-existent or made, or permanent or temporary, cannot be rightly known.

⁵⁷ To say all worldly existences are self-existent because we can assign no cause to them, or because they were already created in the beginning, proves that all existence is the uncreated and ever lasting Supreme Being itself.⁵⁸ There is no cause for consciousness in the Being that is without and beyond the senses. The mind is not the cause of objects that are sensed because the mind is only the sixth organ.⁵⁹ How can the one unspeakable Lord be the cause of these varieties of things passing under various names? How can reality have these unrealities in itself, and how can the Infinite Void contain these finite solid bodies?

⁶⁰ The nature of a plastic body is to produce something plastic, just as the seeds of fruit bring forth

only their own kind. But how is it possible for an amorphous void to produce solid forms from its emptiness, or the solid body to issue forth from a formless mind? ⁶¹ How can you expect to derive a solid seed from a void nothing? Therefore it is a deception to think that the material world is produced from the immaterial and formless void of empty consciousness.

⁶² There are no conditions of creator or creation in the Supreme Being. These states are the fabrications of many words and reveal the ignorance of their inventors. ⁶³ The lack of supporting causes that are coexistent with the prime cause disproves the existence of an active agent and his act of creation. This truth is evident even to children. ⁶⁴ Knowing that only God is the cause, but acknowledging causes for of the earth and other elements, is as absurd as saying that the sun shines and yet it is dark.

⁶⁵ To say that the world is formed of atoms is as absurd as believing in a bow made from the horn of a rabbit. ⁶⁶ If the meeting and arrangement of dull, inert and unconscious material atoms form the world, then it would of its own accord make a mountainous heap here and a bottomless deep there in the air.

⁶⁷ The particles of this earth and the atoms of air and water are constantly flying about from place to place in the forms of dust and humidity. Why do they not yet form a new hill or lake anywhere again?

⁶⁸ Invisible atoms are never seen or known from where or how they are, nor is it possible for formless atoms to unite together and form an idea.

⁶⁹ The creation of the world cannot be the work of an unintelligent cause. Nor can this frail and unreal world be the work of an intelligent maker because only a fool makes something for nothing.

⁷⁰ Unconscious air, composed of atoms with a motion of its own, is never moved by reason or sense, nor is it possible to expect air particles to act wisely. ⁷¹ We are all composed of the intellectual soul and all individuals are made of empty selves. They all appear to us like the figures of people appearing in our dream.

⁷² Therefore there is nothing that is created and this world is not in existence. The whole is the clear void of the intellect which shines with the glare of the Supreme Soul in itself. ⁷³ The empty universe rests completely in the vacuum of Consciousness, just as force, fluidity and emptiness rest respectively in wind, water, and open air. ⁷⁴ The form of the intellectual vacuum is like that of the airy mind which passes to distant climates in a moment, or it is like that of consciousness which is seated in the hollow of the heart, and yet is conscious of everything in itself. ⁷⁵ Such is the empty nature of all things. They are perceived in their intellectual forms only in intellect. So the world is an empty idea that is only imprinted in the intellect.

⁷⁶ The revolving nature of Consciousness exhibits the picture of the universe on its surface. Therefore the world is identical with the empty nature of the intellect, and nothing else. ⁷⁷ Therefore the world is the counterpart of the intellectual sphere. There is no difference in the empty nature of both the world and the intellect. They are both the same thing presenting two aspects, just as the wind and its vibrations are one and the same thing.

⁷⁸ As a wise man going from one country sees all varieties around him, yet he knows he is the same quiet and unvaried soul everywhere. ⁷⁹ A wise man remains aware of the true nature of the elements. Hence the true nature of the elements is never forgotten from the mind of a wise man.

⁸⁰ The world is only an empty sphere of reflections resembling a curved, hollow reflector. It is a formless void in its nature, unimpaired and indestructible in its essence.⁸¹ There is nothing that is born or dies in it. There is nothing which having come to being, is ever annihilated anywhere. The world is not separate from the emptiness of Consciousness, and Consciousness is as empty as the insubstantial world itself.⁸² The world never is, nor was, nor shall ever be in existence. It is only a silent appearance passing in the intellectual emptiness of the Supreme Spirit.⁸³ Divine Consciousness alone shines forth in its glory as the mind exhibits its images of cities and the like in dream. In like manner, our minds show us the image of world like day dreams in our waking state.

⁸⁴ If there is no physical body in the beginning, how could any physical body exist at any time? Therefore there was no corporeality whatever except in the dream of the Divine Mind.⁸⁵ The Supreme Consciousness first dreams of its self-born body, and that we have sprung from that body and have ever afterwards continued to see dream after dream to no end.

⁸⁶ It is impossible for us with all our efforts to turn our minds to the great God because our minds are not of the nature of Divine Consciousness, but born in us like swellings on the thyroid only for our own destruction.

⁸⁷ The god Brahma is not a real person, only a fictitious name for Hiranyagarbha, the totality of souls. But ever since he is regarded as a personal being, the world is considered as body and he the soul of all.⁸⁸ But in truth all is unreal, from the highest heaven to the lowest pit. The world is as false and frail as a dream which rises vainly before the mind and vanishes in a minute.⁸⁹ The world rises in the emptiness of Consciousness and sets therein like a dream. When it does not rise in the enlightened intellect, it is like a dream disappearing from the waking mind and flying before daylight.

⁹⁰ Although the world is known to be false, yet it is perceived and appears to us as true. In the same manner, the false appearances in our dreams appear true to our consciousness at the time of dreaming.

⁹¹ As the formless dream presents many forms before the mind, so the formless world assumes many shapes before our sight. All these are perceived in our consciousness, which is as minute compared to infinite space and sky as an atom of dust is small compared to Mount Meru.

⁹² But how can this consciousness, which is only another name for Brahman, be any bit smaller than the sky? How can the empty world have any solid form when it has no cause with form to form it so?

⁹³ Where was there any matter or mould, and where from this material world was it molded and formed? Whatever we see in our waking minds during daylight is similar to the baseless dreams we see in the empty space of our sleeping minds in the darkness of the night.⁹⁴ There is no difference between waking and sleeping dreams, just as there is none between empty air and sky. Whatever is pictured in the sphere of the intellect, the same is represented as an aerial castle in the dream.

⁹⁵ As the wind is the same as its vibration, so the rest and vibration of the spirit are both alike, just as air and emptiness are one and the same thing.⁹⁶ Hence it is only the intellectual sphere which shows the picture of the world. The whole is a void without any support. It is the splendor of the light of the intellect.⁹⁷ The whole universe is in a state of perfect rest and tranquility, without rising or setting. It is as a quiet and indestructible as a block of stone, ever shining serenely bright.

⁹⁸ Therefore tell me, from where and what are these existent beings? From where does this

understanding of their existence come? Where is there a duality or unity? From where do ideas of egoism and distinct personalities come?

⁹⁹ Be ever prompt in your actions and dealings, with an utter indifference to everything and an unconcern about unity or duality. Preserve an even and cool disposition of your inner mind. Remain in the state of nirvana with your extinguished passions and feelings, free from disease and anxiety. Be aloof from the visible and remain in pure Consciousness only.

¹⁰⁰ This chapter is a lecture on entity and nonentity and the establishment of the spirituality of the universe.

Chapter 104 — The Process of Production Is Indescribable Except as a Dream

¹ Vasishta continued:—

The sky is the receptacle of sound and air is perceptible to feeling. Their friction produces heat and the removal of heat causes cold and its medium of water.² The earth is the union of these, and in this way they combine to form the world that appears to us like a dream. How else is it possible for a solid body to issue forth from the formless vacuum?

³ This progression of productions leads us too far beyond our comprehension. But it being so in the beginning, it brings no blemish upon the pure nature of the empty spirit.⁴ Divine Consciousness is also a pure entity that manifests in the same spirit. The same is said to be the world and this is the most certain truth of truths.⁵ There are no material things and no five elements of matter anywhere. All these are mere unrealities, yet they are perceived by us like the false appearances in our dreams.

⁶ As a city and its various sights appear very clearly to the mind in our dreams during sleep, so it is very pleasant to see the dream-like world shining so brightly before our sight during our waking hours.

⁷ I am of the nature of my empty consciousness, and so this world is also of the same nature. Thus I find myself and this world to be of the same nature, like a dull and unconscious stone.⁸ Hence the world appears like a shining jewel, both at its first creation and in all its following formations, because it always shines with the brightness of Divine Consciousness.

⁹ Whether the body is something or nothing in its essence, its lack of pain and the happiness of the mind are forms of its state of *moksha* or liberation. Its rest with a peaceful mind and pure nature is reckoned as its highest state of bliss.

Chapter 105 — Waking and Sleeping Dreams Are Alike

¹ Vasishta continued:—

The Intellect conceives the form of the world of its own intrinsic nature, then fancies itself in that very form as if it were in a dream.² It pretends to be asleep while it is awake and views the world either as solid stone or as void as the empty air.³ The world is compared to a dream of a country adorned with a great many cities. There is no reality in the objects of dream, so there is no reality in anything appearing in this world.⁴ All the three worlds are as unreal as the various sights in a dream. They are only daydreams to us although we may be awake.

⁵ Whether waking or sleeping, there is nothing that we name the world. It is only an empty void and, at best, only an air-drawn picture in the hollow of the Intellect.⁶ It is a wonderful display of Consciousness in its own hollowness, like an array of hills and mountains on the horizon of the sky. In the minds of the wise, the sense of the world is like a waking dream.⁷ This world is nothing material, nor is it anything of the form of Consciousness. It is only a reflection of Consciousness. The emptiness of the intellectual world is only an empty nothing.⁸ The triple world is only a reflection and like the sight of something in dream, it is only an airy nothing. The empty air becomes diversified and remains entirely bodiless, though seeming to be embodied in our waking state.

⁹ The inventive imagination of men is ever busy even in the hours of sleep and dreaming. It presents us with many creations that were never created and many unrealities appearing as real.¹⁰ The universe appears to be an extensive substantiality implanted in the space of endless emptiness. But this huge body, with all its mountains and cities, in reality is nothing other than the original emptiness.¹¹ The howling of the sea and the clattering of clouds on mountains, though so very tremendous to a man awake, are not heard by the person sleeping soundly by his side.

¹² As a widow dreams bringing forth a son in her sleep, and as a man thinks he is ever living by forgetting his past death and rebirth, so are men unmindful of their real state.¹³ The real is taken for the unreal and unreal for the real, just as a sleeping man forgets his bedroom and thinks he is somewhere else. So everything turns to be otherwise, just as the day turns to night and the night changes to day.¹⁴ The unreal soon succeeds the real, like night, and the impossible becomes possible, as when a living person sees his own death in his sleep.¹⁵ The impossible becomes possible, just as the supposition of the world in the empty void. Darkness appears as light, as the nighttime seems to be daylight to the sleeping and dreaming man at night.¹⁶ Daylight becomes the darkness of night to one who sleeps and dreams in the daytime. The solid ground seems to be hollow to one who dreams of being cast into a pit.¹⁷ As the world appears to be a unreal when we sleep at night, so it undoubtedly appears real when we are awake.

¹⁸ The two suns of yesterday and today are the one and the same, and two men are of the same kind, so doubtless the waking and sleeping states are alike.

¹⁹ Rama asked, “That which is subject to objection and exception, of course, cannot be admissible and reliable as true. The sight of a dream is only momentary and falsified upon our waking. Therefore it cannot be the same as the waking state.”

²⁰ Vasishta replied:—

The disappearance of dreamed objects upon waking does not prove their falsity or make any difference between the two states of dreaming and waking because dream objects are like what a traveler sees in a foreign country. They are lost upon his return to his own country, and the foreign sights are soon lost upon his death. Hence both are true for the time being and both are proved equally false and fleeting at last.

²¹ A dead man is separated from his friends, like from those he saw in his dreams. Then the living are said to be awakened when a sleeper awakes from his slumber.²² After seeing the delusions of happiness and misery, witnessing the rotations of days and nights, and feeling many changes, the living soul at last departs from this world of dreams.²³ After the long sleep of life, there comes an end when the human soul becomes assured of the untruth of this world and that the past was a mere dream.²⁴ As the dreamer perceives his death in the land of his dream, so the waking man sees his waking dream of this world when he meets with his death, in order to be reborn in it and to dream again.²⁵ The waking beholder of the world finds himself dying in the same manner in his living world, where he is doomed to be reborn in order to see the same scenes and to die again.

²⁶ He who in his waking state dies in the living world comes to revisit this earth in order to see the same dreams which he believed to be true in his former births.²⁷ Only the ignorant believe their waking sights to be true. The firm conviction of the intelligent is that all these appearances are only daydreams at best.²⁸ Taking the dreaming state for waking and the waking one for dreaming are only verbal distinctions implying the same thing. Life and death are meaningless words for the two states of the soul, which is never born or dies.

²⁹ He who sees his life and death in the light of a dream is said to be truly awake. The living soul who considers itself to be awake or dying is quite the opposite.³⁰ Whoever dwells upon one dream after another, or wakes to see a waking dream, is like one who wakes after his death and finds his waking also to be a dream.³¹ Our waking and sleeping are both like events of history to us. They are comparable to the past and present histories of nations.³² The dream-sleep seems like waking, and the waking-dream is no other than sleeping. In fact, both are only unrealities, the mere rehash and reflections of the intellectual sky.

³³ We find moving and inert beings on earth and innumerable creatures all around us. But in the end, what do they all prove to be other than the representations of the eternal ideas in Divine Consciousness?³⁴ As we can have no idea of a pot without that of the clay of which it is made, so we can have no conception of blocks of stone unless they were represented to our minds from their prints in Divine Consciousness.³⁵ All these various things which appear to us in waking and dream states are nothing other than the ideas of blocks which are represented in our dreams from their original models in Consciousness.

³⁶ Now tell me, O intelligent Rama, what else must this Consciousness be other than the infinite and empty essence which acts in us, both in our dreaming and waking states?³⁷ Know that this Consciousness is the great Brahman who is everything in the world. It is as if the world were the divided forms of his essence, yet Brahman is the figure of the whole world, as if he were the undivided whole himself.³⁸ As a clay pot is not conceivable without its substance of clay, so the intellectual Brahman is inconceivable without his essence of Consciousness.³⁹ Again, as a stone jar

is beyond our conception except with the idea of its stony substance, so the spiritual God is beyond our comprehension without our idea of spirit.

⁴⁰ As water is a liquid substance that cannot be conceived without its fluidity, so Brahman is conceived as composed of only his Consciousness or Intellect, without which we can have no conception of him. ⁴¹ So also we have the conception of fire by means of its heat, without which we have no concept of it. Such also is our idea of God; that he is Consciousness and beside this we can form no idea of him. ⁴² We know wind only by its movement and by no other means whatsoever. So God is thought as Consciousness or Intelligence itself, beside which we can have no idea of him. ⁴³ There is nothing that can be conceived without its property, just as we can never conceive vacuum to be without its emptiness, or have any conception of earth without its solidity.

⁴⁴ All things are composed of empty Consciousness, just as a pot or painting appearing in the mind is composed of the essence of consciousness only. So the hills and other objects appearing in a dream are only representations of Consciousness. ⁴⁵ We are conscious of the aerial sights of hills and towns presented to our minds in dream. In the same way we know all things in our consciousness in our waking. Both in our sleep and waking, there is a quiet calm emptiness in which only our intellect is ever busy showing itself in endless shapes before us.

Chapter 106 — Description of Intellectual Emptiness; the Impossibility of Material Creation

¹ Rama said, “Tell me again, O venerable sage, about that intellectual emptiness which you say is Brahman. I am never satisfied listening to the holy words distilling like ambrosia from your lips.”

² Vasishta replied:—

I have fully explained to you that the two states of sleeping and waking mean the same thing. The twin virtues of composure and self-control are both the same, though they are differentiated by two names.

³ In reality there is no difference, as there is none between two drops of water. They are both one and same thing, as the empty essence of Brahman and Consciousness.

⁴ As a man travelling from country to country finds his self consciousness to be the same everywhere, Consciousness is the same, dwelling within himself in its empty form which is called the intellectual sphere. ⁵ This intellectual sphere is as clear as the ethereal sky in which earthly trees display their greenness by drawing the moisture of the earth through their roots. ⁶ Again, the intellectual sphere is as calm and quiet as the mind of a man who is free from desires and is at rest in himself, and whose composure is never disturbed by anything. ⁷ Again, the intellectual sphere is like the quiet state of a man who is rid of his busy cares and thoughts and reposes himself at ease before he is lulled to the unconsciousness of his sleep.

⁸ As trees and plants growing in their season rise and fill the sky without being attached to it, such also is intellectual sphere, filled by rising worlds after worlds without being touched or related to any. ⁹ Again, the intellectual sphere is as clear as a cloudless sky and as vacant as the mind of a saintly man wholly purified from the impressions of visible phenomena and from its thoughts and desires about anything in the world. ¹⁰ The intellectual state is as steady as those of stable rocks and trees, and when such is the state of the human mind, it is then said to have attained its intellectuality.

¹¹ The intellectual emptiness, devoid of the three states of the view, viewer, and viewed, is also said to be devoid of any attribute and all change. ¹² The intellectual sphere is where thoughts of various kinds of things rise, last and set in turn without any effect of change on its immutable nature. ¹³ The intellectual sphere is that which embraces all things, which gives rise to and becomes everything itself, and which permeates throughout all nature forever.

¹⁴ That which shines resplendent in heaven and earth, and inside and outside of everybody with equal blaze, is said to be the emptiness of the intellect. ¹⁵ It extends, stretches and bends through all, connected by its lengthening chain to infinity. The emptiness of the intellect envelops the universe, whether we see the universe as an entity or nonentity. ¹⁶ The intellectual vacuum produces everything and at last reduces all to itself. The changes of creation and dissolution are all the workings of this emptiness. ¹⁷ The emptiness of the intellect produces the world, just as the sleeping state of the mind presents its sights in our dreams. And as dreams are dispersed in deep sleep, so the waking dream of the world vanishes from view upon dispersion of its fallacy from the mind.

¹⁸ Know that the Intellectual Vacuum possesses its process of understanding and is quiet and composed in its nature. Its mere thought, in the wink of an eye, makes the world exist and disappear by turns. ¹⁹ The Intellectual Vacuum is found in the discussions of all the scriptures to be what is neither this nor that nor anything, and yet as all and everything in every place and at all times.

²⁰ As a man traveling from country to country retains his consciousness untraveled in himself, so the intellect always rests in its place though the mind travels far in an instant. ²¹ The world is full of the intellect, both as it is or had ever been before. Its outward sight is dependent on its ideas within the mind, giving it the forms and figures as they appear to us. ²² In a slight winking of its eye, it assumes and appears in varied shapes, though the intellect never changes its form or alters the clarity of its empty sphere.

²³ Look on and know all these objects of sense with your external and internal organs without any desire for them. Be ever wakeful and vigilant observing them, but remain as in a deep sleep with regards to them. ²⁴ Be without desire for anything and indifferent in your mind when you speak to anyone, take anything, or go anywhere. Remain as deadly cold and quiet as long as you have to live.

²⁵ But it is impossible for you to remain without desire as long as your eyes and mind are fixed upon the visible before you, and as long as you continue to see the mirage of the world and look upon its duality like two moons rising in the sky.

²⁶ Know that the world is no production from any beginning. The lack of a prior cause precludes any such sequence and it is impossible for a material creation to proceed from an immaterial cause.

²⁷ Whatever appears as existent before you is the product of a causeless cause. It is the appearance of the Transcendent One that appears visible to you. ²⁸ The world as it stands at present is nothing other than its very original form. The same non-dual and undivided pure soul appears as a duality, just as the disc of the moon and its halo create the appearance of two moons. ²⁹ Our false notion of duality has given us a strong bias towards the error of believing in the false and taking the shadow of a dream for reality.

³⁰ Therefore the phenomenal world is no real production, nor does it actually exist or is likely ever to come into existence. Likewise it is never annihilated because it is impossible for a nonexistent to be nothing again. ³¹ Hence that which is only a form of serene vacuum must also be quiet calm and serene. This exhibits itself in the form of the world, but necessarily remains of its own nature quite clear and steady, imperishable through all eternity. ³² Nothing we see before us, nothing that is visible, is ever reliable as real. There is never any viewer because there is nothing separate to be viewed.

³³ Rama asked, “If this is so, then O most eloquent sage, explain the nature of the visible, their view, and viewer. What are these that appear to our view?”

³⁴ Vasishta replied:—

There being no assignable cause for the appearance of the visible, their vision can only be a deception. The hypothesis of scholars is that this is true. ³⁵ Whatever appears as visible to the sight of the viewer is all fallacy, the offspring of the great delusion of Maya. The world in its concealed sense is only a reflection of the Divine Mind.

³⁶ The intellect is awake in our sleeping state and shows us the shapes in our dreams like the sky shows changes and differences in its ample garden. Thus the intellect manifests itself in the form of the world and in itself. ³⁷ Hence there is no formal cause or self evolving element since the first creation of the world. That which sparkles anywhere before us is only the great Brahman Himself.

³⁸ It is the sunshine of the Intellect within its own hollow sphere that manifests this world as a reflection of his own being.

³⁹ The world is an exhibition of the quality and unqualified emptiness of the Intellect, just as existence is the quality of existent beings, emptiness is the property of vacuum, and form is the attribute of a material substance. ⁴⁰ Know that the world is the concrete counterpart of a distinct attribute of the transcendent glory of God. The world is a very reflection of God visibly exposed to the view of its beholders. ⁴¹ But in reality, there is no duality whatever in the unity of God. He is neither the reflector nor the reflection. Say, who can ascertain what he is, or tell whether he is a being or not being, or a something or nothing?

⁴² Rama asked, “If it is how you describe, that the Lord is neither reflector nor reflection, and neither viewer nor the viewed, then tell me. What is the difference between cause and effect? What is the source of all these? If they are unreal, why do they appear as realities?”

⁴³ Vasishta replied:—

Whenever the Lord thinks on the manifestation of his Consciousness, he beholds the same at that same moment, then becomes the subjective beholder of the objects of his own thought. ⁴⁴ The intellectual vacuum itself assumes the form of the world, just as the earth becomes a hill by itself. But it never forgets itself for that form, as men do in their dreams. Moreover, there is no cause to move it to action except its own free will. ⁴⁵ As a person changing his former state to a new one retains his self consciousness, so Divine Consciousness retains its identity in its transition from prior emptiness to its subsequent state of fullness.

⁴⁶ The thought of cause and effect and the sense of visible and invisible proceed from errors of the mind and defects of vision. False imagination frames these worlds and nobody questions or upbraids himself for his error. The states of cause and effect and those of visible and invisible are mere phantoms of error rising before the sight of the living soul and proceeding from its ignorance. Then its imagination paints these as the world and there is nobody who realizes his error or blames himself for his blunder.

⁴⁷ If there is another person who is the cause, beholder, and enjoyer of phenomena, then tell me who it is and what are these phenomena? That is the point in question. Is it liable to proof?

⁴⁸ The state of our sleep presents us only with the indiscernible emptiness of Consciousness. So how is it possible to show one soul as many without being blamed for it? ⁴⁹ Only the self-existent soul presents the appearance of the world in the intellect. The ignorance of this truth has led to the general belief of the creation of the world by Brahma. ⁵⁰ Ignorance of this intellectual phenomenon has led mankind to many errors called by various names of illusion, ignorance, phenomena and, finally, the world.

⁵¹ Manifestations in the intellectual vacuum take possession of the mind like a ghost. The unreal world appears as a reality, like the false phantom of a ghost takes a firm hold on a child’s mind. ⁵² Although the world is an unreality, yet in our empty consciousness we have a notion of it as something real. This is nothing more than the embodiment of a dream which shows us the forms of hills and cities in empty air. ⁵³ Consciousness represents itself as a hill or a Rudra, or as a sea or as the god Viraj

himself, just as a man thinks in his dream that he sees hills and towns in his empty mind.

⁵⁴ Nothing that has any form can be the result of a formless cause. Hence the impossibility that the solid world exists, that the world is formed of atomic elements, that it was annihilated before its creation, or that there will be any world dissolution. Therefore it is evident that the world always and only exists in its ideal form in the Divine Mind. ⁵⁵ The world is a mere uncaused existence inherent in its empty state in the empty Mind. What is called the world is nothing other than an emptiness appertaining to the empty Consciousness.

⁵⁶ The minds of ignorant people are like glassy mirrors receiving the dim and dull images of things set before their senses. But those of reasoning men are like clear microscopes that spy the vivid light of the Divine Mind that shines through all. ⁵⁷ Therefore, the best of men shun the sight of visible forms. They view the world in the light of intellectual emptiness, remaining as firm as rocks in the meditation of the steady Intellect, placing no faith or reliance on anything else.

⁵⁸ Consciousness shows the revolution of the world in itself by its constant act of airy reasoning, just as the sea displays its circular movement throughout the watery world by the continual rotation of its whirlpools. ⁵⁹ As the figurative tree of our desire produces and yields our wished-for fruits in a moment, so Consciousness instantly presents everything before us that is thought of. ⁶⁰ As the mind finds its wished for gem and the fruit of its desire within itself, in the same manner the internal soul instantly meets with its desired objects in its empty self.

⁶¹ As a man passing from one place to another rests calmly in between, such is the state of the mind in the interval between its thoughts, when it sees neither the one nor another thing. ⁶² It is only the reflection of the Consciousness that shines clearly in variegated colors within the cavity of its own sphere. Though devoid of any shape or color, yet it exhibits itself in color like the blue in the emptiness of the sky.

⁶³ Nothing unlike can result from empty Consciousness, only that which is empty as itself. A material production requires a material cause, which is lacking in Consciousness. Therefore the created world is only a display of the Divine Mind, like the appearance of dreams before our sleeping minds.

Chapter 107 — Formless Cannot Create Form; All Is Subjective (Ideal)

¹ Vasishta continued:—

The world is the subjective Intellect and inborn in it, and not the objective which is perceived from without. It is the empty space of Consciousness-Intellect which displays ideas in itself, and here the triple state of the thinking principle, its thinking and thoughts combine together.

² In its ample exhibition, all living beings are displayed as dead bodies. I and you, and he and it are all represented like lifeless figures in a picture.³ All persons engaged in active life appear in Consciousness-Intellect as motionless blocks of wood, or as cold and silent bodies of the dead. All moving and unmoving beings appear as empty air.⁴ The sights of all things are exposed here, like the glare of the crystal surface of the sky. They are to be considered as nothing, for nothing substantial can be contained in the hollow mind.

⁵ Bright sunbeams, splashing waves, and the gathering vapors in the air present us with forms of shining pearls and gems. But never does anyone rely on their reality.⁶ So this phenomenon of the world, which appears in the emptiness of Consciousness and seems to be true to the appearance of all, yet should never be relied upon by anyone.⁷ Consciousness is entangled in its false fancies and dwells on the errors of unreal material things rising like smoke before it, just like a child entranced in his own hobby.

⁸ Say men of ignorance, what reliance can you place on mine and yours that you say “this is I” and “that is mine”? Ah, well do I now perceive that it is the pleasure of ignorant people to indulge themselves in their imaginary flights.⁹ Knowing the unreality of the earth and other things, men are yet prone to pass their lives in those vanities and in their ignorance of truth. They resemble miners who, instead of digging the earth in search of gold, expect it to fall upon them from heaven.

¹⁰ The lack of any prior or supporting cause proves *a priori* the impossibility of the effect. The lack of any created thing proves *a posteriori* the nonexistence of any causal agent.¹¹ They who deal with all the unreal shadows of persons and things in this uncreated world are like ignorant fools who nourish their unborn or dead offspring.¹² Where does this earth and all other things come from? Who made them and how did they spring to sight? It is the representation of the Intellectual emptiness that shines in itself, and is quite calm and serene.¹³ The minds of those addicted to imagine themselves, a causality and its effect, and time and place, are inclined to believe that the earth exists. But we have nothing to do with their childish reasoning.

¹⁴ The world, whether considered material or immaterial, is only a display of intellectual emptiness which presents all these images to our minds like dreams, and like the empty sky that shows its colors and figures to our eyes.¹⁵ The form of empty consciousness is without form. We have knowledge of it only through our perception. It is the same which shows itself in the form of the earth and other phenomena. The subjective soul appears as the subjective world to our sight.

Chapter 108 — Story from Another World of a Besieged King (Vipaschit)

¹ Rama asked, “He whose mind is bound by ignorance to the bright vividness of visible phenomena sees the perceptible scenes of thoughts as mere idle dreams, as imaginary as empty air. ² Now, O sage, please tell me again about the nature and manner of this ignorance of the true nature of things as thoughts. To what extent and how long does this ignorance of the spiritual bind a man?”

³ Vasishta replied:—

Know Rama, that those who are infatuated by their ignorance think this earth and the elementary bodies are as everlasting as they believe Brahman to be. Now, O Rama, listen to a story on this subject.

⁴ In some corner of infinite space there is another world with its three worlds of upper, middle and lower regions, like here in this world. ⁵ In that other world there is a piece of land as beautiful as our own called the plateau level land, where all beings had their free range. ⁶ In a city of that place there ruled a king well known for his learning who passed his time in the company of the learned men of his court.

⁷ He shone as handsome as a swan in a lake of lotuses and as bright as the moon among the stars. He was as dignified as Mount Meru among mountains and he presided over his council as its president.

⁸ The strain of poets fell short reciting his praises, and he was a firm patron of poets and bards, like a mountain supports those seeking refuge. ⁹ The prosperity of his valor flourished day by day and stretched its luster to all sides of the earth, just as the blooming beauty of lotus blossoms, under the early beams of the rising sun, fills the landscape with delight every morning.

¹⁰ That respectable king of brahmin faith adored Agni as the lord of the gods with his full faith and did not recognize any other god as equal to Agni. ¹¹ He was surrounded by a conquering army consisting of cavalry, elephants and foot soldiers. He was surrounded by his councilors like the sea is surrounded by its whirlpools and rolling waters. ¹² His vast and unflinching forces were employed in the protection of the four boundaries of his realm, just as the four seas serve to surround the earth on all its four sides. ¹³ His capital was like the hub of a wheel, the central point of the whole circle of his kingdom. He was as invincible a victor of his foes as the irresistible discus of Vishnu.

¹⁴ Once a shrewd messenger appeared to the king from the eastern borders of his state. The messenger approached the king in haste and delivered a secret message that was not pleasing to him. ¹⁵ “Lord, may your realm be never detached, which is bound fast by your arms as a cow is tied to a tree or post. But hear me tell you something which requires your consideration. ¹⁶ Your chieftain in the east is snatched away from his post by the relentless hand of a fever. He seems to have gone to the regions of death, to conquer, as it were, the god Yama at your command.”

¹⁷ “Then as your chief in the south proceeded to quell the borderers in that region, he was attacked by hostile forces who poured upon him from the east and west and he was killed by the enemy. ¹⁸ Upon his death, the chieftain of the west proceeded with his army to seize those provinces from the hands of the enemy. ¹⁹ On his way he was met by the combined forces of the hostile princes of the east and south who put him to death.”

²⁰ Vasishta continued:—

As he was relating in this manner, another messenger driven by his haste entered the palace with the great a rush of a flood's current.²¹ He said, "O lord, the general of your forces on the north is overpowered by a stronger enemy and is defeated and driven from his post, like an embankment broken down and carried away by rushing waters."

²² Hearing so, the king thought it useless to waste time and leaving his royal apartment, he commanded as follows.²³ "Summon the princes and chiefs and the generals and ministers to appear here immediately in their full armor. Open up the arsenal and get out the destructive weapons.²⁴ Put your armor of metal link plates on your bodies. Set the infantry on foot, number the regiments, and select the best warriors.²⁵ Appoint the leaders of the forces and send the messengers all around." Thus said the king in haste, and such was the royal command.

²⁶ Then the watchman appeared before the king and lowly bending down his head, he sorrowfully expressed, "Lord, the chieftain of the north is waiting at the gate and expects like the lotus to come to your sun-like sight."

²⁷ The king answered, "Go quickly and bring him to my presence so that I may learn from his report the genuine events of that quarter."²⁸ Thus ordered, the watchman introduced the northern chief to the royal presence. The chief bowed down before his royal lord, who saw the chieftain in the following condition.

²⁹ His entire body, every part of it, was full of wounds and scars. He breathed hard, spouted out blood, and supported himself with difficulty.³⁰ With due obeisance and faltering breath and voice, his limbs contorted, he delivered this hasty message to his sovereign.³¹ The chieftain said, "My lord, the three chiefs of the other three quarters, with numerous forces under them, have already gone to the realms of Yama (death) in their attempt to conquer enemies at your command.³² Then the clansmen, finding my weakness defending your realms alone on this side, assembled in large numbers and poured upon me with all their strength.³³ With great difficulty I have very narrowly escaped from them to this palace, all gory and gasping for life as you see. I implore you to punish the rebels who are not invincible before your might."

³⁴ Vasishta continued:—

As the yet alive and wounded chieftain was telling his painful story to the king in this way, there suddenly appeared another person entering the palace after him who spoke to the king in the following manner.³⁵ "O sovereign of men, the hostile armies of your enemies, like the shaking leaves of trees, have all surrounded the outskirts of your kingdom in great numbers on all its four sides.³⁶ The enemy has surrounded our lands like a chain of rocks. They are blazing all about with their waving swords and spears, and with the flashing of their forest-like maces and lances.³⁷ The bodies of their soldiers, with flags flying and weapons shaking on them, appear like chariots moving upon the ground. Their rolling war cars seem like sweeping cities all about.³⁸ Their uplifted arms appear like forests of fleshy trees rising in the sky. The loud sounding phalanx of big elephants seemed like huge bodies of rainy clouds roaring on high."

³⁹ "The ground seems to rise and sink with the bounding and bending of their snorting horses. They

give the land an appearance of the sea, sounding harshly under lashing winds.⁴⁰ The land is moistened and whitened by the thickening froth fallen from the mouths of horses, bearing resemblance to the foaming sea, full with its salt spray.⁴¹ Groups of shining armor and weapons in the field resemble the warlike array of clouds in the sky and are like huge surging waves rising upon the surface of the sea, troubled by the gusts of the deluge.”

⁴² “The weapons on their bodies, their armor and crowns, shine with a flash that equals the flame and fire of your valor.⁴³ Their battle array, in the forms of circling crocodiles and long stretching whales, resemble the waves of the sea that toss these marine animals upon the shore.⁴⁴ Columns of their lancers are advancing with one accord against us, flashing with furious rage and fire, uttering and muttering their abusive insults to us.”

⁴⁵ “It is for this purpose that I have come to report these things to my lord, so that you will consider proceeding in battle array to the borders and drive these insurgents like weeds from the outskirts.

⁴⁶ Now my lord, I take leave of you, with my bow and arrows and club and sword as I came, and leave the rest to your best discretion.”

⁴⁷ Vasishta added:—

Saying so, and bowing lowly to his lord, the messenger immediately went out, like waves of the sea disappear after making a gurgling noise.

⁴⁸ Upon this, the king with his honorable ministers, his knights and attendants and servants, together with his cavalry and chariooteers, men and women and all the citizens at large were struck with terror. The sentinels of the palace trembled with fear as they shouldered their arms and held their weapons, which resembled a forest of trees shaken by a hurricane.

Chapter 109 — King Vipaschit Immolates Himself in Sacred Fire, Producing Four Copies

¹ Vasishta continued:—

In the meanwhile, the assembled ministers advanced before the king, just as the sages of the past sought the help of celestial Indra when they were invaded by the Daitya demons.² The ministers said, “Lord! We have consulted and determined that because the enemy is irresistible by any of the three means (peace, dissension, and bribe) they must be quelled by force or due punishment.³ When the proposal of friendship is of no avail and the offer of hostages also fails, it is useless to propose any other term for reconciliation.”

⁴ “Evil enemies who are base and barbarous from different countries and races, great in number and opulence, and acquainted with our weakness and weak parts are hardly conciliated by terms of peace or bribes of subsidy.⁵ Now there is no remedy against this insurrection other than showing our valor to the enemy. Wherefore let all our efforts be directed towards the strengthening of our gates and ramparts.”

⁶ “Give orders to our brave soldiers to rush out to the field and command the people to worship and implore the protection of the gods. Let the generals give the war alarm with loud sounding drums and trumpets.⁷ Let warriors be well armed and let them rush to the field. Order soldiers to rush upon the plains in all directions like dark flood clouds inundating the land.⁸ Let outstretched bows rattle in the air and bowstrings twang and clang all around. Let the shadows of curved bows hide the skies like clouds.⁹ Let bowstrings flash like flickering lightning in the air and the loud war whoops of soldiers sound like growling clouds above. Let flying darts and arrows fall like showers of rain and make combatants glare with sparkling gold rings in their ears.”

¹⁰ The king said, “All of you proceed to battle and promptly do all what is necessary on this occasion. I will follow you directly to the battlefield, after finishing my ablution and the adoration of the fire god Agni.”

¹¹ In spite of the important affairs which waited on the king, yet he found a moment’s opportunity to bathe by pouring pots full of pure Ganges water upon himself, in the manner of a grove watered by a shower of rainwater.¹² Then he entered his fire temple and worshipped the holy fire with the reverence commanded in the scriptures. Then he began to reflect in the following manner.

King Vipaschit’s thoughts:—

¹³ I have led an untroubled and easy life, passing in pleasure and prosperity. I have kept the security of all the subjects of my realm stretching to the sea.¹⁴ I have subdued the surface of the earth and reduced my enemies under my foot. I have filled the smiling land with plenty under the arc of the sky everywhere.¹⁵ My fair fame shines in the sphere of heaven like clear and cooling moonbeams. The plant of my renown stretches to the three worlds like the three branches of the Ganges.¹⁶ I have lavished my wealth upon friends and relatives and respectable brahmins in the same way as I have amassed treasures for myself. I quenched my thirst with the waters of coconuts growing on the edges of the four oceans.¹⁷ My enemies trembled before me for fear of their lives. They groaned before me like croaking frogs with distended pouches. My rule extended over and marked the mountains situated in islands in distant seas.

¹⁸ I have wandered with bodies of spiritual masters over the nine regions beyond the visible horizon. I have rested on the tops of bordering mountains, like flying clouds that rest on mountain tops. ¹⁹ With my full knowing mind and my perfection in divine meditation, I have acquired my dominions entire and unimpaired through my goodwill for public welfare. ²⁰ I have bound lawless rakshasa demons in strong chains. I have kept my cares for religious duties, and those for my treasures and personal enjoyments, within proper bounds without letting them clash with one another. ²¹ I have passed my lifetime in the uninterrupted discharge of my triple duties. I have enjoyed my life with great satisfaction and renown.

But now hoary old age has come upon me, like snow and frost fallen upon withered leaves and dried straw. ²² Now old age has come and blasted all my pleasures and efforts. After all this, these furious enemies have overpowered me and are eager for war. ²³ They have poured upon me in vast numbers on all sides and victory is doubtful. Therefore it is better for me to offer myself as a sacrifice to the god of this burning fire, which is known to crown its worshipper with victory.

²⁴ I will pluck this head of mine and make an offering of it to the fire god Agni as a fit fruit to offer, and say, "O fire god, I make here an offering of my head to you. ²⁵ I give this offering, as I have ever before given my oblations to fire. Therefore accept this also, O god, if you are pleased with my former offerings. ²⁶ Let the four vessels of your fiery furnace yield four forms of me with brilliant and strong bodies, like that of Narayana with his mighty arms. ²⁷ Thus, with my four bodies, I will be able to meet my enemies on all four sides and be invulnerable like you, by keeping my thought and sight ever fixed in you."

²⁸ Vasishta continued:—

So saying, the king took hold of a dagger and separated his head from his body with one stroke, like children uses their nails to tear a lotus bud from its stalk. ²⁹ As the head became an offering to the fire of dusky fumes, the headless trunk of the self-immolated sovereign also sprang and flew upon the burning furnace. ³⁰ The sacred fire, fed with the fat and flesh of the royal carcass, yielded four such living bodies from amidst its burning flames. It is the nature of the good and great to make an instantaneous gift fourfold of what they receive in earnest.

³¹ The king sprang from the fire in his fourfold forms of royal appearance. These were as bright with light as the radiant body of Narayana when it first rose from the formless deep. ³² The king's four bodies shone brightly, adorned with their inborn decorations of the royal crown and other ornaments and weapons. ³³ They wore armor, crowns, helmets, bracelets and fittings for all and every part of the body. Necklaces and earrings hung upon them as they moved along. ³⁴ All four princes were of equal forms and of similar shapes and sizes in all the parts of their bodies.

They were all seated on horseback, like so many Indras riding on their Uchaisrava horses. ³⁵ They had long and ample quiver, full of arrows with golden shafts. Their heavy bows and bowstrings were equally long and strong with the god of war. ³⁶ They also rode on elephants and steeds and were mounted on their chariots and other vehicles in their warfare. They were alike impregnable by the arms of the enemy, both themselves as well as the vehicles they rode.

³⁷ They sprang from the pit of the sacred fire, nourished by the offerings poured on it, like flames from

an undersea fire rise in the ocean.³⁸ Their flowery bodies on jeweled horses shone light on all sides like four smiling faces of the moon. Their good figures looked like Lord Vishnu, as if they have come out from fire and water.

Chapter 110 — Description of Battle

¹ Vasishta continued:—

In the meantime the battle raged in full fury between the royal forces and the hostile bands that had advanced before the city gates.² Here the enemies were plundering the city and villages, and there they set fire to houses and hamlets. The sky was hidden by clouds of smoke and dust and the air was filled by loud cries of havoc and wailing on every side.³ The sun was hidden by the thickening shadow of a network of arrows spread over the skies. The disc of the sun now appeared to view and was then lost to sight the next moment.

⁴ The burning fire of incendiaries set flame to the leaves of forest trees. Firebrands of burning wood were falling loosely all around and iron sheets of arrows were hurling through the air.⁵ The flame of the blazing fire added a double luster to burnished and waving weapons. The souls of the great combatants falling in battle were carried aloft to the regions of Indra where heavenly apsara nymphs took care of them.

⁶ The thundering sounds of fierce elephants excited the bravery of warriors. Missile weapons of various kinds were flung about in showers.⁷ The loud shouts and cries of combatants depressed the spirits of treacherous cowards. The white clouds of dust flying in the air appeared like elephants intercepting the paths of the midway skies.⁸ Chieftains eager to die in the field wandered about with loud shouts. Men were falling in numbers here and there as if stricken by lightning on the battlefield.

⁹ Burning houses were falling below and fiery clouds dropped from above. Flying arrows in the form of rocks were rolling on high and descending upon and dispatching to death numbers of soldiers who were ready to die.¹⁰ Galloping horses in the field made it appear like a wavy ocean from far away. The crashing of the tusks of fighting elephants crackled like clashing clouds in air.¹¹ Arrow shafts filled the forts and its strongholds, their flashing on roofs making a glare of fire around.

¹² The dashing of one another passing to and fro tore their garments into pieces. The furling of flags in open air and the clashing of shields between combatants made a pat-pat noise all around.¹³ The flash of elephant tusks, the crash of weapons dashing on stony rocks, and the loud uproar and clamor of the battlefield invited the elephants of heaven to join in the fight.¹⁴ Flights of arrows ran like rivers into the ocean of the sky. Flying lances, swords and discs flung into the air resembled sharks and alligators swimming in the ethereal sea.¹⁵ The impact of the armor of the clamorous combatants and the clashing of arms in commingled warfare were like the sound of the ocean crashing against islands.

¹⁶ Foot soldiers' feet trod down the ground into a muddy pool. Blood issuing from arrow wounds in their bodies ran like rivers carrying down broken chariots and slain elephants in its rapid course.

¹⁷ The flight of winged arrows and the falling of battle axes resembled waves of a sea of missiles in the air. Broken arms of the vanquished floated upon it like sea animals.

¹⁸ The sky was set on fire by flames issuing forth from the clashing arms. The celestial regions were filled with the deified souls of departed heroes, now released from the chains of their wrinkled and decaying frames of earth.¹⁹ Clouds of dingy dust and ash filled the sky with flashes of lightning flaming like arches amidst them. Missile weapons filled the air, as the drawn out arms occupied the surface of the earth.²⁰ Contending combatants hooted at one another and broke and cut their weapons

in mutual contest. Cars were split by clashing at each other and chariots were destroyed by dashing together.

I²¹ Here the headless trunks of the kabandhas (man eating cannibals) mingled with the gigantic bodies of vetalas demons. It was disastrous on every side as demonic vetalas plucked hearts for their tasty meal. ²² Warriors tore the arteries of the slain, breaking apart their arms, heads and thighs, while the uplifted and shaking arms of kabandhas made a moving forest in the air. ²³ Demons moving about with open and jeering mouths made their stomachs and jaws into caskets for carrion. Soldiers passing with their helmets and crowns looked fiercely on all around.

²⁴ To kill or die, to slay or to be slain, was the soldier's final glory in the field. Their greatest shame was to retreat giving or receiving wounds. ²⁵ He makes death happy who dries up the boast of soldiers and chieftains, who drains the flowing ichor of ferocious elephants, and who is entirely bent on destruction. ²⁶ Loud applause was given to the victory of modest and unknown heroes, and great censures were poured upon nameless and treacherous cowards. ²⁷ Rousing the sleeping virtues of bravery is as glorious to the great and strong as the laying out of treasures for the protection of their protégés.

²⁸ Elephant trunks were broken in conflicts of elephant riders and charioteers, stopping the flow of fragrant ichor fluid from their front lobes. ²⁹ Elephants left loose by their flying leaders fell into lakes and cried like shrill storks. Here they were pursued and overcome by men who inflicted terrible wounds upon them. ³⁰ In some place unprotected people, abused and half dead in their fight against each other, fled and fell at the feet of their king, just as daytime takes shelter under the shining sun. ³¹ Maddened by pride and the force of giddiness, they became subject to death, just as millionaires and traders seek a better place in fear of their life.

³² The red coats of soldiers and the red flags lifted upon their arms like a forest of trees spread a reddish color all around, like the adoration of the three worlds. ³³ White umbrellas, resembling the waves of the Milky Ocean when churned by Mandara Mountain, covered the weapons of the soldiers and made the sky appear like a garden of flowers.

³⁴ Eulogies sung by bards and gandharvas added to the valor of the warriors. Flowing juice from tall palm trees infused a vigor to their veins, like that of Baladeva. ³⁵ There was the clashing of arms of the rakshasa demons who fought together in bodies big as lofty trees, taking bodies to fill their mountain caves so they could feed on the carcasses.

³⁶ On one side there was a forest of spears rising in the sky with the severed heads and arms of the slain attached to them. There were flying stones on another side, flung from the slings of combatants and covering the ground below. ³⁷ There was the clapping of hands and weapons of champions, resembling the splitting and bursting of great trees. The loud wailing of women was also heard echoing amidst the lofty buildings of the city. ³⁸ Flights of fiery weapons in the air resembled flying firebrands on high, with a hissing and whistling sound. People fled from them, leaving their homes and treasures all behind. ³⁹ Onlookers fled to save their heads from arrows flying all about, just as timid snakes hide for fear of the devouring garuda bird flying upon them from the sky. ⁴⁰ Brave soldiers were ground under elephant tusks as if pounded under the jaws of death, or like grapes

crushed in pressing mills.

⁴¹ Weapons flying in the air were repelled and broken by stones flung by machines. The shouts of champions resounded like the echoing yells of elephants issuing out of ragged caverns. ⁴² Hollow sounding mountain caves resounded to the loud shouts of warriors who were ready to expose their dear lives and dearly earned vigor in the battlefield. ⁴³ The burning fire of firearms and the flames of incendiaries flashed on all sides. These conflicts and chariot fighting went on unceasingly all around.

⁴⁴ The battlefield was surrounded by surviving soldiers who were as brave hearted as Mount Kailash with the strong god Shiva seated therein. ⁴⁵ Brave men who boldly expose their lives in battle enjoy a lasting life by their death in warfare. But they die in their living state by their flight from the battlefield.

⁴⁶ Big elephants were being killed in the battlefield like lotus flowers immersed into the waters of lakes. Great champions were seen to stalk over the plains like towering storks strutting on the banks of lakes. ⁴⁷ Showers of stones fell in torrents with a whizzing sound. Showers of arrows were flying with a whistling noise around. The uproar of warriors growled in the skies. Flying weapons hurled through the air, and the neighing of horses, the cries of elephants and the whirling of chariot wheels, together with the hurling of stones from the height of hills, deafened the ears of men all about.

Chapter 111 — The Four-fold King Lets Loose His Weapons and the Enemy Flees

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Thus the war waged with the fury of the four elements in their mutual conflict on the last doomsday of the world. Forces on all sides were falling and flying in numbers in and about the battlefield.² The sky was filled with the harsh sound of the fourfold noise of drums and conch shells and the rattling of arrows and clattering of arms.³ Furious warriors violently dashed against one another. Their steel armor clashed and split in two with a clattering noise.⁴ The ranks of the royal forces were broken in the struggle. They fell fainting in the field, chopped off like leaves and plants, mown down like straw and grass.

⁵ At this time the trumpets announced the king's advance with a sound that filled the quarters of the sky. Cannons thundered with a treble roar resounding with the uproar of kalpa doomsday clouds.

⁶ They tore apart the sides of the highest hills and mountains and split rocky shores and banks everywhere in two.⁷ Then the king issued forth on all four sides with his fourfold forms, like the four regents of the four quarters of the sky, or like the four arms of Narayana stretching to so many sides of heaven.⁸ Followed by his fourfold forces (cavalry, elephants, chariots and foot soldiers), he rushed out of the confines of his city of palaces and marched to the open fields lying outside town.⁹ He saw the thinness of his own army and the strong armament of his enemies all around. He heard their loud clamor all about, like the wild roar of the surrounding sea.

¹⁰ Flights of arrows flying thickly through the air appeared like sharks floating in the sea. The bodies of elephants moving in the wide battlefield seemed like huge waves of the ocean.¹¹ Battalions wheeling in circular formations seemed like the whirling currents in the sea. Racing chariots with flags waving appeared like sailing ships with their unfurled sails.¹² Uplifted umbrellas were like sea foam and the neighing of horses was like the frothing of whales. The glare of shining weapons appeared like flares of falling rain under sunshine.¹³ Moving elephants and sweeping horses seemed like huge surges and swelling waves of the sea. Dark barbarians babbled like the gurgling bubbles of sea waters.

¹⁴ Big elephants with towering and dark bodies seemed like they were mounting from the heights of mountains and breaking their hollow caves, howling with rustling winds.¹⁵ The battlefield looked like a vast expanse of water in which slain horses and elephants seemed to be swimming like fragments of floating rocks, and where moving legions appeared like the rolling waves of the sea.

¹⁶ The field presented a dismal appearance of an untimely dissolution. It appeared like an ocean of blood stretching to the borders of the visible horizon.¹⁷ Fragments of shining weapons sparkled like gems in the womb of the sea. The movements of forces resembled the casting of projectile stones into it.¹⁸ Falling weapons were like showers of gems and snow from above, presenting the appearance of evening clouds in some place and fleecy vapors in another.

¹⁹ Seeing the ocean-like battalions of the enemy, the king thought of swallowing it up like sage Agastya had sucked up the ocean. With this intent, he remembered his airy instrument which he thought to employ on this occasion.²⁰ He got the Vayavya airy weapon and aimed it at all sides, just as when the god Shiva set the arrow to his bow on Mount Meru to slay the demon Tripura.²¹ The king

bowed to his god Agni, then let his mighty missile fly with all his might to repel the raging fire and protect his own forces from destruction.²² He hurled his airy Paryaya arrow, together with its accompaniment of cloudy Vayavya arms, both to drive off as well as to set down enemy fire.²³ From these weapons propelled from his crossbow, eight beings emerged into a thousand horrible weapons which ran and filled all four quarters of the sky.²⁴ Then from these there issued forth an abundance of darts and arrows, currents of iron spears and tridents, and volleys of shots and rockets.²⁵ There were torrents of missiles and mallets, as well as currents of discs and battle axes.²⁶ There were streams of iron clubs, crowbars and lances, and floods of bhindipalas, short arrows thrown from the hand or through tubes, and splashes of spring nets and air instruments of incredible velocity.²⁷ There was a pouring out of fire-bolts and a flowing of lightning, as also showers of falling rains and swift movements of flying swords and sabers.²⁸ There were fallings of iron arrows, javelins and spears of great force and strength, and fallings of huge snakes found in mountain caves that grew there for ages.

²⁹ In no time the force of these flying arms blasted the ocean of hostile forces. They fled in full haste and hurry in all directions, like heaps of ash before a hurricane or whirlwind.³⁰ The thunder showers of arms and the driving rain of weapons were driven away by impetuous winds. Invading hosts hurried to all sides like the torrent of a river in the rains breaks its embankment and flows over the land.³¹ The four bodies of enemy troops (horse, elephant, chariots, and foot-soldiers) fled defeated from the battlefield to the four directions, just as mountain waterfalls rapidly move down on all sides during rains.

³² Lofty flags and their posts were torn, broken and hurled down like large trees in a storm. Forests of uplifted swords were broken to pieces and scattered on the ground like the petals of marichi flowers.

³³ Sturdy bodies of strong soldiers rolled like stones on the ground, smeared with blood gushing out of their wounds, while the groans of their agony broke down the stoutest hearts.³⁴ Large elephants rolled upon the ground with their tusks sticking up like trees. They roared aloud with crackling sounds as loud as thunder and roaring clouds.

³⁵ The clashing of the weapons against one another was like the crashing of tree branches. Horses clashing on one another sounded like the clashing of waves of the sea.³⁶ The crackling of war cars and their huge wheels sounded like the rattling of a hailstorm from high, and the mingled noise of the clashing of carriages, horse, elephants and foot soldiers sounded like the crashing of rocks.³⁷ The harsh sound of war hoops and shouts was loud on all sides. Cries of dying soldiers, "We die! We are slain!" swelled in the air all around.³⁸ The army appeared like a sea and their march was like the whirling of an whirlpool with its gurgling sound. Blood shed on their bodies exhibited the roseate color of the evening sky.³⁹ Waving weapons appeared like a dark cloud moving upon the shore. The ground smeared in blood looked like the fragment of a purple cloud.⁴⁰ Lancers, mace bearers and spearmen looked as if they were carrying tall palm trees in their hands. Cowardly crowds of men were seen crying aloud like timid deer in the plains.

⁴¹ The dead bodies of horses, elephants and warriors lay on the ground like the fallen leaves of trees. The rotten flesh and fat of bruised carcasses were trodden down to mud and mire in the field.⁴² Their bones were pounded to dust under the hoofs of horses. The impact of wood and stones under driving winds raised a rattling sound all around.⁴³ The clouds of doomsday roared and the winds of

desolation blew. The rains of the last day were falling and the thunders of destruction were clapping all about.⁴⁴ The surface of the ground was all muddy and miry and the face of the land was flooded all over. The air was chilly and bleak and the sky was drizzling through all its pores.

⁴⁵ Huts and hamlets and towns and villages were all in a blaze. People and their cattle, with all the horses and elephants, were in full cry and loud uproar.⁴⁶ Earth and heaven resounded with the rolling of chariots and rumbling of clouds. The four quarters of heaven reverberated to the twanging of the king's fourfold bow on all the four sides.

⁴⁷ Forked lightning played with the friction and clashing of clouds. Showers of arrows and missiles fell profusely from them, with thunderbolts of maces and darts of spears.⁴⁸ The armies of the invading chiefs fled in confusion from all four sides of the field. Fleeing forces fell in numbers like swarms of ants and troops of gnats and flies.⁴⁹ The armies of the border tribes were burnt amidst the conflagration of fiery arms, pierced by the fiery weapons falling like thunderbolts upon them from the darkened sky. The fleeing forces resembled marine animals of the deep, disturbed by the perturbed waters of the sea, plunging into an undersea fire.

Chapter 112 — Catalogue of Fleeing Foreign Foes

¹ Vasishta continued:—

The Chedis of Deccan, who were as thickly crowded as the sandalwood of their country, and clothed with girdles resembling the snakes about those trees, were felled by battle axes and driven far away south to the Indian Ocean.² The Persians fled like the flying leaves of trees. Striking against one another in their madness, they fell like vanjula leaves in the forest.³ Then the demon-like Daradas, who dwell in the caverns of the distant Dardura Mountains, were pierced in their breasts and fled from the field with their heart-rending sorrow.

⁴ Winds blew away the clouds of weapons that poured down torrents of missile arms, shattering the armor of warriors, glittering like twisting lightning.⁵ Elephants fell upon one another, piercing their bodies and goring each other to death with their tusks. They became heaps of flesh like the lumps of food with which they filled their bellies.

⁶ Another people of the Raivata Mountains, fleeing from the battlefield by night, were waylaid by fierce pisacha ghosts who tore their bodies and devoured them with a huge appetite.⁷ Those who fled to palm and spice forests, and to the old woods on the banks of Dasarna River, were caught by crouching lions and tigers and were throttled to death under their feet.⁸ The Yavanas living on the coasts of the western ocean, and those in the land of coconut trees, were caught and devoured by sharks in the course of their flight.⁹ Sakas warriors, unable to endure the painful touch of black iron arrows, fled in all directions. Ramatha people were blown away and broken down like a lotus bed by blowing winds.¹⁰ Routed enemy flying to Mahendra Mountain covered its three peaks with their armor of black metal-link plates, making them appear as if covered by the dark clouds of rainy weather.¹¹ Legions of these hostile forces, broken down by the arms of the king, were first plundered of their clothing by highway robbers, then killed and devoured by the night cannibals and demons of the desert.

¹² The surface of the land was converted to the face of the sky with broken fragments of weapons glistening like the stars of heaven twinkling in large multitudes above.¹³ The caverns of the earth, resounding to the noise of the clouds above, were like a grand orchestra sounding the victory of the king both in earth and heaven.¹⁴ Peoples inhabiting islands lost their lives under whirling discs, as those dwelling in watery marshes perish on dry lands for want of rain.¹⁵ The defeated islanders fled to the Sahya Mountains and, having halted there for a week, departed slowly to their respective places.¹⁶ Many took shelter in the Gandhamadana Mountains, while multitudes took refuge in the Punnaga forests.

Retreating gandharvas became refugees in the sanctuaries of vidyadhara maidens.¹⁷ Huns, Chinese and Kiratas had their heads struck off by the king's flying discuses. These were blown away by opposing winds like lotus flowers by the blast.¹⁸ The Nilipa people remained as firm as trees in a forest, and as fixed in their places as thorns on stalks and brambles.

¹⁹ Beautiful pastures of antelopes, woodlands and hilly tracts on all sides were desolated by showers of weapons and the rush and crush of the forces.²⁰ Thorny deserts became the asylum of robbers after they deserted their homes to be overgrown by thorns and thistles.²¹ Persians who were abundant in

number got over to the other side of the sea. They were blown away by the hurricane, like stars blasted by the storm of final desolation.²² Winds blew as on the last day of destruction, breaking down woods and forests all about and disturbing the sea by shaking its hidden rocks below.²³ The dirty waters of the deep rose on high with a gurgling noise. The sky was invisible from the clouds of weapons which hid its face on all sides.²⁴ Howling winds raised a clapping and flapping sound all about. Showers of snow also fell which flowed on earth like the waters of the sea.

²⁵ The chariooteers of Vidura country fell down from their cars with the loud noise of waves and were driven to fall into the waters of the lake, like bees from lotuses.²⁶ Defeated foot soldiers were as numerous as the dust of the earth and well armed from head to foot. They were so overpowered under the showers of arrows and discs that they were blinded by the tears of their eyes, unable to beat their retreat.²⁷ Huns were buried with their heads and heels in their flight over the sandy deserts of the north. Others were as muddied as dirty iron from being stuck in the swampy shores of northern seas.

²⁸ The Sakas were driven to a cardamom forest on the bank of the eastern shores. There they were confined for some time, then released without being dispatched to the regions of death.²⁹ The Madrasis were repulsed to the Mahendra mountains, from where they lightly descended on the ground as if fallen from heaven. There they were protected by great sages who preserved them there with care as tender as they bear for the deer of their hermitage.

³⁰ Fugitives flying to the refuge of the Sahya Mountains instead found their imminent destruction in the underground cell, the twofold gain of their present and future good. Thus it comes to pass that many times good issues out of evil where it was least expected.³¹ Soldiers flying to Dasarna, at the meeting of the ten rivers, fell into Dardura Forest like the fallen leaves of trees. There they lay dead all about by eating the poisonous fruits there.³² The Haihayas who fled to the Himalayas drank the juice of visalya-karani pain-killing plants by mistake, and thereby became as violent as vidyadharas and flew to their country.

³³ Then the people of Bengal, who are as weak as faded flowers, showed their backs to the field and fled to their homes, from which they dare not stir even to this day, but remain like pisacha ghosts all along.³⁴ But the people of Anga or Bihar who live upon the fruits of their country are as strong as vidyadharas and play with their mates as if in heavenly bliss.

³⁵ The Persians, defeated in their bodies, fell into palm and spice forests where, by drinking their intoxicating extracts, they became as giddy as drunk men.³⁶ The light and swift spirited elephants of the dark skinned Kalingas pushed against their fourfold armies in the field of battle, where all lay slain in haphazard heaps.³⁷ The Salwas, passing under the arrows and stones of the enemy, fell into the waters which encircled their city. They perished there with the whole of their hosts that are still lying there in the form of heap of rocks.

³⁸ There were numbers of hosts that fled to different countries in all directions. Many were driven to distant seas where they drowned and were carried away by the waves.³⁹ But who can count the countless hosts that fled and lay dead unnoticed in every part of the wide earth and sea, on fields and plains, in forests and woods, on land and water, on mountains and valleys, on shores and coasts and on the hills and cliffs. So there is nobody who can tell what numbers of living beings are dying every moment, in their homes in cities and villages, in caves and dens, and everywhere in the world.

Chapter 113 — Combatants Exhausted; Description of the Ocean

¹ Vasishta continued:—

The four Kings Vipaschit pursued the fleeing hostile forces for a great distance, as said before.

² These four forms of almighty power, and of one soul and mind, went on conquering the four regions on every side with one intent and purpose. ³ They chased retreating enemies to the shores of the seas on all sides without giving them any rest, just as river currents keep on their course to the coast of the far distant ocean without rest. ⁴ This long course of royal forces and the enemies they chased soon put an end to all their provisions and ammunition. All their resources and strength were exhausted at last, like a stream lost under sands before it reaches a lake. ⁵ At the end, the king saw his forces and those of his enemies to be as exhausted as the merits and demerits of a man upon his ultimate liberation.

⁶ Weapons ceased to fly about, as if they were resting having done their part in the sky, and as the flames of fire subside of themselves for lack of combustible fuel. ⁷ Horses and elephants went under their shelters and weapons stuck to trees and rocks. They seemed to fall fast asleep like birds upon their tree branches at nightfall. ⁸ As waves cease to roll in a dried up channel, as snow falls under cloudy sky, as clouds fly before a storm, and as the fragrance of flowers is carried by the wind, ⁹ so flying weapons were submerged like fish under showers of rain, and dripping drops of darts were thwarted by thickening showers of snow.

¹⁰ The sky was cleared of whirling discs that had been hurled by the hundreds in the hazy atmosphere. It was swept clean by gathering clouds that were soaring up in surges and pouring down floods of rain. ¹¹ The sky appeared like an immense ocean composed of a vast void and containing sparkling gems of stars in its bosom, and the burning undersea fire of the sun in its midst. ¹² The great vacuum appeared as extensive, deep, bright, serene, and devoid of the dust of pride as the minds of great men.

¹³ Then they saw the oceans, lying like junior brothers of the skies, being of equal extent and clarity, stretching to the utmost limits of the horizon. ¹⁴ These with their deep sounding waves and foaming froths are as gratifying to the minds of people as roaring clouds with their showers of snow captivate human hearts. ¹⁵ Having fallen down from high heaven, stretching wide their huge bodies on the earth below, they seem to be rolling grievously on the ground with deep groaning and breathing, raising up their wavelike arms to lift themselves on high.

¹⁶ They are gross and dull bodies, yet full of force and motion. Though they are mute and dumb, yet they are full of noise and howling in their hollow cavities. They are full of dreadful whirlpools, as is this world with all its dizzy rounds. ¹⁷ Gems sparkling on banks add to the brightness of sunbeams. Winds blowing in conch shells resound all along the coast. ¹⁸ Huge waves growl like big clouds roaring loudly on high. Circling currents whirl around scattering shattered coral branches.

¹⁹ Harsh snorting of sharks and whales howl in the bosom of the deep, their tails lashing water sounding like oars splashing. ²⁰ Dreadful sharks and alligators devour mermaids and sailors in numbers. A thousand suns shine their reflections on rising waves. ²¹ Fleets of ships float on the surface of the waters, rising aloft on the tops of the waves, driven forward by blowing winds howling horribly through the furling sails and cracking ropes.

²² The ocean with his hundreds of arms of heaving waves handles the globes of the sun and moon and

displays varieties of sparkling gems with reflections of their light rays.²³ Shoals of sharks glide over the foaming ocean. Water spouts rise to the skies like columns of elephants' trunks and like a forest of bamboo.²⁴ In some places, rippling waves glide like twisting creepers with hairy tufts and frothy blossoms. In other places, little rocks resembling the backs of elephants and bearing spring flowers are scattered in the midst of the waters.²⁵ Somewhere are heaps of froth and frost and hills of icebergs resembling the homes of gods and demigods. Elsewhere are groups of sparkling little waves that laughed to scorn the clusters of shining stars in the skies.

²⁶ Here are branches of rocks concealed in its depth, like little gnats hidden in underground hollows. There are huge wave surges that make dwarfs of the high hills on earth.²⁷ Its coasts are spread over with sparkling gems, like flower beds on the ground. Glistening pearls burst out of their silvery shells and sparkle in the sand.²⁸ The sea seems to weave a vest of silk with its cloudy waves, decorating it with floating gems and pearls. Rivers flow into it from all directions, serving to color it with their various waters.²⁹ Coasts studded with gems and pearls of various colors display the beams of a hundred moons in the multicolored nails of its feet.³⁰ The shadows of tall forests on the shores fall on the swelling waves of the sea imbued with the colors of marine gems. They appear like moving trees with their variegated foliage, fruits and flowers.

³¹ Shadows of different fruit trees reflect in the waters gliding below, rising up and falling down with their reflections in the moving waves and billows. False and falling shadows gathered numbers of marine beasts under them, gorging themselves on the falling fruit.³² Greedy fish gather, leaping to catch the birds sitting on the fruit trees and seen in their reflections on the waves.³³ There are many sea monsters that break the embankments and randomly wander about in the watery maze, like birds flying freely in the empty air.

³⁴ The ocean, being a formless deep, bears the image of the three worlds impressed on its bosom. It also bears the image of pure emptiness, as it bore the image of Narayana in its breast.³⁵ Its great depth, clarity and immeasurable extent give it the appearance of the majestic sky which is reflected in its bosom, as it were impressed upon it.³⁶ It bears the reflection of the sky and flying birds as if they were the images of aquatic fowls swimming on its surface, or resembling black bees fluttering about its lotus-like waves.

³⁷ Its boisterous waves are carried to the skies by violent winds, washing the sky's face with their salty spray. The deep sounding ocean, resounding from its hollow rocks, roars aloud like the clouds of the world flood.³⁸ The gurgling noise of whirlpools resembles the loud thunder claps of heaven. The undersea fire is sometimes seen to burst out of the deep, like the latent flame of the sage Agastya that consumed the waters of the ocean.³⁹ The watery maze presents the picture of a vast wilderness with its waves like the waving trees, its surf like as blossoms, and foam and froth like flowers.⁴⁰ The high heaving surges with great numbers of fish gliding and skipping appear like fragments of the sky fallen below, carried away by gliding waters.

⁴¹ Thus the hostile forces were driven far away to the shores of the salt seas extending far and wide and bounding the earth on every side. Lofty mountains, rising to the skies with their green tops, intercepted the sight on all sides.

Chapter 114 — The King's Companions Praise Nature in India

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Then the royal army saw whatever was on all sides of them, namely forests, hills, seas and clouds, foresters and hill people, and the trees of the forest.

² They said:—

Behold, O lord, that high hill which lifts its lofty top to the sky and invites the clouds to settle upon it, while its midmost part is the region of the winds and its base is composed of hard and rugged stones.

³ See, O lord, how they abound with fruit trees of various kinds, and groves whose fragrance is blown around by gentle winds. ⁴ The sea breaks down peninsulas with its battering breakers, dispersing rocks on its banks. It shatters bordering forests with its wavy axes, scattering their fruit and flowers all over the waters. ⁵ Behold the sea breeze blowing away clouds, settling on tops of mountains, shaking and dancing over the leafy branches of trees like men blowing smoke away with fans.

⁶ Here are trees on its coasts, like the trees in the Nandana garden of paradise, whose branches are as white as the conch shells growing in the full moon tide, and whose fruit are as bright as the moon.

⁷ These trees with their wives, the vines, are honoring you with offerings of flowers from the rosy palms of their red leaves. ⁸ There is Rikshavanta Mountain, howling like a ferocious bear, devouring huge sharks and swallowing waves in its cavern-like mouth and under its stony teeth. ⁹ Mahendra Mountain growls at roaring clouds with a loud uproar, like a stronger champion hurling defiance at his weaker rival. ¹⁰ There enraged Malaya Mountain lifts his lofty head, decorated with sandalwood forests, threatening the loud ocean below, rolling with its outstretched arms of waves on the shore.

¹¹ Celestials on high look upon the ocean rolling constantly with its sparkling waves on all sides, as if carrying away the earth's treasured gems. ¹² Wild hillocks, woods and ruddy rocks on the tops, wave with the blowing gales looking like huge serpents creeping with their crescent gems and inhaling the breeze. ¹³ Huge sharks and crocodiles move and grapple with each other upon the surges. This sight delights the minds of men like that of a rainy and light clouds opposing and pursuing one another.

¹⁴ There an elephant has fallen in a whirlpool, unable to raise itself up. It left its trunk on the water and dies sputtering water from its trunk on all sides.

¹⁵ High hills and low seas are all equally filled with living beings. As the oceans abound with aquatic animals, so all lands and islands are full of living beings. ¹⁶ The sea, like the earth and all worlds, are full of whirlpools and things revolving, and all these are mere falsities that are taken and viewed as realities. ¹⁷ The ocean bears liquid waves in its bosom that are inert in themselves, yet appear to be in constant motion. So Brahman contains innumerable worlds which seem to be solid without any substance.

¹⁸ When the gods and demons of the past churned the ocean, they stole all of its bright and hidden treasures which since have fallen to the lot of Indra and the gods. ¹⁹ Therefore, the ocean has adopted wearing the reflections of the greatest and brightest lights of heaven as its false and fictitious ornaments. These are seen even from the nether worlds, and of these no one can deprive it. ²⁰ Among them is the shining sun whose image the ocean bears in its bosom with equal splendor as it is in

heaven. This bright gem is daily thrown like a deposit in the western sea to give its light to the nether world. It is called the gem of day because it makes day wherever it shines.

²¹ There is a coming together of all waters from all sides. This assemblage in its reservoir gives it a clamorous sound, like that of crowds of men in a mixed procession. ²² Here is a continuous conflict among marine monsters, just as currents and torrents of the waters of rivers and seas jostle at the mouths of gulfs and bays. ²³ There large whales roll and dance on rising waves, spouting forth water from their mouths, shedding showers of pearls carried aloft and scattered by the winds. ²⁴ Streams of water, flowing like strings of pearls bearing bubbles like brilliant pearls, adorn the breast of the ocean like necklaces, whistling by their impacts.

²⁵ Sea winds serve to refresh the spirits of the siddha spiritual masters and sadhya classes of spirits who dwell in the caves of Mahendra Mountains and traverse the howling regions of the sounding main. ²⁶ Again, winds exhaled from the caves of Mahendra Mountains gently shake the woods growing upon it, stretching a cloud of flowers over its tablelands.

²⁷ Here is Mount Gandhamadana full of mango and kadamba trees. There fragments of clouds enter its caves like deer eyes flashing like lightning. ²⁸ Winds issuing from the valleys of the Himalaya Mountains, passing through the encircling bowers of creeping plants, scatter the clouds of heaven and break the waves of the sea. ²⁹ The winds of Gandhamadana Mountain exhale the fragrance of kadamba flowers growing upon it, agitating the surface of the sea with whirling waves. ³⁰ After twisting fleecy clouds into the forms of curling locks of hair on the peaks of Kubera's Alaka residence, winds pass by the valleys of Gandhamadana groves, forming a canopy of flowers at this place. ³¹ Here scented airs creep slowly in the alleys bearing the sweet burden of fragrant flowers and moistened by a mixture of icy showers.

³² See there, nalikera vines diffusing their sour scent to the breezes, which being made acid by their sourness, turn towards the regions of Persia. ³³ Here winds blow the scents of Shiva's flowery forests on Kailash Mountain. There they breathe the perfume of lotuses from mountain lakes and blow away camphor white clouds from the face of the sky.

³⁴ Liquid ichor flowing from the frontal trunk of elephants is dried and stiffened by breezes issuing out of the caverns of Vindhya Mountain. ³⁵ The women of the Savara foresters, their bodies covered with the dry leaves of trees and accompanied by their dark skinned males in leafy apparel, have been making a town of their jungle by eradicating wild animals with their iron arrows.

³⁶ Behold, great lord, these seas and mountains, these forests and rivers, and these clouds on all sides look as if they are all smiling under your auspices, as under the brightness of sunbeams. ³⁷ Flower beds designed by vidyadharas on mountain and forest paths and the footprints from the shores suggest that man is tired of making love so the woman has gone on top of the man to continue the act of love making.

Chapter 115 — The King's Companions Continue to Praise Nature in India

¹ The royal companions related:—

Hear, O high minded lord, the kinnara women enjoying themselves singing their songs in their homes in leafy tree branches. Kinnara men, enraptured by the music, listen attentively and forget their business of the day.

² There the Himalaya, Malaya, Vindhya, Krauncha, Mahendra, Mandara, Dardura and other mountains, from a distant view, appear to be clothed in robes of white clouds, or like heaps of stones covered with the dry leaves of trees.³ Those distant and indistinct chains of boundary mountains appear to stretch themselves like the walls of cities. Those rivers seen falling into the ocean with their gurgling noises appear like the warp and woof threads of a broad sheet of ocean waters.⁴ The ten sides of the sky spread over mountain tops appear like royal consorts looking at you from their lofty palaces, smiling gladly at your success. The many colored and roaring clouds in the sky resemble the variegated birds of air, warbling their notes on high. Rows of trees dropping showers of flowers from high appear like the arms of heavenly apsara nymphs showering their blessings upon your head with their hands.⁵ High hills overgrown with rows of trees stretching all along the seashore appear like ramparts. These hills, beaten by surges of waves, seem like mere moss gathered on the coast.

⁶ O! the extensive, all sustaining and wonderful body of the ocean that supported the body of Vishnu sleeping upon it. It contained the unrighteous creation at the great deluge and it covered all the mountains and rocks and undersea fires under it.⁷ There is the northern ocean into which the Jambu River pours all the gold from Mount Meru. It contains numerous cities and forests and mountains and countries. It washes the face of the sky and all its lights and therefore is adored by gods as well as men.⁸ Mount Meru reaches the sun, presenting the trees on its top like its cloud-capped head. May the earth extending to this mountain all be yours, and may this mountain which hides the sun under its clouds not obstruct the expansion of your realm.

⁹ In the south is Malaya Mountain growing fragrant sandalwood which converts all other woods into its own nature. Its sweet paste decorates the bodies of gods, men, and demons and is put as a spot on the forehead like Shiva's third eye. It is sprinkled over the body like perspiration on women's bodies.

¹⁰ The waves of the ocean continually wash the coast overgrown with sandalwood forests and encircled by folds of snakes. Meanwhile, woodland vidyadhari nymphs wandering on this mountain throw a luster about it by the beauty of their bodies.

¹¹ Here is the hill called Krauncha, its groves vibrating with the sound of cuckoos cooing, its rugged caves and rivers resounding harshly to one another. Meanwhile, bamboo cracks as they rub against each other. Bumble bees hum and we hear the warbling of migrating cranes on high and the loud screams of peacocks that are terrifying to snakes.¹² Behold here, O great lord, the play of woodland vidyadhari nymphs in the groves of their soft leafy bushes. Listen to the tinkling sound of their bracelets, so sweet to the ears.¹³ There behold the dripping ichor exuding from elephants' foreheads and making swarming bees giddy with the drink, which has made the sea melt in tears on account of being neglected by them.¹⁴ Behold there the fair moon with his retinue of celestial stars, playing in their reflections in the lap of his father the Milky Ocean, from which it was churned as its froth.¹⁵ See

there the tender vines dancing merrily on the tablelands of Malaya Mountain displaying their red petals like the palms of their hands, winking their eyes formed of fluttering bees. Blooming flowers speak of their spring festivity and warbling cuckoos fill the groves with their festive music.

¹⁶ Here raindrops produce a pearly substance in the hollows of bamboos, the frontal pearl in elephants' heads, and large pearls in the womb of pearl shells. So the words of the wise produce different effects in different people,¹⁷ and so gems produce various effects depending on their settings, whether decorating men or stones, in seas and forests, in frogs, clouds, and elephants. They gladden and distract the mind, cause fear and error, fever, death, and many other supernatural effects.

¹⁸ Behold here the city smiling under the rising moon and singing the praises of that ambrosial luminary through all its windows, doorways and openings, as it were from the mouths of its women, as if responding to the praises sung by Mandara Mountain from the many mouths of its caves and caverns, and the pipes of hollow bamboo.

¹⁹ Wondering women of the siddha spiritual masters behold with astonished and uplifted faces and eyes a large cloud carried away by winds. They wonder whether it is a mountain peak carried away by the winds, or a forest of the snowy mountain flying upward in the air, or a column to measure the distance between earth and sky, or a balance to weigh their weight.²⁰ See the plains at the foot of Mandara Mountain. How cool they are with breezes blowing the coldness of the waves of Ganges. See its foothills inhabited by fair vidyadhara spirits. Behold its flowery woodlands all around, topped by shady clouds of flowers.²¹ See forests, groves and thickets scattered with men's huts, hamlets and homes. Look at the holy shrines and the sacred brooks and fountains lying in them. Their very sight disperses our sorrows, poverty and iniquities.

²² There are mountain crags and ridges on all sides of the horizon. Valleys, groves and caves are overshadowed by clouds. Still lakes resemble the clear sky. Such sights are sure to melt away masses of our crimes.²³ Behold here my lord, the ravines of Malaya Mountain scented with the odor of the aromatic sandalwood. There are the Vindhyan Hills abounding with infuriated elephants, Mount Kailash yielding the best kind of gold in its olden poetic tradition, and Mount Mahendra filled with its mineral ores. The summits of the snowy mountain are plenteous with the best kind of horses and medicinal plants. Every place is found to abound with richest productions of nature. What a pity that man complains in his time worn cell, like an old and blind mouse in its dirty hole.

²⁴ Behold the dark rain cloud on high, appearing like another world to submerge the earth under its flood, threatening it with its flashing and forked lightning, and swimming like frisky shrimp in the ethereal ocean.²⁵ O the bleak, rainy winds blowing with the keen icy blasts of frozen snows, poured down profusely by the raging rainy clouds on high. They are howling aloud in the air, chilling the blood and shaking the body with hairs rising erect.²⁶ O the cold winds of winter are blowing with the dark clouds of heaven, scattering clusters of flowers from the branches of trees. Drizzling raindrops drop in showers upon thick forests scented with the fragrance of kadamba blossoms.²⁷ Winds bear the fragrance of the breaths of longing females as if it were the celestial odor of ambrosia, stolen and carried on the wings of warm breezes.²⁸ Here gentle breezes breathe with the breath of freshly blooming lilies and lotuses of the lake, sweeping their tender odors to the land. Blasts of wind burst the flakes of folded clouds, blowing perfumes from the gardens and groves.²⁹ Beyond, mild airs calm

our struggles, cooled by their contact with the evening clouds of heaven, and resembling servant gardeners perfumed all over from picking flowers from the royal gardens.³⁰ Some are perfumed with the scents of different flowers, and others with the fragrance of lilies and lotuses. In some places they scatter showers of blossoms and in others they shed pollen. Somewhere the air blows from hoary mountains of frost and at others from those of blue, black, and red minerals.

³¹ The sun scatters his rays like firebrands in some places, spreading a fire with a loud noise in the woods, like an unruly crowd in the country.³² Winds, like the sun's wicked attendants, spread the fire caused by the sun and carry their clattering noise far away.³³ Cooling winds blowing from the woods, moistened by the gentle moonbeams, though cheering others' souls, appear as fiery hot to separated lovers.

³⁴ Behold here, O lord, how Sabara women on the lowlands of the eastern sea are covered with their rude and rough leafy garments, wearing their noisy bracelets of brass. See how they strut about in the giddiness of their prime of youth.³⁵ See how these newly loving ladies cling to the bodies of their mates for fear of darkness of the approaching night, like timid snakes twining about the trunk of sandalwood trees.³⁶ Struck with fear by the alarm given by the bell at daybreak, the loving consort leans on the bosom of her lover as darkness lingers in the enclosed room.

³⁷ There is a shrub of kinsuka flowers blooming like firebrands on the border of the southern sea which is continually washing them with the watering of its waves, as if it wanted to extinguish them.

³⁸ Winds blow their smoking powder flying upwards like mists of hazy clouds to heaven. Flowers fall like flames of fire. Birds and black bees hover over them like extinguished cinders of fire.³⁹ Behold, there on the other side, real flashes of living wildfire blazing in the forests on the east. Their flames are carried above the mountain tops by the flying winds of the air.

⁴⁰ See the slow moving clouds shrouding the lowlands lying at the foot of Krauncha Mountain. Observe crowding peacocks dancing under them, screaming aloud with their grave and shrill cries to the clouds. Behold there the gusts of rain-winds rising high, blowing fruit, flowers and leaves from trees afar on all sides.⁴¹ Behold the sun-setting mountain in the west, with its thousand peaks of glittering gold shining amidst the dusky color of the evening sky. See the sloping sun descending below, his chariot whirling down with rattling wheels in the rustling of evening winds.⁴² The moon rises upon the eastern peak of Mount Meru like a full blown flower in order to give light to the darkened mansion of this world. The moon itself is accompanied by its black spots, sitting like black bees upon a blossom. Hence there is no good thing in this perverted world which is free from fault or frailty.

⁴³ Moonlight shines like the laughter of the god Rudra in his dome of the triple world. Moonlight is like a whitewash over the great hall of the universe, or like the milky fluid of the Milky Ocean in the night sky.⁴⁴ Look on all sides of the sky, tinged with evening twilight and the variegated colors of mountain tops, filled with milky moonbeams churned from the Milky Ocean by Mount Mandara.

⁴⁵ Look there, O incomparable lord, those hosts of Guhyaka ghosts, hideous as large palm trees. See those puny vetalas-ghost younglings pouring upon the ill-fated dominions of the Hunas, devouring troubled inhabitants at night.

⁴⁶ The face of the moon shines brightly like the beautiful face of a lady, as long as it does not appear

out of its nighttime home. But in daylight, the moon's beams are cut off and it appears like a piece of fleecy cloud, just as the lady's face becomes disgraced by appearing out of her inner apartment.

⁴⁷ Look at the lofty peaks of the snowy mountain covered with the fair vesture of bright moonbeams. See its crags washed by floods of the falling Ganges. Behold its head capped by perpetual snow, surrounded by creepers of snowy whiteness. ⁴⁸ Behold there Mandara Mountain touching the sky, crowning the forest with its lofty ridges. Here winds blow the cradle chimes of apsara nymphs, and there the mountainous mines sparkle in various colors. ⁴⁹ See high hills all around abounding with blooming flowers like offerings to the gods. See thickening clouds around their loins, resounding harshly within their hollows, while the starry heaven shines over their heads.

⁵⁰ There is Mount Kailash to the north, contending with the sky in its brightness. Below it there is the hermitage of Skanda and the moon shines in her brilliance above. ⁵¹ Behold, the god Indra has let loose his winds to break the branches of trees and demolish the huts on the ground, carrying their fragments afar. ⁵² Winds blow the profuse fragrance of flowers after the rains, filling men's nostrils with their odors. Meanwhile, flights of bees float like clouds in the blue sky. ⁵³ I think goddess Lakshmi has chosen the blooming flowers in the forests, the clear waters in marshy grounds, and villages abounding in fruitful trees and flourishing fields for her home. ⁵⁴ Windows are overgrown with creeping vines in the rains and house tops are decorated with the flowers of the climbing creepers upon them. The ground is scattered with flowers up to the heels. Breezes blow flower pollen all about. All these have made the woodlands the homes of the forest gods.

⁵⁵ The rains have converted a rustic village into a romantic paradise with blooming champaka flowers, rural nymphs swinging in their cradles made of flowering vines, the warbling of birds and gurgling of waterfalls, the blossoming of the tall palm trees in the outskirts, tender vines blooming with clusters of snow-white blossoms, peacocks dancing on roof tops, borders shaded by trees, and rain clouds hanging over the village and its neighboring hills. ⁵⁶ Again, soft and sweet breathing breezes, the variegated leaves of plants and creepers, the vegetation of the village, the cries of cranes and other fowls, and the wild notes of foresters, together with the merriment of the shepherds and other pastoral people over their plenty of milk, curd, butter and ghee, and their joy in their peaceful abodes, add a charm to this hilly tract.

Chapter 116 — The King's Companions Continue: Praise of Sky and Air as Metaphors for God; a Beautiful Valley; Men Are Dirtier than Dogs; Nasty Crows and Pleasing Cuckoos

¹ The companions added:—

Look lord, the field of battle stretching to the bordering hills. Look at the heaps of shining weapons and the scattered forces of elephants, cavalry, infantry and chariots. ² Look at the slain and their slayers, combatants attacking their rivals, and how their dying souls are carried in heavenly cars by celestial apsara nymphs to heaven.

³ The victor finding his adversary defeated in war should not slay him unjustly unless he is justified to do so by the laws of warfare, like love making in youth. ⁴ As health, wealth and prosperity are good for men when they are rightly gained, so it is right to fight for those by whom one is supported. ⁵ When one kills his opposing rival in combat, without violation of the laws of warfare, he is justly styled a heavenly champion. Not so one who takes undue advantage of his enemy.

⁶ Behold there, the bold champion waving his sword as if he were swinging a blue lotus in his hand, casting a dark shadow of the evening dusk on the ground. Lakshmi would court such a hero for her wedlock. ⁷ Look at those flourishing weapons, flaming like the flying embers of a wildfire in a mountain forest, or like the dreadful serpents of the sea dancing on land with hundreds of flashing hoods and heads. ⁸ Look at the sky on one side, resembling the sea with its watery clouds, shining with strings of its stars on another. See how it is covered by dark clouds on one side and brightened by moonbeams on the other. ⁹ Look at the sky filled with multitudes of revolving planets resembling the rolling chariots of warriors, crowded by multitudes of moving stars like soldiers on the battlefield. Yet the error of the ignorant is to think it an empty vacuum, an error which is hard for the wise to remove.

¹⁰ The sky — with its clouds spread all over, its fiery lightning, its thunderbolts that break down mountains, its starry display, and the battle of gods and demigods that took place in it — is still as mysterious in his nature as the solid minds of the wise whose magnitude no one can measure. ¹¹ O wise man, you have been constantly observing the sun, moon, and all the planets and stars in the sky, together with all the luminous bodies of comets, meteors and lightning. Yet it is astonishing that your ignorance will not let you see the great god Narayana in it. ¹² O dark blue sky brightened by moonlight, you retain your blackness like the black spots on the bright face of the moon. Such is the wonder with ignorant minds, that with all their enlightenment, they never get rid of their inner bias and prejudice.

¹³ Again the clear sky, full with endless worlds, is never contaminated by their faults, nor ever changed in its essential state. It resembles the vast and pure mind of the wise, full with its knowledge of all things and devoid of all their pollutions. ¹⁴ O profound sky, you are the receptacle of the most elevated objects of nature. You contain lofty clouds and trees and summits in your womb. You are the recipient of the sun, moon and the aerial spirits that move about in you. Yet you are inflamed by the flames of the fiery bodies that rise in you, to our great regret, in spite of your greatness, which helps them spread themselves high in heaven. ¹⁵ O sky, you are filled with pure and transparent light. You are great giving quarters to all the great and elevated objects of nature. But it is greatly to be pitied that the dark clouds, to whom you give room to rise under yourself, trouble us like base upstarts,

throwing their hailstones at random.¹⁶ Again O dark sky, you are the witness of all lights, just as the touchstone is the test of gold. You are a void in your essence, yet you support the substances of stars and planets of clouds and winds and all real existences at large.¹⁷ You are the daylight at daytime, the purple red of evening, and turn black at night, yet remain devoid of all color of yourself. You exhibit all colors in yourself. Hence it is impossible even for the learned to understand correctly your nature and its convertible conditions.¹⁸ As a helpless man can achieve his purposes through patient perseverance, so the empty sky has risen above all by means of its universal spread.

¹⁹ The sun persisting in his accustomed course rises to the vertical point in time, but unmoving straw and trees, dormant hills and places, and stagnant pools and ponds are ever lying low on the ground.

²⁰ The night invests the sky with a dark dress, sprinkles fair moonlight over it like the cooling dust of camphor, and decorates it with stars like clusters of flowers. The day covers the sky with bright sunbeams. The seasons serve to cover it with clouds and snows and in the flashing attire of spring flowers. Thus Time is always busy decorating the heavenly paths of his lords, the sun and the moon, the two time keepers by day and night.²¹ The sky, like a magnanimous mind, never changes the firmness of its nature, even though it is constantly assailed by disturbances of smoke and clouds of dust and darkness, of the rising and setting sun and moon and their dawns and dusks, and the coming together of stars and combats between gods and demons.

²² The world is an old and decayed home of which the four directions are its walls, the sky its roof above, and the earth its ground floor below. The hills and mountains are its pillars and columns and cities and towns are its rooms and apartments. All the various classes of animal beings are like the ants of this home.²³ Time and action reside in this mansion from age to age. All its ample space presents the aspect of a smiling garden. Every day there is fear that it will be blown and blasted away, yet the wonder is how this frail flower last so longs and forever.

²⁴ I think the air puts a stop to trees and hills growing taller for, though it does not actually restrain their growth, yet its influence, like the authority of noble men, puts a check to the rise of aspiring underlings.²⁵ O pity for that learning which calls air void and empty, seeing how the air contains millions of worlds in its bosom, producing and reducing countless beings in its boundless bosom.

²⁶ We see all things born in air and return to it. Yet we see the madness of men who reckon the all containing and all pervading air is something different from God.²⁷ We see the works of creation continually being produced, existing and extinguishing in air, like sparks of fire. I believe this pure and sole air to be God, without beginning, middle or end, the universal source and end of all, without any other distinct cause.²⁸ Emptiness is the vast reservoir for the three worlds bearing the innumerable productions of nature in its vast space. I understand infinite emptiness as the body of Consciousness, that transcendent being in which this false conception of the world has its rise and fall.

²⁹ There, in the woodlands on mountain tops, a solitary forester chants his charming strains amidst his woodland retreat, attracting the heart of a lonely passerby who lifts up his head to listen to the rapturous times.³⁰ Listen O lord, to the sweet music coming from the thick groves on that distant lofty mountain, emitted with the heart rending strains of lovelorn vidyadhari nymphs. See the lonely passerby whose lovesick heart, smitten by the sound, has neither the power to go forward or

backward from the spot, or even utter a word.³¹ I hear a lovelorn vidyadhari lady singing her love song in the woods of the hill, her sighs heaving and tears flowing profusely from her eyes. She sang saying, "Lord, I well remember the day when you led me home holding my chin and kissing me on the cheeks with your smiling face. Now the pleasing memory of that glad moment has left me deplored its loss for years."

³² I heard her tale, O Lord, which the forester related to me when I passed by. He said, "Her former young lover was cursed by a relentless sage to become a tree for a dozen years. Since his ill fated change, she has been leaning on that tree singing her mournful song to it."³³ Now observe the wonder. As I approached, the tree-like lover was released of his sad curse. Shedding a shower of flowers upon her, he changed his form and clasped her to his arms with his face smiling like his blooming flowers.

³⁴ Hilltops are decorated with flowers like the heads of elephants are painted with white dye. The sky is whitened with stars and falling meteors, like a mountain summit is bleached with white frost and snow.³⁵ Behold, the beautiful stream of Cauvery River gliding along with a great number of fish swimming in its waters. Its noisy waves resound with the cries of shrill and clamorous cranes. See its banks covered with garments of flowers, its shores freely grazed by timid deer without any fear.

³⁶ Look at Survela Hill, washed by the waves of the sea god Varuna. Its stones shine like gold under sunlight and sparkle like marine fires washed by waves.³⁷ Look at the homes of Ghosha shepherds at the foot of the mountain constantly shrouded by clouds. Behold the beauty of blossoming palasa and patala trees there.³⁸ Look at the plains, whitened by full-blown white flowers. See mandara trees with twining and flowering vines. Look at the banks crowded with cranes and peacocks. Look at those villages and the waterfalls, sounding like music from the mouths of mountain caves and forests, evoking joy among the happy inhabitants of the valley.

³⁹ Here buzzing bees play around the new blown petals of plantain flowers, inspiring fond desire in the breasts of Pamara foresters. They enjoy a bliss in their rustic pastures and hidden hilly caverns which, I believe, is not attainable by the immortal gods in their celestial gardens.⁴⁰ Behold the black bees playing and swinging in their cradles of flowery vines of the forest, and the Pulinda forester singing to his beloved, his eyes fixed upon her face. Mark also the sportive Kirata, forgetting to kill the deer wandering beside his lonely cave.⁴¹ Here a weary traveler is refreshed by the sweet scent of various full blown flowers, his body cooled by the fragrant pollen blown by the breeze from flowering vines.

Meanwhile, moisture bearing winds wash the valley on all sides, rendering the place more delightful than the spotted disc of the moon.⁴² Here are unceasing gliding of waters, the constant waving of palm trees, the dancing of blossom-bearing branches, and the shaking of the spreading vines in the air. A forest of lofty sala trees in the borders and clouds hanging over the foothills all combine to add a charm to this village of the valley, like that of gardens in the planet of the moon.⁴³ Lightning flashing, clouds roaring deeply, peacocks dancing merrily with loud shrieks and screams, and their trailing retinue displayed in the air decorate the valley with a variety of multicolored gems.⁴⁴ The bright moon appearing on one side and dark clouds rising like huge elephants on the other serve to adorn the village in the valley and the hills in its outskirts with a beauty unknown in the heavenly kingdom of

⁴⁵ O, how I long to live in a mountain cave among the fragrant trees of beautiful Nandana forest, among the delightful groves of blooming santanaha blossoms where busy bees continually flutter over mandara and paribhadra groves. ⁴⁶ O, our hearts are attracted by the cries of tender deer browsing green and delightful vegetation, and by blooming blossoms on hills and in valleys, as they are by the sight of the cities of mankind. ⁴⁷ Look at that far off village in the valley where the waterfall appears like a column of clear crystals and peacocks merrily dance about the cascading waterfalls. ⁴⁸ See how the happy peacocks and joyful vines, bending down under the burden of their blossoms, are dancing delightfully beside the swirling waters of the waterfall. ⁴⁹ I believe the lusty god of desire, Kama, plays at his pleasure in this village of the valley protected by hills all around. He is playing with handsome green harita birds in green groves beside crystal lakes resounding with the sweet singing of water fowl.

⁵⁰ O most prosperous and magnanimous raincloud lord who is the center of all virtues and the highest and gravest of men, you are like a towering mountain, mankind's refuge from heat and the cause of their plenty. ⁵¹ O who bathes in holy waters, exalted above all earthly beings, choosing to live in hills and wildernesses like holy hermits, and who is silent like them from the pure holiness of your nature, you also appear fair when you are emptied of your waters in autumn. All this is good in you. But say, why do you rise in your fullness with lightning flashing in your face and thunder roaring in your breast, like lucky upstarts of low origin? ⁵² All good things being misplaced turn to badness, just as water ascending to the clouds turns to hoarfrost and cold ice. ⁵³ O, wonder that drops distilled by clouds fill the earth with water, and that this water supports all beings and makes the poor grow with plenty of harvest.

⁵⁴ Ignorant people are like dogs in their unsteadiness, impudence, impurity and wayfaring. Hence I know not whether the ignorant have derived their nature from dogs or these from them. ⁵⁵ There are some people who, in spite of all their faults, are yet esteemed for certain qualities, just as some dogs are taken into favor because of their valor, contentment and faithfulness to their masters. ⁵⁶ We see all worldly people like madmen pursuing worldliness, pushing in the paths of business at the sacrifice of their honor, and likely to tumble down with fatigue. I find them flying to and fro like trifling straw. I do not know whether their will, madness or stupidity has made them chose this foolish course.

⁵⁷ Among brute creatures, the brave lion hears tremendous thunder claps without shuddering, while the cowardly dog trembles and shuts his eyes with fear at the sound. ⁵⁸ I believe, O vile dog, that you have been taught to bark at your fellows and to wander about the streets by some arrogant and stupid fellow. ⁵⁹ The Divine Creator, who has ordained varieties in all his works, has made the nasty breed of his daughter Sarama, the bitch of the gods, all equally filthy. These are the dogs that dig holes in dirt for their kennels, feed upon filth and carrion, copulate in public places, and carry an impure body everywhere.

⁶⁰ "Who is there lower than you?" asks a man of his dog. To which the dog answers, "You, the silly man, is the lowest of all." Dogs combine the best qualities of valor, fidelity and unshaken patience. These are hard to find among humans who grovel in the darkness of their ignorance amidst greater impurities and disasters. ⁶¹ A dog eats impure things and lives in impurity. He is content with what it

gets, feeds upon dead bodies, and never hurts the living. Yet men are fond of throwing stones at dogs everywhere. Thus men make dogs playthings, contrary to the will of God.

⁶² Look there, at the crow flying with the offerings left for the Shivalinga on the farther bank. There it is, in clear sight telling its story to everyone, saying; "Behold me on high, with my degrading sin of stealing from the altars of the gods." ⁶³ You croaking crow who crows so harshly and treads the marshy lake, no wonder you annoy us with your cries that drown out the sweet buzz of humming bees.

⁶⁴ We see the greedy crow ravenously devouring dirty filth in preference to the sweet lotus stalk. No wonder that from long habituated taste, some would prefer sour to sweet.

⁶⁵ A white crow, sitting in a bush of white lotus flowers and their snowy filaments, was at first taken for a swan or a heron, but as it began to pick up worms, it came to be known as a crow. ⁶⁶ It is difficult to distinguish a crow from cuckoos, both having similar dark feathers, unless the one makes itself known by giving out its own vocal sound. ⁶⁷ The crow sitting on a forest tree, a mound of clay or a tall building looks on all sides for its prey, just as a nightly thief climbs a chaitta tree and sits watching the ways of people.

⁶⁸ It is impossible for a crow to live with cranes and storks by the side of a lake that abounds in lotus flowers diffusing their somber pollen all about. ⁶⁹ For shame that the noisy crow should have a seat on the soft lotus bed in company with silent swans and play his disgraceful tricks among them. ⁷⁰ You crow who cries with the sound of a grating saw, say, where have you lost your former reserve today? Why do you brood over the young cuckoo, whose sweetness of voice you can never attain and who you can not retain as your young?

⁷¹ On seeing a dark crow sitting like a black goose in a bed of white lotuses, crowing aloud with delight at that place, a person said to him, "It is better for you, O clamorous crow, to use your cracking voice to grab the ears of those who are not tired of splitting others' heads with their crafty words."

⁷² It is good that the cunning keep company with the cunning, like a crow and a crab meeting at a pool, or a crow joining with an owl in a tree. The two rogues, though seemingly familiar, will not fail to frustrate each other by their natural hatred. ⁷³ The cuckoo associating with the crow and resembling him in figure and color is distinguished by his sweet notes, just as a learned man makes himself known in the society of the ignorant by his speech. ⁷⁴ A blossoming branch is well able to bear the cuckoo plundering its flowers, but it will not suffer the association of crows and cranes, and cocks and vultures upon its twigs.

⁷⁵ How delightfully do people listen to the sweet notes of the cuckoo uniting separated lovers. But who can tolerate listening to the jarring cries of the crow or the hooting of the owl without disgust?

⁷⁶ When the sweet notes of the young kokila nightingale serve to entertain the ears of listeners with the glad tidings of spring season, the grating cry of the crow immediately intrudes upon their ears, demanding the melodious cuckoo to be its foster child. ⁷⁷ Why and what have you been cooing so long, O you tender cuckoo, with so much joy and joy in that distant grove? Behold, your pleasant spring season is too soon over with its fading flowers. Behold the stern winter approaching fast to blast blossoming trees with its icy breath, bidding you hide your head in your nest.

⁷⁸ A separated mistress seeing a sweet kokila nightingale pour forth his notes to the tender blossoms of the spring season thus addressed to him saying, "Say, O sweet cuckoo, who taught you to say that spring season is for you and your enjoyment? This is truly a sorrowful lie you told me. Instead of saying 'It is mine and yours', you are enjoying your companion."

⁷⁹ The cuckoo sitting silent in an assemblage of crows, appears as one of them in its form and color of its feathers. The graceful gait of the cuckoo makes it known from the rest, as the wise man is marked in the company of fools. Hence everybody is respected by his inner talents and outward behavior more than by outer form and feathers. ⁸⁰ O brother kokila nightingale, you coo so sweetly but in vain when there is none to appreciate its value. Therefore, when flocks of crows are crying so loudly and when it is time for dew to fall and not spring flowers, it is far better that you sit quietly in your secluded concealment under shady leaves. ⁸¹ It is a wonder that a young cuckoo forsakes its mother for a fostering crow that begins to prick it with its bills and claws.

As I reflect on these, I find the young cuckoo growing into the likeness of its mother. Hence I conclude that the nature of a person prevails over his training.

Chapter 117 — Description of a Lotus-Lake, Bees and Swans

¹ The companions said:—

Behold there, O lord! The lotus lake on the tableland of the mountain reflects the sky in its bosom and resembles the pleasure pond of Kama. Behold there the beds of white, red and blue lotuses with their protruding stalks. Listen to the mingled sounds of water fowls playing there. ² See the full blown lotus standing on its stalk with its thousand petals and the royal swan resting on its petal. It is crowded by double streaked bees and birds of various kinds, as if it were the home of the lotus-seated Brahma himself.

³ Mists and fearful frost are everywhere. The red pollen of full blown flowers and lotuses have been flying all about. Bees and birds, giddy with the scents spread around, hum and warble their tunes and notes in the open air. Clouds are spread above like an aerial canopy. ⁴ There is the lashing sound of the breaking waves beating against the shore. Here is the rumbling noise of humming bees contending with one another. Somewhere the silent waters are sleeping in the deep. Elsewhere the fair lotuses of the lake are lying hidden in the bushes. ⁵ Pearly particles of water lull heat away from people. Wild beasts prowl on the bank overgrown with wild thickets. Waves wash the stones on the bank. The land appears like the clear sky on the earth. ⁶ The bosom of the lake displays lightning flashes from the red clouds bearing flower pollen. One side is hidden by a dark rain cloud while the other side shows the variegated rays of the evening skies above it. ⁷ There is a fragment of autumn cloud carried aloft by driving winds, appearing like a part of the sky supported upon air.

⁸ Waves of the lake rippling by gentle breeze and moist humming bees fluttering over a lotus lake make a noise all around like flowers falling from trees on the river bank. ⁹ Large lotus leaves are waving like fans made of palm leaves, foaming froths puffing like the snowy chowry fans of princes. Buzzing bees and cooing cuckoos sing in praise of the lake which lies like a lord in the assembly of lotuses resembling the consorts of his harem. ¹⁰ Behold the chorus of black bees singing their charming chimes before him. The yellow pollen of lotus flowers scatter his waters with dust of gold. Yellowish froth float like fragments of its gold colored flowers. The flowery shrubs on the bank decorate the lake like its headdress. ¹¹ The deep fountain, having beautiful lotuses on its bosom, enjoys their sweet fragrance like princes derive from an assembly of talented men in their courts.

¹² The translucent lake, reflecting the clear autumn sky on its surface, resembles the mind of a wise man which is ever clear and composed with the light of the true scriptures. ¹³ The clear lake is little discernible in winter when the keen blasts have covered it with hoarfrost and converted its blueness to white. ¹⁴ So the world appears to the wise like a vast sheet of the glory of God. All these distinct forms of things, like waves on the sea, are lost at last in the bright element of Eternity.

¹⁵ Everyone should try to raise himself above the sea of error by his own effort. Or else he must continually whirl in the whirlpool of blunder, like all other ignorant men. ¹⁶ As the waters of wells, tanks, lakes and seas differ from one another in their quality, so men and women are different from each other in their respective dispositions.

¹⁷ Who can count the aquatic plants and lotuses growing in the lakes as plentifully as the passions and desires spring in the fountain of the human heart, carried away by the waves of accidents, or hurled

into the whirlpool of perdition? ¹⁸ O the wonderful effect of bad company, that the lotus growing in the company of aquatic plants loses its fragrance in the waters and shows its thorny stalks to view.

¹⁹ The good qualities of a person, like those of the lotus, are lost in the company of vicious faults, just like the pores, hollowness and too fine and fragile fibers of the lotus stalks make them entirely useless to anybody. ²⁰ But the lotus which adorns its native waters and fills the air with its fragrance is like a nobleman born with the noble qualities of a noble family, and whose virtues are impossible for Sesha, the hundred hooded serpent, also to describe. ²¹ What can equal the lotus in praise, which in the form of Lakshmi, rests on the bosom of Hari and graces his hand like a bouquet of flowers?

²² Both white and blue lotuses are esteemed for their quality of sweet scent, though they differ in their color. Hence one is sacred to the sun and the other to the moon. ²³ The blooming beauty of a lotus bed cannot be compared to full blown flowers of the forest. Nor does a lotus lake bear compare with the starry heaven. They are to be compared with the comely and smiling face of a dancing girl in her entertainment.

²⁴ Blessed are bees that have all along enjoyed their lives reveling with the sweets of flowers without having anything else to care about. ²⁵ Blessed are bees and cuckoos that feast upon the flavor of mango fruit and entertain themselves with the fragrance of their flowers. All others not so blessed are born only to bear the name of the species. ²⁶ Bees filled with honey and giddy with the flavor of lotuses in the lake where they play laugh to scorn others of their tribe that led humble lives on the common powder of flowers. ²⁷ The black bee buzzing to the lotus, living and playing in their company and sleeping in their honey cups at night, was in trouble at the approach of autumn, not knowing what flower to choose for its fare and rest. ²⁸ A black bee sitting on an unopened flower bud looks like Andhaka placed over a trident by Shiva.

²⁹ O you unsatisfied bee, ever wandering over hills and dales and sucking the sweets of all kinds of flowers, why do you still wander, unless it were for your restless discontent? ³⁰ You soft bodied bee, raised on sweets and feeding upon pollen, it is better for you to resort to the lotuses of the lake than bruise your body in thorns and thistles. ³¹ O bumble bee, if stern winter deprives you of sweet flowing food and your fair diet of pollen, still you should repair like wise men do, as may suit your taste, and be congenial to your nature rather than be mean and debase yourself by attending upon the base and mean.

³² Look there, O lord, an assembly of milk-white swans swimming in the lake, feeding upon the silvery fibers of lotus stalks and making gurgling sounds as gravely as those who chant the Sama Veda. ³³ Here the gander, pursuing geese sitting in their cradles of lotus bushes, thinks the clear lake to be the blue sky, and the lotus cradle as a cloud, and stops his pursuit. ³⁴ Let nobody be so unfortunate, O lord, as this gander in pursuit of the shadows of geese.

³⁵ The sweet music of the swan is unmatched by the crow or crane, although they are taught to learn it for many years in its society. ³⁶ Although the swan and drake are both of the same kind, of like form and figure living upon the same sort of food, yet they differ widely from one another in their respective species and qualities. ³⁷ The swan soaring in the sky, his snow white wings and feathers, appears like the hoary lotus sitting upon its stalk. Then it gladdens the minds of men, like the full moon with her icy beams. ³⁸ The elevated stalks of lotuses, rising like the lofty stems of plantain trees,

with lotuses sitting like the goddess Lakshmi upon them, afford delight only to swans and to no other bird.

³⁹ Behold how the lake is adorned like a beautiful lady with waves like her waving bracelets, ripples like her necklaces, and aquatic plants and flowers as wreaths and garlands on her bosom. ⁴⁰ Strings of fluttering bees are like streaks of black spots on her body. The swelling of cranes and storks are like the tinkling of her anklets and rippling waves are the glances of her eyes. ⁴¹ The lake is graced, like a lady, by young swans crying by her side as her young ones, looking up to the mountain as her lord for a fresh supply of fresh water from his flowing waterfall.

⁴² Don't you, O harmless swan, reside with malicious water fowls and birds of prey in one and the same lake? It is better that you remain with your own kind who can help you in distress. ⁴³ Look to your end, O silly bee, now so giddy with your drink of sweet honey, treading on the heads of elephants to sip and suck their flowing ichor and wandering at large among blooming lotuses. The winter of scarcity is fast approaching when you shall be forced to live upon dewdrops drizzling on blades of grass or dripping from stones. ⁴⁴ O lord, the milk-white swan with wide stretched wings enters into the lotus bush to look after his young ones. On seeing him, they begin to cackle like a child seeing his father. The young ones said, "O father, it is all delusion, like a white pearl in silver and seeing an overcast of fog over his head at midday."

⁴⁵ The swan silently floats over the clear waters of the lake like the bright moon gently glides along the translucent atmosphere of the sky. As it passes through lotus beds, the swan's wings bruise the blossoms, causing them to distil their fragrant fluid which is gulped by fish like the holy water of the Ganges.

Chapter 118 — Descriptions of Cranes, Herons, Deer & Travelers

¹ Some companion said:—

Behold the crane which, despite lacking all good qualities, has one special instinct of uttering the sounds imitating the rain.² O crane that resembles the swan in the color of your feathers, you might well be taken for a young swan if you were without the rapacity of the kingfisher.³ There is a line of kingfishers expert in diving amidst deep waters and catching fish in their wide extended beaks. Now they are sitting idly on the shore, not venturing into the water for fear of sharks floating there with open mouths and wide stretched jaws.⁴ Thus murderers also dive upon men like kingfishers and cry out saying, “This kingfisher is our instructor in killing.”

⁵ Seeing a white heron with its long neck and uplifted head sitting silently and watching on the shore, people first took it to be a swan. But afterward, finding it catch a shrimp from the marsh water, they came to know it as a heron.⁶ A woman saw a crane sitting on the shore for the entire day like a devotee. Meanwhile, in reality it was watching for prey until the evening shade, like day laborers do for their bread.⁷ “Look there,” says a wayfaring woman to her companion, “how these rustic women pluck lotuses from the frosty lake. If you like, you can follow them, but I will fall back from you.”

⁸ Look there, O lord, says the companion to the king, how that traveler appeases his angry mate and leads her to the flowery bower of the weedy bush.⁹ Look then, O lord, at the dalliance of the lady, and at her smiling face mixed with her frowning looks, and listen to her speech to her associate.

¹⁰ The crane, kingfisher and other rapacious birds that live together in the same place are all of the same mind and purpose. But the fool and wise man can never agree, though they live together in the same society forever.¹¹ As a cricket caught in a woodpecker’s bill whistles to his face, so the retribution of our past misdeeds unfolds and flies like a flag before us.

¹² As long as the cruel crane of fate keeps clucking upon the tall tree on the shore, the fearful shrimp keep itself concealed in the bog with its inner fear. Hence there is no rest of the body or soul until the ultimate release of both.¹³ The bodies of animals, devoured by rapacious beasts and birds, then disgorged unhurt and entire out of their bowels, resemble their rising from the lap of sleep or a state of profound trance.¹⁴ The fear that overtakes fish in their native waters at the sight of rapacious animals is far greater than those of thunderclaps or thunderbolts falling upon them. This I know from my memories of my past life as a fish, and it cannot be denied by the wise.

¹⁵ See there a herd of deer resting in rapture on a bed of flowers under the shade of trees on the borders of the lake. Look also at the hive of the bees about the new blown flowers of the grove.

¹⁶ Look at the high minded and lofty headed peacock craving and crying aloud for rainwater to the great god of the clouds and rains. In return, the god Indra pours floods to fill the whole earth with water, for the greatness of gods looks to the general and individual good.¹⁷ Peacocks, like suckling infants, attend on the clouds as their wet nurses. Or it may be that the black peacocks are the offspring of dark clouds.¹⁸ Behold the wanderer looking with wonder on the eyes of the antelope and finding they resemble those of his dear one at home, remaining stupefied like a statue at the sight of the objects exposed to his view.

¹⁹ The peacock, instead of drinking water from the ground, forcefully snatches a snake from

underneath. Wherefore I am at a loss to know which of these to blame for its malice.²⁰ Why is it that the peacock shuns to drink from the large lake, which is as generous as the minds of great men? It is content to swallow drops of rainwater, spit out and poured by clouds. It refuses to drink from the large lake for shame of having to stoop down his head.²¹ See the peacock dancing, displaying his flashy feathers to the clouds and shaking their starry plumage in the rain as if they were the offspring of the rainy season.²² A rainy dark cloud, carried by the wind from the bed of the ocean, appears over the forest lake and meets with the joyful dancing peacock below.

²³ It is better for you, O chataka cuckoo, to pick up blades of grass for your food, drink water from fountains, and rest in the shady plantain grove of the forest. You should not have to dwell in the hollow cave of a withered tree in sultry heat because of your pride of never stooping down for your existence.²⁴ Think not, O peacock, that this cloud is a sea and home for sharks. Know it is a watery cloud, born of the smoke of wildfire and the vapors of mountains ascending to the sky.²⁵ The peacock, seeing a cloud full of rain even in autumn, sometimes becoming so scant of its supply as not even to fill a tank, sustains its thirst with patience, in gratitude to the cloud's past favors. It does not blame its former supporter for failing or consider drinking any other earthly water like common people.²⁶ The peacock, accustomed to drinking crystal drops from clouds, would not stoop to drink dirty water from a ditch, though pressed and pinched by drought and thirst. The sweet memories of his past drink supports him from fainting, and the expectation of fresh drinks preserves him from dying.

²⁷ Travelers lessen the struggles of their journey by conversation on the way, just as the ignorant who are unable to be with themselves communicate their thoughts with others to hide the dullness of their lives.²⁸ Look there, O lord, at the slender stalks of lotuses supporting the burden of the water on the lotus leaves like distant tender ladies carrying water pots on their heads.²⁹ Asked why they were carrying those of lotus flowers and leaves and for what use, they replied, to make cooling beds for reducing the fever heat of the love sick wives of travelers from their homes.³⁰ These impassioned ladies, with swollen breasts and youthful amorous play and the motions and gestures of their bodies, served to excite the memories of separated brides left behind by the travelers in their far distant homes.

³¹ "Ah surely," says a traveler, "my dear one must be weeping and wailing in my absence, or falling down and rolling on the ground seeing that distant dark cloud in the sky."³² Behold there, lines of black bees fluttering on lotus cups and little bees giddy with the sweet nectar of flowers. Gentle breezes blow on all sides, blowing the fragrance of the opening blossoms. Meanwhile the leaves of trees are dancing to the tunes of the rustling winds.

Chapter 119 — A Lovelorn Traveler Talks to a Cloud and Is Almost Cremated

¹ The king's companions continued:—

The traveler having returned home and finding his beloved one by the trees of Mandara Mountain, began to relate to her the pains of his extended separation. ² "Listen to my marvelous tale," said he, "and what happened to me one day when I tried to send someone to you with my tidings."

³ "In my painful separation, I sought long in vain to send someone to you at this my house. But where can one be found in the world who would take a severe interest in another's affliction for the sake of charity or mere friendship? ⁴ Then I saw a big cloud on the top of a mountain resembling the steed of Indra. It appeared cheerfully before me, accompanied by swift lightening as his precursor. ⁵ I advanced before him and addressed him, saying, 'Ah brother cloud, you carry the rainbow of Indra like a collar about your neck and are graceful in your course. Have pity on me for a moment. Please go to my dear one and tell her my tidings with your low voice, sympathetic tears and breath of sighs. Because the tender form of a yielding vine is unable to bear your loud uproar. ⁶ I know not, O dark cloud, to what dwelling to direct you to find my beloved one, who is pictured in my heart by the pencil of my mind and is forever situated in my heart. ⁷ But now, O my friendly cloud, my distracted mind has lost that figure of my beloved in my heart, together with her sight from my eyes. Now having lost the freedom of my body in a foreign country, I have become only a wooden framework without my love, which is its living soul. For what living body can bear the pangs of separation?'"

⁸ "People thought I was dead and with tears in their eyes, they began to prepare my last rites and collect wood for my funeral. ⁹ I was carried away to be burnt on a dreadful funeral pile, which was horribly crackling with cracking wood from the blazing fire on the burning ground. ¹⁰ There, O my lotus eyed love, I was laid on the pile by some persons with eyes weeping. The pyre was surrounded by a number of men who stood as spectators of the horrible sight. ¹¹ At that time the twisting smoke of the pyre began to enter my nostrils like the stalks of lotus plants and like the dark and lengthy body of a curved snake enters a hole in the ground."

¹² "But in all this, I was defended by the strong armor of my firm love for you, just as the unborn son of the god Brahma was defended from the showers of darts of an entire army of demons. Thinking myself to be plunged in the cooling pool of your love within my heart, I was untouched by the flames of fire burning all about me. ¹³ All this time I lay in the ecstasy of my love for you, and I felt raptures of joy rising in my breast as I imagined being with you. I deemed myself drowned in an ambrosial lake while I was in that state of rapture. I thought sovereignty of the whole world was too insignificant before my ecstatic transport. ¹⁴ I thought I felt raptures of inexpressible delight fill my whole soul at the thought of all your flattery and graces, and in the allurements of your speech, sweet smiles and side glances, and all your gestures and motions that spread an ambrosial charm all around me."

¹⁵ "I imagined we embraced in amorous holds until exhausted with excess, I lay upon a cool soft bed as if I were drowned in the cold and icy ocean of the moon. ¹⁶ At this moment as I lay in my bed, moistened with cool sandal paste and the cooling beams of the full moon, I heard a thundering noise accompanied with flames of fire rising from the burning pile of woods under me, like undersea fire from the Milky Ocean where I was lying."

¹⁷ The king's companions resumed:—

When the husband had said this much, his wife cried out aloud, "Ah me! I am dead, I am gone!" She was afraid she would hear the sad ending and fell into a swoon, senseless. ¹⁸ The husband finding her fainting, began to fan her with lotus leaves sprinkled with water and taking her up to his bosom, tried to restore her to her senses. ¹⁹ She wanted to hear him finish his story, so he began to tell the rest holding her chin with his hand.

²⁰ "As I felt the pain of the burning flame touching my body, I cried out and groaned. The spectators hastened to extinguish the blazing pile, delighted to find me alive. ²¹ With loud shouts of joy like the sound of drums and with garlands of flowers, attendants raised and embraced me to their bosoms. They went on shouting and singing and dancing and laughing with exultation."

²² "Then I saw the funeral ground that looked like the formidable body of Bhairava, the god of destruction. It was covered with ashes, wreathed with snakes, and studded with human skulls. Bones scattered over the ground looked like the rays of the moon crowning the head of Shiva. ²³ Howling winds blew from the funeral piles, like from the burning fire on Hara's head, bearing the burnt ashes of dead bodies like a dark mist. They bore stink of rotten bones and carried the rustling noise of bones jostling against one another. ²⁴ Burning piles, their flashing flames and flying sparks, and the fiery winds scorching trees and grass gave that place the appearance of the playground of the gods of wind (Vayu) and fire (Agni) and of the sons of the Sun god (Yama and Saturn)."

²⁵ "Thus I saw the funeral ground full of terrors, covered with skeletons of half-burnt bodies and putrid carcasses. It was infested by hungry dogs, howling jackals, and other voracious beasts, and ravenous ravens and vultures. It was a place where vetala and pisacha demons played with fearful shrieks and jarring sounds. ²⁶ I saw the coffins of dead bodies carried by their mourning friends with loud cries and lamentations that filled the air all about. I saw beasts and birds tearing the bodies' entrails and arteries, yet moist with blood, and I saw the ground scattered with half burnt logs of wood and bushes. ²⁷ In some places, the glaring pyres gave a gloomy light, and in others the tufts of hair were heaped like spots of clouds. In one place the ground was smeared with blood and looked like a lurid sheet of cloth. Elsewhere clouds roared as the sun set below the horizon."

Chapter 120 — Description of Breezes & Winds, Flowers without Fragrance, Celestial Gardens, and other Various Objects on All Sides

¹ The king's companions continued:—

Thus the loving pair, after taking to one another in the aforesaid manner, began to sip their delicious wine. And now attend, O lotus eyed lord, to the other things of things of this place.

² Lo, there the winds, shaking plantain leaves and clusters of their flowers, blowing pollen from various flowers everywhere. ³ Breezes are loaded with scents exhaled by the flowers of the forest. Gentle breezes blow perfumes stolen from the locks of their favorite ladies. ⁴ Here blasts blow from the salt sea on the south, driving as fast as a stern lion rushes into woods and mountain caves, with the force of fierce demons attacking the gods on the top of Mount Meru. ⁵ There a strong wind plays and shakes tall spice, palmyra and other palm trees. Meanwhile, gentle gales softly glide over waves blowing their moisture to tender plants below. ⁶ Soft breezes wander with pollen thrown out by flowers. Meanwhile gentle warm breezes move about like princes amidst trees and flower gardens.

⁷ There the wind god Vayu plays his sweet woodland pipe in the holes of hollow bamboo, like female sweet musicians tuning their reeds in the city of Hastinapura.

⁸ Here every plant is filled with bees, except the karnikara flower which they avoid because that flower disregards the wind god Vayu by withholding tribute scent and pollen. ⁹ The palm tree, rising high as a column but yielding no fruit or flower to the hungry passerby owing to its inaccessible height, is as disgraceful as an uncharitable rich man. ¹⁰ Ignorant and unworthy people build their pride on an outward show, just as the kinsuka flower displays the beauty of its color but lacks fragrance.

¹¹ Look at the karnikara flower, blooming only to decay because its lack of fragrance makes it worthless and despicable, like unworthy and ignorant men disregarded by all. ¹² So the tamara tree with its blushing blossoms beguiles the thirsty chataka cuckoo by its false appearance of a rainy cloud. So the fair, outer appearance of the fool deceives the unwise by his inward foulness.

¹³ Look at these robust, woody, shady and cloud capped hills that afford shade and shelter to others. They are possessed of many more qualities befitting the kings of men and are standing like lofty bamboo. ¹⁴ Look at the distant cloud on the mountain top, resting as it were upon the seat of its tableland of bright gold and twirling its yellow covering of lightning, appearing like the god Vishnu in his garment of golden yellow.

¹⁵ Look at the blooming kinsuka flowers with fluttering bees and birds about them, appearing like fighting warriors pierced by flying arrows and smeared with crimson blood. ¹⁶ Behold the golden mandara flowers touching the orange colored clouds of heaven. They appear like giddy gandharva lads lying on top of Mahendra Mountain. ¹⁷ Behold the weary wayfarers, laying and lulling themselves to rest under the shade of kalpa trees in the Nandana garden of paradise. Meanwhile siddha spiritual masters and vidyadhara spirits are sitting at ease, singing their songs to the tune of their stringed instruments. ¹⁸ Behold celestial ladies stretched at ease, laughing and singing in the groves of kalpa trees in the celestial garden. ¹⁹ There is the silent home of the great sage Mandapala famed in legends, and the cave of the celebrated eagle Jarita said to be his wife. ²⁰ See there, the line of hermitages of the ancient sages where the envious animals forget their mutual hatreds and live

together in perfect concord and friendship.

²¹ There are coral plants growing with other shrubs and bushes by the sea coast. Drops of water trickling upon them glisten like gems from the sun. ²² Waves roll with precious gems on the bosom of the ocean, like playful ladies rocking with their ornaments on the breasts of their lovers. ²³ We hear the jingling of the jewelry of celestial ladies traveling in the celestial regions to the infernal homes of serpents.

²⁴ Mountain caves whistle with a sound resembling the buzzing of wild bees falling down giddy from drinking the ichor flowing from the forehead of elephants. ²⁵ Behold the sea ebbing with the waning moon during the dark fortnight of the month, and the receding tides leaving the linear marks of their regression upon the sands on the shore. ²⁶ Behold the woodland decorated like a beauty with clusters of flowers hanging like wreaths and garlands on every side, breathing fragrance all about and attired in the robe of its cooling shade. ²⁷ Variegated foliage form its party-colored dress and waterfalls seem like its sweet smiles. Scattered flowers appear like the flowery bed of a happy woodland goddess.

²⁸ High-minded sages and hermits are as highly delighted with their quiet woodland retreats as the celestials are joyous in gardens of Nandana. ²⁹ The tranquil and indifferent minds of sages are equally delighted with these solitary woodlands as the restless and impatient minds of lovers and worldly people. ³⁰ The waters of the sea, whether running into the land or washing the foot of a rock on the seashore, are equally shinning and sounding as their tinkling anklet ornaments. ³¹ Punnaga flowers blooming on mountains appear like golden mines. Gold finches flying over them look like winged gods in the aerial path. ³² Mountain forests appear to be on fire with their full blown champaka flowers. Bees and clouds hover over them like smoke. Meanwhile, winds spread their pollen and petals like sparks of fire. ³³ Behold the kokila nightingale swinging and singing on his seat on the topmost branch of a karavira tree. His mate comes and embraces him there and sings in response to his songs with her clamorous chattering. ³⁴ See the salt waters of the salty ocean roaring aloud against the shore. But the coast lands are kept in subjection under the hands of their able masters.

³⁵ O lord, please make this earth stretching to the four seas as your footstool. Establish your rule over the remaining kings who have escaped the brunt of your valor. Appoint rulers over all provinces on all sides. Provide them with the force and arms necessary to keep them in order. Continue to govern your realms with mercy and moderation.

Chapter 121 — King Vipaschit's Companions Settle by the Ocean and Pray to Agni

¹ Vasishta related:—

Then King Vipaschit and his companions sat on the seacoast and did whatever was necessary to establish his sovereignty.² They chose spots for their homes at that place and made houses for themselves according to their positions. They settled the boundaries of the provinces and set guards for their defense.³ At last they went down into the ocean, then proceeded to the other side of the world to show Vipaschit's glory to other parts of the world.

⁴ Then dark night came in the form of an all-shading cloud and all people, after finishing their daily works and rituals, sank into the lap of sleep.⁵ The companions were amazed to think how they had been led so insensibly over such a great distance in so short a space of time, meeting the ocean-like currents of rivers falling into it.⁶ They said, "It is a wonder we have come so far without any attempt on our part. Therefore this great speed must be attributed to the swiftness of the vehicles of the great god Agni."

⁷ "Lord!" they say, "how extensive is the view before us stretching from one end of Asia to its other extreme of the vast salt ocean, and thence again to the islands in it, and other lands and seas beyond them.⁸ There are islands and seas beyond these, and others again beyond them. How many such and many more may there be of this kind, and how inscrutable is the delusion which is thus spread before our minds?⁹ Therefore let us pray to the fire god Agni that we may see at once everything on all sides by his favor and without any effort or pain on our part."

¹⁰ So saying and thinking in this manner, they all reflected on the fire god Agni with one accord, and meditated on him as they sat in their respective places.¹¹ The fire god Agni appeared to them in his tangible form and spoke to them, "Ask my sons, what favor you desire of me?"

¹² They said, "O lord of gods who abides beyond this visible and elemental world, ordain that by means of Vedic mantra and our purified minds we may know in our minds what is knowable.¹³ Give us, O fire god, this great and best boon that we ask of you, that we may know by your light whatever is knowable by the external senses, mind or self-consciousness.¹⁴ Enable us to see with our eyes, O lord, the paths which lead the spiritual masters and yogis to the sight of the invisibles. Make us also perceive in our minds the things that are imperceptible to them.¹⁵ Let not death overtake us until we have reached the ways of the spiritual masters. Let your grace guide us in the paths where no embodied being can pass."

¹⁶ Vasishta said:—

"So be it," said the fire god Agni, and instantly disappeared from their sight, just like an undersea fire bursts forth and immediately vanishes in the sea.¹⁷ Dark night appeared as the fire god Agni disappeared. After a while, the night also fled and sunshine returned with the reviving wishes of the king and his men to survey the wide ocean lying before them.

Chapter 122 — King Vipaschit and His Companions Walk on the Ocean

¹ Vasishta related:—

Rising in the morning, they regulated the affairs of the state according to the rules prescribed by law. They were eager to see the sea, as if impelled by some supernatural force which nothing less than the power of ministerial officers could restrain.² So exasperated by their mad ambition, they forgot their affections for family to undertake their perilous sea voyage, leaving them all weeping.³ They said, "We will see what there is on the other side of the sea, then return instantly to this place." Saying so they muttered the invocatory mantras of the fire god Agni, who inspired them with the power of walking with feet dry over the sea.

⁴ All the representatives of the king, followed by their companions on all sides, proceeded to the borders of the various seas, walking over the watery maze.⁵ They walked upon the waters as if they were walking upon the ground. All four bodies of the fourfold king met together in one place. Immediately afterwards they separated with all their forces.⁶ Marching on foot over the vast expanse, they surveyed all that was in and upon the sea, then disappeared from the sight of people on the shore, like a cloud vanishes in autumn.⁷ The forces traveled on foot over the watery path of the ocean with as much fortitude as the king's elephants tread patiently on land when bound on a distant journey.⁸ They mounted high and went down along rising and lowering waves, like men climbing and descending steep mountains, or like one galloping on horseback, or like Vishnu floating upon ocean waves.⁹ They paced over whirlpools like straw floats on water. They walked about as gracefully among waves as the beautiful moon passes through clouds.¹⁰ The brave soldiers, so well armed with weapons and so well protected by the power of their mantras and amulets, were discharged from the bowels of sharks as often as they came to be devoured by them.¹¹ Pushed onward by waves and driven forward by winds, their bodies were carried many leagues in a moment.

¹² Huge wave surges lifted them to great heights, like the enormous elephants on which they used to mount and ride about in their native land.¹³ The vast expanse of water is like the empty space of the sky. Its successions of heaving waves are like the folds of gathering clouds in heaven, emitting lightning as they dash against one another.¹⁴ Loose, loud surges of the sea resembled elephants loose on the battlefield. Though they dashed against the shore with all their force, yet they were unable to break them down, like elephants baffled in their attempt to break down a stone rampart.

¹⁵ Surging waves reflect the rays of brilliant pearls and gems borne from shore to shore. They resemble eminent men who, though they pass alone from place to place, are accompanied by their train and glory everywhere.¹⁶ The surf tramples over masses of hoary froth with contempt, like a snowy white swan treads upon the bed of white lotuses with contempt.¹⁷ The loud ocean, even louder than roaring clouds and waves, has no terror to those who stand like rocks thereon.¹⁸ The cloud-kissed waves of the ocean, rising above the mountains then falling low at their feet, were likely to touch the sun and then sink into the nether worlds.

¹⁹ The companions were not afraid of the rising waters. They passed over the sea like upon a sheet of cloth, shrouded by drizzling clouds that formed a canopy over them.²⁰ Thus the king's companions crossed the ocean full of sharks, alligators and tremendous whirlpools. They were sprinkled with

water like showers of flowers and adorned with marine gems and pearls. They crossed on foot, as others do in fleets of ships.

Chapter 123 — King Vipaschit Wanders in Various Continents

¹ Vasishta related:—

Thus they proceeded to explore visible phenomena exposed before them by ignorance. They continued to walk over the watery maze and the islands it contained.² They passed over the ocean to some island, then from that island to the sea again. In this manner they walked over many mountains and wildernesses in endless succession.

³ Then as the king proceeded towards the western ocean, he was seized and eaten by a voracious fish, like the undying breed of Vishnu's fish, and as fleet as a boat in the stream of Bitasta Beyah.⁴ The fish fled to the Milky Ocean with the king in his belly. Finding him too hard digest, he carried him in his bowels over a great distance in another direction.⁵ He was carried to the Sugar Ocean on the south. There he was cast on the island of yaksha demons where he was overpowered by love for a female yaksha fiend by her art of enchantment sorcery.⁶ Then he went towards the east and passing by the Ganges, he killed a shark that had pursued him, and arrived at last at the district of Kanyakubja.⁷ Then proceeding towards the north, he came to the country of Uttara-kurus where he was elevated by his adoration of Shiva and became freed from the fear of death, in all his wanderings on all sides of the earth.⁸ In this way, travelling long and far, both by land and sea, he was often attacked by wild elephants on the boundary mountains, and repeatedly gorged and disgorged by sharks and alligators in the seas.

⁹ Then proceeding towards the west, he was picked up by a garuda bird and set upon his back. The bird took to his golden wings and carried him in an instant to Kusa-dwipa across the ocean.¹⁰ From there he passed to Krauncha-dwipa on the east where he was seized and devoured by a rakshasa demon of the mountain, but who he later killed by ripping up his belly and its entrails.¹¹ Then wandering in the south, Daksha, the king of that part, cursed him to become a yaksha demon. After some years he was released from that state by the King of Sakadwipa.¹² Then he passed over the great and smaller seas lying in the north and after passing over the great frigid ocean, he arrived at the country of gold where he was changed into a stone by the spiritual masters of that place.¹³ He remained in that state for a hundred years until by the grace of his god Agni, he was released from the curse of the spiritual master who received him again into his favor.

¹⁴ Then travelling to the east, he became king of the country of coconuts. After reigning there for a full five years, he was restored to the memory of his former state.¹⁵ Then passing to the north of Meru Mountain, he dwelt for ten years among the apsara nymphs in the groves of kalpa trees living on coconuts.¹⁶ Afterwards he went to Salmali-dwipa in the west, which abounds in trees of the same name. He lived with the birds for many years, having been instructed in their language when he had been carried away by the garuda.¹⁷ From there, journeying in a westerly course, he reached Mandara Mountain which abounded in vegetation and madara forests. Here he resided for a day in company with a kinnara female named Mandari.¹⁸ Then he journeyed to the Nandana garden of the gods, which abounded in wish-fulfilling kalpa trees rising as tall as the waves of the Milky Ocean. He remained in the company of the woodland gods for a seventy years, sporting with apsara nymphs in their amorous play.

Chapter 124 — Fourfold State of King Vipaschit

¹ Rama said, “Tell me sage, how was it that the fourfold Vipaschit entertained different desires though one person with a single consciousness?”

² Vasishta replied:—

Any person conscious of his self identity and its invariability and indivisibility may still think himself to be another person doing different things, just as a man does in his dream.³ Again, the clarity of the soul shows abstract images of things in itself, as it did in the soul of the wise King Vipaschit, and as a mirror reflects the discrete figures of objects, and of the sky and sea, in its clear and empty space.

⁴ As reflectors made of the same metal reflect one another in themselves, so all things, which in reality are of an intellectual nature, reflect themselves in the intellect.⁵ Hence whatever object presents itself to the senses of anyone is nothing other than the solidification of his intellectual idea of it.⁶ The one and the same thing appears as many, and varied ones in reality are only the unchanging one. There is no positive variety or uniformity in existence because all apparent variety is positive unity.⁷ Hence whatever part of the king was conscious of anything that presented itself at anytime, the same is said to be the state of his being during that time.

⁸ It is possible for a yogi who sits secluded in one place to see all present, past and future events simultaneously. In the same way, it is possible for a king sitting retired in his palace to manage all affairs of his whole domain and much more, for King Vipaschit delegated to his viceroys as if they were members of his body.

⁹ A cloud stretches itself to all the quarters of the sky and at the same time performs the different functions of quenching the parched earth with its water and of growing vegetables and fructifying trees. Similarly, a man boasts of doing several acts at the same time.¹⁰ So also are the simultaneous acts of the Lord God and those of the lords of men and yogis who design and perform at the same time the multiple acts relating to the creation, preservation and management of the world.

¹¹ So the one Vishnu, with his four arms and as many forms, acts many parts independently, such as the preservation of the world on the one hand and the enjoyment of his fair consorts on the other.¹² Again though a person’s two hands are enough to discharge the ordinary affairs of life, yet it is necessary to have many arms to use many weapons in warfare.

¹³ In the same manner, the one monarch was situated with his fourfold persons in all four sides of the earth where, though each was impressed with the consciousness of the one identity, each acted his part distinctly from the others.¹⁴ They were all similarly conscious of the pains and pleasures of lying down on bare ground, passing to distant islands, and travelling to various forests, groves, and desert lands.¹⁵ They all remembered their journeys over hills and mountains, as well as their voyages by water and air. They knew how they floated on the seas and rested on clouds.¹⁶ They knew how they mounted upon waves of seas and rode on the back of flying wind, and how they lay on seashores and at the feet of mountains.

¹⁷ Again, the king proceeding to Saka continent on the east passed into an enchanted city of yaksha demons lying at the foot of the eastern Udaya-giri mountain where, being spellbound by their sorcery, he lay asleep for a full seven years in the woods of leafless mansasija trees.¹⁸ Afterwards, rising

from his drowsiness, he was converted to the dull state of a stone by drinking some mineral water and was condemned to remain for seven more years with the mineral substances of the earth.¹⁹ Then he was confined in a cave in western Astachala Mountain which reaches to the region of clouds and is shrouded by darkness. There he became enamored of the company of pisacha and apsara females.

²⁰ Then he arrived at a region free from fear where a high mountain rose with waterfalls on all sides. Here the king was lost in the forest of Haritaki having myrobalan fruits and become invisible for years.²¹ The king that had before been spellbound by the yaksha afterwards travelled to the frigid climate. There, being transformed to a lion, he wandered about Raivata Hills for ten days and nights.

²² Then being deluded by the black art of pisachas, he was changed into the form of a frog and lived in that state in the caves of the golden mountain for a hundred years.²³ Afterwards, travelling to the country of Kumarika, he dwelt at the bottom of the northern ridge of Black Mountain. Then going to the Saka country, he was transformed into a hog and lived in a dark hole in that shape for a hundred years.²⁴ He lived for fourteen years in the land of Maribaca when the western form of the king was turned into a vidyadhara by virtue of his skill in learning various mantras.²⁵ There he enjoyed sexual intercourse to his full satisfaction under scented gardens of cardamom trees and passed his time in amusement.

Chapter 125 — Each Body of the King Helps the Other; On Yogis; None but Yogis Can Know the Mind of Another; Indifference to Fate

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Now of the four bodies of the king, one was transformed into a tree in a valley called the vale of fearlessness in Saka continent. It supported itself by drinking the cascading water flowing down from the rocks above. ² Then the western body of the king, by the power of its mantra incantations, came to the relief of the eastern part and released it from its seventy-year long curse of a vegetable state.

³ Then the western body of the king that had traveled to the frigid climate was transformed into a stone by curse of the chief of a pisacha tribe. He was released from that state by the southern body offering meat food to the carnivorous pisacha. ⁴ At another time, as this western body was settled beyond the western horizon, it was changed into the form of a bull by a female fiend that had assumed the form of a cow, and was freed from that state by the southern body. ⁵ Again, the southern body of the king was doomed to live as a demon in a tree on a mountain in Kshemaka and was liberated from it at last by the yaksha prince. ⁶ Then again, the eastern body of the king was transformed into the shape of a lion on a mountain in the province of Vrishaka. He was delivered from his transformation by the western body.

⁷ Rama asked, “Sage, how can the one king, confined in one place like a yogi, be present everywhere at the same time? How could he simultaneously perform various acts at different times and in different places by the all comprehensive universality of the mind?”

⁸ Vasishta replied:—

O Rama, let the unenlightened think whatever they may regarding this world, but you attend to what I say regarding the meaning in which it is viewed by enlightened yogis.

⁹ According to the wise, there is no other essence except the one Universal Consciousness. Phenomena are an utter nonexistence. The creation or uncreated entity of the world blends into nothing. ¹⁰ This Universal Consciousness is the eternal residence of and is the same as the eternal and Universal Soul and constitutes the essentiality and universality of the Supreme Soul at all times.

¹¹ Say, who can obstruct the course of the great mind anywhere or by any force? It is omnipresent and all comprehensive, exhibiting itself in various forms in the endless varieties of its thoughts. ¹² What can we call ours when all these sights are exhibited in the Supreme Soul or Consciousness in all places and times, and all that is present, past and future are comprised in that all-comprehending mind? ¹³ The far and near, a moment and an age, are the same to Consciousness which is never altered in its nature. It is both near and afar. It is the past, present and future.

¹⁴ All things are situated in the soul, yet through creation’s illusion and ignorance, they appear to be placed outside as we see them with our naked eyes. ¹⁵ The soul is the substantial omniscience of empty form. It exhibits the three worlds in its emptiness without changing its emptiness. ¹⁶ The Universal Soul appears in the universe as both viewer and the view, or as the subjective and objective in its same nature. How is it possible for the inherent soul of the apparent world to admit of a visible form in any way, unless it be by the delusion of our understanding to think it so?

¹⁷ But tell me, O sage who knows the truth, what is impossible for God for whom all things are possible at all times and places? So also to wise King Vipaschit who was conscious of his self identity in all his four forms.

¹⁸ The enlightened intellect of a yogi who has not yet arrived at his transcendent state of unity with God and retains the sense of its individuality, can yet readily unite itself with the souls of others in all places.

¹⁹ There is nothing impossible for the Supreme Soul. But the half-enlightened soul that lingers between knowledge and ignorance and has not attained transcendent wisdom is confounded in its intellect regarding the true knowledge of things. ²⁰ The soul that is somewhat advanced in its knowledge is said to have partly progressed towards its perfection. Hence the four parts of Vipaschit situated on the four sides made up a perfect whole. ²¹ These four parts were like so many states of perfection which happened on Vipaschit like the rays of heavenly light. These states helped and healed each other, just as the different parts of the body assist and supply to the defects of one another.

²² Rama said, "Tell me, O venerable brahmin, why the fourfold King Vipaschit ran on all sides like brutes if he was so enlightened in every part? Why he did not sit collected in himself as he was?"

²³ Vasishta replied:—

What I have told you about enlightenment applies only to yogis who, though they are combined of many parts in their minds, yet remain tranquil in themselves in the same state.

²⁴ The four Vipaschitas were not wholly enlightened like holy yogis, but being partly enlightened, they remained in the middle state between the two, as if hanging between the states of enlightenment and ignorance at the same time. ²⁵ They carried the marks of both at once: discretion and discernment on the one part, and passions and affections of their minds on the other. These two parts led them two different ways of liberation as well as of bondage.

²⁶ Those who are ever vigilant in the discharge of their pious acts, wavering between their temporal and eternal concerns such as the Vipaschitas, continue in their course of action. Such persons cannot be perfect, esoteric yogis in this life. ²⁷ Devotees devoted to a particular god, as the Vipaschitas were devoted to the god of fire, are called concentration yogis. Only if they attain transcendental knowledge are they called transcendent yogis. ²⁸ The learned yogi does not see any mist of ignorance obstructing his sight of the light of truth. But the ignorant devotee is blind to truth, though he may be received into the favor of his favorite god.

²⁹ The four Vipaschitas were all subject to ignorance. They rejected knowledge of the true soul by their attachment to gross material bodies which are, at best, only vain unrealities. Therefore listen to what I will now tell you about those who are liberated from their grossness even in their lifetime.

³⁰ Yogis, of course, retain their knowledge of the material as they conduct the external affairs of life. Liberation is the virtue of the mind, consisting of its freedom from subjugation to gross materials. Liberation exists only in the mind and not in the body or its consciousness. ³¹ But, as the bodily properties are inseparably connected with the body, and as consciousness cannot be separated from the body, therefore a liberated soul is not attached to the body, nor does a yogi ever take any heed of

the body in his mind.³² The mind of a liberated yogi is never reunited with his body, anymore than pollen ever returns to its parent stalk. The physical properties of the body of a living liberated yogi always remain the same as those of worldly persons.

³³ All can equally perceive the bodies of both yogis and worldly people, but not the minds which are hidden in them. A liberated soul cannot be seen by others, but the imprisoned spirit is known to all by its addiction to the discharge of its bounded duties.³⁴ A person can well recognize self-liberation in oneself, just as his perception of the sweetness of honey and the taste of other things are well known to him. One is well acquainted with his liberation and bondage from his consciousness of pleasure and pain from the one or the other.³⁵ Thus one's inner perception of his liberation is why he is called liberated. It is also the inner coolness of his soul and the detachment of his mind that constitute his liberation even in his lifetime.³⁶ Neither bondage nor liberation of the soul, nor the pleasure or painfulness of one's mind can be known to another, whether you divide the body into pieces or place it upon a royal throne.

³⁷ Whether laughing or crying, the liberated soul feels no pleasure or pain because in either state he remains situated in the unalterable spirit of God.³⁸ The minds of liberated persons are settled in the Divine Spirit and nowhere else, even when they are receiving or doing anything with their bodies. But learned men of the different schools are seen to be quite otherwise because they are unacquainted with liberation.³⁹ The bodies of liberated persons are not affected by external events. Though such a one may appear to be weeping, yet he never weeps in grief, nor does he die with the death of his mortal body.⁴⁰ A great man who is liberated in his lifetime does not smile though he has a smiling face. He is not affected by or angry at anything, though he seems to be moved by affections and anger.⁴¹ Without any delusion, he sees the delusions of the world. Unseen by any, he sees the failings of others. All pleasure and pain seem as ideals to him.

⁴² Everything is like nothing to a liberated sage, like flowers growing in the garden of the sky. The existence of the world is nonexistence to he who sees only unity in all existence.⁴³ The words pleasure and pain are like flowers in the sky to the liberated who are indifferent to them. They have become victorious over their feelings by their liberation from all sensations in their lifetime.

⁴⁴ They who have known the truth are unchanged in their nature, just as the mouths of Brahma are unflinching in the recital of Vedas.⁴⁵ Shiva, with the nail of his finger, ripped the upper head of Brahma like a lotus bud. Brahma neither resented it nor grew another head, which he was well able to do. So the meek yogi does not resent any harm done to him.

⁴⁶ Of what use is the upward looking face to he whose inner, intellectual eye shows him the emptiness of all things around. Hence, possession of the external organ of sight is useless to he who sees everything within himself.⁴⁷ Everyone gets what allotted to him by his fate in retribution of his past actions. Fate affects not only mortals, but also binds the god Shiva to the sweet embraces of Gauri, as well as to his somber contemplation forever. So also, the Milky Ocean bears the ambrosial moon in his ample bosom.

⁴⁸ Good minded men are seldom seen to abandon their passions, though they are capable of doing so in their lifetime. But they become quite dispassionate upon their death when the five elemental principles of their bodies are burnt away upon the funeral pile.⁴⁹ But the living liberated man gains

nothing by doing anything, nor does he lose anything by doing nothing. He has no concern with any person or interest whatever with anything here on earth.⁵⁰ What avails one's passion or dispassion in this world? What is fated in this life cannot be averted by any means.

⁵¹ Vishnu, who is liberated in his life, does not cease from his work of slaying asura demons or to have them slain by the hands of Indra and others. He becomes incarnate to die himself or by the hands of demons. He is repeatedly born and grows up to become extinct at last.⁵² No one can immediately give up his alternate activity and rest, nor is there any good to be reaped by his attachment to the one or his renunciation of the other.⁵³ Therefore let a man remain in whatever state he may be, without having any desire of his own. So Vishnu is without any desire in himself, being only the form of pure Consciousness and Intelligence.

⁵⁴ Changing time changes and moves the steady soul on every side like a ball, just like it makes the fixed sun appear turning around the world.⁵⁵ The lord of the day is not able to restrain his body from its apparent course, though he is seated in his nirvana as he is, without any desire to change his place.

⁵⁶ The moon also appears to be waning under his wasting disease, though he remains always the same in all kalpa ages of the world. So the soul of the liberated person continues the same, though his body is subject to decay with age.

⁵⁷ Fire also is ever free and liberated in itself because nothing can extinguish its latent heat at anytime. Though it was suppressed for a while by the sacrificial butter of Marutta and the seminal liquid of Shiva, yet it revived again as it was before.⁵⁸ Brihaspati and Shukra, the preceptors of gods and demigods, were liberated in their lifetime and with all their ambitious views of predominance, they acted like dull and miserable persons.⁵⁹ The sagely King Janaka is perfectly liberated in his mind, yet he is willing to rule over his kingdom and defeat his enemies in battle.⁶⁰ The great Kings Nala, Mandhata, Sagara, Dilipa, Nahusa and others were all liberated in their lives, yet they reigned and ruled over their kingdoms with all the vigilance of sovereigns.

⁶¹ A man acting wisely or foolishly in life is neither bound nor liberated in this world. His ardent desire or apathy to worldliness is what constitutes his bondage or liberation.⁶² The demon Kings Vali, Namuchi, Vritra, Andhaka, Mura and others lived quite liberated in their lives, yet they acted as unwisely as if they were elated by their ambition and passions.⁶³ Therefore the existence or disappearance of passions in anyone's conduct makes no difference to his spiritual character. Pure vacancy of the human soul and mind constitutes his liberation in this world.

⁶⁴ Being possessed of the knowledge of God as pure vacuum, the living liberated person is assimilated to the likeness of emptiness itself. He is free from the duality of thinking himself to be other than the Divine Spirit.⁶⁵ He is conscious of the fallacy of phenomenal appearances, which he knows to be no more than like the variegated rainbow reflected in empty air.⁶⁶ As the various colors are seen shining in a rainbow in the field of empty air, so these countless brilliant worldly bodies are only empty particles appearing in infinite space.

⁶⁷ This world is an unreality that appears like a reality. It is unborn and uncreated, yet it is irresistibly conspicuous to our sight, like the appearance of the empty sky.⁶⁸ It is without beginning or end and yet appears to have both. It is a mere void seeming to be a real substantiality. It is uncreated, yet thought

to be a created something. It is indestructible, though thought to be subject to destruction.⁶⁹ Its creation and destruction are phenomena occurring in the empty essence of God, just as the structure of a wooden post and statue takes place in the substance of the wood.

⁷⁰ The mind freed from its imagination and drowned in deep samadhi, as in the state of a sleepless sleeper, comes to the sight of an even intellectual emptiness, absorbing the sights of all the worlds as if absorbed in it.⁷¹ As a man passing from one place to another is unmindful of the intermediate scenes, so when attention is directed solely to the sight of the intellectual void, the thought of the world and other existences is wholly lost.⁷² The thought of duality is lost in unity in this state of intense meditation. This idea of oneness disappears in that of a vast void which ends in a state of conscious bliss.⁷³ In this state of mental sameness, the duality of the world is lost in the nothingness of emptiness. The knowledge of self personality is decreased by spirituality. All future presents itself clearly to the view of the clairvoyance of the enrapt yogi.

⁷⁴ The perfect yogi remains with his mind as clear as the empty sky, enveloping phenomena in its ample sphere. He sits silently, still and cold as a stone. He views the world in himself and remains quiet in rapturous amazement at the view.

Chapter 126 — Death and Further, Varied Consciousness of the Four Vipaschitas

¹ Rama said, "Now tell me sage, what did the four Vipaschitas do, being cast in seas, islands and forests in the different parts of the earth?"

² Vasishta replied:—

Rama, now hear about the four Vipaschitas and their wandering in forests of palm and tamara trees, upon the hills and in the islands in all directions.

³ One of the Vipaschitas, wandering about the westerly ridge of a mountain in Kraunchadwipa, was crushed to death by the tusk of an elephant, just as when it tears a lotus in the lake.⁴ Another was smashed in his contest with a rakshasa, who carried his mangled body aloft in air, then cast it amidst an ocean fire where it was burnt to ashes.⁵ The third was taken up by a vidyadhara to the region of the celestials. There he was reduced to ashes by curse of the god Indra who was offended at the king's lack of respect for him.⁶ The fourth, the one that went to the farthest edge of a mountain in Kusadwipa, was caught by a shark on the seashore which tore his body to eight pieces.⁷ In this manner, all four lost their lives. They all fell as sorrowfully as the regents of the four quarters at the destruction of the world on doomsday.

⁸ After they were reduced to the state of emptiness in the vast vacuum, their empty and self-conscious souls were led by memories of their former states to see the earth.⁹ They saw the seven continents with their belts of seven oceans and the cities and towns with which they were decorated everywhere.

¹⁰ They saw the sky above with the sun and moon forming the pupils of its eyes. They also saw clusters of stars hanging like chains of pearls about its neck and billowy clouds that formed its folded vest.¹¹ With their intellectual eye, they saw the stupendous bodies that rose out of chaos at the revolutions of past kalpa cycles, filling the vastness of the sky and all sides of the horizon with their gigantic forms.

¹² Being possessed of consciousness in their spiritual forms, they descended to observe the manners of elemental bodies that were exposed before them.¹³ All four Vipaschitas were moved by their previous impressions to inquire into the measure and extent of the ignorance that led people to the belief that the body is the soul, for their lack of knowledge of the spiritual soul.¹⁴ They wandered from one continent to another to observe in which part of this ideal planet of the earth was this ignorance most firmly seated so as to give it the appearance of a visible substance.

¹⁵ Passing over the seven continents and oceans, the western Vipaschit happened to meet with the god Vishnu standing on a parcel of firm land.¹⁶ From the god, Vipaschit received the incomparable knowledge of divine truth and remained in samadhi trance at that spot for a full five years.

¹⁷ Afterwards, finding his soul to be full of the divine presence, he renounced even his spiritual body. He fled like his vital breath to the transcendent vacuum of final nirvana.¹⁸ The eastern Vipaschit was carried to the region of moon where he sat beside that fully bright globe. But the king, though placed in the exalted sphere of the moon, continued to lament the loss of his former body.¹⁹ The southern king, forgetful of his spiritual nature, thought he was ruling in Salmalidwipa and employed himself investigating external objects of the senses.

²⁰ The northern one, living in the clear waters of the seventh ocean, thought he had been devoured by a

shark which held him in his belly for a thousand years.²¹ There he fed upon the bowels of the shark, which killed the animal in a short time. Then he came out of its belly as if the shark had given birth to a young shark.²² Then he traveled over the frigid ocean of snows and its icy tracts stretching eighty thousand leagues in dimension.²³ He arrived at a spot of solid gold which was the home of gods and stretched to ten thousand leagues. Here he met with his end.²⁴ In this land King Vipaschit attained the state of a godhead in the same way a piece of wood is turned to fire in a burning furnace.²⁵ Being one of the principal gods, he went to Lokaloka Mountain which surrounds the earth like an aqueduct surrounds the base of a tree.²⁶ The mountain rises to the height of fifty thousand leagues and has the inhabited earth on one side of it which faces the sunlight, and eternal darkness reigning on the other.

²⁷ He ascended to the top of Lokaloka Mountain which pierced the starry sphere. As he was seated upon it, he was seen in the light of a star by the beholders below.²⁸ Beyond that spot and far away from this highest mountain lay the deep and dark abyss of infinite void.²⁹ Here was the end of this earth. Beyond it was the emptiness of the sky of fathomless depth and full of impervious darkness.³⁰ There reigns a darkness of the color of a swarm of black bees and like the shade of black tamara trees. There is neither the dark earth nor any moving body under the extended sky. This great void is devoid of support, nor does it support anything whatever at anytime.

Chapter 127 — Cosmology of the Universe

¹ Rama said, "Please tell me sage. How is this globe of the earth situated? How and where does Lokaloka Mountain stand upon it? Do the stars revolve about it?"

² Vasishta replied:—

As children build their fancied castles in empty air, so this world is the creation of the imagination of the mind of Brahma, and no more than this.³ As a dim sighted man sees the shadow of the moon and other false sights before his eyes, so in the beginning, the creative power (Brahma) sees the phantoms of the phenomenal world in the emptiness of its Intellect.⁴ As an imaginary city is situated in the mind and is invisible to the eye, so the notion of the world is assumed in the intellect and not exhibited in actuality.⁵ Whenever there is a reflection of anything in the mind arising spontaneously of its own nature, the same presents itself, even then and in that state, before sight as in a dream.⁶ As a dim sighted eye sees false sights in the sky, so the deluded mind sees the earth and heavenly bodies.⁷ As the currents of water flow on the surface of rivers, and there resides a latent fire underneath, so the notions of things presenting themselves as dreams of the mind are manifested as real ones before sight.⁸ Hence, as thoughts and ideas of things continually occur and settle in the mind, so the earth and heavenly bodies constantly appear to revolve in their spheres.

⁹ The world is entirely nonexistent to dull and inanimate beings. It is visible to those who have physical sight but utterly invisible to the blind and altogether unknown to those who are born blind. It is imperceptible to the insensible and perceptible only in the same manner as it is presented in the mind. So it is only in the power of the mind to represent it in some form or other to one's self.¹⁰ Thus it is according to mental conception that the bodies of stars are considered to be as large as the earth and the unreal world is believed to be a real entity.

¹¹ The world has both light and darkness owing to the presence or absence of the sun. Beyond this there is a great abyss of emptiness, a vast expanse of darkness except where there is a glimpse of zodiacal light.¹² The polar circle is called Lokaloka Mountain from the bulging of the poles at both ends. It is also called Lokaloka because it has a light and a dark side, owing to the course of the sun towards or away from it. Its distance from the starry circle also deprives it of zodiacal light.

¹³ Beyond Lokaloka Mountain and far away from the sphere of the sky, there is the sphere of the starry frame which revolves around them at a great distance on all the ten sides.¹⁴ This starry zodiacal belt encircles the sky up and down, from the heavens above to the infernal regions below, in the vast emptiness of space extending to all sides.¹⁵ The starry belt of the zodiac turns round Lokaloka Mountain on earth and its nether regions, as it appears to our imagination and not otherwise as fixed and motionless.¹⁶ The sphere of zodiacal stars is twice as distant from the poles as they are distant from the middle of the earth, in the same way as the shell of a ripe walnut is distant from the sheath of its seeds.¹⁷ Thus the starry belt is settled at double the distance from the poles, as Lokaloka Mountain is situated from the equator. It turns all about the ten sides, like a bael fruit whirling in the sky.¹⁸ The aspect of the world is according to the pattern situated in the imagination of Brahma, and as reflected from its original model in the Divine Mind.

¹⁹ There is another sphere of the heavens, far away from the starry frame and twice in its extent. This

is lighted by the zodiacal light and beyond it there reigns a thick darkness.²⁰ At the end of this sphere there is the great circle of the universe, having one half stretching above and the other below and containing the sky in the middle.²¹ It extends millions of leagues and is compact with all its contents. It is a mere work of imagination, formed of emptiness in the immensity of vacuum.

²² The sphere of light turns on every side of the great circle of emptiness, with all the radiant bodies of the sun, moon, and stars in its circumstance. There is no upside or downward in it, but are all the same.²³ There is no actual ascending, descending or standing of any planetary body. They are merely manifestations of the intellect which exhibits these variations in the workings of the mind.

Chapter 128 — Endlessly Wandering in the Vacuum of Brahma; Everything We Perceive Is through God

Vasishta speaking:—

¹ Rama, I have told you all this from my own personal perception and not by any guesswork. Through their purely intelligent bodies, yogis like ourselves have come to the clear sight of these things in nature which are otherwise unknowable to the material body or mind. ² Thus the world of which I have spoken appears to us as in a dream, and not in any other aspect as it is viewed by others. ³ Now whether the world is seen in the light of a dream or any other thing is of no matter to us. It is the business of the learned to speak of its situation and what it relates to.

⁴ There are the two Meru poles situated at the utmost extremities of the north and south of the world. It is the business of the learned to inquire into the endless kinds of beings lying between them. ⁵ These varieties are well known to the people of those particular parts, but not to us here where they do not appear in their native beauty. ⁶ The two poles standing at the farthest extremities limit the earth with its seven continents and seas, and stretch no farther beyond them.

⁷ Now hear, O Rama, that the whole body of water on earth is ten times as much as the extent of the two continents that are surrounded by it. ⁸ The two continents attract the encircling waters around them, just as a magnet attracts iron needles. The water upholds the continents just like the wish-fulfilling kalpa tree supports the fruit upon it. ⁹ All things on earth are supported by it, just as the fruit of a tree is supported by its stem. Therefore everything on earth falls down on it, like fruit falling upon the ground.

¹⁰ Far below the surface of the water there is a latent heat which is always burning without any fuel. This latent heat is as still as the air and as clear as the flame of fire. ¹¹ At a distance of ten times from it, there is the vast region of air. As many times far away from that, there is the open space of transparent emptiness. ¹² At a great distance from that, there is the infinite space of the emptiness of Divine Spirit. It is neither dark nor bright, but full of Divine Consciousness. ¹³ This endless emptiness of the Supreme Spirit is without beginning, middle or end. It is called the Universal Soul, the great Intellect, and perfect bliss.

¹⁴ Again there are numberless globes in the distant parts of these spheres that appear and disappear from view by turns. ¹⁵ But in reality, there is nothing that appears or disappears in the uniformly bright soul of Brahman where everything continues in the same manner throughout all eternity.

¹⁶ I have thus related to you, Rama, all about the phenomenal worlds that are perceptible to us. Now hear me tell you about what became of Vipaschit in Lokaloka Mountain.

¹⁷ Being led by his former impressions and accustomed habit, he kept wandering about the top of the mountain. But afterwards he fell down in a dark and dismal pit. ¹⁸ He found himself lying as dead when the birds of air, as big as mountain peaks, descended upon his dead body, which they tore to pieces and devoured. ¹⁹ But as he died on the holy mountain, he still had a spiritual body. He did not feel the pains which are inevitable upon the loss of the physical body, but retained his clear consciousness all along. ²⁰ Yet as his self-consciousness did not attain the transcendent perceptivity of his soul, he remembered the grossness of his past acts and deeds and was conscious of them, as any

living body.

²¹ Rama asked, "Sage, how is it possible for the disembodied mind to perform the outward actions of the body? How can our spiritual consciousness have any kind of perception of anything?"

²² Vasishta replied:—

As desire drives a householder man from his house, and as imagination leads the mind to many places and objects, so the mind of this king was led from place to place.²³ As the mind is moved or led by delusion, dream, imagination, error or misapprehension and recital of stories, so the mind of the king was led to believe whatever appeared before him.

²⁴ It is the spiritual, intellectual body that is subject to these fallacies, but the human mind forgets its spiritual nature in course of time and thinks on its materiality.²⁵ Upon disappearance of these fallacies, like the mistaken idea of a snake in a rope, only the spiritual body appears and not any physical one.²⁶ Consider well, O Rama, that the spiritual body is the only real substantiality. All that appears to exist beside consciousness does not exist at all.

²⁷ The mind of a man going from one place to another passes quietly over intermediate places and is quite unconscious of them. Such is the case with the intellect, which passes to endless objects without ever moving from its support or changing itself to any other form.²⁸ Therefore tell me. Where is there a duality? What object is there that deserves your friendship or hatred when all this totality is only one Infinite Deity known as transcendent understanding?²⁹ Transcendental understanding is that calm and quiet state of Consciousness which is without the workings of the mind. Though King Vipaschit was settled in his spiritual body, he had not yet attained that state of transcendental knowledge.

³⁰ Lacking this perception, he saw a vastness in his mind. With his spiritual body, he saw a dark gloom, like what appears to a fetus confined in the embryo.³¹ Amidst this gloom, he saw the cosmic egg split in two, and then perceived the surface of the earth situated in its lower hemisphere. It was a solid substance, bright as gold and extending millions of leagues.³² At the end of this he saw the waters eight times in extent as that of the land. These, in the form of crusts of the oceans, formed the two hemispheres of the earth.³³ After passing over this, he reached the region of light, blazing with the sun and stars emitting flames of fire issuing from the vault of heaven.³⁴ Having passed that region of fire, without being burnt or hurt in his spiritual body, he was led by his mind to another region where he thought and felt himself carried by the winds to his former home.³⁵ As he was carried in this manner, he felt himself to be of a spiritual body. For what other than the mind can lead anybody from one place to another?

³⁶ With this conviction of himself, the patient king passed over the region of the winds. At last he got to the sphere of vacuum, which was ten times in extent to that of the former.³⁷ Passing over this, he found the infinite space of the emptiness of Brahman in which all is situated and from where all had proceeded, which is nothing and yet something, of which nothing can be known or attributed.

³⁸ Moving along this empty air, he was carried far and farther onward in his aerial journey until he thought in his mind that he could see all the other spheres of earth and water and fire and air which he had passed over before.³⁹ There were formations of worlds and their repeated creations and dissolutions to be seen. There were retinues of gods and men, and those of hills and all other things

going on in endless succession.⁴⁰ There was a recurrence of the primary elements, and their assumption of substantial forms, and repetitions of creations and reappearances of worlds and the sides of the compass.

⁴¹ Thus the king is still going on in his journey through the infinite void of Brahman, finding successions of creations and their dissolutions to no end.⁴² He has no cessation from his wanderings owing to his conviction and habit of thinking the reality of the world. Nor does he get rid of his ignorance, which also is from God.

⁴³ Whatever you see in your waking or in your dream is the discernment of the Divine Soul which ever displays these sights in itself.⁴⁴ This world is an apparition of our ignorance, like the phantoms that are seen in deep darkness. But know that the transparent intellect of God represents it so and will ever do the same.⁴⁵ Both the dark sight of the gross world and the clear light of its transparency proceed from the same mind of God. So it is impossible to conceive whether it is the one or the other, or both alike.⁴⁶ Hence, O Rama, this king, uncertain of the transparency of the Divine Spirit, has been wandering forever in the dark maze of his preconceived worlds, just like a stray deer wanders in the tangled wilderness.

Chapter 129 — Identical Self Develops Different Desires from Different Circumstances; Ignorance Is Identical with Brahma; Vipaschit the Stag Is Brought to the Court

Rama asks, ¹ “You said two Vipaschits were liberated by the grace of Vishnu. What became of the other two brothers who have been wandering all about?”

² *Vasishta replied:*—

Of these two, one learned by long habit to subdue his desires. He wandered in many islands and at last settled in one of them and obtained his rest in God. ³ Having renounced the sight of the outer garments of the world, he saw millions of globes rolling in emptiness and is still enrapt with the view. ⁴ The second one was released from his personal wanderings by remaining close to the moon. There his constant association with the deer-like mark on the face of that luminary changed his form to that of that animal, which he still retains in his situation upon a hill.

⁵ Rama asked, “How is it sage, that the four bodies of Vipaschit, having only one mind and the same desire and aim in view, could differ so much in their acts that brought upon them such different results of good and evil?”

⁶ *Vasishta replied:*—

The habitual desire of a person becomes varied in course of time according to the various states of his life and in different places. It becomes weaker and stronger in degree, though it is never changed in its nature. ⁷ According to circumstances, the same desire of a person is modified in different forms. Whatever is greater in intensity takes precedence over others and comes to pass in a short time.

⁸ In this divided state of their desires, the four bodies of the king arrived at four different states in their modes in life. Hence two of them were immersed in their ignorance, the third became a deer, and the last gained his liberation at last. ⁹ The two former have not yet arrived at the end of their ignorance. They have been groveling in darkness by their blindness to the light of truth which can hardly dispel the darkness that is continually spread by ignorance. ¹⁰ Only the light of knowledge is able to drive the gloom of ignorance. Then ignorance, however deep rooted, flies far away like the darkness of night is dispersed before the light of day.

¹¹ Now listen to what this Vipaschit did in the other world, where he was cast across the far distant ocean of sweet waters onto a coast of gold which he mistook for this habitable earth. ¹² Beyond this he saw a globe in the emptiness of Brahma, which was how he thought of the emptiness of the great Brahman. ¹³ Here he was led by his excellent virtues to the company of the learned. From them he learned to see this visible world in its true light and he was merged into the state of Brahman. ¹⁴ As soon as he arrived at that state, his ignorance and his body disappeared from him, like a sea in a mirage vanishes before closer view, and like falsehood flies before truth.

¹⁵ Thus I have described all about Vipaschit and how ignorance is as eternal as Brahman because it is contemporary with him. ¹⁶ Millions of years have passed in eternity, but the mind by its nature is quite unmindful of their course and number. ¹⁷ As the knowledge of horses is said to be false when known, so the knowledge of the world is a falsity. But being truly known, it is found to be Brahman himself.

¹⁸ There is no difference between ignorance and the essence of Brahman because one exists in the other. Brahman is the perfect Consciousness that shows the difference in the modes of reasoning

intellect.

¹⁹ Another Vipaschit, who was wandering all around the universal sphere, could not come to the end of his ignorance in his course of several yuga ages.

²⁰ Rama said, "How was it, sage, that he could not reach the utmost limit of the universe, nor could he pierce its vault to get out? Please explain this fully to me, which you have not yet done."

²¹ Vasishta replied:—

When Brahma was first born in the cosmic egg, he used both hands to break the shell into upper and lower halves.²² The upper hemisphere rose too far upwards from the lower half. So the lower hemisphere descended as far below the upper part.²³ Then there are the circles of earth, water and air which are supported upon these hemispheres, while these two serve as bases for the support of other spheres.²⁴ In between is the empty sky, infinite in its extent, which appears to us as the blue vault of heaven.²⁵ It is not bounded by the circles of earth and water, but is a pure void, the basis of all other spheres that rest upon it.

²⁶ He passed by that way into the infinite void, just like the circles of the starry frame revolve in the same void. He went on in order to examine the extent of ignorance and to obtain his release from it, as he was taught to find.²⁷ But this ignorance exists and grows with Brahma, so it is as infinite as God himself. She (*avidya*, ignorance) is as unknowable as God and no one has been able to know her nature.²⁸ Vipaschit, continuing to rise far away and higher in the heavens, found the nature of ignorance to have the same boundary as the extent of the worlds, through which he traversed on high.

²⁹ Now see how one of these persons was liberated and another grazed about as a deer. See the other two fast bound to their former impressions, forced to wander about the worlds which they took for realities in their ignorance.

³⁰ Rama said, "Tell me kindly, O sage, where and how far and in what sorts of worlds have these Vipaschitas been still roaming, with getting their final release?³¹ How far away are those worlds in which they are born over and over again? All this is very strange to me, as you have described it."

³² Vasishta said:—

The worlds where the two Vipaschitas have been carried and where they have been wandering are quite invisible to me, in spite of all my efforts to look into them.³³ The place where the third Vipaschit is wandering as a deer is also a land known to no one on earth.

³⁴ Rama said, "Sage, you said that the Vipaschit who is transformed into a deer has been wandering on a hill. Therefore tell me, O most intelligent seer, where is that hill and how far away is it?"

³⁵ Vasishta answered:—

Hear me tell you how far away that world is from here, the world where Vipaschit entered after passing through the vast emptiness of the Supreme Spirit and where he has been wandering in his form of a deer.³⁶ It is somewhere between these three worlds. All these worlds are spread at great distances from one another in the vast emptiness of the Divine Spirit.

³⁷ Rama asked, "How is it consistent, sage, to say with good reason that Vipaschit was born and died

in this world, and is still wandering as a deer in it?"

³⁸ Vasishta replied:—

As the whole must well know all the parts of which it is composed, so I know everything everywhere that is situated in the all comprehensive soul of God in which I have assimilated myself.³⁹ I know the absent and all that is destroyed, as well as all forms of things, whether small or great. They are all interwoven together and exhibited before me as if they were produced of this earth of ours.⁴⁰ Hence all that I have told you, O Rama, regarding the adventures of the king was the work of his imagination and took place in some part of this world where he lived and died.

⁴¹ The Vipaschitas all wandered about other worlds in empty air. All this was the work of their imagination, which is unrestricted in its flight through boundless space.⁴² One of these has happened to be born here as a deer. It is in a mountain valley somewhere upon this earth.⁴³ The place where the king is reborn in the form of a deer, after all his wanderings in other spheres were over, is in this earth globe. There he is placed on a certain spot by an act of unaccountable chance.

⁴⁴ Rama said, "If it is so, then tell me sage, in what region of this earth, on what hill and in what forest of it, is this deer placed at present?⁴⁵ What is he doing now, and how does he nibble the grass in the green plain? How long will it be before that experienced seer may come to remember his former state and past actions?"

⁴⁶ Vasishta replied:—

It is the same deer which was presented to you by the ruler of the province of Trigarta. It is kept close in your pleasure garden for your amusement.

⁴⁷ Valmiki said:—

Rama was quite surprised, as were all the people sitting at the court, to hear the sage say this. Rama ordered his attendants to bring the deer immediately.⁴⁸ The brute deer was brought and placed before the open court, when the court-people found it plump and fat, quite tame and gentle.⁴⁹ Its body was spotted all over as with the stars of heaven. Its eyes were as outstretched as the petals of lotus flowers and by far more handsome than the eyes of beautiful ladies.⁵⁰ It looked with timid glances at the blue sapphires which decorated the court. It ran to bite them with its open month, thinking them to be blades of grass.⁵¹ Then, as it fearfully gazed at the assembly with its neck raised, ears alert and eyes staring, people raised their heads, lifted up ears, and looked upon the animal with open eyes for fear the deer would leap and jump upon them.

⁵² The king with his ministers and courtiers were all amazed at the sight of the animal and thought that what they saw before them was all magic.⁵³ The wondering eyes of the assembled people and the shining gems adorning the bodies of princes made the court hall appear as if it were studded with full blown lotuses all around.

Chapter 130 — Vipaschit the Stag Enters Fire, Is Restored and Becomes Bhasa

¹ Valmiki related:—

Rama then asked Vasishta to tell him how Vipaschit could be released from his animal shape and restored to his human form.

² Vasishta said:—

The way by which a person has had his rise is the only way that leads to his success, welfare and happiness in life.

³ Vipaschit had been a worshipper of the fire god Agni. So only through his return to the refuge of that god that his deer form may be altered and the king restored to its former figure of bright and unalloyed gold. ⁴ I will try the means of his restoration in your presence, so you all may witness it with your open eyes. This deer will of itself enter into the fire before your sight.

⁵ Valmiki related:—

Saying so, the benevolent sage touched his water pot with his hand and muttered his mantras upon it in the proper form. ⁶ He thought intently upon the god of fire with his flashing flames all around him. Immediately upon the sage's reflection on Agni, a blaze of fire manifested in the royal hall. ⁷ This was a pure flame, burning with a rumbling noise but without any coal or fuel, or any smoke or soot. ⁸ Brighter and brighter it burned in its beauty, shining like a dome of gold and shedding a golden light all about. The light was like a blushing kinsuka blossom, glowing like the evening clouds of heaven.

⁹ Seeing the spreading flame, the assembled host moved backward but the deer, on seeing its adored deity manifest, became flushed with the passion of its former faith. ¹⁰ As it looked on the fire with its ardent desire, he got rid of his sins as if they were burnt away by its flames. Then advancing slowly towards the fire, the deer suddenly jumped into the blaze like a lion springing upon his prey.

¹¹ At this moment, the muni moved his mind to meditation and found the king's sins had been burnt away from his soul. Then he addressed the fire god, saying, ¹² "O lord who carries the sacrificial butter to the celestials, recall the past acts of the king in your mind and his faith in you. Kindly restore him to his former handsome figure again." ¹³ As the sage was praying in this manner, he saw the deer released from the flame and running towards the assembled princes with the speed of an arrow flying towards its mark. ¹⁴ Having been in the burning fire, he appeared like a flaming body. The assembly saw him in this form as bright as the appearance of an evening cloud. ¹⁵ Thus the deer was changed to the form of a man before the sight of the assembled princes, just as a spot of cloud is seen to assume another figure in the face of the bright vault of heaven. ¹⁶ Within the flames, he assumed a figure like pure gold, then after he emerged, he took the form of a man of handsome shape and appearance.

¹⁷ He appeared like the orb of the sun, like the disc of the moon in the sky, like the god Varuna in the waters of the deep, or like the evening cloud or rising moon. ¹⁸ There was the reflection of the sun in the pupils of his eyes, just as the sun reflects on the surface of water or on a mirror or bright gem. The fire of his faith blazed serenely deep within his eyes. ¹⁹ Shortly, this blaze of light disappeared from the court, just as the light of a lamp is blown away by the breath of wind, or as the colors of evening clouds vanish under the shade of night.

²⁰ Then the man stood in the hall as plainly as the idol of a deity is seen to stand in a ruined temple, or as an actor is seen behind the scene without his dress. ²¹ He stood silently holding prayer beads in his hand, his sacred thread hanging down a chain of gold about his neck. He wore a robe of pure white bleached by the fiery heat. He appeared like the bright moon rising before the assembly.

²² On seeing the brightness of his body and clothing, the courtiers all and everyone cried out saying, "O, such radiance (*bha*)!" Because he shines (*bhasa*) as brightly as daylight, everyone called him "Bhasa". ²³ The courtiers also confirmed it by saying, "Because he is as bright as brightness itself, let him be called Bhasa," which name he bore ever afterwards.

²⁴ He sat in the hall in his meditative mood and remembered all the incidents of his past life and former body. ²⁵ The assembly was struck with wonder and remained quite motionless and speechless, absorbed in thought as Bhasa reflected upon the adventures of his past life. ²⁶ Then after a short while, the king rose from his reflections. He advanced towards the assembly under his newly obtained title of Bhasa, the light. ²⁷ He first advanced towards Vasishtha and saluted him with delight, saying, "I bow down, sage, before you, as the giver of my life and light of knowledge of myself."

²⁸ Vasishtha raised him by touching his head with his hand, saying "May your protracted ignorance, O prince, disappear this day and forever after.

²⁹ "Victory to Rama," said Bhasa, and bowed down to King Dasharata who, rising a little from his seat, approached him smilingly.

³⁰ Dasharata said, "You are welcome, O prince! Be seated on this seat. You have wandered through many difficulties of the world. Now take your rest here."

³¹ Valmiki related:—

Thus approached by the king, the prince now bearing the name of Bhasa, after making his salutations to the venerable sages Vishwamitra and others, took his seat on a cushion. ³² Dasharata exclaimed, "O the pains that Vipaschit has so long undergone under the bondage of Ignorance, like a wild elephant tied by his feet in fetters by ruthless huntsmen. ³³ O to what miseries is man exposed owing to his lack of precise understanding, and by his false knowledge of the reality of these worlds seen revolving in empty shape. ³⁴ How wonderful are these worlds, so extensive and remote, through which Vipaschit has traversed, and how incredible are the pains through which he has passed for so long. ³⁵ O how wonderful is the nature and glory of the empty Intellect of the empty spirit of the Supreme that exhibits the blank thoughts of his all comprehensive mind in empty air as substantial ones.

Chapter 131 — Vishwamitra Lectures on Endless Phenomena; — Bhasa Describes His Lives Searching for the End of Ignorance

¹ Dasharata said, "I understand that Vipaschit has acted unwisely taking so much pains in his wanderings for a knowledge of the spheres. It is all in vain to inquire into unrealities and useless matters, and it was his ignorance alone that led him to the search."

² Valmiki related:—

At this moment, the sage Vishwamitra, who was sitting beside the king, opened his mouth and said on the subject now under consideration.

³ Vishwamitra said:—

O king, there are many such men who, without a good understanding and for want of best knowledge, are apt to think it possible for them to know all things.⁴ Hence the sons of King Vatadhana have been wandering all over this earth for very many years in search of true knowledge without ever being able to arrive at it.⁵ They have ceaselessly struggled to explore the limits of this earth, like a river runs in its constant course forever.

⁶ This great world is situated like a globe in the air, like a child's imaginary tree growing in the sky, or like a toy ball of playful Brahma rolling about in empty air.⁷ As ants crawl around a sugar ball without falling off, so do all living bodies move about on their support of this earth sustained in empty air.⁸ Those who are situated on the lower surface of this globe are moving about as erectly as those who are on its upper side.⁹ The sun, moon, and planets, together with the starry frame and the heavenly stream are attracted to turn round it constantly, without ever coming in contact with it.¹⁰ The sky encircles and surrounds it on all sides, though the sky appears to be above our heads and the earth below our feet.¹¹ Living beings below the earth are moving downward or flying upward, just like the beasts and birds on the upper side. The region to which they fly is called the upper sky.

¹² On some part of this earth there is a warrior race named Vatadhanas. In days of the past, three princes were born to this royal family.¹³ Like Vipaschit, they were firmly intent to know the limits of the visible world. They set out in their journey to explore with a firm and unfailing resolution.¹⁴ They passed from land to water, and from waters to other lands again. Thus they passed many lives and ages in their repeated inquiries with new bodies in repeated births.¹⁵ Wandering forever all about the earth, like ants moving on a sweet cake, they found no end to it. They never reached any spot beyond the earth even in their thought of another one.¹⁶ They are still turning around the world in the air, like busy ants on sugar. They are still in the same search without being tired of it.¹⁷ Because whoever stands on any part of the globe thinks it to be the uppermost, and all other places to be lower. So people living below, on the opposite point on the globe, think they are uppermost.¹⁸ Then the three princes said to themselves that if they could not find the end of the earth after all their struggle, they must give up the pursuit and go elsewhere.

¹⁹ So it is with this world, O king, which is no more than display of the thoughts of Brahma. It is a work of creation only in the mind, a delusion like that of an extended dream.²⁰ The mind is the Supreme Brahman and Brahma is same as his mind. They both are in the form of consciousness and there is no difference between them, as there is none between open air and the sky.²¹ Consciousness

operates in itself, like waters running in whirlpools. As the whirling currents and bubbles are nothing other than the water, so the operations of the mind are modifications of the mind itself.

²² The sky, which is only emptiness and was a void in the beginning, shows itself in the form of the world which is neither created nor ever destroyed. ²³ Whatever the intellect suggests, the mind obeys and is inclined in the same way, and continues to view the outer world as it has always existed in thought. ²⁴ The visible world has the same form and is equally imperishable as the intellectual. Eternal God manifests himself in this manner, which is otherwise nothing of itself.

²⁵ There is an atom of Divine Consciousness, an infinity of minute atoms in the shape of ideas, just as there are innumerable stones in the body of a rock. They reside in the spirit of God and are as translucent as the Divine Spirit. ²⁶ They abide in their own natures in the unexpanded spirit of God. But they do not live independently of themselves as there is nothing separate from the Supreme Spirit.

²⁷ Therefore this world is said to be the manifestation of the Divine Mind. The learned arrive at this conclusion through logical consideration of the antecedent and subsequent arguments. ²⁸ Therefore, it is strange that the human soul should sorrow for its degradation and think itself a different thing when it is inseparable from the one Universal Soul.

²⁹ Now let the so called prince Bhasa, otherwise known by his former name as the mighty monarch Vipaschit, tell us what other strange things he remembers to have seen during his wanderings through worlds.

³⁰ Bhasa replied:—

I have seen many sights, wandered without tiring through many regions, and remember having felt various changes in my life. ³¹ Hear O king, how much I have known and felt in my course through remote regions in the spacious sky on high. Know the joys and grief that I have enjoyed and suffered in my mind for such a long time during my reincarnations in different bodies and distant worlds. ³² By favor of the god of fire and by the good and bad turns of fate, I have seen a great many scenes in my various forms and lives, like the revolving waters in a whirlpool, with a calm and constant and resolute mind. ³³ Moved by past memories and misled by a mistaken view of phenomena in the different forms and changes of my body, I was compelled by my firm zeal to inquire into all worldly things.

³⁴ I was a tree for a thousand years, having my senses undeveloped and feeling the hardships of all climates and seasons within myself. I had no mind or mental action except those of drawing moisture from the earth through my roots and expanding myself into fruits and flowers. ³⁵ I was a mountain deer for a hundred years, with skin of golden color and ears as flat as leaves of trees. I fed on blades of grass, was charmed by all kinds of music and, being the weakest of all animals of the forest, I could do no injury to anyone. ³⁶ I lived for fifty years as a Sarabha animal with eight legs. I dwelt in the caves of Krancha Mountain and brought on my death by falling down from a crag while attempting to fight with rain clouds on high.

³⁷ Once I was born as a vidyadhara and lived on the tableland of Malaya Mountains in the happy forests of mandara trees, smelling the sweet scent of sandalwood and kadamba flowers. There I breathed sweet air perfumed by kalaguru trees and enjoyed the company of celestial vidyadhari

ladies.³⁸ I was born the son of the swan of Brahma and tasted the honey of golden lotuses for more than a hundred years, playing on the banks of the heavenly stream of Mandakini and on the celestial Mount of Meru.³⁹ For a hundred years I remained by the side of Milky Ocean, feeling the cooling breezes blowing the moisture of its waves and the fragrance of forests, listening to the songs of the songsters of spring which vanish the infirmities and sorrows of life.

⁴⁰ Once I was born as a jackal in the woods of Kalenjara Mountains and wandered about blossoming gunja and karanja forests. There I was trodden upon by an elephant and was about to die when I saw a lion kill that elephant in his turn.⁴¹ At one time I was transformed into the form of a celestial nymph and cursed by a spiritual master to live alone in some other world. There I lived for the period of half a yuga upon Sahya Mountain, smiling with the blooming blossoms of santanaka trees.

⁴² Next I lived as a valonika bird of raven color in a nest among Indian oleander plants growing in marshy ground at the foot of a mountain. There I passed my solitary life of a hundred years with a fearless heart and ceaseless scrambling on dreary rocks.⁴³ Afterwards I saw a level plain somewhere, with shady bowers of forest creepers under the shade of sandalwood trees. I saw some females playing and swinging like fruit on the branches of trees, then seized and away by passing spiritual adepts.⁴⁴ At another time, I passed my days as a hermit under the shade of kadamba trees at the foot of a mountain. There I lived meditating upon the single object of my devotion and thus foolishly met my end with the pain of not meeting my object.

⁴⁵ I saw this universe full of beings everywhere, like fish in the ocean. The air, sky and light are all inhabited by beings, as well as this earth of ours.⁴⁵ There is another wonder which fills this universe, just as the shadow of the sky fills the ocean on all sides. It pervades the air, water, sky and light, as well in all forms of things on earth.⁴⁶ I also saw another wonder in a woman who contains the three worlds in her ample womb. She is pictured with the forms of hills and all things, resembling their reflections in a mirror.⁴⁷ I asked her, "O you big bodied and big bellied one! Tell me who you are."

To which she replied, "Sage, know me to be the pure and clear Consciousness that contains all these worlds within herself."⁴⁸ She added, "O sage, as you see me so wonderful in form, so must you know that all things in the world are of the same kind. But people who see things in their ordinary forms find them otherwise. When they look at things in their spiritual light, the gross forms vanish into nothing."

⁴⁹ Even without the directions of the Vedas and scriptures, innumerable beings on earth continually hear a warning voice arising from some part of their bodies bidding them what is right or wrong for them to do.⁵⁰ Nature reigns over all elements like the eternal cosmic vibration. The elements appear immovable at sight but, in fact, they possess inherent mobile forces. No one can assign any cause over them except delusion.

⁵¹ Once I went to a place where there were no females to be found, nor had those people any desire for them. Yet many among the living there were quickly passing away, and many others were newly coming to existence.⁵² I have seen the wonder of some portentous clouds in the sky charging against each other with a jarring noise, pouring down their rain with fragments of things on all sides which were picked up by men and used as weapons.⁵³ I saw another wonder somewhere that these earthly cities and buildings were passing in their aerial course amidst a mist of thick darkness. Then I saw

them vanish into the air, returning to be your homes here below.⁵⁴ Another wonder I saw was that all these men and gods and reptiles, having left the differences of their species, came to be of one kind with all other beings. Because all things first proceed from vacuum, and to this they return at last.

⁵⁵ I also saw a place full of light that shone brightly without light from sun, moon or stars. I remember well that brilliant glory, before which there was neither darkness nor day and night and nothing else in existence.⁵⁶ I also saw a place never seen before which was devoid of gods or demons, men or animals of all kinds. It was without plant life with no home of any kind of being. It was a world where the present and future and all worlds blend into eternity.

⁵⁷ In short, there is no place which I have not seen nor any side where I have not been. There is no act or event which I have not known. In a word, there is nothing unknown to me that is unknown to the knower of all.⁵⁸ I remember hearing the jingling sound of Indra's armlets which resembled the noise of the rattling clouds on high, or like the jangling jar of the jewels that glisten on the peaks of Mandara Mountain in fear of churning the Milky Ocean.

Chapter 132 — Bhasa (King Vipaschit) Describes His Reincarnations and Experiences

¹ Bhasa (King Vipaschit) continued:—

Once I lived as a siddha spiritual adept at the foot of Mandara Mountain under shady branches of mandara trees. I had been sleeping in the sweet embrace of an apsara named Mandara when the current of a river carried us both away like straw down in its course.² I held up my partner floating on the water and asked her to tell me how could it happen to be so. Then she with her quivering eyes answered me saying,³ “This mountain is sacred to the moon. Full moon causes flash floods to rush out as rapidly as ladies run to meet their consorts at moonrise.⁴ I was enraptured by your company, so I forgot to tell you about this.” Saying this, she lifted me up and fled with me into the air, like a female bird flies into the sky with her young.

⁵ I was taken to the top of that mountain where I remained seven years with my dried and unsoiled body, like a bee remains unsullied on the petal of a lotus flower growing in the bed of the Ganges River.⁶ Then I saw some other worlds beyond the starry circle which were encircled by another like the coatings of a plantain tree. They were bright by their own light and peopled by luminous bodies.⁷ There were no distinctions or directions or divisions. There were no scriptures or rules of conduct or Vedas for religious guidance. There was no difference between gods and demigods, but the whole was bright with its own light.

⁸ Next I was born as a vidyadhara and lived for fourteen years as an ascetic under the name of Amarasona. I lived in a grove of kadamba trees at the foot of a cloud-capped mountain frequented by aerial cars of the celestials for their pleasure, play and diversion.⁹ Then I was carried with the speed of wind far away to the ethereal regions on high. From there I saw numberless elephants, horses, lions, deer, and woods and forests filled with beasts and birds, all moving along in the form of clouds below.¹⁰ In this way, by favor of the god of fire and the passion of my desire to see the extensive range of the delusion of ignorance, I rose from earth to heaven with the force of the garuda bird of heaven and passed through infinite space spread all around.

¹¹ Once I felt myself falling away and far from the solar world. It seemed to be an ethereal ocean inhabited by stars, amidst which I was situated as one with the consciousness of my fall and course of time.¹² With only the consciousness of my fall from the sky, I felt in myself a sense of falling fast asleep from fatigue. Then in that state of my body’s sound sleep, I thought I saw the sensible world in my mind, as if it were in my waking state.¹³ I saw the same world within the horizon and the same Mandara Mountain of the gods. Meanwhile I had been fluttering in the midst of its abyss, like a bird sitting on a slender twig is shaken and tossed about by blowing wind.¹⁴ With my eyes I saw to the utmost extent of the sensible world. Again and again I was led to the sight of all that is visible to enjoy only that which can be sensed.

¹⁵ Thus I passed a long series of years, seeing visible and invisible objects and passing through passable and impassable paths.¹⁶ Nowhere could I find any limit to this ignorance. I found only phenomena. It is a fallacy that has taken the possession of our minds, just as the apparition of a demon takes a deep root in the heart of a child.¹⁷ These and those phenomena are not realities. This is the firm conviction of all in their right reasoning. Yet the false sight of this and that as a reality is never removed from anybody.¹⁸ We find our pleasures and pains occurring to us every moment with the

changes of time and place. Their course is as constant as the currents of rivers ceaselessly succeeding one another.

¹⁹ I remember having seen a world with all kinds of moving and unmoving beings. In the middle I saw a green mountain top rustling with the breeze and shining of itself without the light of the luminaries.

²⁰ This mountain peak is delightful to solitary recluses. It is quite free, alone and unlimited, beyond all fear of change or decay. In this bright world, I have never seen a glory comparable to this divine brightness.

Chapter 133 — Bhasa's Story of the Wonderful Carcass

¹ Vipaschit (Bhasa) said:—

In some part of some other world, I saw another great wonder which I will now describe to you. It was a horrible sight that attends sin, and which I had to see by my blind attachment to ignorance.

² Somewhere in the vast emptiness there is a wonderfully bright world which is quite impassable for you. It is situated in an emptiness like this of ours, but so different, just as a city in dream differs from one in waking life. ³ I wandered in that world searching everywhere for the object that I had in my heart. I saw a huge and unmoving shadow, like that of a body of locusts spread over the earth. ⁴ I was astonished at what I saw, and looked all around to see what it was. I found the mountainous form of a man falling fast from the sky, hurling down upon the earth like a whirlpool. ⁵ I thought, “Who can be this person? Is it Lord Viraj with his mountainous body, or a mountain falling from the clouds? It fills the sky and the whole space of heaven, hiding the light of the day under its all developing shadow.”

⁶ As I was watching, thinking about what this portent might mean, I saw the bulky body of the sun falling down from heaven. It seemed to be hurled down by the hurricane of desolation, hitting with a hideous crash against the backbone of the cosmic egg of Brahma. ⁷ As this hideous and enormous body fell down on the earth, it filled its whole surface covering the face of the seven continents and oceans. ⁸ With that impact, I feared for my imminent destruction, together with that of entire earth. I was determined to enter into the ever burning fire by my side. ⁹ Then the fire god Agni, the source of Vedas and my adored divinity in a hundred repeated births, manifested before me in his cooling, moonlike form and said, “Fear not. No evil will betide you.”

¹⁰ Then I addressed the fire god, saying, “Be victorious, O my lord and adored one in repeated births. Save me from this untimely desolation which is now impending on all.”

¹¹ Thus invoked by me, the fire god replied with the same words, “Fear you not, but rise, O sinless one, and follow me to my region of the highest heaven.” ¹² Saying so, he made me sit on the back of his parrot vehicle. He flew with me up to heaven by burning through a part of the falling body.

¹³ Getting to the upper sky, I found the huge, falling body as if it were made of wood. It was this that had created so much terror below, like that attending a terrible omen.

¹⁴ Then, as the huge body fell down with full force, the earth shook beneath its weight, with all trembling waters and tottering mountains and shaking woods and forests. Mountains burst forth in waterfalls which flooded the land creating horrible holes and chasms. ¹⁵ The earth groaned from inside and the sky roared on all its four sides. The heavens resounded to the roar and mountains growled with the fearful howling of all beings, like at the approach of their last doom. ¹⁶ The earth groaned under the burden and all the quarters trembled with fear. The emptiness was filled with the echo of cries rising from the earth and garuda birds were in flight shaken by fear. ¹⁷ There arose a harsh and hideous uproar on high from the loud shattering of mountains below. It was like the crashing and clattering of dark and dense flood clouds when they are shattered and scattered by the blasts of howling winds during the world deluge.

¹⁸ The earth trembled and roared at the impact of the fall of the hideous carcass and the sky roared to the sound from its hundred mouths. Mountains burst on all sides, their falling fragments hurried

headlong and were buried under the ground.¹⁹ Its fall was like the breaking down of a mountain peak, smashing the tops of lower hills, rending and splitting the ground, and leveling all things on earth with the dust.²⁰ It disturbed the waters of the deep and hurled hills down to the ground. It crushed all living beings and gave ample range to the play of the agents of destruction.²¹ The sun fell upon the earth and hid the face of the continents under him. There was the crushing of mountains and a breaking down of towering cities.

²² The celestials saw all these from above this earth which forms one half of the cosmic egg, turning to a vacuum form.²³ As I was looking at that mountainous body of flesh, I observed that the ample space of all the seven continents of the earth was not enough to contain this single body.²⁴ Seeing this, I applied to the good grace of the god of fire and asked him, "Lord, what is this and what does it mean?²⁵ Why did the sun down from heaven with that corpse? How is it that the entire earth and all its oceans do not have sufficient room to contain it?"

²⁶ The god of fire replied, "Hold your patience, my son, for a while until this portentous event passes away. Then I will explain this marvelous matter fully to you."²⁷ As soon as the god had said these words, an assembly of celestials gathered all around us. It consisted of all kinds of beings that are born and move about in the aerial regions.²⁸ There were siddhas, sadhyas, apsaras, daityas, gandharvas and kinnaras among them, together with munis, rishis, yakshas, Pitris, Matris and gods with them.²⁹ All these celestials bowed down their heads in veneration. All joined with their prostrate bodies to praise the dark goddess of night, who is the refuge and resort of all.

³⁰ The celestials said, "May that goddess who is stainless and incomparable protect us, her supplicants. She has the grey braids of Brahma's hairs tied at the top of her sword and the heads of the slain Daitya demons strung to the neck-chain hanging on her breast. She wears the feathers of garuda on her head. After devouring the world, in the end she swallows all beings and worlds. May that goddess be compassionate and protect us."

Chapter 134 — The Story of the Carcass Continued: Goddess and Demons Devour It; Celestials Lament the Loss

¹ Vipaschit (Bhasa) continued:—

All this time I was looking at the carcass that had fallen from above and covered the whole surface of the earth under it. ² I distinguished that part of the body that was the belly. Inside it the whole earth, with all its seven continents and immeasurable mountain, was hidden. ³ Then the god of fire told me that there was no limit to its arms or thighs or the extent of its head, and that it had fallen from beyond Lokaloka Mountain, which is inaccessible to mankind.

⁴ The goddess who is so much praised by the celestials is the manifestation of emptiness. She appeared in the sky with a dry and lean body. ⁵ She is represented as accompanied by vetalas and dakini spirits. She was followed by demons and demons that walk in her retinue and shine like stars and meteors in the night sky. ⁶ Her long and muscular arms stretched to the skies like the tall pines of the forest. Her eyeballs flashed with living fire and scattered sunbeams all around. ⁷ She brandished weapons in her hands that jangled in the sky. Her missiles darted like flocks of birds flying from their aerial nests. ⁸ Her flaming body and flashing eyes and limbs glistened with the glare of dry reeds set on fire, or like the sparkling of a flight of arrows midway in the air. ⁹ Her glittering teeth shed the light of the beaming moon and brightened the faces of the four quarters of heaven with a milk white splendor. Her tall slender stature reached and touched the sky.

¹⁰ She stood without any support, like clouds stretched over the evening sky. She was mounted on a dead body as if she were resting on the blessed seat of Brahma. ¹¹ She shone in her brilliant form like the crimson clouds of evening. She added the burning blaze of an undersea fire to the ocean of the ethereal expanse. ¹² She flaunted her decorations of human skeleton and bones. She was swinging her weapons of the club and others, darting her arrows all around like a mountain scatters its flowers all about. ¹³ She flew into the air with her necklace of human skulls sounding with a harsh clattering noise that resembled the rattling of stones falling down a mountain with the rains.

¹⁴ The gods then prayed to her saying, “O Mother Goddess, we make an offering of this carcass to you. Please join with your adherents, take this corpse for your food and make an end of it.” ¹⁵ Upon this prayer of the gods, the goddess with her inhaling breath began to draw the blood and core of the carcass into her bowels and intestines. ¹⁶ As the goddess was absorbing the dead blood by breathing it in, the red fluid rushed into her wide open month, like the entrance of the evening clouds into the cavity of the western mountain. ¹⁷ The ethereal goddess drank the blood drawn in by her breath. Her lean skeleton-like frame grew fat from being well fed. She stood acknowledged in her form of the goddess Chandika.

¹⁸ Being thus filled and fattened by full drinks of the bloody drink, she had the appearance of a blood red cloud with flashing lightning shooting from her eyes. ¹⁹ The pot bellied goddess, giddy with her bloody drink, became loose in her dress. She began to move her ornaments and swing all her weapons in the empty air. ²⁰ She began to dance and toss about in the air which was almost filled by the bulk of her body. Meanwhile the gods kept watching her movements from their seats on distant mountains.

²¹ Immediately upon this, the whole host of her female ghosts and demons, composed of rupikas and others, flew upon the carcass, just as rain clouds alight upon mountains. ²² The mountainous carcass was grabbed by the clutches of kumbhandas and torn to a thousand pieces. Meanwhile, the rupikas pierced its belly and the yakshas gored its back with their elephantine tusks. ²³ But they could not get or break its arms, shoulders or thighs because these members of its body stretched far beyond the limits of the solar system. ²⁴ Therefore they could not be reached by the ghosts who are confined within the limits of this world. They could not go beyond where those parts rotted away of themselves.

²⁵ As the goddess was dancing in the air and her demons were prancing over the carcass, the celestials remained sitting on mountain tops looking on this dreadful scene. ²⁶ They saw disgusting morsels of putrid flesh. The stench of the rotten carcass filled the air and blood red clouds shrouding the scene. It seemed like burning bushes forming the fuel of the furnace. ²⁷ The chopping of fetid flesh raised a sap-sap sound. The breaking of its hard bones sent forth a kat-kat noise. ²⁸ The gathering of demons caused a clashing sound like the impacts of rocks and mountains colliding against one another.

²⁹ The goddess devoured mouthfuls of flesh roasted in the fire that flashed forth from her mouth. Waste material and fragments fell down and covered the earth below with filth. Meanwhile, drops of blood from the draughts she drank reddened the sky with tints of vermillion color. ³⁰ The celestial spectators saw a universal ocean of blood within the visible horizon over the surface of the continents of the earth. ³¹ All the mountains on earth were covered with blood that reflected their redness to the cloud on high. It gave the appearance of a red covering veil spreading over the faces of the female regent deities of all sides of heaven.

³² The sky below blazed with the flash of weapons waving all around in the hands of the goddess. There was no trace of any city or house to be seen on earth. ³³ It was an incredible sight to see. All the moving and unmoving objects of nature were absorbed into the bodies of the ghosts of insatiable death. ³⁴ Dancing demons were waving their arms in air as if they were weaving nets to snare birds. They were lifting and dropping them up and down as if measuring the height and depth of the sky. ³⁵ They stretched out the victim's entrails from the earth below to the circle of the sun above. They appeared to measure the distance with lines and cords.

³⁶ The gods saw the earth endangered by the ominous carcass, its surface converted to an ocean of blood. ³⁷ They felt dismayed and distressed sitting in their seats on Lokaloka Mountain beyond the boundary of the seven continents where the stench of the putrid carcass could not reach their nostrils.

³⁸ Rama asked, "How is it sage, that the stench of the carcass could not reach the gods in their seats on Lokaloka Mountain when the dead body is said to extend even beyond the limits of the mundane system?"

³⁹ Vasishta replied:—

It is true, O Rama, that the dead body stretched beyond the limits of the mundane sphere, but its belly lay within the boundaries of seven continents and its head, thighs and feet extended beyond. ⁴⁰ But from its breasts, two sides and its loins and waist, which lay out of this sphere, one could have a

clear view of the polar circle, as well as that of its mountainous top.⁴¹ Sitting in those parts and places, the gods could well see the peaks of the mountain which were surely bright to sight, and as white as the rainless clouds of the skies.

Presumably, Bhasa continues:—

⁴² Then the Matris (mother goddesses) of heaven danced on the wide spread dead body. Meanwhile hosts of ghosts devoured the flesh as the corpse lay with its face turned downwards.⁴³ Seeing streams of reddish blood running around and the putrid stink of rotten body spreading on all sides, the gods all felt sorrowful at heart and grieved among themselves, exclaiming as follows:

The gods lament:—

⁴⁴ Ah alas! Where has the earth disappeared with all the bodies of waters upon her? Where have all those multitudes of men fled, and where are the mountains swept away from its surface?⁴⁵ Alas for those forests of sandal, mandara and kadamba woods which had so ornamented the earth! What sorrow for the flower gardens and the happy groves of the Malaya Mountains!⁴⁶ Where are those uplands of the lofty and gigantic snowy mountains of the Himalayas which now appear to be reduced by anger to lurid clay with the red hot blood of the bloody ghost of the carcass?⁴⁷ Even the gigantic kalpa trees that grew below the Krauncha Mountains in Krauncha Continent, trees which had spread their branches up to reach the world of Brahmaloka, are now reduced to dirt.

⁴⁸ O you lordly Milky Ocean, where are you now? You had produced the moon and the goddess Lakshmi from your bosom. In the past you yielded the parijata flower and the celestial nectar of the gods.⁴⁹ O you Ocean of Curd, what has become of you who was full with waving forests of billows rising as high as mountains, carrying sweet butter with their foaming froth?⁵⁰ O you sweet Sea of Honey, bordered by mountains studded with coconut trees whose fruit gave sweet liquor for the drink of goddesses, where have you and they fled?

⁵¹ O Krauncha Continent that did abound in kalpa trees inseparably clasped by twining ivy of golden color, say, where have you hidden with your towering Krauncha Mountain?⁵² O Pushkara Continent, where are you now with your clear fountains, always decorated with beds of lotus bushes where the silvery swans of Brahma used to play?⁵³ O, where have your kadamba groves gone, with their outstretched branches on all sides, whose sheltered coverings were frequented by aerial apsara nymphs for their secluded amusements?

⁵⁴ O where has Gomedha Continent gone with its springs of sweet waters, and flowery gardens by its holy places? Where are those valleys beautified by kalpa trees and their golden creepers?⁵⁵ Ah, where is Saka Continent with its forests of heavenly evergreen trees? The very memory of them raises a sense of holiness and sensations of heavenly bliss.⁵⁶ Ah! Where are those tender plants that waved their leaves at the gentle breeze? Where are those blooming flowers that had brightened the scene all around?⁵⁷ The devastation of all these beautiful landscapes fills our minds with pity and grief. We do not know how much more piteous and painful it must be to the majority of mankind.

⁵⁸ Ah, when shall we again see sugar-cane fields by the sea of sugar waters and hardened sugar candy on the dry lands about? When shall we see candy made of molasses and confectionary dolls of sugar?

⁵⁹ When shall we again sit on our golden seats on Mount Meru and see the merry dance of beautiful

apsaras daubed with sandal paste in their palm and tamara tree grooves, blown by the cooling breeze of kadamba and kalpa trees on woodland mountains?

⁶⁰ Ah, we remember the memorable Jambuvati River flowing with the sweet juice of jambu fruit, passing through Jambu Continent to its boundary ocean. ⁶¹ "I often remember," said one, "the giddy song and dance of celestial apsaras in the thick and shady groves of sailendra trees and in the shelter of mountains beside the heavenly stream. It tears my heart like the lotus flower as it opens its petals in the morning."

⁶² Another one said, "Look at this ocean of blood, sparkling like melted gold on the top of the golden mountain of Meru, brightening the beams of the rising and setting sun, or as moonbeams spread over the face of all sides of heaven."

⁶³ Alas, we know not where the earth has gone, with all her encircling oceans about the continents. Nor do we know where that high hill of Himalaya has fled, which was the resort of many rainy clouds and yielded lotus flowers on its summit. ⁶⁴ We do not know where those rivers, forests and groves which had decorated the earth have gone. We have pity for the cities and villages and their people that are now seen no more.

Chapter 135 — The Carcass Disappears and Used to Recreate the World

¹ Vasishta resumed and said:—

After the corpse had been partly devoured by the demons, the gods who had been sitting on Lokaloka Mountain with Indra at their head spoke to one another in the following manner. ² “Lo, the voracious demons have not yet wholly devoured the corpse. They have thrown its fat and flesh into the air to test the paths of vehicles of vidyadharas which, being blown away and scattered about by the winds, appear like huge masses of clouds spreading over the skies. ³ See the demons also throwing away traces of their food and drink over the seven continents and oceans of the earth, making it reappear to view. ⁴ Alas, that the once delightful earth is now polluted by impure carrion and blood and covered under blankets of its forests, just as the sky is overshadowed by clouds. ⁵ The big bones of its bulky body form the mountains of this earth. What is this high Himalaya but the huge backbone of the gigantic skeleton?”

⁶ Vasishta said:—

As the gods were speaking in this manner, the demons were employed constructing the earth anew with the materials of the carcass. After this they flew in the air and kept on dancing and moving wildly there. ⁷ As the ghosts were playing in their giddy dance in the air, the god commanded the liquid portion of the dead body to be collected together in one great basin of the ocean which was the home of whales and sharks. ⁸ As this ocean was made from the pleasure of the gods, it is thereafter called the ocean of wine.

⁹ The demons, having danced in wild uproar in the air, came down to drink full draughts of that dark bloody pool. After that they returned to their aerial home to dance again. ¹⁰ Demonic elemental beings are still accustomed to indulge themselves drinking from that bloody pool and to dance in their airy circles in company with their attendants. ¹¹ Because the earth was smeared with the fat and flesh of the corpse, it is thereafter called Medini or corpus.

¹² At last after the disappearance of the dead body of the demon, the succession of day and night appeared again. Then Prajapati, the lord of creatures, having formed all things anew, restored the earth to its former shape.

Chapter 136 — Story of the Asura Cursed to Become a Gnat: He Becomes a Deer and a Hunter

¹ Bhasa said:—

O lord of the earth (King Dasharata), now hear what I then said to the god of fire as I sat under the wing of his riding parrot, and the god's answer to my question. ² I said, "O Lord of the sacrificial fire and sacrifice, please explain the mystery of the carcass and the accompanying events."

³ The god fire replied:—

Listen, O prince, and I will explain everything that has happened about the carcass, as it is well known in all the three worlds. ⁴ Know there is an eternal formless and transcendent Consciousness in the form of boundless and formless emptiness in which there are countless worlds existing as minute atoms in endless space. ⁵ This intellectual void, which contains all and everything in itself, happened of its own spontaneity to be conscious of its contents in course of time. ⁶ By its innate knowledge, it conceived the abstract idea of fiery particles in itself, just as you find yourself traveling in your dream by thinking of it in your state of waking. ⁷ It was thus that Divine Consciousness saw particles of fire, like in the unconscious state of its dream, and like one sees lotus dust before him in his imagination.

⁸ Then, as this Consciousness reflected on the expansion of these particles of fire, it became assimilated with them. In its thought, it evolved itself into the shape of the powers and organs of sense in those particles of its body. ⁹ Then it saw the sense organs as receptacles of their particular faculties. It saw the world with all its beings appearing before it as in its dream, just as we see a city in our dreaming state.

¹⁰ An asura among those living became haughty and proud of his dignity. He was vain and addicted to vanities. He had no parents or forefathers of his own. ¹¹ Being elated with giddiness, he once entered into the holy hermitage of a sage and destroyed and defiled the sacred asylum in his anger. ¹² The sage pronounced a curse upon him saying, "Because you have demolished my home with your gigantic figure, die immediately and be born as a contemptible gnat under my curse." ¹³ The anger of the sage created a burning fire which immediately reduced the asura to ashes on the spot, just as a wildfire consumes woods, and as an undersea fire dries up a channel.

¹⁴ Then the asura became like air, without form or supporting body. His heart and mind became as unconscious as in a swoon. ¹⁵ His consciousness fled from him and became mixed with the ethereal air. They were hurled up and down by the course of flying winds. ¹⁶ They existed in the form of the intelligent and airy soul, which was to become the living soul that is connected to the body composed of particles of the undivided elements: earth, fire, water, and air (and space). ¹⁷ The quintessence of five elements, being joined with a particle of the intellect, creates a motion of their own accord just like the empty sky produces wind by its breath and of its own nature. ¹⁸ At last, the particle of intellect is awakened in the airy soul, just as a seed, in course of time, germinates when it contacts earth, water and air.

¹⁹ The understanding of the asura became obsessed with the thought of the sage's curse of becoming a gnat. It brooded over thoughts about its body becoming a gnat, and the asura became a gnat, ²⁰ a tiny, short-lived insect born in dirt by daylight and blown away by the breath of wind.

²¹ Rama asked, "If living animals are only creatures of our dream, as you said before, how can they be born from other sources? Please tell me, are they really born or is it otherwise?"

²² Vasishta replied:—

Rama, know that all living beings, from the great Brahma to the small animal and vegetable below, have two kinds of birth. The first is that they are all full of Brahman. The other is that they are the creatures of our errors.

²³ The false but deeply rooted knowledge of the previous existence of the world, and of all creatures besides, leads to the belief of the reincarnation of beings from memories of the past. This is called the false conception of births in the visible world. ²⁴ The other is seeing the image of Brahman in all things appearing to exist in this nonexistent and unreal world. This is called the pantheistic view of the world, and not as a production either by birth or creation. ²⁵ Thus the gnat, produced by its delusive knowledge of the world and continuing in that same blunder, did not allow itself to see the one Brahman in all, but led to different views and attempts, as you shall hear just now.

Presumably, Bhasa continues to relate the story narrated to him by Agni, but it becomes Vasishta's story to Rama about the unnamed sage's story to the asura reincarnated as a hunter :—

²⁶ It passed half a day of its lifetime whistling its faint voice among the humming gnats in the bushes of reeds and long grass. It merrily drank their juice and dews, and played and flew all about. ²⁷ The next day it kept fluttering over a pool of mud and mire, in company with its female partner. ²⁸ Then being tired of its swinging, it rested on a blade of grass some place. There it was trodden upon by the foot of a deer, which killed him on the spot, as if a rock had fallen upon it.

²⁹ Now, because it died looking at the face of a deer, it was reborn in the shape and with the senses of a deer. ³⁰ The deer was grazing in the forest when it was killed by a hunter's arrow. As the deer saw the face of the hunter in its dying moment, it came to be born next in that same form. ³¹ The hunter was roaming in the forest when he happened to enter into the hermitage of a hermit, by whom he was rescued from his wickedness and was awokened to the light of truth.

³² The muni said, "O foolish man! Why did you roam so long, afflicting the innocent deer with your arrows? Why do you not rather protect them and observe the law of universal benevolence in this transitory world? ³³ Life is only a breath of air in the shadow of clouds of disasters, frail as a drop of falling water. Our enjoyments are a series of clouds interspersed by fickle and flickering lightning. Youth is fleeting and its pleasures are like gliding waters. The body is as transient as a moment. Therefore, O my child, attain your happiness while in this world, and look for ways to free yourself from the bondage of the world and attain nirvana at the end."

Chapter 137 — An Unnamed Sage Teaches the Hunter; Travel through Breath into a Student's Body to Investigate the States of Waking, Sleeping, Dreaming and the Fourth State

¹ The hunter said, "Instruct me now, O sage, on the way from misery to my salvation. Teach me the best mode of conduct, which may neither be too difficult nor too easy to practice."

² The sage replied, "Now be submissive to me and throw away your bow and arrows. Bring yourself to the silence and conduct of sages. Be free from trouble and live here."

³ Vasishta related:—

Being thus advised by the sage, the hunter threw away his bow and arrows. Bringing himself to the conduct of sages, he remained still even without asking for food. ⁴ In the course of a few days, his mind turned to the investigations of scriptures, just like a full blown flower enters into the minds of men by means of its far smelling fragrance. ⁵ Once, O Rama, he asked his teacher to tell him how and in what manner outward objects come to be seen within us in our dream.

⁶ The sage said:—

This very question, my good fellow, how these shadows of things beyond us arise like the bodies of clouds in the sphere of our minds during sleep, has been asked of me before. ⁷ I applied myself to meditation and practiced concentration into this matter. I steadily sat with legs folded in lotus posture, intent upon investigating this matter. ⁸ Sitting like this, I stretched my thought all about and afar, then retracted them into the recess of my mind, just as the rising sun stretches out his beams in the morning and afterwards draws them back into its disc in the evening.

⁹ I sent forth my breaths in quest of knowledge, and then called them back to myself. I continued exhaling and inhaling my breaths, as flowers let out and contract their fragrance by turns. ¹⁰ My mind being connected to my breath, it rested in the air before me. Then my mind was with the air inhaled by the student sitting before me. Then it entered into his nostrils. ¹¹ Thus, my breath mixed with his entered into his heart, like a snake is drawn in by the breath of a bear sitting with his wide open mouth at the entrance of his den.

¹² Thus I entered into his heart through the vehicle of my breath. My folly of following my breath into his heart placed me at risk of being stuck there. ¹³ I passed through arteries and aorta, and was led through all the channels and blood-vessels of all the nerves and veins, both large and small and inside and outside the body. ¹⁴ At last I was confined within both sides of the rib cage. I had fleshy masses of liver and spleen presented before me. This was the painful home for my living soul and these were like pots full of meat set before it.

¹⁵ My intestines coiled within me with a hissing sound. They were surrounded by a flood of red hot blood continually flowing and boiling, like the waves of the ocean heated under hot sunshine. ¹⁶ I had fresh supplies of sweet scents constantly carried to my nostrils by the blowing breeze. These tended to infuse life to my body and consciousness to my soul. ¹⁷ But then I was tormented in my dark, dismal prison as in hell by boiling blood, bile and phlegm.

¹⁸ The free and slow passage of the vital airs through the lungs regulates the circulation of blood in all parts of the body. This determines the state of the bodily humors, a derangement of which tends to

create future diseases.¹⁹ The vital airs, pushing against each other, burst and explode within their cavities. Meanwhile, the digestive fire burns like an undersea fire through the tubular stomach, resembling the hollow pipe of a lotus stalk.²⁰ The external air carries particles of things through the outer organs of sense into the body. These then enter into the mind, either in their gross or pure state, like thieves enter a house at night.²¹ Internal winds carry the blood with digested body juices through the intestines to all parts of the body, just as the outer air carries feint and loud sounds of songs in all direction.

²² Then I entered his heart, which is difficult to access. I passed inside with as much jostling as a strong man making his way in a densely crowded group of men.²³ Soon afterwards I found the sight of some shining substance at a distance from the heart, just as a man scorched by sunshine finds the sight of the cooling moon in the gloom of night.²⁴ It was the spiritual light which, like a mirror, reflects all these triple worlds in itself. It throws its rays upon all things. It is the essence of whatever there is in existence, and the receptacle of all living souls.²⁵ The scriptures say that the living soul or life pervades the whole body, just as a flower's fragrance runs through all parts of it. Yet life chiefly resides in the heat of the heart, just as a flower's fragrance dwells in the pistils after the blossom is expanded by the solar heat.

²⁶ Then I crept unperceived into that heat, which was the cell of the living soul. There I was preserved from extinction by the vital airs, like a lamp burning in a lantern is protected from being blown out by its interior airs.²⁷ I entered into that heat-like fragrance passing through air, or like a hot wind pushing cold air, or like water rushing into a pot.²⁸ I passed into the second sheath which is as bright as moonlight and as clear as a spot of white cloud. Thereafter I ascended to the fair sheaths known by the names of the cells of butter, sweets, and milk-white water.

²⁹ Being tired with my difficult passage through these sheaths, I returned and rested in the genial warmth of my heart, where I saw the full view of the world appearing like a dream before my sight.³⁰ It showed the images of the sun and moon and pictures of seas and hills with the shapes of gods and demigods and human forms. It also presented the sights of cities and countries and the face of the sky on all sides around.³¹ It also exhibited oceans with their islands, the course of time and seasons, and all moving and unmoving objects to my view.³² This vision of my dream continued steadfast and quite alike even after I was awake. I remained in the same state after my sleep as I had been when sleeping. What I saw in my waking state was what I had seen in my sleep.

³³ Now listen to me, O hunter, what I did then. I said to myself, "What is this waking dream that I see before me?" As I was thinking in this manner, I had this knowledge of it awakened in me.³⁴ Truly it is the representation of Divine Consciousness. It is the manifestation of God himself. All these objects under different names are only manifestations of the Divine Spirit in various shapes in the world.

³⁵ Wherever there is the substance of Consciousness, impressed upon it is the cosmic image of God in its empty form, which it never forsakes.³⁶ "Ah! now I understand," I thought to myself, "that all these appearances passing under the names of the world are mere representations of Consciousness in the form of a passing dream."³⁷ What we call a dream is a little expansion of the essence of Consciousness. A greater expansion is what we call waking, but both dream and waking are displays of the very same intellectual essence.

³⁸ A dream is said to be dream in the waking state, and not while one continues in his dream state when it appears as waking. So our waking is only a dream, and the two states are waking dream and sleeping dream. ³⁹ Even our death is a dream that continues with our consciousness even after our death. The consciousness that resides in the body does not die even in a hundred deaths of the body. For who has ever heard of the death of anyone's soul? ⁴⁰ This consciousness is a void and empty substance, dwelling in and expanding with the body. It is infinite and undivided, and remains indivisible and indestructible, both with as well as without the destructible body.

⁴¹ The empty particle of consciousness, indestructible by nature, shines forth eternally and without limit by itself. It has the so-called world for its core and sap and is ever attached to itself. ⁴² The emptiness of consciousness contains the minute particles of ideas within its space, each of which represents a part of the great variety of objects that compose its totality. ⁴³ The soul, when separated from consciousness of visible phenomena, rests in its receptacle of heart. It sees various sights in its dream which consciousness unfolds before it.

⁴⁴ Again, the soul is inclined to the outer mind of sights exposed before it by its own intellect. It comes to see visions of external objects which we call the world of phenomena. ⁴⁵ In the same state, the soul sees in itself the sights of all things both within and without it, such as this earth and sky, the winds and waters, the hills and cities, and all things spread on all sides. ⁴⁶ As the sun situated in the heaven above also appears reflected in full blaze in waters below, so the soul is situated both inside and outside in the form of the world.

⁴⁷ Therefore knowing that the intellectual soul sees the internal dream and the external world in itself, whoever abstains from craving anything is surely blessed. ⁴⁸ The soul cannot be cut into parts or burned away. Whoever says otherwise must be betrayed by the delusion of duality, like a child deceived by a deceitful yaksha demon. ⁴⁹ He who knows his inner soul sees the world internally in itself is said to be dreaming in himself. Whoever finds his soul looking outwardly on the external world is said to be waking.

⁵⁰ Having come to this realization regarding dreaming and waking states, I was curious to know about the state of sound sleep. I continued my investigations. ⁵¹ I thought, "What good is the sight of the visible to me? Better remain quiet in myself because thoughtless forgetfulness and consciousness of Self is true detachment or the sleep state (*sushupti*)."

⁵² As we never think of the hair and nails of the body, though they are well known to belong to and to be attached to it, so the mind, in its state of sound sleep when it rests in its self consciousness alone, is quite unconscious of all material and immaterial objects in nature. ⁵³ Tired with the wanderings and sights of my waking and dreaming states, I sought my quiet rest in the state of thoughtless self consciousness. This is the sole aim and end of sound sleep. There is no other meaning of the sleep state (*sushupti*).

⁵⁴ It is possible to have this sound sleep state (*sushupta*) even in the waking state by our determination of thinking of nothing except that of sitting quietly in the abstracted trance state. ⁵⁵ The state of abstraction is called *sushupti* (sound sleep), but when sleep is light (*vikshepa*) it is called sleep or dream (*swapnam*). ⁵⁶ Having settled by mental inactivity into the trance-like *sushupti* state, I

was resolved to seek after the *turiya* or fourth state of supreme bliss. With this resolution, I set out in search of it with my best introspection and diligence.

⁵⁷ I tried my utmost, but I could get no indication of its true form and feature. In the end I found that it was not to be had without our clear-sightedness, just as sunlight is imperceptible to the dim sighted eye. ⁵⁸ Clear sightedness is when our view of the world is utterly lost. Then we see from the perspective in which the world exists in the Divine Mind. ⁵⁹ Therefore the three states of waking, dreaming and sound sleep are all included under this fourth state. In that fourth state, the world is seen as it exists, in the light of a nothingness.

⁶⁰ This, then, is the *turiya* or ultimate view of the world: that it is produced by no cause from nothing. It is Brahman himself that exists from all eternity in this state of tranquility. ⁶¹ The impossibility of preexistent or primordial causes precludes the possibility of anything being produced or created. It is only the reasoning of the intellect that gives rise to the conception of creation, just as it is the nature of water to assume its fluidity and exhibit its expansion.

Chapter 138 — The Unnamed Sage Describes Entering the Student's Consciousness, Seeing Double, then Realizing All Is One; Vasishta Describes the Process of Brahman, Brahma and Creation

¹ The (unnamed) ascetic sage continued:—

Then I thought of being united with his consciousness and I breathed out the breath of my life to be joined with his, like a ripe mango sends out its flavor to mix with the fragrance of lotus flowers.² I did not forsake my vital heat until I entered his intellect. I began by infusing my outward sensations into the organs of his external senses.³ Then I used the internal consciousness of my heart to attract my outward sensations. I mixed them with those of his, like a drop of oil mixes and dissolves in water.

⁴ As my consciousness intermingled with his sensations, I became aware of a double feeling of all external objects. Objects appeared to my senses in duplicate forms.⁵ All things everywhere seemed to be doubled about me, and I saw two suns and two moons. Heaven and earth appeared in double forms before me.⁶ As one face is seen as two in some mirror reflections, so all things presented their double forms to the mirror of my eyes. All these double shapes seemed to be as closely united as the world.⁷ As the intellect resides in the same form of oil in two sesame seeds, so with my intellect united with his in his body, I saw two worlds mixed up together.

⁸ Though my consciousness was united with his in the same body, yet it was not wholly assimilated with his. Each saw the world in different lights, like milk and water.⁹ Yet as I continued to looked into his consciousness and compared and measured it with mine, I found both were the same thing and of the same essence.

¹⁰ My consciousness was joined with his in the same way as one season joins with another, or as two rivers run together, or as smoke mixes with clouds, or as wind carries the fragrance of flowers.

¹¹ Thus, as our consciousness continued being mixed together, the double view of the world became one, just as the false sight of two moons in the sky is soon changed to one upon correct understanding.

¹² My power of discernment, which was in his person, became finer and finer without wholly losing itself in his. It resided together in his body.

¹³ Afterwards, I saw the faculties of his mind which resided in his heart were directed to observing external objects, taking delight noticing the occurrences of the day.¹⁴ After taking his meal and drink, he rested from his weariness. He felt drowsy and inclined to sleep, like a lotus flower shutting its petals at nightfall after sucking the nectar-like liquid of the lake.¹⁵ He withdrew his mind from observing the events that circulated all about the busy scene of the external world, just as the setting sun retracts his rays from the face of the world as he goes to take his rest in the evening.¹⁶ The functions of his senses receded into heart. The operations of his mind retired to his brain and remained hidden there like the limbs of a tortoise drawn inside its shell.¹⁷ His eyelids were closed as his heart had shut up. He remained as dead as a lifeless block, or as a figure in painting or statue.

¹⁸ I also followed the course of his mental faculties and settled with them in his mind. My senses being under the direction of the mind were set in the recess of his heart.¹⁹ Then unconscious of all outward perceptions and their conceptions, I remained with that spirit in me, like sleeping on a soft

bed, perceiving nothing but a void all about me.²⁰ As the breathing of our vital breath was neither obstructed in the aorta nor passed rapidly through the lungs, as it does when eating and drinking in excess and fatigue, it passed evenly through the nostrils.²¹ Then our souls remained in the heart with the Supreme Soul, keeping the course of the naturally uncontrollable mind under subjection.²² Then the soul is employed in its consciousness of supreme bliss. It takes no notice of others' actions. In that state of sound sleep, the body rests in perfect bliss.

²³ Rama asked, "Tell me sage. If the vital breath, the cause of the mind's operations while awake, is subjugated, then what does the mind do? The mind has no form other than breath. How can it exist without the breath?"

²⁴ Vasishta replied:—

Even so, there is no body other than one's own idea of it. Only the mind's imagination makes the body, just as the dream causes a mountain and other things to appear.²⁵ As there is no mind without the idea of it, and as there is nothing with a thought of it, so there is no production of the visible world for lack of a cause at the beginning of creation.²⁶ Therefore all these are forms of Brahman because he is the soul of all. The world itself is nothing other than the image of God.²⁷ Both mind and body are Brahman to those who know the truth, even though mind and body appear otherwise to ordinary knowledge.

²⁸ O intelligent prince, I will now explain how the triple world is Brahman, and how he is the soul of all these varieties.

²⁹ Only pure Consciousness exists forever. It has the form of infinite emptiness. It alone shows itself always in all forms, without being either the world itself or its visible appearance.³⁰ The Lord being omniscient, took the form of the character or substance of the mind upon himself, without forsaking his nature of pure consciousness free from disease or decay.³¹ Then, as the Lord thought upon the movement of his mind, he assumed the relationship of the vital breath upon himself. O Rama, know that the best of men knows the knowable, that these are only forms of the very same being of God.

³² Now as this expansion of air appears to be a model form of the Divine Essence, so sensations and bodily perceptions and the entities of space and time are only various modifications of the same being.³³ Thus the whole world is entirely the formation of the Divine Mind. As this mind is the very intellect of the Supreme Brahman, so the totality of creation is only the expansion of the mind of Brahman himself.³⁴ The formless Brahman, without beginning or end, who has no reflection of himself and is free from disease and decay, is the quiet intellect. The quiescent entity of Brahman has the whole universe for its body.³⁵ The Supreme Being is omnipotent, so the mind also retains its power everywhere, though it remains like empty air.

³⁶ The will of the mind is called Brahma. Volition immediately produces whatever it wills at anytime in itself. The mind's ability to reproduce whatever is in it is a truth well known, even to children.

³⁷ Now behold, O Rama, the almighty power of the mind which first became a living being by breathing. Then it became an intelligent being by its power of thinking. Next it became the living soul with its body. It made the three worlds and became the Purusha in the form of Brahma. It became embodied from its aerial form in the shape of Viraj. Thus it created everything in itself of its own

will, as men produce all things in their imagination and see the cities of their fancy in dream.

Chapter 139 — Vasishta Explains the Relationship between Mind and *Prana*; — the Unnamed Sage Describes Being Taken in by His Student's Dream of Universal Flood

¹ Vasishta related:—

Whatever the mind (*chitta*) wills regarding the creation of the world, the same immediately appears before it, whether producing something nonexistent to view, annihilating something that once existed, or the representing one as another.² The mind is said to be subject to the vital breath (*prana*, subtle energy, life force) whenever it fancies itself as the vital breath, and can neither exist nor do anything without it being moved by the air of respiration.³ It thinks it cannot live long without the association of respiration, and it must come back to its life and its living action of thinking with the return of breathing.

⁴ Again, as the mind fancies that it is accompanied by vital breath in some living body, it finds itself instantly joined with such breath. It beholds the world rising to view like an enchanted city.⁵ The mind thinks of the convenience of its union with the vital breath and body. With this thinking it is pleased to remain forever as a triple being, combining intellectuality, vitality and materiality.

⁶ Know that false knowledge keeps the mind in suspense and is the cause of great sorrow to mankind. There is no way of getting rid of it except by the true knowledge of the Self.⁷ He who thinks there is a distinction between his self and another can have no correction from his error except by spiritual knowledge of the only spirit.⁸ There is no way to true knowledge except by inquiry into liberation. Therefore be employed with all diligence to inquire into the means of liberation.⁹ Truly the very conceptions of individual ego and "I" and another are false and proceed from utter ignorance. There is no other means to remove them except through liberation.

¹⁰ Hence any thought which is habitual to the mind comes to be firmly impressed upon it in time. Therefore the idea that the vital breath is one's life and all makes his mind dependent upon the breath.

¹¹ So also, when the body is in a healthy state with its vitality, the mind is dependent on it and has its free play. But being in bad health, it feels its life embittered and forgets to know itself in its true nature.¹² When the respiration is quick in discharging the duties of the body and the mind is engaged in its busy thoughts; then neither is capable of meditation unless they are repressed in the heart.

¹³ These two, mind and respiration, are related to one another like car and driver. What living being is there who is not driven along by them?

¹⁴ The Supreme Spirit ordained the mind and vital breath in this way at the very beginning of creation. Therefore, this law of their cooperation continues unaltered to this day.¹⁵ Hence the mind and vital airs act in concert in all living bodies, conducting them at all times in all places in their stated course of action.¹⁶ The equal course of both serves the regular conduct of the functions of life. But their unequal course produces dissimilar effects, like that of dreaming when the mind alone is active. The inactivity of both causes the inertness of the body and soul in the state of sound sleep.

¹⁷ When the intestines are blocked or controlled by the digestive juices of food taken into them and the breathing becomes dull and slow, then the mind also becomes calm and quiet. Then follows the blissful state of sound sleep.¹⁸ When the stomach is filled with food and the lungs are weak with weariness, then breathing remains shallow, bringing on a state of sweet state of deep sleep

(*sushupti*).¹⁹ Again when the intestinal parts are cool and phlegmatic, or exhausted by loss of blood owing to some sore or wound, and breathing is stopped in the body, there comes the state of numbness of sleep.

²⁰ The ascetic said:—

Then I had entered into his heart. It became all dark to me as night. He fell into a sound sleep from his satisfaction with the fullness of his food.²¹ I was assimilated into his mind and lay in deep sleep with him without any effort of my own.²² Then as the passage of his lungs reopened, after his stomach digested the food, his breathing resumed their natural pattern and he began to breathe slowly and softly in his slumbering state.²³ After the sound sleep had become light and airy, I saw a sunny world arising out of my heart and manifesting before me in my dream.

²⁴ This world seemed to rise out of a troubled ocean and be filled with water on its surface. The water was released from the dark flood clouds which had enveloped the world like mists hanging over oceans.²⁵ There was a hurricane blowing over it, carrying rocks and stones in its whirling and uproarious course. It was carrying away uprooted trees with shrubs and grassy turf with them.²⁶ It was carrying away and hurling fragments of the last conflagration of desolation. It was blowing down pieces of celestial cities from high.

²⁷ Then as I was looking at a certain place, I found myself situated with my wife in one of the houses of a splendid city rising at that spot.²⁸ As I was sitting in company with my wife and children, attended by my friends and servants and supplied with dishes and cups of food and drink, suddenly I was carried away by the waves of flood waters.²⁹ The deluge swept me away, together with the houses and the city in which we were situated. We were floating on the tops of mountainous waves, buffeted in the water.

³⁰ There arose a loud dashing noise louder than the roaring sea. I was stunned by the harsh vibrating sound, unaware of the fate of my family.³¹ Men were driven away and hurled down into whirling currents of water and buried deep in dreadful mud, wailing, crying loudly, and beating their breasts.³² Houses and huts were breaking and cracking, their beams and posts splitting, pillars and supports bursting. Roofs were falling down while women were looking out fixed at the windows.

³³ As I was looking at all this, affected by the sight and weeping sorrowfully, I saw the entire house falling down on the ground.³⁴ All four walls broke down, burying old and young and women occupants under them. Then these were carried away by the waves in the same way that an impetuous waterfall carries away shattered and scattered stones to a hundred different places.³⁵ Then I was blown away into the waters of the flood, leaving my family and friends behind and accompanied only by my mind and vital breath.

³⁶ I was tossed about by waves and carried away hundreds of leagues. I was thrown upon a floating forest which roasted me by their burning wildfire.³⁷ I was dashed against floating planks and timbers and slashed in many parts of my body. Then falling into a whirlpool I was hurled into the depths of hell.³⁸ For a long time I was tossed all about, hurled up and down, buffeted by waves and waters and their gurgling, roaring and rumbling sounds.³⁹ Then I was buried under mud released by the friction between drowned mountains. Then I was again lifted upward like an elephant by another flood of

water.⁴⁰ As I rested on a hill covered with foam and froth, immediately I was run over by a rush of water, like a man overtaken by his enemy.⁴¹ Being overwhelmed by water and carried away wherever the waves and currents pleased, I lost sight of whatever I was seeing and was greatly dejected in my mind.

⁴² At this moment, I remembered that a certain silent sage was going to give a public lecture, that Vasishtha was going to teach Rama.⁴³ I remembered my former state of samadhi and exclaimed, "O, I was an ascetic in another world.⁴⁴ I have entered the body of another person in order to see the sights in his dreams. All that I am now seeing is nothing more than a dream, a mere error of the mind and falsehood.⁴⁵ It is from our habitual bias to believe in what is present before us that I believed these falsehoods as true. In the dream I was troubled to see myself carried away by the flood. Now I feel happy to find it was only a dream."

⁴⁶ What I saw as water was whirling currents in the ocean of the universal flood, as false as water in a mirage. The hills and woods and cities and towns that were swept away by the flood were as false as any visual deception.⁴⁷ There were gods and aerials, men and women, and huge snakes carried away by the flood. Great cities and mansions of the rulers of men were all floating upon the waters.

⁴⁸ I saw mountains merged and mixed up with the waters, battered and shattered by waves. I saw within myself the approaching dissolution of the world.⁴⁹ Even Lord Shiva with his three eyes was swimming upon and swept away like straw on the waves. O what a shame and pity that there is nothing impossible for destiny.

⁵⁰ Fragments of houses floating upon the waters looked like lotus flowers displaying themselves under the sunbeams.⁵¹ It was astonishing to see the bodies of gandharvas, kinnaras, men and naagas floating on the waters, like swarms of bees fluttering over lotus beds in a lake.⁵² Fragments of the splendid palaces of the gods and demigods and others, decorated with the ornamental works of vidyadharas, were floating like golden vessels on the wide expanse of the ocean.⁵³ Lord Indra was floating on the clear water as if he were lying in his crystal palace. He mounted over waves as if riding on his elephant. He was swinging on waves like a cradle.⁵⁴ Waves rising to the sky washed the faces of the stars. Winds were scattering them all about, like flowers from the garden of Meru drop down on the mansions of the gods, or like men scattering flowers on the ground.

⁵⁵ Waves as high as mountains rose to the sky. Breakers flying aloft like stones flung from slings fell upon the lotus seat of Brahma, turning it about with the god sitting upon it in deep meditation.

⁵⁶ Clouds roared loudly with deep and appalling thunder and waves flashed like frightful lightning in the air. Elephants, horses and ferocious lions wandered in the atmosphere and forests as large as the earth floated in the sky.⁵⁷ Dark blue waves of overflowing waters pushed against one another with force so violent that it seemed as if the god of destruction was pushing them in an act of utter annihilation.

⁵⁸ Gods, men and naagas, together with their homes in heaven, earth, and the regions below, were pulled down into the deep waters.⁵⁹ The irresistible flood covered all sides of earth, heaven and hell. The bodies of gods and demigods were all floating together like great numbers of fish. Their heavenly cars and vehicles were swimming on the surface of the waters like in a field of battle.⁶⁰ The dark blue waters resembled the blue form of Krishna. Their foaming froth resembled the milk white calves

about Krishna. It became the reason for their being swept off to sea.⁶¹ The waves pushed one another with a terrible sound that drowned everything. The women of both gods and demons wailed and howled loudly.⁶² The loud cries raised by all at the destruction of their houses echoed over the waters on all sides. The clouds moving over the rolling waves appeared like the covers of fallen, floating domes.

⁶³ Ah, it was pitiful to see how the whirling currents hurled down even the gods into the deep, and how Indra, Yama and Kubera breathed their last breaths in the form of flying and flimsy clouds.

⁶⁴ Learned and saintly persons were carried away with the ignorant like dead bodies devoid of their pride. The cities of the gods Brahma, Vishnu and Indra were swept away, all broken and crushed to pieces.⁶⁵ The bodies of weak women were washed and carried over by the waves. There was nobody left to save them from the grasp of death which devoured them under his horrid jaws.

⁶⁶ The floods which at first flowed with serpentine crooked courses into the caves of mountains, in the end flooded them to their tops. The cities of the gods which at first floated like boats upon the waters by the mountain tops, in the end were hurled to the bottom.⁶⁷ Gods and demons and all other beings, together with their homes in heaven and on the continents and mountains of earth, were all submerged and shattered like lotus beds by the waters. The three worlds were turned into a universal ocean and all their grandeur and splendor were swallowed up by time, together with all the sovereign powers of earth and heaven.

Chapter 140 — The Unnamed Sage Describes His Life as a Brahmin in the Body of Viraj; — His Escape through the Mouth of Viraj; — Finding His Own Life; then Trying to Find Where He Had Been

¹ The hunter said, “Tell me sage, how could a sage like you be deluded by a dream of a flood? Why did your meditation not deliver you from your mistake?”

² The sage replied:—

At the end of the kalpa age, all kinds of beings meet with their destruction. Thus there is a termination of the false forms of the worlds and a cessation of the luminous bodies in the heaven.³ Sometimes the dissolution at the end of a kalpa takes place gradually. At others, it comes suddenly with simultaneous turmoil and disorganization everywhere.⁴ So when everything was flooded, the gods fled to Brahma, the first cause of all, for protection but they were all swept away by the overflowing tide.

⁵ Moreover, O forester, know that time is the most mighty destroyer of all things. Everything must occur in its time, as it is predestined at the beginning.⁶ The time of one’s dissolution being near, there follows a destruction in the strength, intellect, and energy of everybody. Not even the great are left out.

⁷ I have also told you, O fortunate forester, that everything seen in a dream is mere dreaming. Nothing of it comes to take place in reality.

⁸ The forester responded, “Sage, if the dream is a mere falsity and error of imagination, then what was the good of you describing all this dream? You know well what is good and useful for mankind.”

⁹ The sage replied:—

There was much value for me to tell you all this, O intelligent hunter, to improve your understanding. As you come to know that what can be seen are all as false as sights in sleep, you shall know what is real and true.

¹⁰ Now as long as the flood waters lasted, I remained seated in the heart of the medium, the student as I had mentioned, and saw some other false sights in his dream.¹¹ I saw the flood waters recede to the unknown region from where they had come. The huge waves disappeared altogether, as when winged mountains flee from fear of Indra’s thunder.

¹² By my good fate, I was carried to some distant shore where I was seated as firmly as upon the peak of a high and solid mountain.¹³ From there I saw the waters settle down in their basins. The stars of heaven were shining upon them, like sparkling particles of splashing waves or their foaming and floating froth.¹⁴ The reflections of stars in water seemed like jewels shining in the heart of the ocean. The stars that shone above in the sky appeared like nightly flaming bushes on the tops of mountains.

¹⁵ The sky studded with bright stars appeared like an island beaming with gold. The blue sky seemed wrapped with the blue garments of celestial ladies.¹⁶ The blue flood clouds floating in the sky resembled a bed of sky blue lotuses in an ethereal lake. The lightning that flashed in the bosoms of the clouds resembled the yellow powder of flowers flying all about the sky.¹⁷ Masses of mountain-like clouds, flushed with frost, poured down showers of rain on all sides. The floods rolled down with their reflections, bearing huge kalpa forests in their bosom.

¹⁸ Afterwards the basin of the universal ocean dried up and turned into an empty and dry hollow. The peaks of Mandara and Sahya hills had been drowned under the waters and were left melted down to mud or washed away by the receding flood. ¹⁹ Here the sun and moon were found sunk in the mud hole. There the gods Yama and Indra were hidden under soil. Somewhere the serpents and Takshaka naagas were rolling in the mire. Elsewhere kalpa trees lay buried with their tops and branches under the mud. ²⁰ In some places, people's heads and hands were scattered over the ground and looked like lotus buds and flowers torn from their stalks and scattered about the bare and barren land.

²¹ In one place there were vidyadhara women drowned up to their necks in slime, crying with their piteous shrieks. In another, there were the huge bodied buffaloes of Yama lying, resembling the huge bodies of dead elephants appearing in a dream. ²² In some place lay the bulky body of Garuda, bulging out like the huge mountain of the gods. In others, the embankments were swept away as if they were slashed by the mace of Yama falling upon the ground. ²³ There were the remains of the dead swan of Brahma, stuck in the mire somewhere. The footprints of Indra's elephant Iravata were stuck in the mud in another place.

²⁴ In the meanwhile, I found some flat land in one place. There I rested from my weariness and was overtaken by sound sleep. That unconscious state quickly stole upon me. ²⁵ Then waking from my sound sleep, I found myself seated in the heart of the hunter. Retaining possession of my awareness, I was led by my innate desire to see similar sights of desolation as before. ²⁶ Upon my waking, I saw the flat land where I was situated was in the heart of the hunter. I was seized with great grief and sorrow at my sight of the spectacle.

²⁷ I saw the rising of the bright and beautiful sun on the next day. That light revealed the worlds, the sky, this earth and its hills. ²⁸ But I soon found that the earth, sky, air, hills and rivers were all only the reproductions of my mind, like leaves shooting forth from trees. ²⁹ On seeing these things, I began to view them in a ordinary way as I had somewhat forgotten their right and proper use.

³⁰ After my birth, I passed sixteen years at that place and had the knowledge of this man as my father and that woman as my mother and that place as my home. All this knowledge arose spontaneously from my self-reflection. ³¹ Then I saw a village with the home of a brahmin. There I saw a house and found a friend, and many more other places. ³² Thus I remained with friends in village huts. I passed many days and nights in repeated watchfulness and returning sleep. ³³ Remaining in this company over the course of time, I came to lose the light of the understanding I had attained before. I forgot myself and became one of them through my habitual mode of thinking, as if a man had forgotten himself and become a fish.

³⁴ In this manner, I remained a village brahmin for a long time, relying only upon my body as begotten by a brahmin and quite forgetful of other things. ³⁵ I believed in my identity only as my material body and only my wife as my partner. I understood the essence of my soul to be only my desires and thought that riches only were the sole object to be gained in life. ³⁶ My only treasure was an old cow and my only provisions were the greens of my garden. My only possessions were the sacred fire and sacrificial animals and my only utensil was a water pot. ³⁷ My hopes were as frail as perennial plants. My conduct was the same as that of other men. The state of my living was as mean as the mud with which my hut was constructed.

³⁸ I passed my days pruning and weeding the garden of my greens and performing my daily ablutions in the streams and rivulets reckoned as holy by men. ³⁹ I was employed providing my food and drink and procuring fuel and cow dung for fire. I remained entangled in the snare of scrutinizing what was right or wrong for daily observance. ⁴⁰ In this way a life of an entire hundred years passed away at that place.

Then it happened one time that a holy hermit from far away passed by and became my guest in my humble home. ⁴¹ Being welcomed and honored by me, he entered in my hut and took rest after washing and bathing himself. Then after his meal he sat on his bed and began to tell his story as night approached.

⁴² He spoke of many places and countries and of many lands and mountains. He talked about their different customs and manners, which were pleasant to hear and related to various subjects. ⁴³ "All these," he said, "are the display of the one Consciousness which is infinite and immutable in its nature. It manifests itself in the form of cosmos and is forever present with it as it is now seen to be."

⁴⁴ Being thus enlightened by him, I was filled with a flood of light. I listened attentively to whatever he said on this and other subjects.

⁴⁵ I also heard about my own story from him. I learned that the person who contained me within its womb is no less than the body of Viraj himself. I was eager to come out of that body. ⁴⁶ As long as I did not know that the mouth of Viraj is the only way out from that body, I kept moving through it, as if wandering in the vast extent of earth and oceans.

⁴⁷ Then I left that place, surrounded as it was by my friends and relations. I entered into his vital part to make my exit with the vital breath. ⁴⁸ I intended to see both the inside and outside of Viraj's body in which I had been housed. I continued to mark the process of its outer movements and inner thoughts.

⁴⁹ I fixed my attention upon my own consciousness and remained settled in one place without moving. Then I breathed out with his breath, like the fragrance of flowers accompanies the wind. ⁵⁰ Then rising with his respiration, I reached the opening of his mouth. Then mounting on the vehicle of the wind, I went forward and saw all that lay before me.

⁵¹ In the distance I saw the hermitage of a sage situated in the grotto of a mountain. I found it full with hermits, myself sitting in lotus posture among them. ⁵² These hermits stood before me as my pupils. They were employed in their duty of taking care of my body in its state of samadhi. ⁵³ After a while, I saw the student among them in whose heart I had been staying. He was resting, lying flat on his back after taking some food which he got in the nearby village. ⁵⁴ Seeing this wonder, I remained quiet and did not speak anything about it to anybody waiting upon me. Then I reentered my body for my own amusement.

⁵⁵ I got to the region of vitality situated within the heart. I had a my lasting desire to see the friends I had before, the ones I had left behind. ⁵⁶ As I was looking around, I saw the end of the world approaching with its dreadful aspect, changing the course of nature together with the positions of the world. ⁵⁷ Mountains appeared altered and changed to another state. The sky presented another face. The whole world seemed to be dislocated from its place. ⁵⁸ I could find no trace of my former friends or hut. I could not find where that land had been. All seemed swept away by winds and I could not

know where they had been taken.

⁵⁹ Then I found the world appearing in another form, presenting a sight altogether different from what it had been before and quite fresh to view. ⁶⁰ I saw the twelve suns of the twelve signs of the zodiac shining all at once and burning in all the quarters of heaven and melting down high mountains, heat melting snows and icebergs to water. ⁶¹ Volcanic fire spread from mountain to mountain and fire leapt from forests to forests. The earth was parched with all the gems in her bowels. No trace remained except in the memory of men. ⁶² The seas were dried up and the earth was full of burning embers everywhere. A strong gale rose which blew away all the ashes. ⁶³ Underground, terrestrial and ethereal fires began to issue forth in flames and flash on all sides. The face of the whole universe flushed with a blaze glistening like the glowing clouds of the evening sky.

⁶⁴ I entered into this burning sphere like a flying moth falls into a flame. I was confined within its cave, like a wandering bee is closed up in a shutting lotus, yet I was quite unscathed by the burning flames. ⁶⁵ Then I then flew among the flames as freely as in air, flickering like a flash of lightning in a cloud. I sometimes hovered over the burning fire, as a light winged butterfly flies over a lotus.

Chapter 141 — The Unnamed Sage Describes His Own Dream of Universal Fire

¹ The sage continued:—

Though repeatedly burning in those fires, yet I was neither consumed nor felt the least pain. Though falling from one fire into another, I remained thinking that all this was a dream in my dreaming.

² Fires flew aloft and filled the vault of heaven with flames. I was flying like a firebrand amidst and all about.³ As I was wandering with my spiritual light and unwearied soul in this universal conflagration, suddenly a tremendous hurricane arose.⁴ It howled and growled loudly like the roaring of clouds on high. It blew fiercely, bearing down and carrying away everything before it.⁵ The whirling and howling hurricane raged with redoubled force in the forest. It lifted large tracts of woods in the form of clouds, mixing them with rolling firebrands resembling the revolving suns above.

⁶ Flames of fire flashed above like the evening clouds of heaven blazing like hundreds of fiery pools on high. The earth with the homes of men, demons and gods burned like burning mountains everywhere.⁷ Burnt, un-burnt and half-burnt devils and demons wandered together throughout the heated air, grasping each other in the ethereal streams.⁸ Gods and goddesses fell down like flames of fire. The homes of the celestials melted in showers of fire.⁹ Flashes of fire flickered like lightning from the burning vault of heaven. Clouds of dark smoke hid the face of the high sky in darkness.¹⁰ The faces of earth and sky and all sides of heaven were covered with a flaming veil like that of an evening cloud. The whole universe with its seven spheres appeared like a massive mountain of flaming fire.

¹¹ On one side the sparks of flaming fire flashed overhead. On another, a huge mountainous mist of smoke hid the hemisphere from sight. In the midst there appeared a mountainous body of fire like that of Shiva, the god of destruction, dancing amidst the destructive winds of the Rudras blowing on all sides.

Chapter 142 — The Sage Continues: There Is No Karma; Pure-Born Souls; Religious Acts Useless

¹ The sage resumed and said:—

Continuing in this journey of my false imagination, I was led to many such painful sights. Eventually they raised feelings of sorrow and sorrow in me and my curiosity gave way to weariness. ² Then I thought in my mind that it was merely a dream in the mind of another person which I had come to see from my seat within his heart. Therefore, I should refrain from such sights and curb my useless sorrow for them.

³ The hunter asked, “You entered the body of another person to investigate the nature of dream. Tell me then, what did you learn and how were your questions answered? ⁴ How did you come to see the ocean in the heart which never existed there? How did you see the fire in the heart and the tornado in the bowels which are never to be found in any of those places? ⁵ You said you saw the earth and sky and rivers, mountains and many other things in the mind. But how can these and the world itself be situated in the mind in any manner?”

⁶ The sage replied:—

All these things and the world itself are all mere nonentities as there was no preexistent material cause for the production of the world before it came into existence. Therefore neither the term creation nor its sense is in any way applicable to this world or the way we see it. ⁷ Hence the world creation and its meaning proceed from ignorance of the Supreme Soul, which is immutable in its nature. Ignorance of this truth produces the false knowledge of creation.

⁸ Therefore I say, O you fortunate one, that after you come to your knowledge in this respect, your ignorance of his supremely pure nature is removed. ⁹ Like me, you will no longer believe in the false impression of your consciousness. But you must come to know that this causeless and uncreated world is only the expanded reflection of your own mind.

¹⁰ Where is the body and the heart and where are these elements of water and the like? What is this dream and what are these conceptions and perceptions? What is life or death or anything else?

¹¹ There is only one transparent Intellect everywhere, before which the subtle ether is gross and the biggest mountain is small. ¹² Of its own nature, this intellectual emptiness reflects on something in its thought and sees the same as its body of air. This is what is called the world.

¹³ Because it is only our intellect that reflects itself in various forms in our dream, and because there is nothing other than the intellect that presents itself to our view, therefore this world is nothing other than the aerial form of the intellect. ¹⁴ This universe is a quiet emptiness without any stir or shadow of anything in it. The dimness of the blind eye of the intellect presents these false shapes to sight, like blind men seeing black spots in the clear sky. ¹⁵ To my sight the world is neither an entity nor a nonentity. It is not a mere void or the shadow or reflection of anything. It is only the formless infinity of empty Consciousness.

¹⁶ In the state of our sleep, pure consciousness sees itself in the various forms of its dream, without any cause whatsoever. In the same way, it sees everything in its own emptiness in the waking state also, without any external objects of sight or its act of seeing them. ¹⁷ It is something inexplicable,

without beginning or end. It is an appearance of its own conceptions which are one with it. There is no duality in its nature.¹⁸ As there is only one endless duration embracing the periods of creation as well as annihilation. As a tree comprehends all its parts, blossoms, and fruit, so Brahman is the Soul of all.

¹⁹ As one's great building appears as an empty space to another, and as one's sight of a castle in a mirage appears as nothing to another, so this visible world of waking people is the dream of sleeping persons rising on the ground of their imagination.²⁰ From time to time the transparent emptiness of consciousness exhibits itself in itself. We see things in our dream as we see them when we are awake, and we see things awake like we see them in our dreams.²¹ As the fragrance of flowers lies hidden in the invisible air, so the world lies concealed in the invisible intellect which sees through every opening.

²² By shutting out thoughts of anything and everything from your mind, you may be quite pure in yourself. Only then can your infinite soul have its everlasting peace and rest, when it is freed from all cares, both within and without.

²³ The hunter said, "Tell me sage, how can men get rid of their thoughts and cares of life when they are invariably accompanied by the acts and memories of their past lives? Tell me, what kind of men are subject to the tendencies of their past conduct and what kind are released from them?"

²⁴ The sage replied:—

Those souls who are full of intelligence and have their spiritual bodies are never subject to renewed births or the consequences of their past actions. Such were the bodies of Brahma, Kapila and others who became manifest of themselves. Such also were the supernatural bodies of the gods and divine incarnations.²⁵ Their bodies were not of this world and were not subject to its dualistic illusory imaginations. They were forms of pure intelligence and of a subtle and spiritual nature.

²⁶ In the beginning of creation, there was no primordial act of anybody to fashion his form or frame of mind. Only the sole and self-existent Brahman existed who manifested himself in the form of the world.²⁷ As the great Brahma and others were the manifestations of the supreme Brahman in the beginning, so there have been many thousands more who manifested from the same divine essence and are known as pure intelligences and a superior orders of beings.

²⁸ But those who are deluded by their ignorance of truth to think they are other than Brahman, dull and unintelligent beings separate from the nature of God,²⁹ are born again because of their past actions. They are accompanied with the results of those acts, whereby they are confined in their unintelligent bodies in order to lead their unspiritual lives, quite forgetful of their divine nature and subjected to the false belief of their materiality.

³⁰ But those who preserve the purity of their divine character by thinking themselves as inseparable from the Divine Soul are known here as uncontaminated by their former acts, like the divine trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva.³¹ All those who know the true nature of the soul remain with its purity in the spirit of God. But those who understand the soul in the light of a mere individual living spirit (*jivatma*) live in themselves as if detached from the Divine Soul.³² Whenever one thinks he is merely a living being, he certainly is accompanied by ignorance. The soul takes the name of animal spirit or

life, which means having knowledge only of the world in which it is situated.³³ But in course of time, as he comes to know the true and divine nature of his soul, he is reinstated in his real spiritual state and becomes one with the Supreme Soul of all.

³⁴ As the fluidity of water in some waters exhibits itself in the form of whirlpools, so Divine Consciousness shows the nonexistent world as existent to those understandings who are ignorant of the nature of the Supreme Soul.³⁵ The world is the reflection of omniscience and not the representation of our dreaming or waking states. Therefore, when it is nothing in reality, it can have no action or property of itself.³⁶ In fact neither the knowledge of the world nor ignorance of it, or its action or motion or any of its properties, is anything in reality. All these are the results of our thoughts that represent the unreal as real to us.

³⁷ Brahman, being the very creation or the great cosmos itself, is truly the soul of all beings. Therefore it is useless to suppose our prior acts as the cause of our births. That God is the creator of the universe is a mere assumption made from his omnipotence.³⁸ It is impossible for anyone to be bound by the chains of his prior acts at his first creation in the world. It only afterwards, through his ignorance, that he fabricated a fate or causality of his actions to himself for results in later lives.

³⁹ Tell me, does the whirlpool of the sea have any action of its own? It is only whirling water, as Brahman himself is apparent in the form of this seeming world.⁴⁰ As people appearing in our dream have no prior acts for their appearance, so living beings when first formed are endowed with only pure understanding.⁴¹ It is a mere supposition that they had a cause at first creation, and that ever since all living beings have been wandering bound fast by the chain of their prior acts.

⁴² This creation is no act of creation but truly the manifestations of Brahman himself. Such being the case, tell me, what can “acts” mean? From where do they proceed and where are they?⁴³ Only the ignorance of the Supreme Soul binds us to the bondage of acts. But its chains fall off from the believer of Brahman by his knowledge of truth.

⁴⁴ Know the outward acts of faith proceed from ignorance of the universe. But as the wise man advances in his knowledge, he frees himself from the bondage of all religious and ceremonial acts and observances.⁴⁵ External acts of faith are entirely devoid of any substantial merit, so it is not difficult to get rid of them at once. Only our spiritual bond is our chief concern, beside which there is no bond whatsoever.

⁴⁶ As long as there is fear of the dreadful illusion of this world, you do not attain wisdom. As long as you exhibit your wisdom, you do not fall into the whirlpool of worldly affairs. Therefore, you men of pure hearts and soul, always try to acquire wisdom and learning. There is no other way you can fly from the fears of the world, except by means of your right understanding.

Chapter 143 — The Philosophy that All Is within God Is Compatible with All Beliefs, but It Is Wrong to Confuse God to Be like the World; Various Thoughts Create Various Worlds

¹ The (unnamed) sage continued:—

A wise man investigates the duties of religion and ceremonial acts and serves the welfare of men in both worlds. He shines in the assembly of the learned, just as the sun illuminates an assembly of lotuses.² Learned and wise men attain heavenly bliss through spiritual knowledge. Compared to this ocean of bliss, even the wealth of Indra vanishes like rotten straw tossed by waves.³ I find nothing anywhere in the three regions of this earth, heaven above, or the netherworld which is comparable with the bliss and wealth of learning and wisdom.

⁴ The learned see the true state of all things as clearly as moonlight gives a clear view of the sphere of stars in a cloudless sky.⁵ The visible world soon vanishes from sight and turns into invisible Brahman by the knowledge of the wise, just as a rope, at first appearing to be a snake, upon inspection is soon found to be a rope.

⁶ Brahman, the God ever situated in his Godhead, is a truth evident by itself. His nature gives rise to the words creation, destruction, body and others.⁷ He to whom the existence of the world is nonexistent has no concern for acts or duties which are no more than meaningless words to him.⁸ It is possible to believe that the material world was produced from something if there were such a prior material cause. But without a prior material cause, there can be no material world. Therefore, without cause, the world itself is nonexistent and void.⁹ It is only the reflection of Brahman that takes the names of earth and all other things. It is not necessary for mere reflections to have any cause at all.

¹⁰ Men seen in a dream have no real cause other than the dreamer's imagination. The same is true of men seen in our waking dreams. They are only mere reflections of our imaginations and not the products of their parents.¹¹ There is no causality of prior acts for the appearance of people in our dreams. Neither is there any actual cause for people seen in waking dream assuming the garb of humanity.¹² Neither prior acts nor desires are causes of living beings in different shapes in repeated births, just as prior acts or desires do not cause the production of people seen in our dreams.¹³ Men appear as dreams and their impressions in the course of their births and deaths. They are conscious of this state or that as they think themselves either as the one or the other.

¹⁴ People appear to be as they think they are from their own consciousness of themselves. Their purpose and actions appear the same in dreams and when awake.¹⁵ The desires and sensations of a dreaming man are like those when he is awake. The only difference is that a dream is dimmer and being awake is more distinct. A dreaming man derives the same satisfaction as an awake man obtaining the object of his wish, though the dream is more concealed and being awake is more of a manifest nature.¹⁶ When our pure consciousness of things shines forth of its own nature in either of its two states of clearness or faintness, the reflection of one takes the name of waking and of the other is known as dream.

¹⁷ As long as consciousness continues to shine in anyone, from his first creation until his final emancipation, he is said to be a living being with repeated births and deaths.¹⁸ The meaning of the words waking and dreaming is not at all different from that of consciousness. The irrepressible

reflection of consciousness constitutes the essence of both states, just as light is the quality of heavenly bodies.¹⁹ As heat is the essence of fire, motion is the quality of wind, fluidity of water is the quality of the waves, and coolness the essential nature of breeze, so consciousness is the essence our waking and dreaming states.

²⁰ The whole universe is an undisturbed chasm and an unchanging unreality. The seeming reality of the world is united with its negative sense of nonexistence.²¹ Brahman, in its external sense, is both the creation and the destruction of the world. The visible form and the idea of the world are equally alike. But being viewed in its inner meaning, it is seen only as pure Consciousness, the one alone that is forever calm and quiet and without decay in itself.

²² Whatever thought of causality or effect passes in the mind of Brahman at anytime, the same comes to take place immediately, just as men construct their houses in cities as they please.²³ The entire creation abides in the mind of God just like the city you dream is in your thought. Their cause and effect are the same in each case.²⁴ Both cause and effect are contained in the womb of dense Consciousness. These are exerted to create the world in the same way you construct your imaginary castle.²⁵ Divine Consciousness employs its will to cause its intended creation, just like you form a plan to construct your building. Thus causality and its effect are combined together in the one and the same mind.²⁶ The Divine Mind develops itself into the form of the sky and the world that is forever situated within. Then the mind is called the creation residing in the expanse of that sky.

²⁷ The light which the sun of our consciousness is cast upon the imaginary city in the mind. What is called cause and effect is this light.²⁸ The forms in which the mind first displayed itself continues to exist in the same state ever since. These are called time, space, and the rest.²⁹ Whatever names are given to things exhibited in the emptiness of Consciousness, they are seen as realities, some under the names of causes and others as their effects.³⁰ Creation is first miraculously displayed in Consciousness in its ideal form as mere ideas. Afterwards, it receives the name of the world.

³¹ This triple world is an empty form. It is situated in the emptiness of Consciousness just as clear air innately contains its blowing vibration.³² As vapors and clouds covering the face of the sky give the appearance of blueness to it, so the dizziness of ignorance misrepresents the clear Intellect in the form of the gross world.³³ But on receiving the true reflection of the spirit in the Intellect, by means of intense meditation, the idea of creation turns into that of non-creation, as the false sight of a snake in a rope is changed to that of the rope upon its realization.

³⁴ The dead find a future world like what they used to see in their dreams. But that world, as well as this, are equally as formless as the vacuum of the Intellect.

³⁵ The hunter said, "Tell me sage, why are men reborn in new bodies to suffer and enjoy future births? Tell me also, what are the principal and accompanying causes for our rebirths in this world?³⁶ If pious or impious acts done in our present destructible bodies destine us to their later retributions, then tell me. Why should our indestructible souls be brought to feel their results in other bodies? This seems to be very absurd to me."

³⁷ The sage replied:—

The words piety and impiety mean the same as our desires and acts. They mean causation, framing the

living soul according to its own impressions. But these are mere suppositions. They are not the true causes of the doubts in our souls or the modes of our lives.

³⁸ The mind is situated in the empty intellect. The mind has the power of thinking and it imagines various states of things and gives names to them accordingly. ³⁹ The conscious soul, by means of its intellect, comes to know its own body in its empty self. After death it sees its body existing as in its dream or imagination. ⁴⁰ The knowledge of the dead in the next world is also like a dream. Because this dream state of the soul continues for a long time, he assumes it to be real.

⁴¹ If another person frames a new body for a deceased person to enter, then how does the new born body have any memory of the past? How does this body be what the dead person had been before? As for his intellect, it is a mere emptiness and cannot pass from one body into another. ⁴² Therefore no one who is dead is born again or is to be reborn afterwards at anytime. It is only an idea of the mind that I was so and am reborn as such. It is a vain wish in emptiness to be born again in some form or other. ⁴³ By nature and habits of thinking, men are impressed with the belief of rebirth, both by popular belief and scriptural evidence of a state of future retribution, which is altogether false and fanciful.

⁴⁴ The soul is an aerial and empty substance that gives rise to the phantoms of visible phenomena in the forms of shadowy dreams in its spacious emptiness. The soul is forever seeing its births and deaths in this world in endless repetitions. ⁴⁵ It sees every particular object in the illusive network spread in its ample sphere. It seems to see and act and enjoy everything without being in the actual enjoyment of anything. ⁴⁶ In this manner millions and millions of worlds are constantly rising before its sight. They appear to be so many visible phenomena in its ignorance. But when viewed in their proper light, they prove to be the display of only one, all pervading Brahman.

⁴⁷ No phenomenon ever occupies any space, nor does any ever exist anywhere in reality. There is only that one Brahman that spreads undivided though all and knows all these as an undivided whole, and yet everyone of them forming a world of itself.

⁴⁸ Now all beings in these worlds are connected with one another in a common link. They appear as realities to the false sight of people, but when seen from the true perspective, they prove to be identical with the unborn one. ⁴⁹ To the knower of the knowable, the one without decay is known as the true reality. What an enlightened sage understands to be unreal is believed to be true by the ignorant.

⁵⁰ It is enough to reconcile these opposite parties by believing in one common faith, a universal philosophy of the one reality, that all things everywhere are real because they are all reflections of the same one reality. ⁵¹ Or, to determine whether the world as one sees it is real or unreal, let one consult his own consciousness and rely on its verdict whether the world is real or otherwise.

⁵² Who can doubt the evidence of consciousness with regard to the difference or identity of things, or their unity or duality? ⁵³ Knowledge of the knowable God, in as much as we know it to be correct, establishes the identity of the knowable one with his knowledge. But it is false and mistaken to believe that the world of phenomena is the same as the unknown and invisible God.

⁵⁴ The knowable one is not distinct from knowledge of him. But being seated in finite understanding,

the ignorant have no knowledge of the knowable one who is then quite unknown to and apart.⁵⁵ The knowable one is known in proportion to our knowledge of him. But it is not so to those who are ignorant of him. As our knowledge increases, so the knowable soul spreads of itself over our souls.⁵⁶ Hence I know nothing about the unreal worlds that appear of themselves as real before the eyes of the ignorant. They are nonexistent and nothing to my sight.⁵⁷ Being rightly understood, all things are only forms of the one Intellect and equally void as the Intellect. The Intellect appears in a thousand different shapes to the understanding of the ignorant.

⁵⁸ An intellectual soul assumes many forms to itself in its dreams, then absorbs them all again into one, single form of unity in sound sleep. In the same way, the Divine Soul appears in one or more forms to our intellects.⁵⁹ Thus God, though one and same, appears to our consciousness in various forms according to the various apprehensions of men, whether empty or with form, as our dreams and works of our imagination.⁶⁰ Men give the name of world to their consciousness of the dreams they have in the vacuum of their minds. But in deep sound sleep, the mind is unconscious of anything and that state is called the extinction or trance of the mind. This comparison applies equally to them.

⁶¹ This substantial totality of existences is only a mere perception of the mind. Whatever appears in any manner in any thought at anytime or place, the same seems to present itself in reality before us, even then and there.⁶² It was only thought that first manifested itself in the forms of the primary elements of fire and water and earth at the beginning of creation. All this arose in the mind like dreams and the phantoms of its imagination.

⁶³ Again the inner impressions of these things are preserved in the empty space of our consciousness. They unite of themselves and exhibit this world to us in the form we see it in our presence.⁶⁴ Our consciousness appears to us in both its transient and permanent states. In reality, it is no temporary thing, but continues with us even at the end of all transitory things and our transient lives.⁶⁵ Our consciousness accompanies us forever wherever we stay or go. Think about the example of traveling east or west. You see many things and cities on your way, but can never lose your memory of the past or the consciousness of yourself as you proceed onward.

⁶⁶ Anything that the mind has seen or willed or is long practiced to do or think upon is never erased from consciousness, unless it be from numbness or unawareness of Consciousness.⁶⁷ You may wander wherever you please, either to the east or west, and you will find your consciousness continuing the same, never changing with the change of your location.

⁶⁸ We have seen how a man of steady consciousness, by his firm perseverance, attains the object or state of his wish. By comparison, an unsteady mind is sure to lose both.⁶⁹ A man of steady consciousness is possessed of both the object or state of his wish regardless whether he goes to north or south. But one who is unsteady in himself and his purpose is deprived of both himself and his object.⁷⁰ The man of firm purpose who thinks he is both in heaven and earth has them both by fixing his mind upon one [heaven] while his body is placed in the other [earth]. In the same way, a man may travel both east and west by walking one way and thinking of the other. But the man of unsteady purpose is neither for this world nor the other. He neither walks one way nor the other.

⁷¹ By steadfast belief in the One, we find that only Intellect pervades the whole emptiness of space. But this One appears as many, many thousands to the understanding of ignorant skeptics.⁷² Whether

the body is destructible because of its materiality or indestructible because it is only a reflection of Divine Consciousness, in either case it is all merely appearance in the dream of the living soul, whether in this or in the future world.

⁷³ Wizards invoke ghosts and spirits of foreigners and make them relate the incidents of their past lives. It is evident from these examples that men's souls do not die with their bodies. ⁷⁴ Men in foreign countries, long dead and burnt to ashes, disappeared with their living souls, are known to reappear before people and deliver their messages. ⁷⁵ If it is impossible for departed souls to reappear like the living, which is what the Charvakas say, then let me ask them, why do they not believe their absent friends to also be dead and unable to return? ⁷⁶ If the property of action is true of the living, why should it not be equally true of the dead?

⁷⁷ The doctrine of the imaginary dream of the world is the established and irrefutable truth of Vedic scriptures. It is quite compatible with the doctrine of eternal ideas maintained in Indian philosophy.

⁷⁸ These worlds are equally true as they are false, just as seeing shapes in the moon which appear real to the person seeing them although the shapes have no substance to them. ⁷⁹ The subjective world is real because all its objects are parts of the true entity. The subjective mind is a reality, although it is composed of only pure ideas. The Intellect is true only as a reflection, and so they are all true without having any reality of themselves. ⁸⁰ All these are immutable and quiet, lying unmoving in the emptiness of Divine Consciousness. They are unmovable and inconspicuous of themselves, lying immanent in the Divine Soul. ⁸¹ Steady consciousness is conscious of whatever it is fixed upon at anytime or place. It shows all things real or unreal that are inbred or inherent in it.

⁸² Let our bodies rise or fall, and let our destinies overtake us as they will. Let happiness or misery befall us as they are decreed. They cannot affect the serenity of the indifferent soul. ⁸³ Hence it makes no difference to us whether these are realities or not, or whether it may be so or not so. Avoid your desire for anything. Be wise and at rest after all your wanderings.

Chapter 144 — The Individual Mind is a Microcosm of Brahman; Dreams and Creations; the Rules for the Dreams (Destiny) Are Inherent in Brahman

¹ The sage continued:—

The visible world is something in nothing, an entity based upon nonentity. It resembles our consciousness of things seen only in our dreams. As all things are eternally situated in the Divine Mind, there can be no meaning in our being bound to or liberated from them.² These worlds appearing to move before us are seen like specks of dust flying about in sunbeams. They are only impermanent phantoms in the air that appear like stable bodies in the minds of the ignorant.

³ Whatever is seen placed before us in any form or state is soon found to change its mode and manner. In the same way, all things here are in constant change, continually revolving like water in a whirlpool.⁴ The earth, air, water, and other elements are the materials that combine to form frail bodies that are doomed to decay and dissolve in a short time. Yet the ignorant expect it to last for kalpa and yuga ages.⁵ The world is a dream and the totality of existence a mere nothing. Yet the idea of existence that is had of this nonexistence is no other than a reflection of the one Eternal Intellect.

⁶ There are hundreds and thousands of other worlds to be seen in the skies like this solar world of ours, and we can believe that others have the same ideas about other peoples.⁷ We see seas and lakes swarming with living beings of various kinds, and find pools and bogs full of frogs everywhere. But none of them know anything about reservoirs or their inhabitants other than their own.⁸ A hundred men sleeping in the same room see as many different air-built castles in their dreams. In the same way, different worlds appear in the airy intellects of some which are unseen and unknown to others.

⁹ Just like many men sleeping in the same room dream as many different aerial cities, so these aerial worlds appear in the empty sphere of our minds. They are said to be in being and not being at the same time.

¹⁰ The sky is a miracle of the mind and a phenomenon of itself. It is visible without its form, appears as limited without its limitation, and as created without its creation.¹¹ The emptiness bearing the nature of the empty mind is vainly called the physical sky. It presents the forms of fleeting objects to sight as understanding represents its ideas and passing thoughts to our knowledge.¹² The memory of a thing is the cause of its dream by night, just as the desire of something (*samskara*) causes its conception in the mind, and as the apprehension of one's death comes from seeing it in others.

¹³ In the beginning of creation, the world appears as an image in the mind. It is only a flash or reflection of Divine Consciousness. No other name can be properly given to it other than a thought in Divine Consciousness.¹⁴ The saying that Brahman shines like world does not mean that he shines anew in the form of the world, but that this form eternally exists in his omniscience.

¹⁵ It is said that cause is identical with the effect because the common cause of all is specialized in its form of the effect. An action initially confined in the cause afterwards evolves into the germ of creation.¹⁶ When things we have not seen or known before occur in the mind in dreams, they are called pristine impressions in the mind and not the external objects of sense which are not innate in the mind.¹⁷ These mental impressions or memories are perceptible to us in our dreaming and not in the waking state. Yet they are not lost as long as we retain those impressions in the mind. They

naturally appear in the soul in dreaming, just as visible phenomena appear to sight in the waking state.

¹⁸ Thus the Vedantist comes to know the nonexistence of the outer world, and by knowing the knowable one, they come to attain their object.

¹⁹ The impressions of the waking state which occur in the state of dreaming are the newly made imprints of the waking hours on the memory. These make the sleeping hours seem like waking to the dreaming soul. ²⁰ These recent ideas fluctuate in the mind like the breath of the wind. They occur and reoccur of themselves without the agency of pristine impressions.

²¹ There is only one Consciousness that possesses many multitudes of airy dreams. Being dispossessed of them at last, it remains solely by and in itself. ²² The consciousness that we have of the dreams, ranging at large in the empty sphere of our intellect, is truly what we call the world. The lack of this consciousness in our sound sleep is what we call the extinction of the world. This comparison applies equally to the nature of the self-existed One.

²³ There exists only the infinite sphere of one eternal Intellect (*chidakasa*). In that Intellect appears an infinity of shapes, perpetually rising and setting in its open space like dreams. These are born of its own nature, are called the world, and bear the same intellectual form with itself. ²⁴ Thus the atomic particle of the Intellect contains the form of the entire cosmos within its open space. This cosmos is an exact pattern of its original model, just as the reflection in a mirror is the true representation of the original. ²⁵ The opening of the Intellect contains consciousness diffused in it like an atom being stretched. It extends throughout without beginning or end and this is called the cosmos. ²⁶ The emptiness of Intellect extends to all infinity. Connected with it is the appearance of the cosmos which is immanent and identical with itself at all times.

²⁷ Intellect is identical with the cosmos, therefore all minds and intellectual beings such as I and you are also worlds or microcosms. This is why the great macrocosm of the world is said to be comprised in the womb of an atom of consciousness in the mind. ²⁸ Therefore I, who is a minute soul, also have the form of the whole world. Hence I abide everywhere likewise, even in the midst of an atom. ²⁹ Being in the form of the minute atom of the intellect, I am also as great as the Universal Soul, and as expanded as the open air all around. I also see all three worlds wherever I live or move.

³⁰ I am an atom of the intellectual soul. I am joined with the intellectual soul of the universe. When I see the Supreme Spirit in my meditation, I am lost in it like a drop of water is lost in the ocean.

³¹ Having entered into the Divine Spirit and feeling its influence in me, I am filled with its consciousness. I behold the three worlds within me, just as the seed lies hidden within its husk. ³² I see the triple world expanding within myself, beside which there is no outer world on the outside of anybody.

³³ Whenever the world appears in any form, whether in gross or subtle form, such as in the states of our waking or dreaming, all these interior or exterior worlds are to be understood as reflections of the ideal one imprinted in the intellect. ³⁴ When the living soul indulges itself dreaming of sights of the world, it is to be understood as a reflection of the expanded particle of the intellect. The sleeping soul delights to show fondness upon such reflections.

³⁵ The hunter said, "If the visible world is causeless or without its maker, then how could it come into

existence? If it is a caused or created exterior world, then how could we have any knowledge of it during sleep when the soul is dreaming?"

³⁶ The sage replied:—

All this is without a cause. The world proceeded at first without any causality whatever.³⁷ Truly it is impossible for gross and perishable bodies and transient beings to come to being without a cause. But that which is only a copy of the original model of the eternal mind cannot possibly have any cause at all.³⁸ It is Brahman himself that shines brightly by nature of his intellectual brightness. Hence the world's creation and destruction are utterly inapplicable to what is without beginning or end.³⁹ Thus uncaused creation abides in the substance of the great God and shines forth with divine glory to all infinity. The appearance of gross bodies appears only to gross minds that are prejudiced with the grosser ideas of materiality.

⁴⁰ What numberless varieties appear in the unchangeable Brahman! What unnumbered diversities of shapes and forms are seen in the formless One that is ever unchanged and imperishable!⁴¹ Brahman is formless in his person, yet because he is the mind, he exhibits himself in many forms. There he represents his spiritual self in all the various forms of moving and immovable bodies.⁴² He makes gods, sages, and seers in his likeness, and also directs them to their different degrees and duties. He establishes the laws and prohibitions of conduct and appoints the acts and observances at all times and places.

⁴³ All existences and privations, productions and destructions, whether of moving or unmoving bodies, or great or small ones, are subject to his decree. None can ever transgress any of his general laws.⁴⁴ Ever since the general decree, nothing takes place without its proper special cause, just as you can never expect to extract oil from sand.⁴⁵ The destined decree of providence leads all events in the world. It is like one part of Brahman's body curbs the other part of himself, like we restrain the action of one hand by the other.

⁴⁶ This unavoidable destiny overtakes us, despite our prudence and will, like the sudden fall of a fruit on a flying crow. Destiny drives us along with its course, just as the tide carries waters with it.⁴⁷ The preordination of certain effects from certain causes is called destiny. Without that, there would be only disorder and disturbance, and not even Brahman can abide that. Therefore destiny is the imperishable soul of all existence.⁴⁸ Therefore destiny is the cause of all. Although it is unseen and unknown, yet it acts on everything as it is destined for them ever since their very production.

⁴⁹ The uncausing Brahman causes nothing. Yet the ignorant, through their error in judgment, mistakenly believe Brahman to be the cause of creation.⁵⁰ However, a wise man seeing the sudden appearance of the world before him, like the rotation of a wheel, considers its causes as such and such or this and that, just as they have been determined by their preordained destiny.⁵¹ All existent bodies have their special causes in their primordial destiny, which determines their subsequent lots in endless succession. Hence occurrences in our waking state, resembling visions in our dreams, are never without their antecedent causes.

⁵² I dreamed the destruction of the world caused by impacts of elements and waters. I dreamed this way because of its cause inbred in me. I had memories of the great deluge that I had heard in

traditional stories.⁵³ In this manner we see the reflections of almighty power in all things, just as we see crystals and shellfish shining with their intrinsic brightness.

May this Omnipotent power that is the ever-living soul of souls, known to us in our imperfect notion of him, be glorified forever and ever.

Chapter 145 — Concentration Expands Ideas; Descriptions of Body Fluids Affecting the Quality of Dreams

¹ The sage continued:—

The living soul perceives the dream of the outer world by means of the external organs of sense, and that of the inner world by the internal senses. But the quickness of both the internal and external senses gives the sensations of both these worlds to the soul.² When the outer senses are busily employed with outward objects, then the perceptions of mental objects and inner functions become faint and fainter by degrees.³ When the external senses are all directed to the inside and the inner senses are concentrated in the mind, then the object of thought and the idea of the world, however minute they had been before, gradually assume a more expanded form and present their extended appearances to the soul.⁴ In this manner the world which is nothing in reality, being once thought upon as something however small in its idea, expands itself in the mind to an enormous size, which at last also casts its reflection on the external organs of sense and make it appear so big and vast to sight.

⁵ When the eyes and senses of a living person are occupied with outer objects, then the soul only beholds the intellect in the form of the exterior world.⁶ The intellectual and intangible soul is composed of a collection of all outward sensations, namely hearing, touch, seeing, smelling and taste, as well as the four internal sensations of will.⁷ Therefore the living soul is always present at every place accompanied by all the senses. Hence the airy intellect is always unobstructed, knowing and seeing everywhere.

⁸ When the body fluids fill the veins and arteries of a living person, then the soul is lulled to sleep to see false visions in its dream.⁹ It seems to swim in a sea of milk and soar in the moonlight sky. It thinks it sees a clear lake about it, filled with full blown lotuses and their blooming buds.¹⁰ In itself it sees the flowery gardens of spring season covered in clothes of flowers, contending with the star-sparkling sky, and resounding with the warbling of birds and the buzz of humming bumble bees.

¹¹ It sees all merriment and festivity stirring in its mansion and the merry dance of playful ladies sporting in its compound. It views its courtyard filled with provisions of food and drink.¹² It beholds flowing streams like adolescent maidens running playfully to join the distant sea, encircled with swimming flowers and smiling with their flashy foams, darting about their fickle glances in flitting motions of shrimp fluttering on the surface of the water.¹³ It sees palaces and towers rising as high as the summits of the Himalayan Mountains and the tops of icebergs with their white washed walls appearing as if they were varnished with moonbeams.

¹⁴ It sees the landscape covered by the dews of the dewy season, or as hidden under the mists of winter, and shrouded by the showering clouds of rainy weather. It views the ground below overgrown with herb-bearing plants and muddy marshes grown over with blue lotuses.¹⁵ The woodlands are seen covered with flowers, herds of deer and weary travelers resting there that halted under the cooling shade of the thickening foliage of the forest, soothed by soft breezes of the woodland spot.

¹⁶ The flowery tree groves had all its gardens and vaulted places scattered with the flaring powder of flowers. The crimson dust of kunda, kadamba and mandara blossoms blush and cover the scenery all around.

¹⁷ Lakes are clothed in blue with blue lotuses and the ground wears the flowing floral garment of flowers. Woodlands are clear of clouds and the sky is clear and cold under the autumn sky. ¹⁸ The mountain range is crowned with rows of kunda, kadamba and kadali plantain trees. These trees wave their leafy fans on their exalted heads, which appear to nod at the dancing of the leaflets. ¹⁹ Tender vines shake without care, buds and blossoms upon them. They appear like young ladies dancing gracefully with strings of pearls on their slender bodies.

²⁰ It sees a royal palace and regal assemblies shining as brightly as a blooming lotus-bed in a lake. It also sees white chowry fans waving over them, like feathered birds flapping their wings over the floral lake. ²¹ It also sees running streams softly gliding in a playful mood with curling vines and flowers wreathed with their currents, murmuring along with the mixed music of birds on the branches beside them. ²² The earth is filled and flooded by torrents of water falling from mountain waterfalls. All sides of heaven are hidden by showers of rain and snow falling all about its vault.

²³ When the internal channels of the body are filled with bile fluid, the soul remains with its internal vigor as an atom in its cell, then sees the dreams of the following nature in itself.

²⁴ It sees flames of fire about it and red kinsuka flowers upon its withered trees, blasted by the winds. It also sees the forms of red lotus flowers burning like flames of fire before it. ²⁵ The inner nerves and veins became as dry of gastric juice as when clear streams turn to dry sandbanks. Then flames of wildfire appear and dark smoke flies over the darkened face of nature. ²⁶ Fire appears to be burning all around and the disc of the sun seems to dart its burning rays. Wildfires are seen in forests. Withered and dried ponds emit a poisonous gas instead of their clear waters. ²⁷ The seas are seen with boiling waters turning into beds of hot mire and mud. The horizon is filled with hot winds and the forests with flying ashes, while the deserts appear quite desolate all about. ²⁸ Moving sands spread about fly in the air like flights of storks.

The landscape appears different than in the previous example. The former greenness of the trees no longer comes to sight. ²⁹ The soul sees the fearful wayfarer covered by the burning sands of a parching desert. He is looking longingly on the distant tree by the wayside, spreading its cooling ambrosial shade over the parched ground. ³⁰ It sees the earth burning like a flaming furnace with all its lands and places hidden under ashes, and a dark cloud of dust covering the face of the sky on all sides. ³¹ The world appears in flames everywhere. All its planetary bodies, cities and seas, hills and forests and the open air are seen burning in a blaze. ³² It sees the empty clouds of autumn, spring and hot seasons serving to favor the fires instead of quenching them. It beholds lands below covered with grass and leafy vines that entrap them as coverings of clouds. ³³ It sees the ground glittering like gold everywhere and the waters of lakes and rivers, and even snowy mountains all lukewarm or hot.

³⁴ When the channels of the body are dried up for lack of gastric juice, they are filled with wind and gas. The soul, retaining its vigor, sees various dreams of the following description. ³⁵ Disturbed by the wind in its dream, understanding sees the homes of men, the forests and the earth quite differently from how they appeared before.

³⁶ The soul sees itself flying in the air with hills and hilly lands all around. It hears a rumbling noise like that of the whirling of chariot wheels. ³⁷ It seems to be riding about on horseback, or upon a

camel or eagle or on the back of a cloud, or riding in a chariot drawn by swans.³⁸ It sees the earth, sky, cities and forests appearing before it, trembling like bubbles in water as if in fear.³⁹ It finds itself fallen in a blind ditch, or in some great danger, or as mounting in the air upon a tree or hill.

⁴⁰ When the arteries of the body are filled with a combination of all three fluids of phlegm, bile and gas then the soul is led by the windy quality to see several dreams of the following nature.

⁴¹ It sees rainfall flowing down mountains and hailstones, to its terror, hurling down its sides. It hears hills and buildings bursting and sees trees moving about.⁴² Woods and forests appear to encircle the distant horizon which is overcast by huge clouds and traversed by big elephants and lions.⁴³ Palm and tamara trees appear to be burning all around. Hollow caves and caverns appear to resound with the harsh noise of flashing fires and falling trees.⁴⁴ Mountain crags seem to be clashing and crashing against one another and caves resounding to their harsh crackling sounds.⁴⁵ Mountain tops seem to clash against each other, emitting a harsh and hideous noise. Streams running among them appear to be wearing necklaces of the loosened vines and bushes which they carry away.⁴⁶ Fragments of rocks are seen carried away by mountain streams to the ocean. They carry torn bushes which seem to spread as far as the utmost pole.

⁴⁷ Craggy hills seem to crash each other with their sharp edges, crashing and splitting themselves with their harsh and hideous sounds.⁴⁸ Forest leaves with vines are scattered all around by the strong wind. Broken stones from mountains make their bed over the moss below.⁴⁹ Tall palm trees fall to the ground with a crushing sound, like the wars between gods and demons of the past. All birds fly with a harsh scream, like the crying of men on the last day of the destruction of the world.⁵⁰ All wood, stones and earth mix together as one mass, like the jiva soul in dream surrounded by soldiers of air.

⁵¹ Silence reigns like a worm underneath the earth, or a frog under a stone, or an embryo within the womb, or a seed within the fruit,⁵² like boiled rice and solidified liquid in a bowl, or a doll carved in the wall of a wooden pillar.⁵³ Vital air ceases to blow and all things get stalled as if they are encased within the hollow of the earth.⁵⁴ Deep darkness reigns there and deep sleep (*sushupti*) appears like a deep dark well within a mountain cave.

⁵⁵ As heavy food is digested by the body and becomes a separate juice with new energy, so the vital air which once disappeared makes its appearance again.⁵⁶ After digestion a certain kind of juice appears within the body in the shape of vitality, so the jiva soul experiences stones which begin to fall within.⁵⁷ As fire increases and creates more fire, a little adds a little more, so the combination of the three body fluids composes the inner and outer essence of the body.⁵⁸ Thus the living soul, confined within the bonds of the body and led by force of the three body fluids, sees the dreams of the absent world as it sees visions of visible phenomena, with its external organs of sense.

⁵⁹ The mind is liable to see its internal visions, in a greater or lesser degree, according to the greater or lesser excitement of the senses by the greater or lesser irritations of its body fluids. But if the action of the body fluids is uniform, then the course of the mind runs in an even course.

⁶⁰ The living soul, surrounded by irritated body fluids, looks out over the wide world and sees the earth and sky and mountains turning round and flames of fire issuing from burning piles.⁶¹ It finds

itself rising and moving in the skies with the rising moon and mountain ranges. It sees forests of trees, hills, and floods of water washing the face of heaven.⁶² It thinks it is diving and floating on water, or wandering in heavenly abodes, or in forests and hilly places, or floating in the sky upon the backs of white clouds.⁶³ It sees rows of palms and other trees ranged in the sky, and sees the false sights of hell punishments, such as the sawing and crushing of sinful bodies.

⁶⁴ It fancies itself hurled down by a turning wheel and rising instantly into the sky again. It sees the air full of people and thinks it is diving in waters upon the land.⁶⁵ It sees the business of daytime carried on everywhere at night, the sun shining at night as in daytime, and a thick darkness spreading over the face of the day.⁶⁶ Mountainous terrain is seen in the skies. The land is seen full of holes and ditches. Rows of buildings are seen in the air. Friendship is found combined with hatred.⁶⁷ Relatives are thought of as strangers and wicked people are taken for friends. Ditches and valleys are viewed as level land. Flats and plains appear as caves and caverns.⁶⁸ White mountains of milky whiteness and crystal gems appear sounding with the melody of birds. Clear lakes are seen gliding below, their water as sweet as butter.⁶⁹ Forests of various trees appear and houses adorned with women appear like lotuses filled with bees.

⁷⁰ The living soul thinks that it lies hidden within and is closed within itself, yet it perceives all these sights outside as if it were awake to them.⁷¹ In this manner, the work of impaired body fluids represents many such sights of external objects in the forms of dream to the minds of people.⁷² It is usual with men of disordered body fluids to see many extraordinary sights and fearful appearances, both within and without.

⁷³ When the internal organs are steady in their action, then the course of nature and the conduct of people appear in the usual state.⁷⁴ Then the situations of cities and countries, and the positions of woods and hills, are seen in the same calm, clear and unperturbed state as they are known to exist agreeably to the natural order of things, such as cool and clear streams, shady forests, and countries and paths traversed by travelers.⁷⁵ Days and nights decorated with pleasant sunbeams, moonbeams and starlight, and all other appearances, however unreal in their nature, appear as wonders to the sight and other senses.

⁷⁶ The perception of phenomena is as inherent in the mind as movement is inherent in wind. The essential property of the mind's nature is to see the unreal as real, to see the intrinsic, or what is derived from within the mind, as separate and extrinsic or derived from without the mind.

⁷⁷ The calm and quiet spirit of Brahman gives rise to all things which are equally calm and quiet. The world is mere emptiness without having any reality in it. The empty mind represents endless varieties of forms in the sphere of its own emptiness as the endless reflections of its empty person.

Chapter 146 — Brahman Does not Sleep, Dream or Awake

¹ The hunter said, “Tell me, O great sage, what did you do and see afterwards, from your seat in the false spirit of that person?”

² The sage replied:—

Hear me tell you what I did and saw afterwards, by my union and sitting within the spirit of that infatuated person.

³ As I resided in the dark cave of his heart, in the confusion of the last doomsday, I thought a hurricane arose which blew mountains away like straw on the day of the final desolation of the world. ⁴ It was soon followed by outpourings of rainwater from mountain tops which carried away woods and hills in its torrents. ⁵ As I dwelt in that opening in union with the vitality of that individual, even in that state of my spiritual minuteness, I perceived rain and hailstones falling from mountain tops.

⁶ Then I was enfolded within the vitality (*ojas*) of that person and fell into a state of sound sleep. I felt a deep darkness envelop me all over. ⁷ Having laid down in sleep for some time, I gradually woke up from my sleepy state, just as the closed lotus of the night unfolds its petals in the morning. ⁸ Then, as a man lying in darkness comes to see some circular discs appearing to sight, so I saw some flimsy dreams flying about and hovering over me. ⁹ Being released from the chain of sleep, I fell into a series of dreams. I saw a hundred shapes of things arising in my spirit, like shapes of unnumbered waves and billows rising on the surface of the sea. ¹⁰ Very many forms of visible things appeared in the cell of my consciousness, just as a great many flying things are seen moving about in the still and motionless air.

¹¹ As heat is inherent in fire, coldness is inherent in water, fluidity is characteristic of liquids, and pungency is immanent in pepper, so is the world inherent in Brahman. ¹² The nature of Consciousness being uniform and the same in itself, the phenomenal world is engrained in it, just as the dream of a new born child presents itself to the sight of a sleeping man.

¹³ The hunter asked, “Tell me sage. How is it possible for Consciousness to have the sight of anything in its state of sound sleep, since dreams never occur in the mind except in the state of light sleep?”

¹⁴ Again, when both you and the person in whose heart you merged were both in the state of sound sleep, how could the sight of the creation appear to you?”

¹⁵ The sage replied:—

Know that creation is expressed by words, namely *jayati* is born, *bhati* appears, and *kachati* shines. These words are applied indiscriminately to all material things, such as pots and pictures as well as the world itself. All these words are used by men whose brains are heated with duality to express a duality. ¹⁶ Know that the word born means only being and its synonyms are manifestation, which is derived from the root *bhu* to be. ¹⁷ Now the meaning of *bhu* is being, which word also expresses the sense of being born. The word *sarga* means production or creation. It is the same as being.

¹⁸ With us learned men, there is nothing made or born or destroyed. All is one calm and quiet unborn being. ¹⁹ The whole and soul of this entity is the one Brahman. The totality of existence is called the cosmos, the macrocosm, or the world. Say then, what substance or insubstantiality is there that can be

positively affirmed or denied of the One which is uniformly alike? ²⁰ That which is called the active energy of God literally resides in the Divine Spirit, but not as a free or separate power of itself. All power exists in omnipotence, which is identical with Brahman, and not as an attribute or part of him.

²¹ According to the reflection of men learned in divine knowledge, the properties of waking, sleep and dreaming do not belong to the nature of God because God never sleeps or dreams or wakes in the manner of his creatures. ²² Neither sleep nor the airy visions of dreaming nor anything else that we know or have any idea about can have any relation to the nature of the Inscrutable One, any more than the impossibility of our having any idea of the world before its creation. ²³ It is the living soul that sees the dream and imagines creation in itself. Pure Consciousness is quite unintelligible in its nature. It remains as clear as either in the beginning of creation.

²⁴ Consciousness is neither the observer nor enjoyer. It is something as nothing, perfectly quiet and utterly unspeakable in its nature. ²⁵ In the beginning there was no cause of creation and creative agent of the world. It is only an ideal of the Divine Mind, existing forever in the same state like a vision in a dream or an airy castle of imagination.

²⁶ The unwise apprehend individual intelligence as a duality, but never the intelligent. An ignorant man, like silly infants, is afraid of a tiger or snake that is painted upon his own body. But the intelligent, knowing them too well to be marked upon their own bodies, never suspect them as anything other than their own body.

²⁷ The one unchanging and translucent soul, without beginning, middle or end, appears to be varying and various to the unreflecting dualist and polytheist. But the whole which appears so changeful and noticeable to sight, is in itself a perfect calm and quiet and serene appearance.

Chapter 147 — The Sage Awakens within His Student, Becomes Absorbed in His Own Memories, and Forgets Himself; Unless One Cultivates Knowledge, One Relapses into Forgetfulness and Ignorance

¹ The sage continued:—

Hear me now, O strong armed archer, how I awoke from my sound sleep and saw the sight of the world in my dream, just a man rising to the surface from the depth of the sea surveys the heavens above him.

² I saw the heavens as cut out of the ethereal vacuum. I saw the terrestrials as sculptured out of the earth. I found them all to be fashioned out of the Divine Mind, or framed in that manner by my organ of sight. ³ The world appeared like an early blossom of the tree of the eternal mind, or like the ceaseless waves of a vast ocean, or like phantoms of my deluded eyesight. ⁴ It seemed to appear from the space of the sky above, or to have proceeded from all sides of heaven. Moreover, it seemed like masonry carved out of the mountains of all quarters of the sky, and also like a prodigy rising out of the earth. ⁵ It also seemed to have sprung out of the heart like any of its feelings or affections. It appeared to have filled all the space of emptiness, just like the all pervading clouds of heaven. I also thought it was like the produce of a large forest, or like seeds or grains growing out of the earth.

⁶ As pictures of houses with apartments are painted upon the planes of level plates, so the figures of living beings are drawn upon the smooth flatness of Consciousness, together with all the limbs and organs of their bodies. ⁷ These worlds appear to have sprung in some unknown part of Infinity, and to have presented themselves to our view like flying herds of distant regions coming to our sight, or as presents are brought to a prince from different lands, or as the retributions and rewards of one's good or bad deeds in this life meet him in following reincarnations.

⁸ The world is only a blossom of the great tree of Brahman, or a little wave in the vast ocean of eternity. It is a carving on the colossal pillar of Consciousness without being carved or cast. ⁹ Space is an ample field filled with an infinity of worlds that appear to be our earthly homes in an empty city of air. Like an infuriated elephant, the mind randomly wanders everywhere with an airy empty life as fickle and fleeting as a breath of air. ¹⁰ The building of the world has no foundation and is unsupported by any walls. The sky appearing so bright and variegated has no color or tint of its own. The magical power of the great magician displays these wonders and spreads a curtain of delusion over the ignorant and infatuated world.

¹¹ Though creation always seems so exuberant everywhere, yet it is quite quiescent, unbounded by any limitation of space or time. Though it appears as having great variety, yet it is a single unity. Though seemingly having great diversity, yet is all only one unchanging uniformity.

¹² A gandharva fairyland, for example, is exactly the same as this world in that both are unreal. The error that occurs to us in our dreams is the same that possesses us in our waking state of dreaming.

¹³ Only the reflection of the mind represents the absent past and future as already present before it, whether they relate to anything of time or place, or substance or action, or anything relating to its creation or its destruction.

¹⁴ There are numberless beings contained among every species of animal, which contain others

without limit in their ovaries, bearing microscopic organisms like seeds of pomegranate fruit.
¹⁵ Rivers, forests, and mountains are seen surrounded by clouds of the sky and studded with the shining stars of heaven. The sea is heard to resound with the loud alarm of battle drums raised by warring winds with conflicting currents.

¹⁶ Then before me I saw a visible sphere in which I saw the village of my prior dream. I recognized my former home. ¹⁷ I saw all my former friends and relatives in the same place and of the same age as I had seen them before. I saw my wife and my children sitting in the very same house. ¹⁸ Seeing my fellow villagers and my former village scenes, my heart wished to meet them as violently as the sea waves swell to meet the shore. ¹⁹ I began to embrace all my relatives, feeling happy with our reunion. Being absorbed in my desire to see more and more, I utterly lost all my memory of the past.

²⁰ As a mirror receives the reflection of whatever is present before it, so the mirror of the mind is wholly occupied with the objects of its future desires, and becomes unmindful of the past. ²¹ It is the emptiness (*chidakasa*) of Consciousness that has the knowledge of everything. There is no other principle of understanding beside Consciousness which ever exists by itself.

²² He who has not lost his pure understanding and his memory of himself is never misled by the demons of dualism and doubt to think of a duality. ²³ He whose understanding is awakened by his constant inquiry into truth and divine knowledge, and by his study of good scriptures and attendance on divine sages, does not forget his enlightenment anymore. ²⁴ He who is imperfect in his divine knowledge and whose mind is bound by worldly desires is liable to lose his good understanding, as if by the influence of an unfavorable planet or inauspicious star.

²⁵ Know, O hunter, that your understanding, which is not yet cultivated by association with the wise, is liable to fall into the error of duality and thereby involve you in repeated difficulties.

²⁶ The hunter answered, “It is all very true, O sage, that in spite of all your lectures, my understanding does not find its rest in the knowledge of the only true One. ²⁷ My understanding still hangs in doubt as to whether it is so or not. Though I rely upon my conception of the truth as you have declared, yet my mind finds no peace in it. ²⁸ Ah, though I fix my faith on the doctrine you have preached, yet I cannot rest secure in it as long as my ignorance reigns supreme in me. ²⁹ Unless understanding is enlightened in the company of wise men by attending the doctrine of the best scriptures and due examination of their teachings, there can be no end to the errors of the world, nor any rest for the weary soul wandering continually in a maze of errors.”

Chapter 148 — No One Can Say Whether Dreams Are Real or Unreal; Certainty Makes Things Real; There Is No Other Law of Dreaming

¹ The hunter said, "If the sight of the world is no more than a vision in dream, then O great sage, tell me, where lies its truth or falsehood? This is a matter of great doubt and difficulty to me."

² The sage replied:—

That dream which rises in our consciousness under the conditions of proper place and time, and right actions and things, is true and actually happens.³ A dream caused by the use of some gem or drug, or by effect of some mantra or amulet, actually happens, whether favorable or not to the dreamer.⁴ When a man's earnest desire presents itself in the shape of a dream before his mental sight, it comes to happen by accident, by the law of chance.⁵ Whatever we believe with certainty in our consciousness, the same is sure as fate. We are sure to see and become the same.

⁶ Certainty removes uncertainty. If anyone reaches certainty, uncertainty falls down absolutely.⁷ No object is ever situated inside or outside of anybody. Only consciousness assumes the various forms of worldly things and remains in the same state as it knows itself to be.⁸ The certainty arrived at by evidence of the scriptures, that phenomena are like appearances in a dream, makes it believed indeed. But a disbelief in this belief makes one a skeptic who wanders about in his doubts forever.⁹ If one gains his object by any means other than certainty, in spite of his belief in that the world is a dream, that gain is reckoned as imaginary only.¹⁰ Whatever is determined to be true in the world by the strong consciousness of anybody in his waking state, then either sooner or later in course of time and change of place, the same comes to be known as untrue.

¹¹ In the beginning the world existed in Divine Consciousness and was represented in its subtle and incompressible form. It had its essence in the mind of God, then extended its slender substance to any length according to its free will and desire.¹² Know that beside the true and immutable entity of the intellect of Brahman, all others are both real and unreal, and lasting and transient also.¹³ Brahman is the only one being and soul of all. There can be no other that may be called as such. Therefore tell me, what else is there that may be called a reality or a non reality?¹⁴ Therefore, neither the ignorant nor the enlightened part of mankind can say whether a dream is true or false at anytime.

¹⁵ The phenomenal world appears before us by delusion of our senses and misconception of our consciousness. The visible worlds, commonly referred to as illusion, has nothing of reality or certainty in it.¹⁶ Divine Consciousness flashes forth in the mind with the glare of the glaring world, just as fluidity is seen quivering and flowing in all bodies of waters and liquids.¹⁷ As one first sees a dream then afterwards falls fast asleep, so does everybody see phenomena in his waking state, then falls naturally into a deep and sound sleep.¹⁸ Know then, O great sage, that the waking state is similar to that of dreaming. Know the dreaming state to be like that of waking, and that both these states are only two phases of the one and the same Brahman.

¹⁹ Divine Consciousness is an empty and incomprehensible entity. The specious universe is only its reflection. The three states of waking, dreaming and sleeping are the triple foundations of the same being.

²⁰ There is no law regarding the effectiveness of dreams. How can you determine any rule for

ascertaining the results of various dreams?²¹ As long as the mind dwells on the appearance of dreams, it is troubled with its aimless wanderings. Therefore the sage must wipe their impressions off from his consciousness.

²² The temperament of the mind gives rise to dreams, like vibration in air causing wind currents. There is no other cause of dreams or any law that governs them, except that in sound sleep, these appearances entirely settle down and vanish.²³ The learned attribute the cause of impressions in our consciousness to external appearances of this thing or that. But relying on the doctrine that external objects have no cause, they prove to be nothing other than mere imaginations of the subjective mind.

²⁴ Therefore the only law with respect to this is that the appearances of things, whatever they be, are generally granted as such by the common sense of mankind.²⁵ Thus, as there is no law of dreaming, sometimes there is some truth in some dreams, and at others there is no truth in any of them at all. Because there is a lack of any constancy, it is only an accidental occurrence.

²⁶ Whatever appears subjectively to one's self, either from his own nature or by means of artificial devices, and whatever one is habituated to think of anything in himself, he sees the same in that form, both in his dreaming as well as waking states.²⁷ The appearances of things, both in men's sleeping and waking states, are merely the reflections of their minds. They remain the same whether when one is waking or lying in the imaginary city of his dreams.

²⁸ It is not enough to call only waking to be awake because a dream also appears as waking to the waking soul that never sleeps.²⁹ So there is nothing such as dreaming that may be called by that name. It is only a particular form of thinking in the Divine Mind which sees sleeping and waking in the same light.

³⁰ Or it may be that neither of the two states of waking or dreaming exists because the ever living soul of a dead person continues to behold the visible even after its separation from the body and its rebirth after death.³¹ The soul remains the same never becomes other than what it is regardless what state it is in, just as endless duration never changes with the course of time, and the ocean continues alike under its rolling waves, and airy space remains unchanged above the changing clouds.³² So creation is inseparable from the Supreme Soul, whether it exists or becomes extinct. As the perforations and marks in a stone are never distinct from it, so the states of waking and sleeping are coincident with the Divine Soul.

³³ Waking, sleeping, dreaming and sound sleep are the four forms of bodies of the formless and bodiless Brahman who, though devoid of all forms, is still of the form of whole creation, cosmos and the mundane soul.³⁴ The Supreme Soul that pervades and encompasses all space is visible to us only in the form of infinite space or sky. Therefore, endless emptiness being only the body of Supreme Consciousness, it is no way different from it.³⁵ Air, wind, fire and water, together with the earth and clouds on high, are reckoned as the causes of all creation, but they only exist in their ideal shapes in the mind of Brahman.³⁶ The Lord is devoid of all names and attributes. He remains united with his body of Consciousness containing the knowledge of all things within itself. Phenomena are never separate from their ideas.

Chapter 149 — Many People Sharing Same Event; Only Brahman Is a Possible “Cause”

¹ The hunter asked, “Tell me, O sage! What then became of the world that you saw in your dream? Tell me all about it until its final extinction.”

² The sage replied:—

Then listen as I tell you, O honest fellow, what then passed in the heart of the person in whom I had entered. Listen to the wonderful tale with proper attention.

³ As I remained there in that forgetful state of my transformation, I saw the course of time gliding upon me with its train of months, seasons and years passing imperceptibly by. ⁴ I passed there a full fifteen years in my domestic life, happy with the enjoyment of my married life.

⁵ It happened there, once upon a time, that a learned sage came as a guest to my house. I received the venerable and austere devotee with honor within my doors. ⁶ Being pleased with my honorable reception, he took his meal and he rested at ease. Then I asked him the following question regarding the happiness and sorrow of mankind.

⁷ “Sage,” I said, “you are possessed of vast understanding. You well know the course of the world and therefore you are not known to become angry at adversity or delight in prosperity. ⁸ All happiness and sorrow proceed from the acts of men engaged in busy life in the world. The farmer reaps good or bad crops in autumn according to how well he cultivated his field.”

⁹ “So when all the inhabitants of a place suffer and fall under some severe calamity all at once, are they all equally faulty in their actions at the one and same time? ¹⁰ We see famine, drought, portents and catastrophes repeatedly overtaking a large portion of mankind at the same time. Say then, is it owing to the wickedness of the people at the one and very time?”

¹¹ Hearing my words he stared at me. He looked as if he was taken by surprise and seemed confounded in his mind. Then he uttered these words of reverence and ambrosial sweetness.

¹² The sagely guest said:—

O well spoken! These words of yours indicate your highly enlightened mind and how well you have understood the cause of phenomena, be it real or unreal. Tell me, how did you come to know it?

¹³ Remember only the Universal Soul and think nothing about what you are and where you sit. Reflect well in yourself, what am I and from where and what is phenomena, and whether it is anything substantial or only an ideal of the mind. ¹⁴ All this is the display of dream. How is it that you do not know this yet? I am an imaginary being to you, just as you are the phantom of a dream before me.

¹⁵ The world you see is a formless and nameless nothing, a mere formation of your imagination. It flashes with the glare of the crystal Intellect and is a glaring falsehood in itself. ¹⁶ Therefore all forms whatsoever that you think or take to be anywhere are the true, nonfictional, and omnipresent Intellect.

¹⁷ Now, in assigning a cause to things, you will find that the Intellect is the cause of all. In ascribing one cause to anything, you have the uncaused and un-causing Intellect for everything. ¹⁸ The Universal Soul spreads through all and in whom all living beings reside. It is known as the common soul of all. It is regarded as residing in us and it is known to be all individual souls linked together in a series.

¹⁹ There will be other living beings in the future, with the common soul pervading in all of them, and causing their happiness or sorrow according to their desires. ²⁰ The soul is disturbed by the disorder of fluids in the body, then men's limbs and other body parts become disturbed likewise. ²¹ Drought, famine and destruction may come upon mankind occurring simultaneously of themselves, because ²² it is possible, O good soul, that there are many persons living together who are equally guilty of some crime at the same time and are waiting for their simultaneous punishment, falling like the fire of heaven on a forest.

²³ The mind that relies on the effectiveness of acts comes to feel the effects of its actions. But the soul that is free from such expectation is never involved in its acts or exposed to their results. ²⁴ Whatever one imagines in any form at any place or time occurs to him in the same proportion as he expected it, whether that object be with or without its cause.

²⁵ Imaginary appearances in dreams are in no way accompanied by their immediate or accessory causes, as all actual existences are. Therefore this imaginary world is the appearance of the everlasting Intellect of Consciousness, which is Brahman itself. ²⁶ The world, appearing as a false dream, is only a causeless unreality. But considering it as the appearance of Brahman, it has both its cause and reality.

²⁷ The casual occurrence of dreams deludes our consciousness of them. So the accidental appearance of the world is equally delusive of our understanding of it. Its extension is a delusion like the expansion of a dream. ²⁸ Everything appears to be as caused or uncaused as we take it to be. ²⁹ It is a deception of the understanding to take the imaginary world to be the product of a real causality. It is natural to the waking state to take the world as real which, in our sleep and dreams, appears quite calm and unreal.

³⁰ Now hear me tell you, O great minded sage, that the one Existent Being, Brahman, is the sole cause of existence. What else can cause all nature and this all pervading vacuum? ³¹ Say, what can be the cause of the solidity of the earth and the lightness of air? What is the cause of our universal ignorance? What is the cause of the self born Brahman? ³² What may be the cause of creation and what is the origin of the winds, fire and water? What is the source of our apprehensions of things that are mere vacuum in empty intellect? ³³ Tell me, what can be the cause of the rebirth of departed souls into the mass of material bodies? The course of creation is going on in this manner from the beginning. ³⁴ Thus all things seem to be going on and reoccurring in this world, like wheels and spheres turning in air, because we have a constant habit of thinking and seeing them as such.

³⁵ Thus the great Brahman himself, in the form of Brahma the Creator, spreads and moves throughout the world. Afterwards this Brahma receives as many different names as the different phases and forms he displays in nature, such as the earth, air and the like. ³⁶ All creations move about like fluctuations of winds in the spacious firmament of the Divine Mind which conceives of itself various forms of things in its own imagination. ³⁷ Whatever it imagines in any form or shape, the same receives the very form as a decree of fate. Since these forms are the very images or ideas of the Divine Mind, they are considered to form the body of God.

³⁸ Whatever likeness the Divine Intellect first designed, it bears that same form and figure to this day.

³⁹ But as the Divine Mind is all powerful and omniscient, it is able to alter them and make others anew by its great efforts. ⁴⁰ Whenever anything is supposed to have a cause, it is also thought to be subject to the will of that cause. Wherever there is no hypothesis of a cause, there is no capacity or possibility of its alteration. ⁴¹ Like vibration in air, the world first existed as an idea in the Divine Mind. As it was insubstantial before, so it continues ever still.

⁴² They who amass the merits or demerits of their pious or impious deeds reap the good or bad rewards or results accordingly in this life. There are others who are crushed under a thousand disasters, falling upon them like showers of hailstones or the thunderbolts of heaven.

Chapter 150 — The Sage in the Dream Is the Sage Who Forgot Himself in the Dream: He Imagined Everything

¹ The sage then said:—

It was through this kind of reasoning that my sagely guest made me acquainted with whatever was worth knowing. ² Then by pleading, I forced my guest to remain longer with me. He consented to stay at my house, which resembled the home of a dead, ignorant person. ³ The sage who spoke those instructive words to me, bright and cooling as moonlight, behold him to be the same venerable person who is now sitting beside you.

⁴ Without me having to ask, the sage gave me the following speech to remove my ignorance. It was as if Agni, the god of sacrifice, had risen out of the fire pleased with my sacrifice.

Vasishta speaking:—

⁵ Hearing these words of the sage, the hunter was confounded with wonder. He could not understand how the sage who explained the theory of dreaming was the same sage sitting before him.

⁶ The hunter said, “O, it is a great wonder, inconceivable in my mind, that the sage who expounded the nature of dreams is now manifest before me. ⁷ I wonder at this, O sage, that the sagely guest you saw in your dream and who explained the cause of dreams to you, should now be seen in this waking state.

⁸ Say, how could this imaginary sage seen in your airy dream appear in a solid body and sit calmly here, like the fancied ghost of children? ⁹ Please explain your wonderful story, in due order. Who is he and from where does he comes in this questionable form?”

¹⁰ The sage replied:—

Hear me patiently, O fortunate man. Let me relate this wonderful story. I will tell it briefly, but you must not be hasty about it.

¹¹ This sage who now sits by you, who I had then met, told me that he was a learned man and had come to tell me his tale too long to relate. ¹² As he said these words, he remembered his former nature, which was as bright and fair as the clear sky at the end of spring season.

¹³ O, I also remember that afterwards I became a sage with an expanded mind. My heart was swollen with joy and I remained amazed at my wonderful change. ¹⁴ In that state of my life, I was happy from my desire for the enjoyments of the world. But I had been deceived like a weary passenger pursuing a mirage with eager expectation of water. ¹⁵ Alas, that the phantoms of the phenomenal world should so attract even the wise, just as the tempting fiends of hell deceive mankind only to mislead them.

¹⁶ Alas, even I wonder at how I was misled by my own ignorance. I was misled by my false knowledge of the world to this state of life which is utterly devoid of every good. ¹⁷ Whatever I am, I find I am full of only errors. There is no truth whatever in me, yet it is the error of errors and the greatest blunder that we should be so deceived and betrayed by unrealities. ¹⁸ I am neither this nor that nor any other entity at all. Yet it is a wonder that all these false appearances should appear as realities.

¹⁹ Then what must I do now to break my bondage to these falsities? I see the germ of error lying inside me. This I must tear off and cast away from me. ²⁰ If there is a primeval ignorance prevalent all over

the world, she, being a mere negation herself, can do us no harm. Now I must try to get rid of my error of considering the unreal as real.

²¹ That this sage is my teacher and I am his student is all a mistake because I am in and am the very same Brahman and the person sitting next to me is like the man on the moon or in a cloud. ²² Then I thought of speaking to that great sage of enlightened understanding. So thinking, I addressed him saying, ²³ “O great sage! I will now go out from the body of this person into my own body so that I may see what I may be doing there.”

²⁴ Hearing this, that great sage said smilingly to me, “Ah! Where are those bodies of you two that are blown far away in their ashes? ²⁵ You may go there yourself, if you please, and see the matter yourself. By seeing their present state, you will know everything relating to them.”

²⁶ Being thus advised by him, I thought of entering my former body. To reach the place where it was located, I united my soul (*jiva*) with his vital air (*prana*) flow. ²⁷ I told him, “Do remain here, O sage, until I come back here after seeing my former body.” So saying I became a breath of air and fled from my home.

²⁸ Mounting on the wind, I wandered through the air, gently blown a hundred ways like the scent of a flower. For a long time I was carried rapidly all about by fragrant breezes. ²⁹ Wandering long in this manner, I tried to enter that body through its lungs. But finding neither that or any other passage, I kept floating in the air. ³⁰ Then with deep felt sorrow, I returned to my place and again became tied to that world by my returning affections for it. ³¹ Returned to my house in that place, I saw that venerable sage sitting before me, and earnestly asked him in the following manner.

³² “Tell me sage,” I said, “for you know all the past and future. Your all seeing sight allows you to know what all this is. ³³ How was it that I could not find the person whose body I had entered or my own body? ³⁴ I wandered throughout the vast expanse of the sphere of this earth, and searched among all fixed and living bodies there, but I could not find that opening of the throat from which I had come out.”

³⁵ Being thus addressed by me, that high minded sage then said:—

It is not possible for you to find with your bright and brilliant eyes unaided by my advice. ³⁶ If you should search after it with the light of your yoga meditation, then it is possible for you to find it out as fully as one sees a lotus placed in his palm. ³⁷ Now therefore, if you wish to listen to my words, then pay attention to my advice and I will tell you all about it.

³⁸ Know that just like sunlight expands lotus blossoms in a lake, Brahma’s enlightening beams develop the lotus of understanding. You can know nothing by yourself.

³⁹ You once sat in meditation and dreamt your abstract reverie of entering into the heart of another person. You were confirmed in your consciousness of that belief. ⁴⁰ You believed you saw the three worlds and the great sphere of heaven and earth contained in the bosom of the heart of that person you thought you had entered. ⁴¹ In this manner, as you were absorbed in your reverie thinking you resided in the body of another person, you happened to fall asleep and your hermitage in the forest suddenly caught fire and was burnt down.

⁴² The burning hut sent forth clouds of smoke to the sky. Blazing cinders flew to the sun and moon.
⁴³ Flying ash covered the sky like a grey cloud or an ash-colored blanket, covering the blue vault of heaven with a canopy. ⁴⁴ Wild animals fleeing from their caves and caverns let out horrible yells and growls. Bursting sparks filled the horizon. ⁴⁵ Tall palm and other trees caught fire and appeared like trees of fire. Flying and falling fire cracked like clattering clouds. ⁴⁶ The flames leaped high in the air and appeared like lightning fixed in the sky. The sky assumed a face like that of molten gold. ⁴⁷ Fiery sparks flying far into the starry sky doubled the number of stars in heaven. Flashing fires in the open space of the sky delighted the eyes of ladies. ⁴⁸ Blowing and booming fires, roaring in the hollow sky, startled sleeping foresters in the woods. They rushed out from their caves and caverns and wandered about in the forest. ⁴⁹ Wild beasts and birds, half burnt in their caves and nests, fell and lay dead on the ground. Lakes and river waters boiled with heat and foresters were suffocated by fumes. ⁵⁰ Young chauri bulls were burnt in the flames. The stink of burning fat and flesh of wild beasts filled the air with nasty stench. ⁵¹ This all devouring wildfire, raging like the fire at the end of the world, wholly consumed your hermitage, like a serpent devours its prey.

⁵² The hunter asked, "Tell me sage, what was the real cause of this fire? Why were the brahmin lads who dwelt in that ashram also burnt?"

⁵³ The sage replied:—

The vibration or effort of the will or designing mind is the true cause or incentive for the production or demolition of a desired object. Its inactivity is the cause for the absence of the three worlds. ⁵⁴ As a sudden fear or passion causes palpitations of the heart, so an effort or desire of the mind is the mobile force that causes the three worlds. ⁵⁵ The vibration of the Divine Mind causes the imaginary city of the world together with its increase of population and its rains and draughts.

⁵⁶ The will in the Divine Mind is the source of the creative mind of Brahma, which in turn gives rise to the minds of the first patriarchs who transmit it to others in endless progression. All of this proceeds from the first quiet and calm intellect through the medium of vacuum. ⁵⁷ The learned well know that the brightness of the pure and empty Consciousness shines in the vacuum of their own intellects. But the ignorant think that it is what appears to them, which is not the reality.

Chapter 151 — The Dream Sage's View of Inexistence

¹ The other sage, the one in the dream, continued:—

Afterwards the whole village, together with all its dwellings and trees, were burnt down to ashes like dry straw. ² All things being burnt away, the two bodies of the two of you who had been sleeping there were also scorched and burnt, like fire heats and splits a large rock.

³ Then the fire set upon satisfying itself by devouring the entire forest, just like the sea sat below its basin after its waters were sucked up by sage Agastya. ⁴ After the fire was quenched and the ashes of the burnt cinders had become cold, they were blown away by gusts of wind, just as the winds carry away heaps of flowers. ⁵ Then nothing was known about where the hermit's hut and the two bodies had been carried away, or where was that imaginary city and its great population that had been seen as vividly as if waking. ⁶ In this manner, the two bodies disappeared. Their existence remains in the conscious soul as a memory of externals remains in the mind when the unconscious body is in the state of dreaming.

⁷ Therefore, where is that passage of the lungs and where is that jiva soul, the self of Virat, anymore? They are burnt away together with the vigor and vitality of the dead body. ⁸ On account of this, O sage, you could not find those two bodies and wandered about in this endless world of dreams, as if you were awake.

⁹ Therefore know that this mortal state is like a mere dream that appears as if awake. All of us are only daydreams. We see each other like we see imaginary beings in our dreams. ¹⁰ You are an imaginary man to me, and so also am I to you in this intellectual sphere in which the soul is situated within itself. ¹¹ Before you had been an imaginary being in your life, until you thought you were a waking man in your domestic life.

¹² Thus I have described the entire matter to you as it has occurred to you, and which you well know by your own conception, perception and meditation of them. ¹³ Know at last that it is the firm conviction of our consciousness which shines forever in the emptiness of our minds like the glitter of gold. The intellectual soul catches the color of our deeds, be they fair or foul or a mixture of both, in its state of a regenerated spirit.

Chapter 152 — The Dream Sage Proposes Living with the Hunter's Sage

¹ The sage, the one in with the hunter, resumed:—

Saying so the sage held his silence and lay himself in his bed at night. I was as bewildered in my mind as if I had been blown away by the winds. ² After a long time, I broke my silence and spoke to that sage, “Sage, in my opinion, such dreams appear to have some truth and reality in them.”

³ The other muni sage replied:—

If you can believe in the truth of your waking dreams, then you may also rely upon the reality of your sleeping dreams. But should your daydreams prove to be false, what faith can you place on your night dreams? ⁴ The entire creation from its very beginning is no more than a dream. It appears to be comprised of the earth and other elements, yet it is devoid of everything. ⁵ Know that the waking dream of this creation is more subtle than our recent dreams by night. O lotus eyed teacher of the hunter, you will shortly hear all this from me.

⁶ You think that the object you now see in your waking state in the daytime appears to you in the form of dream in your sleep. So the dream of the present creation is derived from a previous creation which existed from before as an original model in the emptiness of the Divine Mind. ⁷ Again, seeing the falsity of your waking dream of this creation, how do you say that you entertain doubts regarding the untruth of sleeping dreams, knowing full well that the house in your dream is not yours? How do you want to show fondness upon it anymore?

⁸ In this manner, O sage, when you perceive the falsity of your waking dream of this world, how can you be doubtful of its unreality anymore?

The hunter's sage speaking:—

⁹ As the sage was arguing in this manner, I interrupted him with another question. I asked him to tell me how he came to be the hunter's teacher.

¹⁰ The other sage replied:—

Hear me relate this incident to you also. I will be brief, but know O learned sage, that I can easily extend it to any length.

¹¹ I have been living here as a holy hermit for a long time. I have been solely employed in the performance of my religious austerities. After hearing my speech, I think you too would like to remain in this place. ¹² Seeing me situated here, I hope you will not leave me here alone as I truly desire to live in your company. ¹³ But then, I will tell you sage that in the course of some years hence, a dreadful famine will come to pass in this place and all its people will be swept away. ¹⁴ Then there will be warfare between the raging border chiefs and this village will be destroyed and all its houses will be emptied of their occupants.

¹⁵ Then let us remain in this place, free from all troubles, in perfect security and peace, free from all worldly desires by our knowledge of the knowable. ¹⁶ Here let us reside under the shelter of some shady trees and perform the routine of our religious functions, just as the sun and moon perform their revolutions in the solitary sky. ¹⁷ Then many kinds of trees and plants will grow in this desert land and deserted place and cover the surface of this lonely place. ¹⁸ The land will be adorned with fruit trees

with many singing birds sitting upon them. The waters will be filled with lotus beds, with the humming bees and chakora birds chirping amidst them. We shall find happy groves for our rest like the Nandana paradise garden of heaven.

Chapter 153 — Prediction of the Arrival of the Hunter; the Sage's Self-Inquiry Results in the Conclusion that the One Soul Is the Cause of All

¹ The other, dream sage said to the hunter's sage:—

When both of us are living together in that forest, remaining in our practice of austerities, a certain hunter will appear, weary with fatigue from chasing a deer. ² Then you will rescue and enlighten him through your meritorious lectures. Then, from his aversion to the world, he will commence and continue to practice austerities. ³ Continuing in his austere meditation, he will desire to gain spiritual knowledge and will ask questions about the phenomena of dreaming. ⁴ Then you will instruct him fully in divine knowledge. He will become proficient in it through your lectures on the nature of dreams. ⁵ In this manner you will become his religious instructor. It is for this reason that I have spoken to you with the title of the hunter's guru.

⁶ Now I have told you about our errors of this world, what I and you are now, and what we shall become afterwards.

The hunter's sage speaking:—

⁷ Hearing what he said and learning all these things from him, I became filled with wonder. He was more amazed as I discussed these matters with him. ⁸ Thus we passed the night in conversation. After we got up in the morning, I honored the sage with due respect and he was pleased with me.

⁹ Afterwards we continued to live together in the same simple hut in the same village with our steady minds and our friendship daily increasing. ¹⁰ In this manner time glided peacefully upon us with the revolutions of his days and nights, and the return of months, seasons and years.

I have been sitting here unmoved under all the changes of time and fortune. ¹¹ I do not long for a long life, nor do I desire to die before the destined day. I live as well as I may, without any care or anxiety about this or that.

¹² Then I looked upon the visible sphere and began to thinking what and how and from where it was, and what can be its cause. ¹³ What are these multitudes of things, and what is their cause? Is it all only the phenomenon of a dream appearing in the emptiness of Consciousness? ¹⁴ The earth and heaven, air and the sky, hills and rivers, and all the sides of space are only pictures in the Divine Mind displayed in empty air.

¹⁵ The moonlight of Consciousness spreads its beams all around the ample space of emptiness. It is this which shines as the world, which is an indelible copy in the air of Supreme Consciousness.

¹⁶ None of this earth or sky, these hills and valleys, is really in existence. Neither am I anything at all. It is only the reflection of the Supreme Mind in empty air.

¹⁷ What could be the cause of an assemblage of solid bodies when in the beginning there is no material cause for material bodies? ¹⁸ The conception of matter and material bodies is only a fallacy. What can be the cause of this error other than delusion of the sight and mind?

¹⁹ The person in whose heart I remained in the manner of his consciousness was burnt down to ashes together with me. ²⁰ Therefore this vacuum which is without beginning or end is full with the reflection of Divine Consciousness. There is no efficient or instrumental or material cause of

creation, except it being a shadow of the substance of the Divine Mind.

²¹ All these pots and pictures, these prints and paints before us, are only the prints of the Divine Mind. You can never get anything without its mold. ²² But Consciousness too has no brightness of its own, except its pure clarity. For how can a mere emptiness have any light other than its transparency? ²³ Consciousness is the pure Intelligence of the extended entity of Brahman. It shows the panorama of the universe in itself. What else can the visible be and where else can they be seen? ²⁴ There is only one omnipresent soul, uncaused and not causing, without beginning, middle or end. ²⁵ He is the essence of the three worlds and their contents. He is something as the universal intelligence, and shows all and everything in itself.

Chapter 154 — The Sage Describes His Own Life and Admonishes the Hunter to Practice Becoming Established in Knowledge

¹ The hunter's sage continued:—

Having thus considered the vanity of the visible, I remained free from my anxious cares about the world. I became passionless and fearless, without any ego and abiding in the state of nirvana.² I became without support and not supporting anything. I remained without depending upon anybody. I was quite calm with my self-composure and my soul was elevated and rested in heaven.³ I did as my duty called, doing nothing of my own accord. I remained as void and blank as an emptiness devoid of all action and motion.⁴ Earth and heaven, the sky and air, mountains and rivers, and all that lies on all sides and the sides themselves are nothing but shadows in the air. All living bodies are no more than the embodied Consciousness or intellectual bodies.⁵ I am quiet and composed and manage myself as well as I can. I am quite happy in myself. I have no injunction or prohibition to obey, nor do I have to act an inner or outer part.

⁶ Thus I resided here in my even temper with the same course of my mind and actions. It is by mere chance that you have come to meet me here.

⁷ Thus I have fully explained the nature of dream and my personal self to you, together with that of the phenomenal world and yourself.⁸ Hence you have well understood what is this visible world that lies before you, and also what these other beings and people are, and after all, what is Brahman.⁹ O hunter, now that you know that these things are all false, you must have peace of mind with the conviction that all this is the representation of the Intellect in empty air. It is this that is dimly seen, nothing else.

¹⁰ The hunter replied, "If it be so, that I, you and even the gods are nothing, as you say, then all these are only the phantoms of a dream, and all men are no men, and all existence is nonexistence."

¹¹ The sage replied:—

It is truly so. All and everyone of us is to each other like the apparition of a dream, like phantom dream beings in the panoramic cosmos of the world.¹² These dream beings appear in forms according to one's conception of them. The only one appears as many, like the rays of light. All these radiations cannot be wholly true or untrue, or even a mixture of both.¹³ The imaginary city of the world that appears in our waking state is only a waking dream or an apparition of our minds. It appears like the appearance of a distant city that we never saw before.

¹⁴ I have fully explained all this to you already and you have been enlightened in the subject to no end. Now you have grown wise and know well all and everything. Do therefore as you may like best for you.

¹⁵ Though thus awakened and enlightened by me, your corrupt mind is not yet turned to reason or found its rest either in transcendental wisdom or in the transcendent state of the most high.¹⁶ Without habit or practice you cannot concentrate your wandering mind in your heart, nor can you attain the height of wisdom without the practice of constant reflection.¹⁷ It is impossible to attain the summit of perfection without your habitual observance of wisdom, just as it is impossible for a block of wood to contain any water unless it is scooped out to form a wooden vessel.

¹⁸ Habitual reliance upon wisdom and constant attendance to the teachings of the scriptures and spiritual guides, tend to the removal of the mind's uncertainty between unity and duality and set the mind to its ultimate bliss of nirvana quietism. ¹⁹ Indifference to one's worth and state, passivity to all worldly affections, refraining from the evils of bad associations, and abstaining from all earthly desires and cravings of the heart, ²⁰ joined with one's deliverance from the chains of dualities and freedom from all pleasurable and painful associations, are the surest means that lead the learned to the state of unalterable bliss of nirvana.

Chapter 155 — Agni Describes the Hunter's Astonishment; the Sage Predicts the Hunter's Tapas, Boon to Become Huge, and His Huge Body Falling on the Earth

¹ The fire god Agni said:—

Upon hearing all this, the hunter was lost in wonder and remained as dumbfounded as a figure in a painting of a forest. ² He could not pause to fix his mind on the Supreme Being and appeared to be out of his senses and mind, as if he was hurled into a sea. ³ He seemed to be riding on the wheel of his reverie, pushing him onward with the speed of a bicycle, or appeared to be caught by an alligator carrying him speedily up and down in the currents of his meditation. ⁴ He was drowned in doubt wondering whether this was the state of nirvana or delusion. He could not find rest, but was tossed headlong like a headstrong youth in his foolhardiness.

⁵ He thought the visible was the work of his ignorance, but then he had a second thought, that this delusion of the world was the production of Providence. ⁶ “Let me see,” he thought, “the extent of the visible from the beginning. This I will do from a distance, by means of the spiritual body which I have gained by means of intense meditation. ⁷ I will remove myself to a region that is beyond the limit of the existent and nonexistent worlds. I will rest quiet in a place above ethereal space.”

⁸ Having thus determined, he became as dull as a fool. He set his mind to the practice of yoga meditation, as it had been taught to him by the sage who had said that no act could be fruitful without constant practice. ⁹ He left his habit of hunting and applied himself to austerities in company with sages and seers. ¹⁰ He remained long at the same spot in the society of sagely seers. He continued in the practice of his sacred austerities for very many years and seasons.

¹¹ Remaining long in the discharge of his austere duties, the entire time suffering the severities of his difficult penance, he once asked his sagely guide when he would obtain peace and release from these struggles. The muni responded to him this way.

¹² The muni said:—

The little knowledge that I have given you is a spark of fire able to consume a forest of withered wood, though it has not yet burnt down the impression of this rotten world from your mind. ¹³ Without the habit of practice you cannot have transcendental bliss in knowledge. With practice, it is possible to attain it in the course of a long time. ¹⁴ Such truly will be your case if you will rely upon my assurance of this and wear my words as a jewel about your ears, knowing them to be forecasting events in this world.

¹⁵ You praise the unknown spirit of God in your ignorance of his nature. Your mind is hanging in uncertainty between your knowledge and ignorance of divine nature. ¹⁶ You are led of your own accord to inquire into the nature and extent of the cosmos, which is only a phantom of delusion. ¹⁷ For ages you will be employed this way in your difficult understanding of making this research, until Brahma the creative power will appear before you. He will be pleased with your investigation into his works. ¹⁸ Then you will ask a favor of your blessing god, that he release you from your heavy doubt of the reality or delusiveness of the world.

You will ask, saying, ¹⁹ Lord! I see the cosmic panorama of the phenomenal world spread out

everywhere like a delusion before our sight, but I want to see a place which exhibits the true mirror of the Divine Mind and which is free from the blemish of all that is visible.²⁰ The mirror of the empty mind, though as minute as an atom, yet represents the reflection of this vast universe in some part or other within it.²¹ Therefore I want to know how far this boundless world extends for only our misfortune, and how far the sphere of ethereal space stretches beyond it.²² It is for this that I ask your good grace, to make me acquainted with the infinite space of the universe. Accept my prayer, O you lord of the gods, and readily grant this my request."

²³ "Strengthen and immortalize my body and make it mount upon the regions of sky with the speed of the garuda bird of heaven.²⁴ Make my body increase to the length of a league each moment until it encircles the world like its surrounding sky.²⁵ Let this preeminent favor be granted to me, O great and glorious god, that I may reach beyond the bounds of the sky which surrounds the sphere of the visible world."

²⁶ Being thus supplicated by you, O righteous man, the lord will say to you, "Be it as you desire," then he will disappear like a vision from your sight, vanishing into the air with his attendant gods along with him.²⁷ After the departure of Brahma with his accompanying deities to their divine abodes in heaven, your thin and lean body, emaciated by your austerities, will assume a brightness like that of the brilliant moon.²⁸ Then bowing down to me and getting my leave, your radiant body will mount to the sky instantly in order to see the object of your desire which is settled in your mind.

²⁹ It will rise high into the air like a second moon, and higher still than the bright sun itself. It will blaze above as brightly as a burning fire defying the brightness of the luminaries.³⁰ Then it will fly upwards in the empty sky with the force of the strong winged garuda, running forward with the speed of a running current to reach the ends of the world.³¹ Having gone beyond the limit of the world, your body will increase in its bulk and extent and become as swollen as the ocean at the time of dissolution when it covered the face of the entire universe.

³² There you will find your body growing bigger and bigger still, like a big cloud filling the empty space of air which is devoid of all created things.³³ This is the great emptiness of the Divine Spirit, filled with the chaotic confusion of elements flying about like whirlwinds. It is the unbounded ocean of the Infinite Mind swelling with the waves of its perpetual thoughts.³⁴ Within this deep and dark emptiness you will find numberless worlds and created bodies hurling headlong in endless succession, just as you perceive a continuous series of cities and other objects appearing in your dreams.

³⁵ As the torn leaves of trees are seen tossed about in the air by a raging storm, so you will see multitudes of worlds hurled to and fro in the immensity of the Divine Mind.³⁶ As the passing world presents a faint and insubstantial appearance to one looking down at it from the top of a high citadel, so all these worlds appear as mere shadows when viewed from above in their spiritual light.³⁷ As the people of this world see black spots on the moon that are never observed by the moon's inhabitants, so these worlds are supposed to exist in the Divine Spirit. But in reality they are nothing other than the fleeting ideas of the Infinite Mind.

³⁸ Thus you will continue to worlds after worlds, moving in the midst of successive spheres and skies,

passing a long time viewing creation stretching to no end.³⁹ After seeing multitudes of worlds crowding the heavens like the leaves of trees, you will be tired to see no end of them in the endless abyss of Infinity.⁴⁰ Then you will be annoyed at this result of your meditation and the expansion of your body that allowed you to observe the immensity of space.

⁴¹ “Of what good is this big body which I bear like a heavy burden upon me? It is so big that by comparison, millions of mountain ranges a great as Mount Meru shrink away like bits of straw.⁴² My boundless body fills the whole space of the sky but answers no purpose whatever that I can possibly think of.⁴³ My heavy body measures the whole space of the visible world, yet remains in the darkness of ignorance without its spiritual knowledge, which is the true light of the soul.”

⁴⁴ “Therefore I must cast off this huge body, which is of no use to me to acquire knowledge or to keep company with wise and holy men.⁴⁵ Of what good is this big and bulky body to scan the unknowable infinity of the endless and unsupported Brahman, whose essence contains and supports the whole of this universe?”

⁴⁶ Thinking so in yourself, you will throw away your bloated body by exhaling your breath. Then you escape your frame like a bird casts off the skin of a fruit after sucking its juice.⁴⁷ After casting off the mortal lump and turmoil of your body, your soul will rest in empty air accompanied with its respiratory breath of life, which is more slender than the subtle ether.⁴⁸ Then your big body will fall down on earth, just like when the great Mount Meru fell on the ground when angry Indra cut off its wings. Your body will crush all earthly beings and smash mountains to dust underneath.⁴⁹ Then the dry and starved goddess Kali, with her hungry host of Matris and spirits, will devour your prostrate body and restore the earth to its purity by clearing it of its annoyance.

⁵⁰ Now you have heard me fully describe your future fate. Therefore go to the tali forest that is some distance away and remain there practicing your austerities as well as you may like.

⁵¹ The hunter replied, “O sage, how great are the sorrows that are awaiting me, and which I am destined to undergo in my vain pursuit after knowledge.⁵² Pray tell me sage. Do you have anything to say how I may avert the great disaster that you have predicted? Tell me also, is there any means to avoid the destined evil?”

⁵³ The sage replied:—

There is no person and no power whatever that is ever able to prevent the eventualities of fate. All attempts to avert them are thrown on one’s back.⁵⁴ There is no human power to change the relative positions of the limbs of one’s body, so there is no possibility to alter the decree of fate.⁵⁵ The knowledge of the science of astrology serves only to acquaint us with the events of our fate. There is nothing in it that can help us to counteract the arrows of adverse fortune.⁵⁶ Therefore those men are blessed who, with their knowledge of sovereign predestination, are still employed in their present duties, and who after the death and burning of their bodies, rest in the eternal peace of Brahman in their consciousness.

156 — The Hunter Becomes King Sindhu and Defeats King Viduratha; His Minister Explains the Events of Viduratha, Lila, and Saraswati

¹ The hunter asked, “Sage, tell me what will become of my soul that remained in the air and my body that fell on the earth?”

² The hunter’s sage replied:—

Listen carefully as I tell you what will become of your lost body on earth and your living soul sustained in the air.

³ The body being withdrawn from your whole self, your soul will assume an aerial form and will remain in empty air united with its vital breath. ⁴ In that airy particle of your soul, you will find the surface of the earth situated in the recess of your mind. You will see it as clearly as see the world in your dream. ⁵ Then, from the inner desire of your heart and in the fullness of your mind you will see that you have become the sovereign lord of this wide extended world.

⁶ The will of this idea rises of itself in your mind. You have become a king named Sindhu who is highly honored by men. ⁷ When you are eight years of age, your father will depart from this mortal world and leave you this extensive earth, reaching to its utmost boundaries of the four seas. ⁸ On the borders of your kingdom you will find a certain lord named Viduratha who will rise as your enemy. You will find it difficult to conquer him.

⁹ Then you will reflect upon your past and peaceful reign of a full hundred years. You will think of the pleasures you have so long enjoyed in the company of your consort and attendants. ¹⁰ “What a misfortune that this lord of the bordering land has now risen against me in my old age, putting me to the trouble of waging a formidable warfare against him.” ¹¹ As you are thinking in this way, there will occur the great war between you and that lord of the land. All the four branches of your army will be greatly defeated and reduced. ¹² In that great war, you will succeed and kill that Viduratha by striking him with your sword while standing on your chariot.

¹³ Then you will become the sole lord of this earth to the limits of its four oceans. You will become dreaded and honored by all, like the regents of all the sides of heaven. ¹⁴ Having thus become the sovereign monarch of the earth, reigning over it under the name of mighty Sindhu, you will pass your time conversing with the learned scholars and ministers of your court. ¹⁵ The minister will say, “O lord, it is a mighty wonderful deed that you have achieved by killing the invincible Viduratha in single combat.”

¹⁶ Then you will say, “Tell me, O good man, how did this Viduratha grow powerful to become so very rich and possess forces as numerous as the waves of ocean? What caused him to rise against me?”

¹⁷ The minister will reply, “This lord has Lila as his lady. She had won the favor of the fair goddess Saraswati, the support of the world, by her extreme devotion to her. ¹⁸ The kind goddess took this lady as her foster-daughter and enabled her to achieve all her actions, even to obtain her liberation with ease. ¹⁹ It is by favor of this goddess that this lady Lila was able to annihilate you with a single nod or word. Therefore it was no difficult task for her to destroy you all at once.”

²⁰ Sindhu then will answer him saying, “If what you say is true, it is wonderful indeed. Then how could the invincible Viduratha be slain by me in warfare? ²¹ If he was so highly favored by the goddess, how could he not get the better of me in combat?”

²² The minister will reply, “Because he always prayed to the goddess with earnestness of his heart to give him liberation from the cares and troubles of this world. ²³ Now then, O lord, this goddess, who knows the hearts of all men and confers to all the objects of their desire, gave you the victory you sought and by your hands conferred on Viduratha the liberation he sought.”

²⁴ Then Sindhu will respond, saying, “If that is so, then I must ask. Why didn’t the goddess confer the blessing of liberation on me also? I have been so earnestly devoted to her at all times.”

²⁵ The minister will then reply, “This goddess resides as intelligence in the minds of all men and as conscience in the hearts of all individual beings. She is known to all by the title of Saraswati.

²⁶ Whatever object one constantly desires and earnestly asks of her, she is ever ready to confer as it is felt in the heart of everyone. ²⁷ You, O lord, never prayed for your liberation at the shrine of this goddess. You craved for your victory over your enemies, which she accordingly has decided to confer upon you.”

²⁸ Sindhu will then respond and say, “Why is it that this King Viduratha did not pray to the goddess of pure wisdom to obtain a kingdom like me, and how was it that I neglected to pray to her for my final liberation as he did? ²⁹ And why is it that the goddess knowing the desire of my heart for liberation, left me only to desire it without attempting to seek after it?”

³⁰ To this the minister will reply saying, “The tendency of doing evil is inherent in your nature, so you neglected to bow down to the goddess and pray to her for your liberation. ³¹ It is well known since the creation of the world that intrinsic disposition forms the nature of man. This truth being evident to all from their boyhood to age, there is nobody to ignore or repudiate it at anytime. ³² The purity or impurity of the inner heart, to which one is habituated by his long practice and habit, continues to prevail over all his qualities and actions to the very end. There is no power to deny it in any manner.”

Chapter 157 — The Minister Explains Creation and King Sindhu's Tamasic Nature; the King Retires and Attains Nirvana

The hunter's sage speaking:—

¹ Then King Sindhu will say, “Tell me sage. What kind of a bad person was I? How ignorant was I that I still retain the evil propensities of my past life and am doomed to be reborn in this earth.”

² The minister will say in his reply, “Hear me attentively for a while, O king. I will tell you this secret which you require me to relate. It will surely remove your ignorance.”

³ “There is a self existent and being without decay from all eternity, without its beginning or end. It is called the great Brahman and it is known here under the names of ‘I’ and ‘you’ and ‘this’ and ‘that.’⁴ I am that self same Brahman by the consciousness of my self reflection. This becomes the living principle with the power of reasoning. This power does not forsake its personality.⁵ Know that this Consciousness is a spiritual substance with a form rarer and more transparent than that of the subtle ether. This is the only being in existence and there is nothing in it which is of a material substance.”

⁶ “This formless takes the form of the mind by being combined with the act of willing. It sees this and the next world in its state of life and death, and of waking and sleep.⁷ The mind, though formless, stretches itself into the form of the world of phenomena, just as the formless air expands itself in the form of vibration in all material bodies.⁸ The world is identical with the mind, just as the seeming and visible sky is the same as empty emptiness. So the material is the same as the intellectual and there is no difference whatever between the material and mental worlds.⁹ This network of worlds resides in the mind, in their immanent impressions in it. In reality, the outer world is only the formless mind. The cosmos consists of ideas in the formless mind. Its appearance of form has no real substance in it.”

¹⁰ “At first there arose the pure personality of the impersonal and Universal Spirit of God in the person of the creative power known under the name of Brahma. This personal god assumed to himself the name of Ego from his will of creation. The undivided spirit was divided into many impure personalities from its desire of becoming many.”

¹¹ Then Sindhu will say, “Tell me sage, what you mean by impure bodies and personalities? How and from where come these names of the Supreme Being, the Indefinite One?”

¹² The teacher-minister will reply saying, “As all embodied beings possess bodies with organs and limbs, so the bodiless spirit is comprised of an infinite variety of minor spiritual forms under it. These are known as good or bad spirits.¹³ The very same one spirit then calls all these different parts of itself by various names. The incorporeal spirit assumes to itself an endless variety of material and land and water natures and names.¹⁴ Thus the Universal Spirit continues to exhibit in itself all the various forms of this imaginary world at its own will. It gives a distinct name and nature to each and everyone of these representations of itself.”

¹⁵ “When the Divine Spirit decided to conceal itself into the personality of Brahma, and in those of me or you and other individualities, it became altered from its state of original holiness and purity to those of impurity and foulness, known as passion and inertia.¹⁶ The unalterable pure nature of the holy spirit of God, being thus transformed to un-holiness, passed into different states of impurity in the

living souls of beings."

¹⁷ "The spirit of God is breathed as the living soul in an animal body. The soul that comes to perceive its imprisonment in flesh and its doom to suffering is said to be of the pure *sattva* nature. ¹⁸ Those who, while still living in the world, possess politeness and good qualities, are said to be of a *sattva* good nature. ¹⁹ Those who are born repeatedly, destined to the enjoyments of life until their final liberation at the end, are designated as having a *rajas* nature. ²⁰ Those souls who are born in this lower world who are inclined to practice only their manly virtues are famed as having merely *rajas* nature. They are few in number."

²¹ "Those souls who have been undergoing repeated reincarnations since the beginning of creation, and who are continually wandering in bodies of inferior beings, are said by the wise to belong to the species having the most impure *tamas* nature. Even so, it is possible for them to attain their salvation in the end. ²² Those who have been wandering in many births in the forms of vile animals, until they attain their salvation at the end, are designated as merely vile *tamas* nature by the wise who are versed in the distinction of classes."

²³ "Philosophers have classed the emanated souls of beings into many grades and species among which, O my respected sage, your soul is reckoned among the vilest of the vile *tamas* nature. ²⁴ I know you have passed through many births of which you know nothing. These have been as various as they were filled with the different scenes of life. ²⁵ In vain you have passed all your lives doing nothing that is useful, most particularly your late sky life with that gigantic body of yours. ²⁶ Being thus born with the vile class of your soul, it is difficult for you to obtain your liberation from the prison house of this world."

²⁷ Sindhu will then say in his response, "Tell me sage. How can I divest myself of this inborn vile nature of my soul so that, by your counsel, I may learn to live and purify my soul to correct the conduct of my life? ²⁸ There is nothing in all these three worlds that is hard to acquire through earnest endeavor and intense application. ²⁹ As a failure of the previous day is corrected by its correction today, so one can purify the pristine impure soul by pious acts of the present day. ³⁰ Whoever yearns for anything and labors hard is sure to gain it in the end. The negligent are sure to meet with failure. ³¹ Whatever a man is intent upon doing and tries to effect at all times, and whatsoever one desires with earnestness and is constantly devoted to its pursuit, he is to succeed and have his object without fail."

³² The hunter's sage related:—

The king being thus instructed by his minister, was determined to resign the burden of his state, and to renounce his realm and royalty even at that very moment. ³³ He wished to retire to some far distant forest, and he asked his ministers to manage his kingdom. But they declined to take the charge, though the state was free from all its enemies.

³⁴ He then remained in the company of wise men, enlightened by their discourses like sesame seeds became fragrant by being placed in a heap of flowers. ³⁵ Then from his inquiries into the mysteries of his life and birth, and into the causes of his confinement in this world, he obtained the knowledge of his liberation. ³⁶ Thus by means of his continued inquiries into truth and his continual association with

the wise and good, the soul of Sindhu attained a sanctity so holy that compared to it, the prosperity of Brahma is like a bit of straw or the dried leaf of a withered tree tossed about by the winds of the sky.

Chapter 158 — Agni Completes the Story of the Fall of the Hunter's Huge Body

¹ The hunter's sage resumed and said:—

I have thus related these future events to you as if they were past accounts. Do now, O hunter, what you wish and think best for yourself.

² Agni the god of fire said:—

Hearing these words of the sage, the hunter remained aghast in wonder for a while. Then rising with the sage, they went to bathe themselves in the nearest pool.³ In this manner they continued together, conducting their religious austerities and discussions at the same place, remaining in terms of disinterested friendship with one another.⁴ After some time the muni sage met with his final extinction in the state of nirvana. By casting off his mortal body, he obtained his last rest in the state of transcendent tranquility.

⁵ In course of time and the lapse of ages, it pleased the god Brahma to give the hunter a call in order to confer upon him the object of his desire.⁶ The hunter, unable to resist the impulse of his longing, begged to obtain the very same favor blessing of his god which the sage had predicted to him.⁷ “Be it so,” said the god, and he returned to his favorite abode. The hunter flew aloft into the open air in order to enjoy the fruits of his austere meditation.

⁸ He flew with incredible velocity to the extensive empty space which lies beyond the spheres of worlds. It was over the course of an incalculable duration that the ever expanding bulk of his body filled the regions of the upper sky, like a mountain range stretches across this lower world.⁹ He flew with the force and swiftness of the great garuda, up and down and to all sides of heaven, until the huge bulk of his body occupied the whole area of open air over the course of an indefinite period of time.

¹⁰ Thus increasing in his size with the course of time, and infatuated in the maze of his delusion, he began to grow uneasy in himself.

¹¹ From the great anxiety of his mind, he suppressed the respiration of his breath until he breathed out his last breath of life in the air. His body dropped down as a carcass in the earth below.¹² His mind, accompanied by his vital breath, fled through the air into the body of King Sindhu who became the ruler of the whole earth and the great antagonist of King Viduratha.¹³ His great body, resembling a hundred mountain ranges, became a huge mass of a carcass that fell down with hideous clattering of thunder, like one earth falling upon another.¹⁴ At a certain time, it shines like a ball of hair (*kesandraka*). At other times it appears like a covering of a huge range of buildings in sky.

¹⁵ I have already related to you, O learned sage, how this huge carcass fell from above and covered the surface of this earth.¹⁶ The earth where this huge carcass fell resembled in every way this earth of ours, which appears to us as a city in our dream.¹⁷ Then the dry and big bellied goddess Chandi devoured this carcass, filling her bowels with its flesh and stuffing her entrails with its red hot blood.

¹⁸ The earth is called *medini* or fleshy from the flesh of this corpse which spreads over its surface with its prodigious bulky frame.¹⁹ It was this huge fleshy body which was reduced to the substance of the earth over time. It received the name of the earth from the dust of this body.²⁰ This fleshy earth gave rise to forests and habitable parts. The fossil bones rose high in the forms of mountains from underneath the ground, which grew everything useful to men.

Chapter 159 — Vipaschit (Bhasa) Wanders; Indra Says He Has Still to Become a Deer; Indra Cursed by Durvasa; Bhasa Explains How All Possibility Lies within Brahman

¹ The god of fire added:—

Go now O wise Vipaschit, to your wished for abodes and with the steadiness of your mind, conduct yourself with proper behavior everywhere on earth. ² Indra, the lord of the assembly of creatures, has been performing his hundred sacrifices in his celestial abode. There I am invited to attend by his invocation.”

³ Bhasa (Vipaschit) said:—

Saying so, Lord Agni disappeared from that place. He passed through the transparent ether like the electric fire of lightning. ⁴ Then I was led by my predestination to roam about in the air and direct my mind to the investigation of my allotted acts and the termination of my ignorance. ⁵ I again saw an innumerable host of heavenly bodies wandering about space, holding their positions in different worlds containing inhabitants of different natures and customs.

⁶ Some of these were of the same form and resembled floating umbrellas in the sky. Their shining appearance and slow motion attracted the hearts of men. ⁷ Some of them were of earthy substance, but shining and moving onward like mountains in motion. ⁸ Some were of woody appearance and others of a stony substance. But they were all airy bodies, all moving onward in their uninterrupted course.

⁹ I also saw some figures like carved stone statues standing in the open space of my mind, talking together all their entire days. ¹⁰ In this manner, for a long while I saw many such figures, like images in my dream. I was quite bewildered in my utter ignorance of them.

¹¹ Then I intended to perform austere meditation to obtain my liberation. The god Indra appeared to me and said, “No, Vipaschit. You are doomed to become a deer again. You are not entitled to liberation now. ¹² You are propelled by your previous inclination to prefer the pleasures of heaven. Therefore I must direct you to dwell in my paradise and wander there amidst my gardens of mandara trees.”

¹³ Being thus bid by him, I replied and said to him, “I am weary, O lord, with the troubles of the world, and want to get my release from them. Therefore ordain my immediate emancipation from them.”

¹⁴ The god listened to my prayer and said, “Emancipation attends on the pure soul, cleansed from all its desires. This has already been explained to you by the god of fire. Therefore ask some other boon,” said he. I begged him to tell me about my next future state.

¹⁵ Indra replied and said, “I find you fated to be changed into the state of a deer from the fond desire of your heart to wander about and feed freely in the fields. ¹⁶ By becoming a deer, you will have to enter the holy assembly of Dasharata where another deer like you has previously obtained his liberation by listening to the spiritual instructions I had delivered there. ¹⁷ Therefore be born with your pensive soul as a deer in some forest on earth. Then you will come to recollect your past life from listening to Vasishta describe it. ¹⁸ You will learn there that all this existence is only the delusion of a dream, the creation of imagination. You will hear the account of your future life depicted in its true color.”

¹⁹ “After being released from the body of the deer, you shall regain your human form and perceive rays of holy light shining in your inner spirit. ²⁰ This light will dispel the long prevailing gloom of ignorance from your mind. Then you shall attain nirvana, like the calm and breathless wind.”

²¹ After the god had said so, I had the conviction of being a deer in this forest. I entirely forgot my human nature under my firm conviction of having become a deer. ²² Ever since I have been living in these woods under my impression of being a deer. Ever since I have been feeding upon the grass and herbs growing on the mountain top. ²³ Once I saw a body of soldiers coming on a hunting excursion. Being frightened at the sight, I started to flee. ²⁴ They laid hold of me and took me to their place where they kept me for some days for their pleasure. At last they brought me to this place before Rama.

²⁵ Thus I have related to you all the incidents of my life and the magical scenes of the world too full of marvelous events. ²⁶ It is the production of our ignorance that pervades all things and branches out into innumerable forms in everything that presents itself to our view. There is nothing whatever to dispel this darkness, except the light of spiritual knowledge.

²⁷ Valmiki relates:—

Then, as Bhasa (Vipaschit) remained silent after speaking in this manner, he was approached by the well minded Rama with the following words. ²⁸ Rama said, “Tell me sage. How can a person without any desire of his own see the object of another’s desire in himself? How could the deer which arose in your desire (*sankalpa*) be seen by others in Indra’s Paradise?”

²⁹ Bhasa (Vipaschit) replied:—

Let me tell you that the earth where the huge carcass fell was once before trodden upon by Indra with the pride of his having performed a hundred sacrifices. ³⁰ There, strutting along with his haughty strides, he met the hermit Durvasa sitting still in his meditative mood. Believing him to be a dead body lying on his way, he knocked Durvasa down with his feet. ³¹ At this the angry hermit threatened the proud god, saying, “O Indra! As you have dashed me with your feet by thinking I was a lifeless corpse, so will a huge carcass shortly fall upon this ground and slash it to pieces and reduce it to dust. ³² And as you have spurned me as a dead body, so are you cursed to be crushed on earth under the falling carcass.”

³³ He who before was the king of kings was transformed into a deer. He remained in that appearance according to his ideas. ³⁴ In truth, neither the actual world is a reality, nor the imaginary one an unreality. In fact, they are the one and same thing, whether we conceive it as the one or other.

³⁵ Listen now, O Rama, to another explanation which clearly settles the point in question. ³⁶ He in whom all things reside and from whom everything proceeds, who is all in all and who is everywhere in all must be the one that you may call All and beside whom there is none at all. ³⁷ It is equally possible for him to bring forth whatever he wills to produce as it is for him not to produce whatever he does not wish to bring to existence.

³⁸ Whatever anybody earnestly desires eventually must come to pass to him in reality. This is as true as the example of light always being accompanied by its shade. ³⁹ If it is impossible for the desire and its act, which are opposite in their nature, to meet together in fact, then it would be impossible for the

God of all forms to be all things both in being and not being. Therefore, the objects of our desire and thought are equally present with us as the real ones.⁴⁰ There is a reality attached to every form of existence. There is nothing which of itself is either an entity or a nothing.

⁴¹ O the great magic of illusion which is over everywhere and pervades all nature in every form and at all times and binds all beings in inescapable delusion.⁴² The nature of the great God comprises the community of spirits in his spirit. It combines in itself all laws whether permissive or prohibitive acting in concert and eternal harmony.⁴³ His infinite power has displayed the ignorance which spreads over all the three worlds from time with or without beginning. Only our delusion depicts all things in their various forms to our view.

⁴⁴ How could the creation that was once destroyed by the great deluge come to resuscitate again unless it were a rehash of the memory of the past one? The elementary bodies of water, air, fire and earth could not possibly be produced from nothing.⁴⁵ Therefore the world is nothing other than a manifestation of divine nature. This is the verdict of the scriptures and the conviction of mankind from the very beginning of creation.

⁴⁶ Things which have no sufficient proof for their material existence can easily be proved to exist by being considered with proper understanding.⁴⁷ Things of a subtle nature, imperceptible by the senses, are known in their essence by the understanding of the learned. Hence the essence of Brahman is pure understanding, of which we are quite ignorant owing to our ignorance of the Intellect.

⁴⁸ The world is obvious to us from its form, just as air is evident by its vibration. Hence nobody is born or dies here.⁴⁹ That I am living and the other is dead are conceptions of our minds. Hence death, being only the total disappearance of the visible world from our view, must be as pleasing to us as our own deep sleep.⁵⁰ If the life or rebirth of a man is his ability to perceive the visible, then there is nothing in the world which is commonly called the life or death of beings.⁵¹ At a time, the intellect appears a duality, and at other an unity. Both are nothing but intellect.

⁵² It is the reasoning of Divine Intellect that infuses its intelligence into all minds. What is life without the intellect and the faculty of reasoning?⁵³ The intellect being free from pain, there is no cause of complaint in any intellectual being. The word “world” and all that it means to express are only manifestations of empty intellect.

⁵⁴ It is wrong to say that the intellect is one thing and the body is another because the Unity is the Soul of all and pervades all diversity. As waves and whirlpools are seen in waters, so are all these bodies known to abide in the Supreme Being.⁵⁵ The universal permeation of divine essence, like that of the subtle air, is the Cause of causes and the sole Cause of all. Hence the world is also a subtle substance, being only a reflection of Divine Intellect.

⁵⁶ It is wonderful how this subtle world appears to us to be a solid body. It is only our conception of it as such that makes it appear so. But conception is no substance at all. Therefore the world has no materiality in it.⁵⁷ The demon of error reigns over us in its aerial form, deluding us to take the shadowy world as substance. In fact, this creation of error is as nonexistent and void as the empty creation of the intellect.⁵⁸ Hence this nether world below and the ethereal worlds above are as void as the super-physical world of Divine Consciousness. All these, being only reflections of the Divine

Mind, are exhibited in various ways.⁵⁹ The Intellect being a subtle entity, there is nothing like a solid substance anywhere. Phenomena are all insubstantial subtleties, though they appear to us as solidified realities.

⁶⁰ The knowledge of true reality and unreality are so blended together that we must remain in mute silence, like a block of wood or stone, to pronounce anything affirmative or negative about either.

⁶¹ The visible whole is the infinite Brahman. This universe displays the majesty of the great God. All these bodies are various forms exhibiting the infinite attributes of God.⁶² In this manner, the substance of Divine Consciousness displays in itself. It is the empty spirit of God that manifests this insubstantial world in its own emptiness.

⁶³ The number of living beings since the beginning of creation is unlimited everywhere. Of these there are many that exist either in their corporeal or incorporeal forms.⁶⁴ There are spiritual masters and other spiritual beings living with their subtle natures and subtle forms in the Supreme Being. They live in groups in all elements, but never come to perceive each other even though they are of the same kind.

⁶⁵ The liveliness of the visible world, being purely of aerial and empty form, is never seen in its true and intellectual light, except when it appears to us in aerial shapes in our dreams.⁶⁶ The world, being well known, remains as it does in our inner conception of it, like a hazy mist appearing to sight at the end of night.⁶⁷ When seen from a distance, the world is a dark and indistinct maze with nothing distinguishable in it. It becomes clearer from a closer view. By keeping far away you lose sight of it altogether.

⁶⁸ As particles of water fly off and fall back into the sea, so do the atoms of consciousness in all living beings continually rise and subside in the vast ocean of the Divine Mind.⁶⁹ This grandeur of creation is like the crowding multitude of our dreams which lay slumbering in the hollow space of the Divine Mind. Therefore know these emanations of Divine Consciousness to be as calm and quiet as the undisturbed spirit of God.

⁷⁰ I have seen infinite glories of creation and I have felt the various results of my deeds to no end. I have wandered for ages in all quarters of the globe. But I found no rest from the struggles and troubles of the delusive world, except in the knowledge of the vanities of the world.⁷¹ Ignorance appears as true knowledge since it is carried inside himself by Brahman as knowledge.

Chapter 160 — Vasishta Explains that Ignorance is Limitless and Is Brahman; Description of Heaven and Hell; the Mind, an Aspect of the Body, Is Carried Forward in Rebirth

¹ Valmiki related:—

As Bhasa (Vipaschit) was going on saying these things, the sun wished to put an end to his speech and proceeded with rapid strides to enlighten another world.² Loud trumpets gave the alarm of the departing day and filled the air on all sides with their swelling sounds. All quarters of heaven seemed to echo their joy of the fanfare of victory.

³ King Dasharata gave Vipaschit many gifts of money, maidservants and houses. He bestowed on him many rich and royal presents worthy of kings. Then he rose from his seat.⁴ The king, Rama and Vasishta, having taken leave of the assembly, saluted one another in proper order, then returned to their respective homes.⁵ Then, having bathed and refreshed themselves, they passed the night in ease and rest. The next morning they returned to the assembly and sat in their respective seats.

⁶ Sage Vasishta resumed the subject of the previous discourse. He spoke his sweet words with such pleasure in his face as if the beautiful moon was shedding her ambrosial beams from her bright and cooling face.

Vasishta speaking:—

⁷ Let me tell you, O king, that despite all his efforts, Vipaschit has not been able to ascertain the limits, extent or true nature of ignorance. It is not an error of the mind that makes the unreal appear as real.⁸ The nature of ignorance, as long as it is unknown, appears to be eternal and endless. But being understood, it proves to be as nonexistent and as nothing as clear water in a mirage.

⁹ You have already heard, O wise monarch, the story of Bhasa, King Vipaschit. Now you shall hear of his liberation in his living state.

¹⁰ It is likely that he will become acquainted with truth from some or other source or discourse. Then he will be liberated in his lifetime by being freed from his ignorance.¹¹ Since this ignorance is ever accompanied with Consciousness of the Lord himself, it is for this very reason that unreality is falsely taken for the reality.¹² If this ignorance is an attribute of God, then it is nothing other than the same God. The unknown or mysterious nature is nothing other than the inscrutable nature of God.

¹³ This ignorance is infinite. It produces endless offshoots like the sprouts of spring. Some are tasteless and others tasty; some are delicious, while others are ripe and intoxicating.¹⁴ Some grow like thorny plants and are all hollow inside and outside. Others are straight and herb-like, such as juicy sugarcane.¹⁵ Some are unfruitful and unprofitable. Others attract the heart by their untimely blossoming, which only predicts evil without any desirable good.

¹⁶ Ignorance has no form or shape except that of its shapeless bulk which fills all worlds. It is a long and broad mass of darkness infested by demons and devils.¹⁷ All that is visible appears to our view in the clear sky like false light and phantoms in the open air, and like the linked and twisted specks of light curling about in the sky. In reality, they are only fallacies of our vision.¹⁸ The various scenes stretched everywhere in empty space without any connecting link between them are like the many colored rainbows of heaven presented by falling rains that melt into empty air.

¹⁹ The universe resembles a river swollen with rains, all its worlds like countless waves of water with dirty and foaming froths floating everywhere, revolving planets like frightening currents and whirlpools. ²⁰ The world is a vast and dreary desert forever exhibiting waters of mirage on its surface while, in reality, it is only a body of dust filled with the ashes of dead bodies.

²¹ As a man wandering in the fairyland of his dream finds no end to his journey, so have I been wandering forever in the land of my waking dream without finding any end to my travelling. ²² The web of desires that I have been fondly weaving for so long, at last proved to be fragile and frail. Hence men of firm minds learn in a short time to abandon their desires for any of the whole panoply of visible objects. ²³ All those objects contained in the empty space of Consciousness are like precious germs safely stored in the container of the mind. By our misconception of them, they appear like visible objects placed in the open space of air.

²⁴ Those worlds are like the celestial cities of the siddhas, the spiritual masters who are situated in the air and are quite invisible to us. Those who do appear to our view are nonentities, mere phantoms of our fancy. ²⁵ The heavenly abodes of siddha godly souls appear to be overflowing with gold, precious gems and rubies, with rivers yielding pearls and fields of diamonds. They are abundant with food supplies and rivers running with clear and drinkable waters. ²⁶ They are said to abound with honey and wine, with milk and curds, with butter and clarified butter also. There are streams of sweet drink and groups of celestial apsara nymphs. ²⁷ There fruits and flowers grow in gardens in all seasons. Heavenly apsaras are always playing in the tree gardens. All sorts of gains and enjoyments readily attend on anyone's immediate desire.

²⁸ There a hundred suns are shining on one side and a thousand moons on another. Some inhabitants are dressed in gold and purple while others are drinking their fill of nectar. ²⁹ There is a spontaneous darkness in one place and full sunshine in another, and an everlasting joy in some place. The siddhas, the perfected spirits with their light and ethereal bodies, are continually moving like a breeze from one place to another. ³⁰ Some meet with birth and death at each moment, while others live to enjoy the everlasting joys of heaven. ³¹ There are magnificent palaces and great honors of all sorts. It is filled with the delights of all seasons and with whatever is desirable to the mind and delectable to the spirit.

³² But these desirable blessings attending upon the pious deeds of virtuous find no place in the quiet minds of the righteous. ³³ There is nothing that is desirable to the soul which is devoted only to the contemplation of Brahman. Say therefore, O you unholy, of what good are all these blessings if they do not lead to divine bliss?

³⁴ If in the beginning there was no creation at all owing to its lack of a creator, say then, what is this world, of what it is composed, and how did it come into existence? ³⁵ If the world is not produced by any cause and is nothing in reality, then how does it appear to exist? The everlasting will of God manifests itself in the Divine Mind, just as we see the display of our rising thoughts and wishes in our mind. ³⁶ O you simpletons, it is the same as how you or I or he comes to see our imaginary castles in the air. It is by the stretch of our imagination, or the liveliness or flights of our fancies.

³⁷ He whose sole pursuit and object in life is divine bliss comes to attain that supreme bliss after he forsakes his mortal body. ³⁸ Whoever pursues both heaven and heavenly bliss through his religious

rites and sacrifices in this life afterwards acquires both.³⁹ The siddhas reign in the said manner, according to the thoughts in their minds, while the unholy are doomed to the torments of hell owing to the sinful thoughts of their minds.⁴⁰ Whatever one thinks upon, he feels the same in himself as long as he possesses his mortal body. After he loses his material body, he feels it in his mind, which is only a part of the body.

⁴¹ When a living person quits one body for another, he carries the same mind he previously had into the new body. He sees the same things in its thoughts which he was accustomed to look upon before.

⁴² A good conscience has all pleasing prospects before it. A corrupted soul meets with ghastly aspects on all sides. The lofty mind sees only ethereal shapes in its emptiness.⁴³ Only pure souls come to enjoy the sights of these siddha cities in the air. Impure spirits are subjected to suffer their torments in hell.

⁴⁴ There is a continuous rotation of unwieldy grinding stones that crush vicious souls. The wicked are hurled into blind wells or dark pits out of which they can rise no more.⁴⁵ Some bodies are cast in frozen snow where they are frozen to stones. Many are thrown into the burning coals of devils, or led amidst the burning sands of trackless deserts.⁴⁶ Clouds drop living fire and skies pour forth fiery showers and red-hot bolts and arrows darted down from heaven.⁴⁷ Stones and maces and swords float on the running stream of the sky. They fall like cloud fragments upon the chests of the cursed, breaking them like strokes of chopping axes.⁴⁸ Hot iron hailstones and brimstones fall with a hissing sound. Weapons are hurled from engines with a loud tremendous noise.⁴⁹ Missiles and bolts and maces, together with pikes, clubs, swords and arrows fall in showers. Traps and nets and hammers and clubs strike by the hundreds.

⁵⁰ Hot, burning sands bury the dead. Burning meteors fall like torches while large ravens devour dead bodies everywhere.⁵¹ The dead are engulfed by blazing piles from which they can never get out, while darts and spears and bolts and arrows are piercing other bodies all about.⁵² Hunger and dismay and excruciating pains torment in turn the bodies of dead unbelievers. Others are hurled down from high hills and heights onto rough and hard stones below.⁵³ Some wallow in blood and roll in pools of dirt, rotten flesh and disgusting pus. Others are crushed under stones and weapons and beneath the feet of horses and elephants.⁵⁴ Hungry vultures and owls pick and tear at dead bodies, their limbs and guts cut and scattered all over the ground.

⁵⁵ This is how men are influenced by sacred writings and their thoughts of punishment for their guilt. They suffer, both in their bodies and minds, the same way in which they have their inner impressions.

⁵⁶ Whatever form or figure appears in the emptiness of Intellect, or whatever is dreamt or thought of at anytime, the same holds fast the imagination and presents itself before the mirror of the mind of its own accord.

Chapter 161 — Vasishta Explains Dreams and Waking Are identical; Nirvana Is that Realization

¹ Rama said, “Tell me sage. Were these various events in the lives of the hermit and hunter due to any cause, or did they arise spontaneously?”²

² Vasishta replied:—

These events are like the appearance of whirling currents in the vast ocean of the unknown Soul. They are continuously rotating in their airy forms in the whirlpool of the soul of their own accord.³ As the vibrating particles of air are always in motion, so the current of thoughts is continually in action in the vast emptiness of consciousness.⁴ Whatever issues from its source in any shape retains its original form until it is converted or restrained to another form. The aerial thoughts of the empty mind remain until they are drawn, painted or exhibited in another form.

⁵ The empty essence of Divine Consciousness inheres in every form it exhibits and derives from itself. It is like the substance of a body that permeates throughout all its organs and limbs, or the woody substance of a tree that is diffused throughout all the leaves and branches that shoot forth from it.⁶ Brahman appears to remain permanent in some existences, such as in the four elemental forms of earth, water, fire and air. In other existences, he seems transient and impermanent, such as the frail bodies of mortal bodies, all of which abide in their aerial state in the empty spirit.

⁷ Therefore, all these various objects are only reflections of Consciousness impressed upon the soul. It is impossible for us to determine which of these is substantial or insubstantial or real or unreal.

⁸ All these are altogether unknowable except that we know them to be reflections in the emptiness of Consciousness. You who are totally ignorant of everything, do you think this visible world is real or unreal?⁹ Whatever you see anywhere in the universe is only an exhibition in the emptiness of Divine Consciousness. What use is it to you who know the truth whether you believe the world is real or unreal? Therefore rely upon your belief of it as it is.

¹⁰ These forms of reflections rise of themselves in the Divine Mind, just as waves and billows exhibit themselves on the surface of the sea. They are the spontaneous offspring of the Divine Spirit. They are of themselves both causes and effects.¹¹ The display of the transcendent emptiness of the Divine Mind is called its will or volition, or its imagination and creation, or the creation of its imagination. Hence this world is to be understood under anyone of these interpretations, and not as being composed of earth and water.

¹² This appearance of the Divine Mind appears in this manner and nothing besides. The Divine itself resides in Divinity and passes under the title of Ignorance from our ignorance of its nature.¹³ There is no material grossness in the integrity of Divine Intellect. It is purely empty and immaterial and composes the whole universe. This is transcendental knowledge and its perfection is liberation.

¹⁴ The reflection of empty Intellect spreads over the whole universe. It is subtle and uncompressed, ever calm and quiet, and passes by the name of “world.”¹⁵ Only the meditative man whose eyesight is fixed in his meditation, whose body is emaciated in penance, and whose mind is abstracted from the concrete and absorbed in reasoning, is capable of seeing the Intellectual world.

¹⁶ Whatever the empty essence of Consciousness exhibits in any form at any place, the same appears

to be present there of its own nature.¹⁷ The unthinking man and unreasonable soul sees only false sights in the midst of skies, just as one who is dim-sighted and blind by birth always sees a double moon in the sky.¹⁸ Whatever is seen anywhere is nothing other than the unpolluted Brahman himself. The empty sphere of Consciousness, being forever clear and transparent, is never soiled by any foulness of gross matter.¹⁹ The intellect, without forsaking its pure form of self-consciousness, exhibits varieties of gross objects in the form of dreams within itself. So also, our consciousness of the world is like our dreams.

²⁰ By comparing the statements of the scriptures with one another, and weighing them well with acute judgment, one will find his rest in himself. But the man of little understanding will not find it so.

²¹ The ignorance that floats upon the sea of your understanding does not contaminate my mind like dirt polluting a pure and clear stream.²² As there is neither the earth nor any earthly thing to be encountered in our sleep, though we are conscious of them in our dream, so also the phenomenal world has no real existence, though we are conscious of it in our waking.²³ As the clearness of the Intellect, like sunlight or flaming fire, shows us many things in our sleeping dreams, so does its light exhibit the visible to our view in our waking dreams by day.²⁴ There is no difference between the two states of dreaming and waking. Both are of the same nature. The difference lies in how we understand them.

²⁵ The waking man never understands his waking state to be a dream, but the dead man who rises again to life in the next world thinks that his past life was a dream.²⁶ People generally consider dreams to be of short duration and waking life to be of long duration, and that is a difference between dreaming and being awake. But while experiencing either, they both seem real and are similar to the other.²⁷ Sleeping and waking dreams, both having the same quality of presenting false objects to view, necessarily are of the same nature. There is no difference whatever in their outward features, just as there is no elder or younger between twin brothers.²⁸ Whatever is the waking dream, the same is waking in a dream. There is no difference behind the two states of waking and dreaming.

²⁹ We know the inconsistency of the hundreds of dreams we have in the course of our lifetimes. In the same way, an unredeemed and unenlightened soul sees hundreds of waking states.³⁰ Living mortals may remember many sleeping dreams they have seen throughout their lives. In the same way the immortalized souls of siddha spiritual masters remember a number of waking dreams they have seen in their past incarnations in different bodies.³¹ Thus our waking is as valid as our dreaming. Our dreams are equivalent to waking. They correlate with one another both in quality and our perception of them.

³² As the word “worlds” and “phenomena” mean the same, so the words “dreaming” and “waking” mean the same and are interchangeable.³³ As a fairyland city in a dream is as clear as the open space of the Intellect, so is this world an empty void without the materiality that ignorance attributes to it.

³⁴ The world is a empty substance which ignorance mistakes for gross materiality. Therefore I am as free as air and any other airy thing in the world. Only my imagination binds me to my gross materiality.³⁵ Therefore do not confine your free and unconfined nature in the bondage of gross matter. Never change the pure vacuum of your self to a material stuff, or impair your formless and intellectual self in a gross and finite form.

³⁶ There can be no bondage or liberation of anything whatsoever in this visible world of our ignorance because everything is a mere reflection of the formless void of Divine Consciousness.

³⁷ Here there is no display of ignorance any no misconception of anything. There is no bondage or release of anything whatever and there is nothing that exists or is nonexistent. ³⁸ For us there is no ignorance or knowing of anything because it is only uncreated Consciousness that manifests itself in this manner. It reflects all forms in itself, as if they were all its dreams or creations.

³⁹ As a man keeps his mind in check as he passes from one place to another, so should we keep our minds quiet and still between our sight of the visible and our dreams. ⁴⁰ One has his body and mind very quiet and calm in his sleep at night, and in the delay of acting on his sights and thoughts in the states of his waking and dreaming. This same state of lacking sense perception is what is called a yogi's nirvana.

⁴¹ Know that our knowledge of a difference between objects is equally untrue as that of our waking and dreaming states. It is impossible for us to conceive of any matter existing in immaterial Consciousness. ⁴² Our knowledge of identity and diversity proceed from the same empty intellect which combines the unity and duality in unbroken union and harmony in itself. ⁴³ Knowing all as parts of an undivided whole, all these are the same whatever they appear to be. Hence the visible, however diversified they may appear, are all one and the same principle. ⁴⁴ Hence the ethereal sphere of Brahman contains all in itself, who as an aerial point concentrates all in it. Creation, together with all its varieties, is the unity of Brahman.

⁴⁵ Knowing all things as full of God, you must reject them all and rest yourself in the empty Intellect as the great rock of your refuge.

⁴⁶ Now, O fortunate Rama, remain to act in conformity with the rules of your order and the laws of society and the requirements of your position and dignity. Continue to go on, eat and drink and rest in your usual course, rely upon your desired object, and always rest in the glorious and holy lord of your intellect, the supreme God of all.

Chapter 162 — Vasishta on Ignorance; the Folly of Worshipping Form

¹ Vasishta continued:—

All objects are convertible according to the conceptions of the empty intellect, so the entire universe is supposed to be seated in the hollow mind. Therefore both the outer sights of things and the inner thoughts of their forms are all only ideal images in the empty mind.² The world is only a dream and the form of an ideal city in the mind has nothing substantial to it. Therefore it is a quiet emptiness in itself, without having any diversity whatsoever.

³ The uniform display of Consciousness appears to us with many forms. Consciousness sees this variety, though not subjective to the soul, within itself, just as we see the fairyland of our dream rising within ourselves.⁴ This world appeared in the beginning like the aerial castle of a dream in the emptiness of Consciousness. It was a mere reflection of the Divine Mind. Though it had the form of a false shadow, it remained substantive to the Supreme Spirit.

⁵ The knowing sage well knows this mystery, which is mysterious to the unknowing ignorant. The word “creation” bears the sense of both reality and unreality.⁶ Both the knowing sage and the unknowing agnostic acknowledge the reality of creation, but neither can understand how it exists or communicate to the other their correct conception of it.⁷ They both know the meaning of the word “creation” in their own minds. One has the sense of stability ever wakeful in their minds, and the other has the sense of its unsteadiness always waking in them. So they resemble the sober and drunken men who see the world in its steady and shaking states.

⁸ As the liquid waters in a river constantly rise in restless waves, so the rolling worlds push forward into being in the vast expanse of the Divine Mind.⁹ These creations which are not of the nature of the intellect still have their seats in Consciousness, like the thoughts that rise and fall in it. Though these are invisible in their nature, they appear as visible things, like the fair objects and fairy cities in our dreams.¹⁰ The spreading shadow of Divine Consciousness passes under the name of the world. This which is formless in itself appears as having a form, like the shadow of anything else.

¹¹ It is a gross error to take the insubstantial shadow for a substantial body, just as it is a gross error to suppose the empty shadow of a ghost to be an embodied being.¹² The world is as unreal as an imaginary city and as false as a string of raindrops. Then why do you rely upon an unreality which is known from the experiences of both ignorant and knowing men?¹³ Therefore, the words used to express this thing and that are mere empty sounds, like those emitted splitting block of wood, or those heard when waves crash or winds blow. The air conveys the empty sound into the open emptiness of the sky. But they are all unreal and meaningless and bear only a conventional sense with which it has no connection whatsoever.¹⁴ The light of the Lord reflects itself in his creation. The reflection of his edict reverberates through the whole. In reality there is no sound or substance that is heard or seen in the universe.

¹⁵ Whatever shines or exists here is the transcendent reality of the Lord. Otherwise there is nothing that could appear at first without its cause.¹⁶ Therefore, from the distinctions of words and things, know that the one is all in all and remain as quiet and calm as the indefinite and infinite emptiness itself.¹⁷ Forsake the fickleness of your mind through the calm resting of your soul, the purity of your

understanding, and by the even course of your disposition, because a fickle soul is troublesome in life.

¹⁸ It is one's own self who is a friend or enemy to himself. If one will not try to guard and save himself by his own self, there is no one else to do it for him. ¹⁹ Get over the ocean of the world while you are young. Make your good understanding the ferry boat that carries your body safely to the other shore. ²⁰ Do what is good for you today. Why defer till tomorrow? You can do nothing in old age when your body becomes a burden to you. ²¹ Know youth is like old age if it is filled with learning. Consider infirmity as death itself in your lifetime. Youth is truly the life of the living, provided it is filled with knowledge (*buddhi*).

²² Having obtained your life in this living world, which is as transient as fleeting lightning, you must try to derive the essence from this dirty earth by availing yourself of the benefit of good scriptures and the company of the wise. ²³ Woe to the ignorant who will not seek their salvation in life, who are sinking in the pits of mud, and who never strive to lift themselves above the mire.

²⁴ The ignorant rustic is afraid at the sight of earthen images of ghosts and bows down to them, something those who are acquainted with the meaning of the word ghost would never do. ²⁵ Those who see God in an idol or in his visible creation are misled to think it is their god and worship it as such. Those who know the true meaning of the term never worship any visible object.

²⁶ As things in motion come to rest, the visible disappears from the sight of learned men who are acquainted with their true meaning, ²⁷ just as the sights in a dream, seeming to be true while dreaming, disperse upon waking and the realization of their unreal nature. ²⁸ So this world, conceived as something existing in the emptiness of understanding, in the end melts into empty air upon our knowledge of its intellectual nature.

²⁹ This living world is like a wilderness burning with the fires of various evils that are attendant on life. Here we are exposed like weak antelopes living upon our precarious sustenance. Here we are governed by our uncontrollable minds and restless passions and senses of our bodies. All these need to be subdued in order to obtain liberation from repeated births and deaths.

Chapter 163 — Means of Governing the Senses: Control the Mind; the Value of this Book

¹ Rama asked, "Sage, I know that all knowledge is vain and useless without proper control of our senses. So tell me how the senses may be kept under control so that we can have a true knowledge of things unbiased by them."

² Vasishta replied:—

The obstacles to self-control and liberation are addiction to enjoyments, displays of manhood, and devotion to the acquisition of the means of life and wealth, just as blindness is an obstruction to one's sight of a light. ³ Listen to my advice, the least, shortest and best means to control your senses. This is sure to lead one to success by his own effort without struggle or trouble.

⁴ Know that the intellect is the person who manages you. Its power of reasoning makes you a living man. Whatever the living soul thinks within itself, it truly becomes the very same. ⁵ Let the strength of your consciousness use the pointed goad of your acute good sense. You will undoubtedly subdue your otherwise uncontrollable elephantine mind and be victorious shortly. ⁶ The mind (*citta*) is the captain of the army of your bodily and mental senses. If you subdue this leading mind, you will conquer the whole host of your senses, like a man walking in boots treads over thorns lying in his way.

⁷ You must settle your self-consciousness in your consciousness of the omnipresent vacuum of the Divine Soul, and rest yourself quietly in the cave of your heart. Then your mind will sit quietly of itself, just as the snows of winter settle down of themselves in autumn. ⁸ By stopping the action of your consciousness, you will also shut up your mind and put a stop to the operation of all its faculties. This you can never accomplish with all your meditation and austerities, your pilgrimages, your knowledge and sacrifice, and all other ceremonies and acts and duties.

⁹ Whatever occurs in consciousness must be forgotten or buried in the consciousness of the great God alone. So the forgetfulness of all enjoyments and their objects amounts to our victory over them. ¹⁰ We must try by all means to shut out the objects of sense from our consciousness. This state of being unconsciousness of sense objects is equivalent to the state of heavenly bliss.

¹¹ Another way to preserve the steadiness of the mind is the contentment that comes from acting in conformity with the rules of our order. Therefore remain firm in the practice of your particular duties and seek no other happiness. ¹² He who abandons his inclination towards the attainment of what is unlawful for him and remains content with earning his lawful gains is truly said to be a man of subdued desires, one who has self-control. ¹³ He who is pleased with his inner and conscious gratification and is not grieved at the unpleasant things all about him is said to have governed and subdued his mind.

¹⁴ By suspending the action of consciousness, the mind also comes to forget and forsake its activity. The sensations also become relaxed from their restlessness and the mind pursues discrimination and judgment. ¹⁵ The discriminative and judging soul becomes ennobled and magnanimous, keeping its command over feelings and senses. It is not impelled by the waves of its desires to be tossed about on the surface of the wide ocean of this world.

¹⁶ The man of well controlled senses, by his association with the wise and his constant study of religious works, comes to know all things in the world in their true light. ¹⁷ All worldly errors are

dispelled by the light of truth. Otherwise, one must fall into the pit of misery by his mistake of falsehood for truth, just as an ignorant traveler is engulfed in dreary sands by mistaking a mirage for water.¹⁸ The wise know this world to be the unknowable intellect itself, and that this material world is the immaterial mind of God. This is the true light in which the wise view the cosmos, and the wise have no fear of falling into the snare of error, nor do they require any release from it.¹⁹ As the dried up waters of a river are seen no more flowing even slightly in their course, so the formless phenomena of the world never appear in the sight of the wise or leave the slightest trace in their minds.

²⁰ Knowledge of the world as an infinite void and being freed from the false individualities of myself and yourself lead to the knowledge of a Supreme Self which is apart from all and the only Ego that fills the whole.²¹ All these conceptions of our subjective, individual egos and the objective world are only errors of our brain proceeding from ignorance. They are all situated in the void of Consciousness and are void of themselves. All bodies are only empty shadows in air, as quiet as nothingness itself.²² This world appears like a shadow of the Intellect in the emptiness of the same Intellect. It is a void within the void of Consciousness which is certainly a void itself.²³ Nobody can deny the similarity of the world to a shadowy sight in a dream. It is an unreal idea, as insubstantial as all ideas can be, and as the idea of a void is void itself.²⁴ A dream is nothing other than our consciousness of it and the airy realms that it presents to our view for a time. In the same way, Consciousness shows us the sight of the world without any action or passion or instrumentality of Consciousness.

²⁵ So I am of the substance of the same Consciousness which is without activity, passivity or instrumentality. The world cannot be assigned to any causality or instrumentality, so it exists only in our simple conception of it.²⁶ As the conception of one's death in a dream is no reality at all, and as the sight of water in a mirage is only a visual deception, so the sight of the world is no real existence at all.

²⁷ The empty intellect first reflects its thoughts in the clear mirror of its emptiness, which is a mere haphazard of chance without firm base or support.²⁸ The world appears fixed and firm, yet has no foundation anywhere. It seems to be shining brightly with dark opacity. So know that this fixity and brightness is the permanence and glory of the eternal and glorious God.

²⁹ The vital force of living beings displays the spirit of the ever living God. The air is his emptiness. Running waters show the whirlpool-like currents of the eternal Soul.³⁰ As every part of the body is a constituent part of the whole frame, so all the various parts of animated and inanimate nature constitute the entirety of the one cosmic Deity.³¹ As a crystal mirror shows the shades of everything in itself, so the transparency of the Divine Soul exhibits the reflections of all things in it. The silent soul is as quiet as the mute crystal, but it shows the varying scenes of nature as continuously as a clear mirror reflects everything.

³² There is no beginning or end of the Supreme Being. We see dimly only what is in between. The rest is all enveloped in ignorance, though there is no ignorance in the Omniscient.³³ The living soul wakes from its sleeping dream then falls back to its waking dream. Thus it continues dreaming forever, whether waking or sleeping, which are both alike.³⁴ The soul only finds rest while it remains in the

fourth state (*turiya*) of sound sleep. Otherwise, it passes from dream to dream, whether sleeping or awake. Dreams continually haunt the soul unless it is drowned in its sound sleep of trance (*sushupti*), the only resort of the wise.³⁵ But waking and sleeping, dreaming and sound sleep, are all the same to the enlightened soul. He is equally indifferent in all states, whether asleep or awake, and he is never infested by dreams or set beside himself.

³⁶ The knowledge of unity or duality, or that of "I" and "you", or the subjective and objective, never disturbs the enlightened. He views the whole as an empty void and is alike unconscious of all as well as nothing.³⁷ The distinction of unity and duality, made in the meaningless speech of the unwise, is laughed at by the enlightened and the wise, just as aged and intelligent men scorn and laugh at the pranks and idle talk of young children.³⁸ The controversy of unity and duality spontaneously grows in the heart like an indigenous plant which without pruning will not put forth its blossoms to perfume the atmosphere of understanding.

³⁹ The discussion of unity and duality is as beneficial to men as their best friend. It sweeps away the dirt and impurity of ignorance from their minds, just as they sweep dust from within the doors of their houses.⁴⁰ The minds of men become settled in the Divine Mind when they share, communicate, and participate in each other's joys and bliss.⁴¹ Men who are always joined together in fellowship, serving one another with delight and kindness in their hearts, attain enlightenment of their understanding whereby they are admitted into communion with the Most High.⁴² It is possible for a man to be benefited even by his careful preservation of a trifle. But it is never possible for anybody to attain the most hidden knowledge of God without his diligent inquiry into it.

⁴³ Whatever high position one may enjoy in this material world, if one does not remain aloof from all kind of vices, it is to be recognized by all as nothing.⁴⁴ What happiness is gained by the possession of a kingdom which in the end is no better than a mere annoyance of the mind? But the mind that has gained peace and tranquility in truth and divine knowledge spurns the state of rascals and kings as mere bits of straw.⁴⁵ The sleepy and the wakeful are both ready to see the visible and they are enraptured by the sight. But the saints who are calm and quiet and at rest with themselves are averse to sight-seeing and see only the one in themselves.

⁴⁶ Without painstaking and continued practice of contemplation, you cannot attain this state of infinite bliss. Know that this state of transcendent bliss can only be attained through intense meditation.

⁴⁷ What I have said at length is to impress the necessity of intense meditation upon you. The evil-minded say, "What good is all this?" to me and neglect and take no heed of all that I have been telling you for so long.⁴⁸ The ignorant can come to the right view of truth by steady attention to these lectures, by long and repeated practice of meditation, and by listening and analyzing these lectures.

⁴⁹ He who reads this spiritual work once, then neglects it thinking he has already read it and turns to the study of unspiritual books, is a miserable fool who collects burnt ashes after the fire is extinguished.⁵⁰ This excellent work is to be read always, like the recital of the Vedas which are embodied in this work. This book is calculated to reward the labor of the student if constantly read with reverence and rightly explained with diligence.⁵¹ From this book, the student will learn everything he can expect to find in the Vedas because this book embodies both the practical and the spiritual doctrines of the sacred scriptures. A knowledge of both is available by properly reading this

work.⁵² By learning this book, one may have knowledge of the doctrines of the Vedanta and Siddhanta scriptures, because this is the only book that treats the doctrines of all schools.

⁵³ I have presented these doctrines to you because of my sympathy for you all. It is not by way of deception that I impose these lessons on your gullibility. You are the best judges of my discourse. You can well detect whether there is anything like deception in my instructions. ⁵⁴ The knowledge you may derive by carefully weighing the instructions in this great work will serve you like salt that seasons the taste of teachings in other scriptures, which at best are only different dishes before this book.

⁵⁵ The materialist who is familiar with visible phenomena discredits this book because of its occult teachings of spiritualism. But don't be the killer of your souls by neglecting your eternal salvation. Don't revisit this material world and become busied with your temporal affairs. ⁵⁶ Biased minds cling to the dogmas of broken systems. Ignoble men drink the foul water of tanks dug by their ancestors. You are reasoning men. Therefore do not remain forever tightly bound to your ignorance.

Chapter 164 — How the Wise and the Ignorant View the World

¹ Vasishta continued:—

The atoms of living souls in the world are like the particles of light rays in the sun. These parts, taken collectively, make the one undivided whole. There is no division within the unity of God throughout the whole of creation.² By attaining the transcendental knowledge of all being the one and the one as all, everything loses its shape and form before us. Nothing remains as a distinct being or duality.³ The true believer or knower of truth sees the same in all states and forms of things. This is the transcendent and translucent Brahman, and nothing else whatsoever at anytime.

⁴ All the ignorant know of reality is the objects of their senses, but we do not recognize ourselves or others or what the ignorant can sense as real.⁵ An ignorant man's belief in the reality of himself, yourself, and all others does not affect the knower of truth, just as the delusion of mirage never overtakes a man on Mount Meru.⁶ As a man intent upon one object has no consciousness of any other thing in his mind, so one enrapt at the sight of only God is conscious of nothing else.⁷ There neither is nor was nor shall ever be any such thing as the material world at anytime. The world in existence is the image of Brahman himself abiding in his spirit.

⁸ The world is the splendor of the crystal vacuum of the Divine Intellect. It exists in the emptiness of the Supreme Soul itself. It is from this perspective that the universe is seen in the yoga of abstract contemplation.⁹ As there is nothing in an empty dream or in the aerial castle of imagination except the clear atmosphere of Consciousness, so there is no essence or substance or form or figure to this world that we see in our present waking state.¹⁰ At first there was no creation of any kind, no world which appears to us. It exists in its aerial form in the Divine Mind from all eternity. There being no primary or secondary cause for the world, how is it possible to call it a material thing that has its own spontaneous growth?

¹¹ Therefore there is nothing that sprang itself out of nothing, nor was there ever a creator called Brahma or any other name the ignorant might use. In the beginning there is nothing but an infinite void from eternity to eternity, filled by the self-born or uncreated spirit whose intellect exhibits this creation contained forever and ever in its emptiness.

Chapter 165 — Play on the Similarity between Waking and Dreaming; Real or Unreal, Why Be Deluded?

¹ Vasishta continued:—

In the state of waking dream, dream is called waking. In the state in which we dream of being awake, this waking goes by the name of sleep.² The dream ends upon waking, the waking man rises from his dreaming, then falls back into his awake-dream. One awakened from his dream of being awake afterwards falls into his waking dreams.³ The dream of the awake dreamer should also be called a dream, the waking dream of this world. Similarly, we can call the dream of being awake a man's waking state.⁴ Therefore the wakefulness of one who remains in his dreaming state can be called his waking state and not any dream. So also the dream when awake and the daydreams imagining airy castles are to be called dreaming and never being awake.

⁵ Whatever lasts for a short while, a temporary delusion or a flight of imagination, is called a dream even if experienced while awake. Similarly, being awake seems brief to the dreamer.

⁶ Therefore there is no difference whatsoever between the two states of waking and dreaming, other than the absence of one in the other. Both are unreal because they blend into one another.⁷ The waking dream of the world vanishes when we become unconsciousness of the world at death. Similarly, the consciousness of dreaming is lost when we wake and know it was an airy nothing.⁸ A dying person who does not perceive the vanity of the imaginary world on his death-bed has no hope of being awake in the next world.⁹ Whoever believes he is alive among the varying scenes of this empty world lives content with them. He can never see the visions that await him.

¹⁰ As the intellect displays its wonders in the exhibitions of the various scenes of worlds to the sight of one in his dream, so does this universe appear before the minds of men at the time of their waking.

¹¹ These creations, so conspicuous to sight, in their transcendental light are at best only nothing. All the forms of things are like empty shadows appearing in our dreams.¹² The world with all its varieties of visible objects appears in a dream in its empty and shadowy form. It is equally empty, only an intellectual form, in our waking state.

¹³ It is the nature of the empty Consciousness to show the form of the world in its own space. So this earth appears to us in the spacious atmosphere like balls of light in the skies.¹⁴ The wonderful display of Consciousness shines before us under the name of universe. These wonders are as inborn and innumerable in itself as watery and earthly particles are innate and diffused throughout nature.

¹⁵ What can you mistake as a reality in this unreal world that is an empty body in the infinite womb of emptiness?¹⁶ The words recipient, receipt, reception, subject, object, and attribute are all meaningless with regard to this empty world. Whether it is a reality or unreality, we have no perception of it.¹⁷ Whether the world is real or unreal or anything else, why should you mistake it for anything at all regardless of how you view it? It will amount to mistaking an empty ball for a fruit.

Chapter 166 — Story of the Unnamable Crystal Rock

¹ Vasishta continued:—

The true sense of the word “soul” or “self” is to be understood from the title applied to it. This title of “soul” is borne out by the simile of a solid and transparent blue stone.

² From the beginning of creation, the empty soul is diffused in itself. The reflection it casts in its own emptiness is what is called world or creation. ³ No river runs in it. No rock rises or falls in it. It is a mere emptiness existing in infinite void in which the intellect reflects itself without any action or bidding or command. ⁴ This reflection of Divine Consciousness is cast without any utterance of “word” and quite without its “will” or “thought.” It is without the device of any subsequent material, and this is the true sense of the word “soul” or “self.”

⁵ The soul itself is the whole world. There is no other expression for it. Being devoid of a name, it is expressible by no other name though they give many names to it. ⁶ Its name being nameless, whatever name they give it is not opposite but inappropriate. Therefore, what is the good of giving it a name or no name? ⁷ It’s all the same whether it is nameless or given a wrong name because all that is visible is nothing other than a display of the wonderful fabric of the Divine Mind. ⁸ Whatever shines in any manner and at any time in the empty space of the Divine Mind, the same shines forth even then and in that manner like the rays of that Intellect. ⁹ One calls it the soul, another nonexistence, and others nothing. All these are only the mystery of consciousness, but in fact, all are the attributes of soul.

¹⁰ The word itself conveys the meaning of “soul” or “self.” It is without beginning or end. No language can express it. In fact, it is an undivided whole.

¹¹ Now listen to a long story which illustrates this subject. It will serve to gladden your hearts and ears by removing the duality from your sight and enlightening your understanding.

¹² Know that there is a very large crystal stone which extends many thousands of leagues in space, stretching like the solid blue fabric of the sky all around us. ¹³ It is all one piece without any joint or parts. It is as dense and compact as a hard diamond. It is thick, big and bulky in size. But at the same time, it is as clear and far away as the face of the sky. ¹⁴ It continues from countless times and endures to endless duration. With its pleasant and translucent body, it appears like the clear sky or the blank vacuum on high.

¹⁵ No one ever knows its nature or kind because no one has ever seen anything like it. No one knows from when and where it has come into existence. ¹⁶ It does not contain anything substantial in it, such as the material elements. Yet it is as dense and solid as a crystal and as impossible to dissolve as a diamond.

¹⁷ Yet it has innumerable streaks and marks embodied in itself. These resemble the veins and fibers on lotus leaves, or the marks of conches, lotuses, maces and discuses on Lord Vishnu’s feet. ¹⁸ These marks are named air, water, earth, fire, and vacuum, though there are no such things to be found in that crystal stone except that it possesses a living soul which imparted its marks.

¹⁹ Rama asked, “Tell me sage, how could that stone of yours have life or consciousness in it? The stone is an unconscious thing which is unable to give names to the marks on its body.”

²⁰ Vasishta replied:—

That immense and luminous stone is neither a conscious nor an inert body. Nobody knows its nature and state, and there is no other like it.

²¹ Rama said, “Tell me sage, who saw those marks imprinted on the surface of that stone? How could anyone ever break that stone to see its contents and its marks?”

²² Vasishta replied:—

It is difficult to break this hard stone. Nobody has ever been able to break it because it extends over infinite space and encompasses all bodies within its space.²³ It is full of numberless spots in its spacious cavity. These consist of the marks of mountains and trees and of countries, towns and cities.

²⁴ There are small and large dots in it with many forms and figures. They serve to represent the forms of men, gods and demigods, just as an outline shows the images of things.²⁵ Drawn in the crystal stone is a long line in the form of a circle which represents the great circle of the visible horizon. This contains the two central points, signifying the sun and moon.

²⁶ Rama said, “Tell me sage, who saw those marks of such forms? How it is possible for anybody to look into the cell of a solid or hollow ball?”

²⁷ Vasishta replied:—

It is I, O Rama, who saw those marks of different forms in that impenetrable block. It is possible for you to look into it, if you will only like to do so.

²⁸ Rama said, “How could you, O sage, look into those marks inside that solid stone which, you say, is as hard as a diamond and incapable of being broken or perforated by any means?”

²⁹ Vasishta replied:—

I sat in the very heart of that stone, so I came to see those marks and penetrate into their meanings.

³⁰ Who else is able to penetrate that rigid stone besides me? By my penetration, I have been able to pry and pierce into the mysteries of those hidden marks.

³¹ Rama said, “Tell me sage, what is that stone and what are you? Explain to me where you are and what you are saying? What are those things that you have seen and what is their meaning that you have penetrated?”

³² Vasishta replied:—

It is the Supreme Soul, the sole entity and calm reality. This is represented by a figure of speech as the great crystal stone that I have been describing.³³ We are all situated in the cavity of this Supreme Spirit. The three worlds form the flesh of this Great Being who is devoid of all substantiality.

³⁴ Know that the spacious firmament is a part of this solid rock, and the ever flying winds are fragments of its body. Fleeting time and impermanent sounds, together with all our varying actions, desires and imaginations of our minds, are all only insubstantial particles of its substance.³⁵ Earth, air, water and fire, as well as emptiness and understanding, together with our egoism and sensibilities, are only portions of its totality.³⁶ We all are only bits of the great rock of the Supreme Soul. Everything whatever that is in existence proceeds from that source. We know of no other cause

or causality whatsoever.³⁷ This large stone is the great rock of Divine Consciousness. There is nothing beside or beyond its intelligence. Tell me if there is any such thing and what it does?

³⁸ All things, whether a pot or cot, a picture or anything else, are only mere ideas. They appear in us as our dreams and rise before us like waves in water.³⁹ All is the substance of Brahman and the essence of the great Consciousness which fills and pervades the whole. Therefore know that all these are one with the substantiality of the Supreme Spirit, and all is as quiet and calm as itself.

⁴⁰ Thus all this fullness is situated in the space of the great rock of the Intellect. It is without beginning, middle or end and without any hole or doorway. Therefore it is only the Supreme Soul which contemplates in itself and produces this ideal creation of the universe which passes under the name of the visible or material world.

Chapter 167 — Words Cannot Describe Consciousness, Not Even Awake, Dream, Sleep or *Turiya*; Use Reasoning to Acquire Knowledge and Rest in Aum

¹ Vasishta continued:—

The four titles under which the world is known in its different senses — namely, the self-styled, the misnamed, the nameless, and the otherwise named — are all meaningless to the knower of truth.

² These different words do not disturb the mind of the knower of truth whose soul is at rest in the Supreme Spirit and who pays no regard to the use of words.

³ All that is visible rises from Consciousness and bears no name of its own. They are pure vacuum and appear to us in their simple, empty forms.⁴ This soul and, and this its title, are all false conceits and creations of the brain. The spirit admits of no expression. Therefore, take no concern of any word but only the mind and its meaning.⁵ Whatever appears to be moving or stationary or doing any action is as calm and clear as the empty air and as devoid of action as the Divine Soul.⁶ All things, whatever noise they make, are as silent as the silent crystal stone I described. Though they seem to be always moving, they are always as quiet as the void of the sky, and as still as the inactive stone.

⁷ Though all things appear to be acting in their various ways, yet they are as motionless as unmoving emptiness. Though the world appears to be formed of the five elements, yet it is only a void without its own essence.⁸ The world with its fullness of things is only a collection of your conceptions. It is full with the all-pervasive and transparent Consciousness that displays visions of great cities, like the empty sights in our dreams.⁹ It is full of action and motion without any activity or mobility in it, like the passing city of our imagination. It is the air-built castle of our errors, like the fairyland in our dreams.¹⁰ It is a false conception or idea of the mind, like the fading shadow of a fairy. It is the creation of our fancies, altogether insubstantial in its substantiality.

¹¹ Rama asked, “I think of this world is a waking dream, a reproduction of our memories, because our memories present the absent to our view and bring outer objects to our awareness.”

¹² Vasishta replied:—

No Rama, the world is the reflection which the glassy mirror of Consciousness casts before us. The same appears to us even then in its empty form. There is no idea or thought of anything that lays a firm hold on the mind or has its foundation there.¹³ Therefore, phenomena always belongs to the ideals of the Supreme Spirit. Fluctuating phenomena always abide in it, like surging waves playing in the calm waters of the sea.

¹⁴ The uncaused world exists of itself in the Supreme Soul. It becomes extinct of itself in the emptiness of the Universal Soul.¹⁵ Everyone sees the world in the same light as it is reflected in himself. Hence the ignorant are always at fault for having a wrong view of it. But not so the wise, who know it as nothing.

¹⁶ Again, the lord god Brahma himself has exhibited the clear nature of his being according to the four states or conditions which are natural to the soul.¹⁷ These are the three states of waking, dreaming and sleep, together with a fourth called *turiya* or the state of sound sleep. These names are applied to the soul by the Supreme Soul itself.¹⁸ But in reality none of these four states belongs either to the Divine or the living soul, which is always tranquil and of the nature of an indefinite void.

¹⁹ Or it may be said that the soul is either always wakeful or in its ever dreaming state, or in a state of continuous rest and sleep. ²⁰ Or it is always in its fourth state of *turiya*, which is beyond all these triple states. But whether it is in this or that or whatever state, we know nothing as we are always in a state of anxiety and agitation. ²¹ We know nothing of the emptiness of the empty soul, whether it is like the chasm in foam or froth, or whether it is like the air in a bubble or spray, or whether it is like the gap between the waves of the sea, or what it is at all. ²² As a thing is known in imagination, so it is impressed in our conception of it. As anything appears either as real or unreal in a dream, we retain the same idea of it in our waking state. ²³ All this is a display of our consciousness. Whatever reflection it exhibits to us, it is only an empty shadow in the hollow of the vacant mind residing in the emptiness of the empty intellect that pervades the infinite vacuum of the soul.

²⁴ Consciousness is the core of empty Intellect, and it retains this form at all times. It neither rises nor sets. This world is inherent in it. ²⁵ The creations in the beginning and the dark nights of dissolution are only parts of its body, like its nails and hairs. ²⁶ Its appearance and disappearance, its clarity and dimness, are nothing other than the breathing air of the great Intellect. ²⁷ Therefore what does it mean to say the soul is waking, sleeping, or dreaming? What does the term sound sleep or the *turiya* of the soul mean? So the word volition and lack of volition are meaningless when applied to the soul, which is always composed and indifferent.

²⁸ Inner consciousness exhibits its inner concepts as outward objects. How then is there a duality or anything objective? What does the memory of extraneous matter mean? ²⁹ All that appears to sight is without base or foundation. They are the reflections of our consciousness in open air, wholly devoid of any material object.

³⁰ The external world is said to be real because it is a concept of the Divine Mind, out of which it has risen to view. Its cause is said to be memory because our memories of the first creation continue with us. ³¹ But there is no outward object at all because there is no material element, and there being no five material elements, there was no first creation. ³² Rabbits have no horns, trees do not grow in the air, a barren woman has no children, and there is no dark moon shining in the sky. ³³ So this visible world and these personalities we think ourselves to be are misrepresentations of our ignorance. They are things invisible and nonexistent in themselves, seen and known by only the ignorant. ³⁴ To the ignorant the world appears as a false body and they see the personalities and abstractions of persons. But there is nothing fictitious or abstract to the knower of truth who views all in one undivided Divine Spirit.

³⁵ Consciousness, the nature or essence of the soul, exposes all these concepts to light. Consciousness is the manner in which it displays them to the imagination. That is how phenomena make their appearance to our sight. ³⁶ Whenever our misconception portrays a concept in a material form, or gives a name and form to an airy nothing, we come to see in our imagination in the empty void of our mind.

³⁷ The great Consciousness has the appearance of the sky for itself, which in ordinary language is expressed by the word “matter” consisting of the four elements. But the endless void is devoid of them. ³⁸ The unchanging and un-decaying Consciousness bears only the form of air which it conceives

by mistake to be the stable earth, just as imaginary men believe air-built castles to be real.

³⁹ Consciousness, being an incorporeal substance, has neither this form nor that nor anything at all. It has vibration and rest in itself, like the breath and stillness of the winds in the air.

⁴⁰ As consciousness manifests itself in its own sphere in the two states of its volition and no will, so the world seems to be in its states of motion and stillness taking place in the space of vacuum.⁴¹ As the sphere of consciousness remains unchanged with the rise and fall of its thoughts, so emptiness remains unvaried with all the creations and dissolutions in its space.

⁴² The world is always in the same unvaried state, whether you call it so or otherwise. The seeming revolutions of bodies and succession of events are well known to be nothing to the learned and wise, but not to others.⁴³ The wise soul dwells in the hearts of all, which it views alike as its own self. But the ignorant soul, because it sees the outer world and knows the difference of bodies from one another, is unconscious of its identity.

⁴⁴ What is there inside or outside? What is visible or invisible? All this, whether active or still, is in the Lord. Know all is Aum and rest quietly in that Aum.

⁴⁵ There can be no reasoning without an insight into the meanings of significant terms. Consideration of both sides of a question leads to right judgment. Hence reasoning leads us to truth, just as light guides us through the darkness of night.⁴⁶ Therefore drive off the multitudes of diverse desires and doubts from your mind through the light of your understanding, and by your attention to the true interpretation of the scriptures. Then rise and fly above to the higher regions of light and truth and attain the highest, best and most perfect state of Divine bliss and self-liberation.

Chapter 168 — Forms of a Tree; the Value of Investigating Our Dreams; the Origin of Dreams & Creations Are Random; the Carved Image; the Process of Creation

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Like an unconscious tree displaying various forms in its branches, so the unconcerned spirit of God exhibits the airy semblance of creation in air.² Like the ocean describing whirlpools insensibly upon its surface, so the spirit of God exhibits these spinning worlds indifferently on the surface of its own emptiness where they are seen by all.

³ The Lord also gives internal faculties of the mind, understanding and egoism to the conscious part of his creation, and also many other powers under different names.⁴ The material world is the production of the unconscious Intellect, whose volitional faculties are as loose as the rolling currents of rivers and seas.⁵ The mind, understanding and all mental faculties proceed from Divine Consciousness in the same way as the whirlpools, currents, waves and surges rise on the surface of the sea.⁶ A picture is nothing other than its canvas. The world, which is no more than a painting, is drawn on the canvas of the intellect. This is an empty substance with the luminous reflection of the world in it.

⁷ I gave you the example of the unconscious tree and sea which produce branches and whirlpools. This example also applies to Intellect which shows creation rising in its emptiness, not by an act of its intention or will, but by ordinance of fate which governs all things.⁸ A tree exhibits various forms named like plant, shrub, flowers or vine. In the same way, the intellect displays its many features, like its flowers, called by different names like earth, air, or water.⁹ The branches and leaves of a tree are not different from the tree itself. The productions of the great Intellect are nothing other than its very substance.¹⁰ There are many things made of the substance of a tree and having different names. The productions of the Intellect and the offspring of a living being also pass under different forms and names.¹¹ The offshoots of the Intellect are all the creatures that grow in and rise from the mind. They appear to be the works of the mind, as if the mind caused them. But they are no better than the dreams.

¹² Should you ask why these conceptions of creation vainly arise in the mind, I would answer that they arise like dreams in sleep, which you cannot deny enjoying.¹³ As a tree displays various forms in its productions, and as imagination presents different shapes to our mental sight, so the Intellect is employed realizing many such creations in empty air.¹⁴ As the scents of flowers fly about invisibly in the open air, and as vibration abides inherent in the wind, so intellectual powers are intrinsic in the very nature of the soul.¹⁵ These creations likewise are ingrained in the Divine Spirit, as fragrance is inborn in flowers, as emptiness is intrinsic in air, and as vacillation and speed are innate in winds.¹⁶ As air, wind and a flower are receptacles of emptiness, vibration and scent respectively, so the Intellect is a container of creation, although it is literally only an empty emptiness.

¹⁷ Emptiness is nothing other than a vacuum, just as fluidity is not separate from liquids. Fragrance is as inseparable from flowers as movement is never separated from the wind.¹⁸ Heat is not separate from fire, nor is coldness apart from snow. In this way, know that the world is in no way different or disengaged from the transparent, empty Intellect.¹⁹ In the beginning, the Divine Intellect sees creation appear in itself like a dream rising in the mind. Thus, the world having no extraneous cause and being

subject to the Intellect, it is no way a diverse mass or different from the Divine Mind.

²⁰ The example of the dream is the best illustration of creation. You can judge creation well by the nature of the dreams you have every night. Say, what is there substantial in a dream other than it being essential to the Universal Soul? ²¹ A dream is not the effect of any impression in the mind, or the result of memories stored in the mind, because dreams show us many sights unseen and not thought of before. Say therefore, how does this happen? ²² If what is seen in a dream presents itself when we remember the dream, because it is not experienced, it implies that one thing is in two states.

²³ Therefore these spinning worlds are like spinning whirlpools in the wide ocean of the infinite mind. They are the accidental appearances of chance. Whatever occurs in the mind afterwards passes for its dreams.

²⁴ Creations are insensibly produced from the Divine Mind, like waves and whirlpools in the ocean. Afterwards creation receives its stability and continuity, just like whirling waters and ever rolling waves continue once started. ²⁵ Whatever is born without its cause is equal to the unborn because the unborn are forever similar to those who have no cause for their birth.

²⁶ As precious gems growing insensibly of themselves have their luster inherent in them, and as this brilliance is no substance or anything real at all, so the appearance of the world has no substantiality of itself. ²⁷ Somehow or another, the world has its rise, like waves or whirling currents in a river, then it continues to go on like the continuous course of the stream. ²⁸ There are numberless worlds of intellectual forms gliding in the vast emptiness of Consciousness, all passing like aerial dreams without any cause whatsoever. ²⁹ All these again become causes and produce others. They are all empty forms, even the great Brahma and all other gods and angels. ³⁰ All that is born in and produced from void (*shunya*) is nothing and void also. They grow in the void and return to emptiness.

³¹ Emptiness appears as fullness, as in the example of an empty dream that appears to be something. The man who denies his own perception is no better than a fool or a brute. ³² The unreal appearing as real is the fabrication of error and ignorance. But the wise man who knows the truth sees the world as the wonderful display of the Divine Mind. ³³ Long standing and deep rooted prejudice produces the false conceptions of the creation and destruction of the world. Wisdom is to know it in its true light, and foolishness is to take a wrong view of it. ³⁴ The light of the Divine Spirit, once seen in this causeless void of the visible world, continues forever before our sight, just as a dream seen in our vacant minds remains ever afterwards in our memory.

³⁵ The intellect presents the accidental appearance of the world to our minds in the same manner as the sea shows its whirls and waves to our sight. ³⁶ Such is the nature of the Intellect also. It shows itself in this manner and exhibits spinning worlds only in its own ethereal essence. ³⁷ Then the aerial Intellect, by a retrospective view in itself, invented certain words afterwards, an expression of its mental and intellectual powers as well signifying material elements and their properties.

³⁸ Rama said, "Sage, memories are impressions left on the mind. If it is true that everything is the spontaneous growth of chance, then how can the mental power of memory suddenly be produced without memories? Please explain this to me."

³⁹ Vasishta replied:—

Hear me, Rama, and I will destroy your doubt like a lion kills an elephant. I will establish the one unchanging unity like the broad daylight of the sun.

⁴⁰ There is only a Universal Soul, invisible amidst the vacuum of his Intellect, like an un-carved doll remains unseen in the wood of every forest tree. ⁴¹ We can see a carpenter carving the puppet from wood, but we cannot see the Soul that carves the figure of the world from the great bulk of Consciousness. ⁴² The puppet does not appear in the wood unless and until it is carved by the skill of the carpenter. The hidden world does not appear in the Intellect unless and until it is brought to view by the talent of the Mind. ⁴³ Yet the un-carved body of the world still appears in its aerial form, which is the original and genuine form in Divine Consciousness.

⁴⁴ In the beginning of creation, the inventive Intellect forms of itself the concept of the future world, appearing as an airy dream in the sight of the soul. ⁴⁵ Empty Consciousness conceives the airy ideal of the world as if it were a toy or doll gliding of itself in itself. ⁴⁶ It conceives itself as the essential part of the great Brahman, the seed of the mundane system. Then it imagines itself as the source of life and the living soul and the receptacle of individual consciousness. ⁴⁷ It imagines itself as understanding and the mind, the reservoir of space and time. It considers itself as the root of the knowledge of "I", "you", "he" and others, and as the essence of the five elements. ⁴⁸ It sees in itself the collection of the inner and outward senses, as also of the eight faculties of the mind, and both the spiritual as well as the elemental bodies contained in itself. ⁴⁹ It thinks itself to be the great trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. It sees the sun, moon and stars in itself. It considers itself as the whole creation and the interior and exterior part of everything.

⁵⁰ All these are the imaginary creations of the Intellect. There is nothing whatever other than itself. But in essence, Intellect is quite transparent. There is no concrete matter in it. No memory of gross materials is ever attached to it. No duality whatsoever exists in the unity of its nature. ⁵¹ The world is a causeless, uncaused, and uncreated thing, in reality a nothing at all. Its creation is a dream and its appearance is like a delusive shadow in empty air. ⁵² It appears as a phantom in vacuum, and as an intelligence in Consciousness. It is intelligible as it is, and that is in the sense of a nothing.

⁵³ What is the memory of a thing other than a dream of something, a nothing in reality? What is time of which we have no conception, except that it is an imagination of the mind in empty air? ⁵⁴ What is contained inside the compact Intellect, the very same appears on the outside of it. But in reality, there is no substance to the exterior object of sight, just as there is nothing to the interior object of thought. All is only the glittering of Consciousness. ⁵⁵ Whatever issues out of the bodiless and nameless something, which is forever still and calm in its nature, is considered to be a causeless and uncaused production that appears before blinded sight.

⁵⁶ Therefore know that this world is to be viewed in the same intellectual light as you see the Supreme Brahman himself. Know that this world is a castle in the sky, like a dream in the empty space of your mind when you sleep. ⁵⁷ There is no such thing as a visible or material world at anytime. Where can you find any dust on the watery surface of the sea? How can you see anything visible in the invisible spirit of Brahman? ⁵⁸ If the world appears as anything at all to your sight, you must view it as the manifestation of God himself, in his unthinkable and incomprehensible nature. ⁵⁹ The world is full of the glory of God. One is not derived from the other. The world is a full representation of divine

splendor on the face of nature.

⁶⁰ Though I have been repeatedly giving these lectures, yet the deluded minds of men are far from receiving them. They believe the world of their dreams as if they were awake. Even though they know the unreality of their own dreams, still they will never get rid of their rooted prejudice of being awake.

Chapter 169 — Description of the Calm and Tranquil Mind

¹ Vasishta continued:—

He who is not delighted with his delights or dejected in his distress and looks only within himself for his peace and solace is truly called a liberated man in his lifetime.² The mind of a self-liberated man is not moved from its steadiness in the solid rock of intellectuality towards the worldly enjoyments that are spread before him.³ The liberated soul rests in its intellectuality and has its mind ever fixed in it. He delights in intellectual culture and he has his calm rest therein.⁴ The true liberated soul rests in the Supreme Soul. His mind does not slide from divine contemplation, nor does he take any delight in the visible objects that are all around.

⁵ Rama said, “Sage, I think that the man who feels no pain in pain, who derives no pleasure from what is pleasurable, and who is entirely unconscious of both, is a mere block devoid of both senses and consciousness.”

⁶ Vasishta replied:—

The self reposed rests only in his empty consciousness. From the purity of his understanding, his soul derives a spontaneous delight that can be found in nothing and nowhere else.⁷ He rests in the Supreme Soul whose mind is cleansed of its doubts in all things and who by discrimination has obtained the true and certain knowledge of everything.⁸ He who takes no delight in any earthly thing is said to rest in God. Though he is outwardly employed in discharging the duties of his life, yet his soul is fixed in his God.⁹ He is known to be tranquil whose activities are all without any aim or expectation. He lives contentedly with whatever offers itself to his fate.¹⁰ In this world of sorrow and misery, he alone is happy and successful who, in his long, restless, helpless and tiresome journey in it, has found his rest in the Supreme Spirit through his own intellectual improvements.

¹¹ They who, after running their long race in the active course of worldly life, have come at last to set themselves at ease and quiet at the latter end of their lives, are like men who appear to have fallen fast asleep, enjoying their rest after the distressing dreams of their busy days.¹² In the open sphere of their intellects, they shine as brightly as the glorious sunrises in the sky, running his daily course without stopping anywhere.¹³ Good people seem to be sleepy in their minds, though they seem awake and employed in business with their bodies. They remain as inactive as any inert body, though they are never inactive in their souls.

¹⁴ They who lie asleep on their beds, drowned in their reveries and dreams, are said and believed to be sleeping, though they are conscious of the workings of their minds.¹⁵ When a tired traveler rests after a long and wearisome journey and is unable to utter a word from his hard breathing, such dullness does not indicate his dead silence or sluggishness.

¹⁶ The man of transcendent knowledge, with perfect peace and tranquility of mind and soul, remains as blind to the splendors of day as the blind owl. He remains as quiet as anybody in the darkness of night, when the whole creation sleeps in the gloom of ignorance and unconsciousness.¹⁷ He is a happy man who, presented with the varied scenes of this visible world while awake, sleeps through them without noticing its sorrows.¹⁸ He who pays no regard to ceremonial rites, remaining sincere to the welfare of his own soul, such a man is said to be self satisfied from his communion with himself.

He is never, O Rama, considered as dead himself.¹⁹ He who has passed over the miseries of this world and reached the other side remains supremely blessed in himself because of his sense of heavenly bliss in his inner soul.

²⁰ He who is tired with his long journey in this world, always deluded by the five senses and the objects of the senses, becomes dissatisfied with his enjoyments in life and in the end meets with the phantoms of despair.²¹ Overtaken by hoary old age, he is battered and shattered by the hoarfrost of diseases. Then like a old and worn-out antelope, he vainly wishes he could return to his native forests and plains.²² Forsaken by the Supreme Soul, the only faithful guide in our journey through life, we are exposed to intricate mazes of thorns and thickets until the weary traveler, sitting in a shady grove, is at a loss to know where to take his rest.²³ Here we are robbed of our passport and money by the highwaymen of our sins and sensualities. We are overcome by our weakness and exposed to numberless dangers and difficulties along the way.

²⁴ He who is possessed of his soul through his own spiritual knowledge crosses the ocean of the world (*samsara*) and reaches spiritual regions. There he rests calmly on the bedstead of his spirit and without the bedding of his body.²⁵ The man who moves about without any aim or effort of his own, and without his dream and sound sleep, whose mind is ever wakeful and whose eyes are never closed in sleep, such a man sleeps softly in the lap of his soul.²⁶ Like a well bred horse that sleeps standing and running, the self-possessed person sleeps in himself, even though he is employed among mankind with the acts of life.

²⁷ How very sound and profound is the trance of the philosophic mind that it is not disturbed even at the roar of thunder or the explosions of volcanoes.²⁸ How wonderful is the ecstasy of the right discerner of truth who sees within himself all that an external observer with his open eyes sees as lying outside.²⁹ The man who sees the world disappear from the sight of his open eyes is joyful with his ecstatic sights, and not with intoxicating liquor.³⁰ Ah, how happily he sleeps in his reverie whose soul is satisfied and at rest after it has swallowed the visible world and drank the ambrosial drink of self satisfaction.³¹ How happily does the self-possessed man sleep in his singleness, who is always joyful without anything to enjoy. He enjoys the everlasting bliss of unity. He sees the bright shining light of his inner spirit without any mortal thing on the outside.³² Happy is the self-possessed soul who is blind to the objects of common desire and rejoices in the blaze of transcendent light in himself. He delights in subtle and spiritual joys as much as others take delight in their solid food and gross enjoyments.

³³ The spiritual man sleeps happily with the inner peace of his mind. He shuts his eyes against the outer world which abounds only in sights of sorrow and the restlessness of the exuberant mob.³⁴ The self-possessed rest in the perfect peace of their minds. In their outer behavior, they debase themselves as the meanest of the mean, but in the greatness of their souls, they consider themselves to be the greatest of the great. They rest in the lap of the vast emptiness of their selves.

³⁵ The knower of truth sleeps happily in the Universal Soul, his body resting in its vast emptiness which contains an infinity of worlds in every atom.³⁶ The knower of truth rests perfectly blessed in the Supreme Spirit which is full of indescribable light. He sees the repeated creations and dissolutions of the world in the Spirit, without being destroyed himself.³⁷ Blessed is the godly man

who, seeing the world like a dream in his sleep, rests in the spirit of his God where he sees everything as clear as daylight and as bright as open sky.³⁸ How blessed is the knower of truth with his musings, who contemplates on the essences of all substances and absorbs the entirety of nature in himself, and whose comprehensive mind grasps the cosmos in itself, just as the emptiness of space comprehends the whole universe within its ample womb.

³⁹ How happily does the self-communing sage sleep in his abstract contemplation of the clear and bright heavens in himself. He sees the entire universe in the light of the clear sky, resounding with the sound of his own breaths and snoring.⁴⁰ How happily does the self-communing sage rest in the depth of his innermost thoughts. He finds himself as empty as the infinite void itself. He sees the universe hovering like a dream in a corner of that emptiness.⁴¹ How cheerfully does the self-musing sage lie down in his humble bed, which he finds to be like a mat made of straw swept before him by the tides of time and the current of contending circumstances.

⁴² The sage, by his diligent self-reflection, has come to know the true nature of himself. He lives in his lifetime as if in the state of dreaming. He deems his dream to be an aerial figure existing in empty air.

⁴³ The sage, by his diligent self-reflection, has come to the knowledge of his own emptiness. He comes to the same knowledge of all nature at large, until at last he comes to reduce and assimilate himself to that emptiness.

⁴⁴ The waking man falls asleep and the sleeping person rises to wake again. In this manner they pass their time in endless turns. Only the sound sleeper is ever wakeful to his true friend, self-liberation.

⁴⁵ He who, having passed his days in the company of his best friend, self-liberation, comes to enjoy the sweet companionship of that friend self-liberation in his future life for a long period of time. He is truly entitled to perpetual rest and everlasting bliss in the state of the Divinity itself forever.

Chapter 170 — The Friends of a Wise Man: Good Conduct and Mind

¹ Rama asked, “Tell me sage. Who is that friend with whom he lives? What is the nature of this enjoyment? Is it subjective or objective? Is it derived from within oneself or from external objects?”

² Vasishta replied:—

Only our own conduct is our true friend, whether it is innate in our nature or derived from outside through training and education from others.³ Our inborn good conduct is as infallibly and friendly to us as the natural beneficence of our parents. Our extraneous good behavior is as governing upon us as the control and restraints of a faithful wife in the intricate maze of life.

⁴ A fearless course of life, a well earned livelihood, and a well regulated mode of living, together with a dispassionate temper and coolness of mind are filled with unrestricted and ambrosial sweets.

⁵ An unblemished life acquired from early youth is able to save a person from all dangers and difficulties in the world and render him trustworthy for every trust, a repository of all wealth and treasures.⁶ It is able to preserve men from all evils, just as a father prevents his children from daubing their bodies with dust and dirt and hinders them from all acts of wickedness.⁷ Such a life gives a man the passion of fire and the sweetness of flowers. It adds a clarity to his mind and face, just like sunlight brightens the face of day.⁸ It supports a man like a father feeding and fondling his child, protecting him from every accident, just as a father ever ready to shield his children from all harm.

⁹ As fire purifies the body of gold from alloy and separates the impurity that is to be rejected, so does it show the good qualities from whatever is to be shunned and avoided.¹⁰ It gladdens the hearts of men with polite speech controlled against awkwardness. It is a repository of all laudable pursuits, just like a treasury full of coins and precious gems.

¹¹ As the sun never shows darkness, so a good man never exposes his dark side. As a loving wife shows only her affection to her beloved, so he shows only his tenderness to people.¹² He speaks and behaves kindly with all men, doing them only good. His words are always sweet and cooling without any self-interest.¹³ He is the well-wisher of men and therefore is revered by all. He speaks smilingly to all without any craving of his own and displays the form of only goodness to all beings.

¹⁴ Should he happen to meet an enemy in a contest who is ready to strike the first blow, he tries to evade his opponent’s blow by some trick or skill.

¹⁵ He is the patron of gentle and polite men, the protector of women and his family. He is like nectar medicine to the souls of all who are ailing under sickness of body or heart.¹⁶ He is particularly a patron of learning and the learned. He is a servant of respected men and favors the eloquent and argumentative. He is a companion and trusted friend to his equals in birth and breeding.¹⁷ He gains the favor of princes, noblemen and the liberal towards him. He obtains their favor conducting all sacrifices, charitable acts, devotional austerities and pilgrimages, and contributions from his honest means.

¹⁸ He partakes of good food and drink in the company of his friends and brahmins, joining with his wife, children and all his family’s dependants and house residents. He never keeps company except

with the good and great.¹⁹ He abstains from all enjoyments, considering them to be like bits of straw and the causes of disease. He occupies himself conversing upon good subjects with his view to the enlightenment and betterment of mankind.

²⁰ In this manner he passes his time in company with his friends and family. He is content with his own state and happy with what fortune has provided for him.

²¹ Rama asked, "Tell me sage, in short, who are his wives and children and his friends? What are their different forms? What are their respective qualities and virtues?"

²² Vasishta replied:—

His many sons are sacred ablutions and charities, religious austerities and meditation. They are all great souls who are entirely devoted to him.

²³ His wife is named Moon-ray (*Chandra-lekha*). She is like a phase of the moon in her appearance. Her very sight delights the eyes. She is his constant companion, always loving to him and content in herself. ²⁴ She is the ravisher of his heart and the dispeller of the gloom of his mind by reason of her loving kindness to him. She is the delight and delighter of his soul, an ever faithful helpmate to him.

²⁵ He has another consort named Same-Mind (*Samata*) who is dear to his heart and keeps the door to his house. She pleases him by her very appearance. ²⁶ She fixes her mind always at the mansions of virtue and patience. She runs before and guides the steps of her oppressed lord to the abode of the blessed and blissful.

²⁷ That strong man has another wife named Friendship (*Maitri*) whom he bears along with Same-Mind on either shoulder. Friendship advises him how to quell the enemies of his king's states. ²⁸ She is his clever counselor in all honorable acts, giving proof of the truth of her advice by increasing his wealth and rendering him honorable before all.

²⁹ Being employed this way in the discharge of his duties in the circle of his friends, family and advisers, the wise man is always pleased in himself and never complains or grumbles at any person or anything whatever. ³⁰ The wise man always remains as he is, silent and calm in his mind. He always remains as unmoved as a figure in a painting, though he may be moving about in the ordinary affairs of life. ³¹ He remains as dumb as a stone in fruitless discussions, pretending to be deaf in useless conversation. ³² He is like a dead body in acts that are against the social usage, but in conversations regarding polity and good manners he is as eloquent as the wise Brihaspati and as fluent as the snake Sesha with its hundred tongues. ³³ When engaged in some righteous discourse, he exposes the fallacy of sophistic reasoning. He clears all doubts in a moment by the versatility of his conversation on various subjects all at once.

³⁴ He is tolerant and magnanimous, bounteous and charitable. He is flexible and gentle. He is sweet in his speech, handsome in his look, and famed for his pious acts. ³⁵ Such is the character of enlightened men of their own nature. No practice or education can ever make anyone this way. The sun and moon and fire are bright by themselves. There is nothing else that can ever make them shine.

Chapter 171 — Meditation of Pure Emptiness: the Space between Thoughts

¹ Vasishta resumed and said:—

Our empty consciousness exhibits the phenomenal world to us. In reality, there is no such thing as this world, or its appearance, or a vacuum in nature, or a thing such as consciousness in ourselves.

² Whatever is apparent before us is the manifestation of Consciousness. It is vainly called the world, just as the open air called the sky is nothing other than the air itself.³ A man going from one place to another experiences a gap in between when thinks of the place he has seen and left behind. In the same way, the world a mere gap and thought of the mind.

⁴ Before creation there was nothing. Then how could this something appear from that nothing? The latter having no material cause, it is no material or visible thing.⁵ Then there was not even an atom in existence. So how and from what could this spinning world have its rise and form?⁶ Therefore this form of visible world could not have sprung from it, just as no child could ever be born of a barren woman. Hence there is nothing such as the visible world. The conception of it must be entirely false.

⁷ Whatever appears as visibly present before us is only the blank emptiness of Consciousness. This is the transcendental state in which the supreme unity appears to us.⁸ In the depth of our sound sleep a fleeting dream appears before us. So it is with Supreme Consciousness which never forsakes the serene and unalterable tranquility of its divine nature.⁹ It always exists of itself, in itself, in its calm and quiet state before the appearance of creation. It manifests intellectual emptiness in the form of the visible world, which is how it appears to us.

¹⁰ The idle thoughts of the mind present themselves like airy castles in our sleep. So does the emptiness of Supreme Consciousness exhibit the appearance of creation in its own empty space.

¹¹ Empty air evolves itself in the manner of whirlwinds. So does the intellectual emptiness exhibit the phenomenal world that exists in its own self.¹² Hence the three worlds that appear so real to our view are in their very nature quite unintelligible and hidden to our sight. It is the Supreme Deity itself that appears in this manner of its existence in its own empty substance.¹³ There is nothing such as the form of earth or anything else whatever at anytime, be it with or without form.

¹⁴ As a formless mountain appears in dream then disappears in the air upon waking, so the world that is visible when awake becomes invisible in sleep. In the same way, the triple world appears and disappears by turns in the transparent and tranquil Consciousness.¹⁵ To the watchful and enlightened mind, the world appears as identical with God. But however intelligent we may be, we can never know whether we are sleeping or awake.

¹⁶ During the space of journeying from one place to another, the mind can be unoccupied with any object. The minds of all living beings are naturally unoccupied with any preconceived idea. This blankness is the true state of the intellect.¹⁷ That unemployed state of mind which one has in the interval of his journey from place to place is what is called the transcendent void which contains all existence.¹⁸ Now, this emptiness of the mind and the emptiness of the world are similar to one another. Their contents are similar. Neither contains anything except the principles of the five elements, whether in their ideal or gross forms, which we call the unreal and real.¹⁹ The unreal or ideal elements are the inner conceptions of the mind and are called mental idea objects. The real or

gross forms of the elements are called visible form objects. Both of these are only different modes of divine essence. All of them are like whirling currents and waves rising on the surface of the infinite ocean of God.²⁰ Hence there is no such thing as an objective world, except that it is of the nature of that vacant mind of the traveler in the interim of his journey from one place to another.

²¹ The rising and setting of the passions and affections in the mind are mere modes of the mind. So the being and not being of anything, the presence and absence of the world are mere modes of the Divine Mind.²² The chasm between one thought and another is truly characteristic of the emptiness of the Divine Mind. The visible world is only a wave in the ocean of eternity, or a mirage in a sandy desert.

²³ The Divine Spirit never changes from its state of calm rest and vacant mindedness, like the mind of the traveler in the interval of his journey from one place to another. Such is the state of this world which is ever calm and quiet.

²⁴ From the beginning, since the first creation of the world, nothing was made that seems to be made. It is only a magic show that appears so perceptible to sight.²⁵ Alas, all this that shines so clearly to sight is nothing. Yet it is something true when viewed in the light of Brahman himself. Then it affords us fresh joy.²⁶ Where shall I go? How can I get away from this ungodly world that is ever prone to unrighteousness? It is an insubstantial sight that passes for substantial. Nobody understands that this world is Brahman, the same God who exhibits himself in this mode and manner.²⁷ It is no production or reflection, neither is it the original pattern or its copy. What then are these phenomena and how and from where? All these that appear to view are of the emptiness of Brahman who exhibits himself in this manner in all shapes.

²⁸ As a gem shines of its own brightness and not derived from without, so empty Consciousness shines of its own splendor, shown forth in the creation which is the same as itself.²⁹ In that calm and quiet emptiness, this sun shines with all his glory. More accurately, a spot of that emptiness shines in the shape of the sun, which is only a limited part of it and nothing else.³⁰ Though situated within God, yet neither the sun nor the moon shines of itself. God illuminates those luminaries, neither of whom can illuminate that transcendent Supreme Lord to us.³¹ It is his brightness that enlightens this visible mundane sphere. It is he alone who gives the light of the sun, moon, stars and fire, as well as all other shining bodies that shine with their borrowed light from him.

³² Whether God has a shape or is formless, or has a body or is without body, can only be a verbal discussion of the ignorant. The learned well know that any possible description of God is as unreal as the possibility of a flower growing in empty air.³³ A particle of sand shines brightly in sunshine, but even the sun and moon do not shine as brightly as those particles before the great glory of their maker.³⁴ The shining sun, moon and stars are only offshoots of the flaming gem of the empty Consciousness of God. Say, how can they be anything other than flashes of the same gem from which they are emitted?

³⁵ The divine state of pure consciousness, divested of intellectuality and devoid of emptiness, becomes deprived of its essence and all qualities. Being thus drained of all its properties and attributes, it becomes full of the totally of all existence.³⁶ The earth and all elemental bodies exist in it, yet in a manner nothing exists in it. All living beings (*jiva*) are in it, yet none exists as separate from it.³⁷ All things combine in unity, in their atomic forms, without forsaking their grossness

without. The Divine never forsakes its uniformity, without any mixture or duality in its pure being of unity.³⁸ Anything here is nothing, yet it is not a nothing either. Therefore it is too difficult to say what thing is or is not.

³⁹ There is one thing which is infinite without any intersection and ever extended everywhere. This is the essence of the empty Consciousness that contains the germ and foundation of the universe in itself.

⁴⁰ The mind is vacant and still in the space between passing from one thought to another. Such is the nature and form of the world, although it appears so diversified to view.⁴¹ Though it appears to have great diversity, yet it is the only uniform Consciousness that extends consistently over all emptiness, seeing the five elemental bodies hovering about it as if in a dream.

⁴² As Consciousness passes from its rest of sleep to the sights in its dream, so it passes from the state of the void of universal desolation to the commotion state of creation.⁴³ As sleep and dream reoccur to every soul, so the extinction and renovation of the world occurs to all alike. So also waking is like the enlightened state of the soul (*turiya*). Hence the world is no other than a phenomenon in intellectual emptiness.⁴⁴ Thus the whole universe is no more than a state of waking, sleeping, dreaming, and *turiya* scenes. Such is the understanding of the learned on this subject. We know nothing about how the ignorant see the world.

⁴⁵ The Lord is inscrutable amidst living brutes and all inert creation. We can come to no conclusion with regard to the nature of that Being who is beyond the knowledge of our minds and understanding.

⁴⁶ This much is knowable of Him. He is pure Consciousness and all things are full of Him. Yet things are not of the same form as that Reality which manifests itself in the form of the universe.⁴⁷ The wise use words like permeate and diffusion to describe the omnipresence of the Divine Spirit in creation. Actually, there is no trace of meaning to such words to describe the Divine Essence in all nature.

⁴⁸ Since the first creation of the world, this great essence of empty Consciousness is situated of itself and in the souls of great men.⁴⁹ All pervading Consciousness is always situated in the minds of the sages whose souls are full with the presence of the one Supreme Spirit. It is that Consciousness which conceived in itself the idea that passes under the name of the world.⁵⁰ The knowledge of the bliss of the world, like that of a dream upon waking, is attained with delight. But lack of this knowledge, like a nightmare when sleeping, makes us uneasy all the while.

⁵¹ The silent saint who knows the truth is always in the same state of tranquility, whether he be walking or sitting anywhere, or waking or sleeping.⁵² The wise man who remains indifferent to everything, sitting contentedly even in his distress, caring not whether he lives or dies, has nothing to gain or lose.⁵³ The wise man who is outwardly employed in worldly affairs without taking anything to heart, neither parting with nor craving anything, remains inactive in his active life.⁵⁴ Complete detachment is characteristic of the wise man, just as heat and cold are natural to fire and snow. This habit of the mind is not acquired by practice or education.

⁵⁵ He who by his nature does not have this control of his mind is ever ignorant of truth. Ignorance of this truth is the sign of a character that is inclined towards base desires.⁵⁶ The truly wise man remains perfect and strong in his own good nature. He is quite satisfied with the sweet ambrosial drink of his transcendent tranquility. He is calm in his mind without changing desires for this thing or that.

Chapter 172 — There Is no Memory; All Thoughts Are Memories

¹ Vasishta continued:—

The world is devoid of any material element, whether the earth or others. I believe the first creator to be only the Mind, the fruitful tree of desires.² The word mind derives from the act of minding. Afterwards it came to be used as a name for the thinking power, just like the whirling of waters loaned its name to a whirlpool.³ The mind's connection with Consciousness gives its understanding and other faculties. Otherwise, it would be as blank as empty air, which would have no dust were it not for the earth underneath it.⁴ The mind is neither the body nor the heart, nor the senses or desires, nor does the mind even have any of these. Though these are commonly attributed to the mind, yet in its true sense, it is devoid of all properties.

⁵ How can memory be the cause that reproduces the world? If the creator Brahma is liberated or extinct with the extinction of the world, how could he have retained his memory of it? The new creator of the new world could not possibly have any memory of what he did not know.⁶ Holy and liberated souls have no bodies or memories. The passing currents of rivers do not return or whirl back, like the whirlpools of some.⁷ If a liberated soul has any body at all, owing to the memory of his former state, it must be an unearthly and immaterial body, still and rarefied like an imaginary form.

⁸ Our imagination presents an imaginary mountain to the mind's eye. Such is the air-drawn body of the all encompassing Viraj presented to us without any earthly form.⁹ Therefore there is no such thing as memory whatsoever at any time. It is merely built upon popular belief and not upon the reason of wise men.

¹⁰ Rama asked, "O inspired sage, explain why there was no memory in the first creator Prajapati. He must have remembered the creation of a first kalpa or learnt it by his inspiration."

¹¹ Vasishta replied:—

The preexistence of memory is possible in the outward or visible world which admits of cause and effect. But can there be memory when there is no such world, only mere emptiness?¹² There is nothing visible here, from the highest heaven to the lowest pit. If everything is only a nothing, then what is memory and what use is it?¹³ The thought of a prior, absent world is called its memory. But when there never was and never will be any visible world, how can you think of its memory, even in fancy?¹⁴ The complete absence of phenomena at all times makes it identical with the invisible Brahman himself. This being the truth, tell me. How can you fancy the memory of anything?¹⁵ Therefore the prime creator can have no memory of a prior existence, nor could he have any bodily form as he is in the form of a spirit with only pure intelligence.

¹⁶ We should remember the past from our present state, that we are mortal beings undergoing repeated reincarnations. We should not bring other persons and things to our memories, as others think it to mean.¹⁷ Memory (*smriti*) means the retention of past things in our mind. But what can we remember when nothing was or is or shall ever be?¹⁸ All this stupendous fabric is the Supreme Brahman itself. He remains as immovable as a mountain, without beginning, middle or end. What then is the memory or presence of it?

¹⁹ The Lord being the Universal Soul is the soul or essence of all things, shining like the luster of empty Consciousness. Outwardly he is quite calm, as I may say, he is resting in our memory. ²⁰ So the memory of the Lord is as he is seen in the light of nature. Hence the habitual meditation on the Lord corresponds with the contemplation of external nature. ²¹ Whatever is known to us is nature, that is the object of our meditation. Hence the appearance of anything in the mind is called to its memory.

²² If anything that is absent or nonexistent appears before our sight, like the false appearance of water in a mirage, that is also the case with our misleading memory. ²³ Again, any prejudice rooted in the minds of men that appears as correct by long habit of thinking it as such, this also passes for memory.

²⁴ Any sudden accident or passing event that strikes the mind for a moment also passes also under the name of memory, even though it may or may not happen anymore. ²⁵ An idea rises of itself in the mind and by being fostered for any length of time, becomes impressed upon it. Anything else that resembles it passes for an object of our memory. ²⁶ Anything passes for an object of memory, like the movement of air by means of a fan. ²⁷ Again, whatever occurs in the mind, like parts of a whole subject, is also called its memory, just like any part of the body is also called the body.

²⁸ There are also many mental fabrications that arise of themselves before the mind, like magic shows appearing before our sight. If the memories of these be called memory, then say, what truth or reliance is there in it? ²⁹ Consider how this faculty of memory is very imperfect and false to man. There is no visible creation at all. Therefore its memory is altogether meaningless. ³⁰ The world is only a display of the density or volume of the Divine Consciousness. It is reflected at present as a visible object in the minds of the ignorant who have given them the name of memory, which in reality is nothing at all.

³¹ I cannot tell you how to obtain liberation, nor do I know what it means. However, to clear the doubt of the questioner, I will now tell you something about it.

³² Until there is an end to the sight of the visible, an oblivion to the memories of past events, and a cessation of ignorance and delusion, liberation is hard to be attained. ³³ The ignorant have a belief in things quite unknown to us. They can never conceive whatever is imperceptible to their senses. ³⁴ The enlightened are unacquainted with the gross errors that lurk in the darkness of ignorant minds, just as the ever shining sun knows nothing of what passes in the gloom of night.

³⁵ Whatever likeness of anything appears to be impressed in the mirror of the mind, that is the result of habitual thoughts. The impression of anything studied or stored in the mind is called memory. ³⁶ But when these glaring impressions in the imagination are rubbed out of the mind like the colors of a painting, nothing remains of any color or tinge of the mistaken world, such as in the clear minds of the learned.

³⁷ A mirage shows the appearance of water which is a mere delusion and never true. So is the dream that shows this creation to view, which is no more real than a false vision. ³⁸ Empty Consciousness contains creation and shows its representation in ourselves. Thus the world only appears in the emptiness of the Consciousness and not anything as fallen or detached from it. ³⁹ The Supreme Soul shows this form in itself and makes its unreality appear as a reality to us. Though this form was manifested at the beginning, yet it is nothing more than the display of an unreality.

⁴⁰ Tell me. Where does this world with all its pleasant and unpleasant things come from? It is never

anything of a plastic form. It is not an appearance proceeding from memory.⁴¹ The world has no cause in the beginning. It appears as the very form of the Supreme. It is only to our sorrow that we regard its visible form or search for our liberation.⁴² Both of these views are wrong and tend to our bondage in the world. The view of the world's emptiness in the emptiness of Consciousness is the only means to our release and liberation from it.

⁴³ The only way to obtain liberation in this world is to regard the apparent world in its empty form, situated in the emptiness of Consciousness, identical with the true form or spirit of God, and undetached in its essence from the divine essence.⁴⁴ The only means for our release from the bondage of this world is to see visible bodies, such as those of the sun, moon, and mountains, and the invisible bodies, such as space, time, and other ideal objects, in the empty space of Divine Consciousness.

⁴⁵ The only way to our emancipation from temporal bondage is to see the same spirit situated or dwelling in the recess of Consciousness, identical with its own notion of itself and bearing resemblance to the nature of the dream which proceeds from its essence.

⁴⁶ How can any earthly or other elemental body have its place in the spirit of God which is not of the earth or any other element? It shines of itself in itself as the quiet void of Consciousness.⁴⁷ How and from where could the earth and other elements proceed in the beginning unless they were inherent and contemporary with the divine essence, just like the many objects of our dream arise from our own nature?⁴⁸ Afterwards these creations of the spirit are named the earth and the like and considered as material objects. But say, how could spiritual emanations assume such corporal and tangible forms either by pure memory or by creating forms?

⁴⁹ The world is not the production of our error. It is not a representation of our delusion or a magic show. It is not the permeation of the spirit throughout all nature. It is the very essence of the same deity itself.⁵⁰ It is the divinity Brahman itself that shines in the form of this wonderful world. It is the very same unity which appears to manifest, and yet is so very obscure and mysterious to us. All that is visible is only pure light, the serene clarity of open air which glows bright then dims by turns, the changes of light and darkness being creation and destruction.

Chapter 173 — Brahman Is Both Conscious and Unconscious; Brahma Is the Mind, Viraj the Imagined Body

¹ Rama asked, “The universally entertained idea is that the Divine Spirit is the common soul of all, infinite in its permeation. Why is it supposed to be the soul of only the living body and called the ego or a personal being? ² How does Consciousness become inert in the state of our sleep, as in a block of wood or stone? Why is it said to exist or become extinct in the state of its numbness?

³ Vasishta replied:—

In ordinary, common speech we say that the Universal Soul resides as the ego or personal being in the body, just as we say the hands of the body are its hands and not its feet. ⁴ As the leaf of a tree is considered only a part of the tree, so the Universal Soul residing in the tree is called only a tree. ⁵ As emptiness in the sky is also called the sky, so the Universal Soul dwelling in matter is referred to as that matter. ⁶ An aerial castle in a dream appears as a tangible castle to the dreamer for the time. In the same way, the Universal Soul living in our sleep, dreams and waking state is thought to be sleeping, dreaming, or being awake at that time.

⁷ As stones, trees or cliffs are seen to rise on mountains, and waves on the surface of waters, so the huge mountain also rises as a stone or a tree from the bosom of the all pervading Spirit. ⁸ As the living body gives growth to dull and dead nails and hairs, so the living soul of the universe grows unconscious stones and trees upon it. ⁹ As the conscious soul becomes as unconscious as a block of wood in its sleep, so the Universal Soul becomes inert before creation and after its dissolution. Again, as the sleeping soul sees a series of dreams arising out of it, so the tranquil spirit of God beholds the light of creation issuing out of it. ¹⁰ As the conscious and unconscious soul of man produces both conscious offspring and unconscious excrements from its body, so the Universal Soul produces both living beings and inert bodies from itself.

¹¹ The conscious and the unconscious are both embodied in the person of the Universal Soul which is possessed of both the moveables and the inert in itself, although it is formless in its substance. ¹² All these contraries in nature disappear before the sight of the truly learned, just as the false sights in dreams disappear from the view of the awakened man who knows the falsity of dreams. ¹³ All this is the emptiness of Consciousness in which there is no sight, view or viewer, just like a dreamer, awakened from his dreaming, neither sees his dream nor his dreaming sights anymore.

¹⁴ Millions and millions of creations are appearing and disappearing in the vacuum of Consciousness, like recurring waves and revolving whirlpools in the sea. ¹⁵ The waters of the ocean show various shining forms in its rising waves. In the same way Consciousness raises many creations bearing different names in its own intellectuality. ¹⁶ To the truly learned, the world appears as it is, as Brahman. To the ignorant mass of men, it appears as many and changing because they lack precise knowledge of it. ¹⁷ The wave who knows its nature to be only calm and cool water thinks no more of being a fluctuating wave. So the man knowing himself as Brahman thinks no more of his mortal state.

¹⁸ The idea that the Divine Spirit vibrates, which comes from the fluctuating appearance of creation, is mistaking the calmness of the Divine nature. The fluctuation belongs to the powers residing in the Divinity. ¹⁹ Empty Consciousness never forsakes its tranquility. The variety of knowledge that rises in

it, like a varying series of dreams, is attributable to the mind, which they call Brahma or the great progenitor of all.²⁰ Thus the first lord of creatures was the formless mind that does not decay. It was of intellectual form like an imaginary being, and supposed to be the cause of all.

²¹ Saying “you are nothing” is like saying the word “gold.” The word has no form of itself. Its purity is the gold itself.²² Uncreated Brahman, being an intellectual and empty form, an imaginary body imbued with volition, appeared as the Prime Ego or a personal being containing the world in his body.²³ The empty void of Consciousness displays these wonders that are known as the alternating creations, preservations and destructions of the world.²⁴ The clear and uncreated light to which Consciousness evolves itself of its own accord, like the evolution of airy dreams from the mind, is named the first father of all.

²⁵ As a wave assumes one form or another and rolls on endlessly over the vast expanse of the sea, so runs the heavenly mind in the forms of the revolving creations and their dissolutions.²⁶ The light of the intellectual vacuum is called Viraj and is of the same mind as Brahman. It stretches out creation like a castle or city in one’s imagination.²⁷ Viraj is the combined form of the triple states of waking, dreaming and sleep. The first two are analogous to the creation and preservation of the universe, and the last is similar to the utter darkness of dissolution.²⁸ From the chaotic state of his dissolution, there sprang light and darkness, like dark and white hairs growing on his head. The rotations of time resemble the joints of his body.²⁹ His mouth represent the fire, his head the upper sky, and the air is below his navel. His foot-stool is the earth, his eyes are the sun and moon, and the east and west are his two ears. In this manner Lord Viraj manifests himself in the imagination of his mind.³⁰ Thus did the expanded empty form of Viraj represent the whole visible world in his ideal body which was a figure of his own imagination, just like any of the insubstantial forms of our dreams or fancies.

³¹ Whatever is thought of in the emptiness of Consciousness, the same comes to be vividly exhibited there. Such truly is the form of this world which we conceive in our self.³² Viraj is truly an intangible being in himself who appears to be as widely extended as the vast extent of the universe. In his own nature, he is like a city or mountain that we see in our dreams.³³ Whatever one thinks himself to be, he conceives in him to have become the same, without his actually being as such. So an actor is seen to play his part in dream from the concept of his acting on the stage.

³⁴ Whatever be the doctrines of the Vedanta, Buddhism, Sankhya, and Saugata systems of the philosophy, and whatever may be the doctrines of Tryaksha, Pashupati, and other teachers of Agama scriptures, they all agree in acknowledging Brahman as the giver of the boons that they all respectively desire. All of them obtain the particular object of bliss from the same. Such is the glory of the great God, whose soul fills all bodies and whose bounty supports them all.

Chapter 174 — Nirvana Is Knowing God Is All and Nothing Else Exists; Only This Knowledge Yields Nirvana

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Consciousness alone shined in the beginning with its thought of creation appearing before it like a vision in a dream. This was an image of the three worlds, a reflection of the light of Brahman himself.

² These creations were like endless waves in the ocean of the Divine Mind rising from the flexibility of his omniscience. Hence there is no difference between the creation and its absence. Nor is there any sorrow in the one or bliss in the other.

³ Both dream and sound sleep of the soul belong to its sleeping state when the mind remains as vacant as empty air. In the same way, visible and invisible creation are both the same in the emptiness of Consciousness.

⁴ This world in our waking state, appearing like a city seen in our dream, is not worthy of reliance by the wise who are well acquainted with its nature of being an imaginary appearance.

⁵ Upon awaking we realize the falsity of the imaginary city we saw in our dreams. In the same way, in the end we realize our mistake of taking the world to be real.

⁶ As upon waking, we understand the falsity of all our efforts and desires in the imaginary city of our dream. So do we find, at last, that all our aims and attempts in our waking state in this world are equally false and fleeting.

⁷ If anyone assigns any other cause, then he should admit that what he says is mere fancy.

⁸ Guessing knowledge is no better than a dream of the world. The authority of what you can see is much stronger than that which you cannot see.

⁹ It is better to judge the soul and other attributes by examples that are nearer and more familiar rather than something remote. Otherwise it is like a fall from the top of a hill in a dream.

¹⁰ Perfect insensibility is complete inertness, a changeless state of body and mind. The nature of the world and the state of things in it are constantly restless and changing. Therefore it is impossible to attain samadhi in either of these two states.

¹¹ Meditation in worldly life must be too sensitive and variable, while trance stupefies a man to a stone. True liberation consists neither in the changeableness of mind nor in its stone-like insensibility.

¹² I think no liberation is obtainable from stone-like, apathetic trance any more than one gains liberation from deep sleep.

¹³ Only through consummate knowledge can reasoning men dispel their ignorance. He who has secured his liberation in his lifetime has no chance of his being born again.

¹⁴ Inflexible abstraction is said to have no bounds. It consists in sitting steadfast in profound meditation, without distraction or diversion. Such a posture is said to be all illuminating, the eternal sunshine of a yogi.

¹⁵ It is called the endless absorption of the soul, and this is the fourth or last state of contemplation. It is also called nirvana, or losing one's self in one's reveries. This is what they call liberation from all bonds and cares of the world.

¹⁶ Liberation is the density or depth of wisdom and the intensity of mental examination. There is a complete absence of any memory of phenomena in it. It is known as the state of perfect transcendentalism or glory.

¹⁷ It is not the stone-like inertness of some philosophers or the trance or sound sleep of others. It is neither the lack of choice of the Patanjalis or the nonexistence or utter annihilation of the Buddhist.

¹⁸ It is the knowledge of Brahman as the prime source of all and the

nothingness of visible creation. It is knowing God as all and yet nothing that exists. Therefore it is to know him as he is in his all pervading spirit.

¹⁹ The consummate knowledge of all gives us our positive rest of nirvana, knowing that the world is the same as its nonexistence, ²⁰ that all this variety is no variety at all, and that there is no entity in reality. All apparent realities are mere unrealities. It is the end of all our conceptions and inductions. It is the only reality. ²¹ The entire nothingness of the visible world is the state of nirvana. The settled knowledge of this in anyone constitutes his supreme bliss.

²² This state is attainable by one's pure understanding and his habit of constant meditation, joined with a knowledge of the scriptures and scrutiny into the right sense of significant words and their meanings.

²³ Constant study of this work is the best guide to liberation. It is attainable by no means other than enlightenment of the understanding. ²⁴ Liberation is never attainable by pilgrimage or charity, sacred ablutions or learning, meditation or yoga contemplation, religious austerities, or sacrifice of any kind.

²⁵ The world is only a delusion causing the unreal to appear as real. The world is only an empty void which presents the appearance of the world, like a dream in the emptiness of Consciousness. ²⁶ No religious austerity or pilgrimage is ever able to remove our error of the world. At best, they can earn us the reward of heaven, but never secure to us our liberation or final beatitude. ²⁷ Our error is eradicated only by the light of the scriptures and our good understanding. Above all, the best means to our liberation and final salvation is spiritual knowledge. ²⁸ The vivid light of the scriptures is sure to destroy our error of the world, just as sunshine dispels the gloom of night.

²⁹ Light, clarity, shade, creation, preservation and destruction appear by turns in the clear empty mirror of Consciousness, like the movement of air in a breeze or the fluctuation of waves in water.

³⁰ The first principle of a future form is contained in the heart or embryo of everything. Air contains wind in constant motion within itself. The existence of the world is inherent in Divine Consciousness. Hence the world has its evolution and dissolution in Divine Consciousness, like the rise and fall of wind in empty air.

¹ Vasishta continued:—

The emptiness of Consciousness which first presented the shadow of a dream could not possibly assume the form of a causal and conscious body in order to be visible and form the visible world. How is it possible for an intellectual void to have a physical form at all?

² O Rama, in the beginning of creation there was nothing except a shadow dream in the Intellect. There was no this creation or the next world in visible existence.³ The world appeared only in the form of an insubstantial idea of it. The empty intellect remained as quiet with its ideal world as the mind rests quietly with the nightmare in its dream.⁴ Such is the essence of the Intellect, translucent and without beginning or end. Though it is a clear void in itself, yet it bears the ideal model of the world in its mirror.

⁵ So long as this is unknown, the world appears as a gross substance. But being known as contained in the Divine Spirit, it becomes a spiritual substance. Since how is it possible for any gross matter to attach itself to the transcendent void of which there is no beginning or end?⁶ This pure and abstract knowledge of the world is like the dream of a city. Such being the state of the world before its creation, how can any earthly or other matter ever be joined with emptiness?

⁷ The light of the Divine Soul, shining in the emptiness of Consciousness, is called the cosmos or the universe consisting of, as it is supposed, matter, mind and faculties.⁸ Only the lack of understanding makes us suppose a thing such as a material earth spinning around like a whirlpool with the force of the wind. It has no basis or stability.⁹ Afterwards the same Divine Spirit (*jiva*), wishing to display its own glory in its personality of Brahma, thought of the ideal forms of the earth and other things.¹⁰ Then the great mind of Brahma shone with a purer light of itself. This is called his creation which is of an aerial form and nothing else.¹¹ That pure light was nothing substantial of itself, but only the brightness of Consciousness shining with the radiance of the Divine Spirit.¹² This light is the body of the spirit shining as intellectual light in the void of Consciousness. It presented the appearance of the world in it like dreams floating before the empty mind.

¹³ There is no other inference that can be derived. There is no other cause that can possibly be assigned or produced. It is certain that in the beginning the Divine Spirit sees itself in the form of creation within the emptiness of its Consciousness.¹⁴ This body of the world, having no property of a tangible body, is never fragile in its nature. But it is as void as the emptiness of Consciousness and as insubstantial as empty air.¹⁵ The form of the world is that of the Supreme Being, which is without any form whatever. It is identical with the Divine form. The Supreme Being comprehends all bodies in itself and extends undivided as all in all in its own self.

¹⁶ This is better understood with the example of a dream which rises of itself and shows itself in various forms. But all these varieties are nothing but empty visions, so the diverse scenes and sights of the world are no more than shows of the Divine Spirit.¹⁷ The Divine Soul of Brahman assumed to itself the state of the living spirit and, without forsaking its transparent form, became of the form of mind.¹⁸ This power extends the universe in its ethereal form in air, which appears to be changed from its unchangeable state of transparency to that of a gross nature.

¹⁹ The mind is Brahman who gives an external and visible form to the world that was seated invisibly in his heart. It is continually employed in the process of repeated creation and destruction of all.

²⁰ The immaterial mind of Brahman evolved the world from its living matter, which was originally seated in his heart. From there it appeared in a different form as a counterpart of the original, or as the formless representation of something in a dream.²¹ The god Brahma, dwelling in himself with his formless mind in his embodied form of the triple world, is being diffused in endless forms of conscious and unconscious beings in the triple world.²² But there is no earth and no material form, not even anything of a visible appearance in the world. It is only the mind of Brahma which exhibits itself in the form of the formless and empty world.

²³ Then Lord Brahma thought that his mental form was nothing of substance as it did not appear to sight. It was only Consciousness which shone in this manner within itself, without solidity or substantiality.²⁴ This mental conception or abstract contemplation of the world cannot be described with words. Realization makes the meditator remain in mute astonishment and causes him to continue as dumb in this ordinary conduct in life.²⁵ The mind reflecting upon infinite and unlimited Consciousness is lost in infinity. Hence Brahma, having remained in a long silence, at last awakened to his knowledge.

²⁶ After the unconscious mind of Brahma came to its sense, it revolved in itself with its thoughts, just like the liquid waters of the sea turns in whirlpools by agitation.²⁷ As unconscious air is moved by its internal motion, so all living souls, who are identical with the calm and quiet Supreme Soul, slide away like waters flowing from their main source.²⁸ As winds and waves are identical with the calm air and still water, yet blow and flow in all directions of themselves, so the minds of living beings, which are the same with the Supreme Intellect, run in different ways of their own accord.²⁹ Hence the empty intellect of all living beings is the same as the Divine Intellect. This, O most intelligent Rama, is otherwise also known as the Supreme Soul.

³⁰ To us, the Divine Soul appears to be blinking its eyes, like the movement of air. Closing them causes the end of the world an opening exposes creation to view.³¹ Its opening of eyes causes the visibility of creation. Closing its eyes makes it invisible or extinct to view. The absence of both these acts is equivalent to the formless void of the world.³² Seeing the opening and shutting of its sight, or seeing the visibility and disappearance of the world in one unvaried light, makes existence and nonexistence the same in the mind and indicates the perfection of the soul.³³ Seeing and not seeing and their results of creation and extinction make no difference in Divine Consciousness which is always the same.³⁴ Therefore know this world is as calm and quiet as the Divine Soul. It is of the nature of the uncreated void which is ever the same and has no decay.

³⁵ The sensing, conscious Intellect exhibits itself as the insensible and unconscious emptiness. The same Consciousness shows itself in the form of the world, which in a manner is its body and home.

³⁶ Consciousness is neither born nor made, nor does it ever grow or decay. It is never visible or perceptible, nor do we have any idea of it. It displays its wonders in itself without any extraneous substance in it.³⁷ All that is called phenomena is the brightness of the blazing gem of the great Consciousness proceeding from the quarry of its emptiness, just as the sunshine which illuminates the world issues from the sun.

³⁸ Brahman shines forth as creation, just as our sleep exhibits the imaginary world in its dream. All this creation is as quiet as sleep, yet it is full with the commotion of the slumbering world.

³⁹ Whatever is known in any manner in the mind, whether existent or nonexistent in the world, is the reflection of Consciousness, whether it be an entity or nonentity.

⁴⁰ Should the mystery of existence lead us to assume some cause, such as primary atoms or the like, then what cause can be assigned to the appearance of sights in our dream? ⁴¹ If the origin of the world is not ascribed to Brahman as the origination of dreams to consciousness, then neither is there any truth in the existence of the One nor in the appearance of the others, both of which cannot be true.

⁴² The minds of men are inclined towards the particular objects of their fancy. Hence those who believe and delight in God take him to be the origin of all things that appear to them. ⁴³ Whatever is in the minds of men, and whatever is the object of constant devotion in their hearts, they know them as the only objects of their lives and the very essence of their souls. ⁴⁴ He who delights in Brahman immediately becomes of the same mind. So anyone who is gratified in anything is united with that in his mind. ⁴⁵ The man who has obtained his rest in God has found the highest bliss in his mind, though he shows himself as otherwise in his outward conduct and social dealings.

⁴⁶ There is no reason to speculate about unity or duality when the entirety of existence is as I have taught. It is in vain to look at anything else. ⁴⁷ There is nothing visible or invisible, or anything as formless or having a form. There is nothing as subject or object, nor anything of reality or unreality here. The whole is the very Brahman himself. ⁴⁸ This world is without beginning or end and is known to the world as soul. But in fact, one Brahman rules over all without any fixed rule, like a path without a name.

⁴⁹ That which is conceived as the serene Brahman is also called the bright Brahma or the creator god, just as what is known as the calm and clear sky is also called empty space. ⁵⁰ Nebulae that seem to dim the face of the sky are something in appearance and nothing in substance. In the same way our mental faculties appear to flutter and obscure the clear atmosphere of Consciousness. They seem to be dualities and other than the serene intellectual principle. ⁵¹ But the mental, physical and all other perceptive and active powers of living beings are the common properties of the intellectual soul, just as the many gaps and hollows in various bodies are in common with the emptiness of the one universal vacuum.

⁵² As the quiet soul passing from its sleeping to the dreaming state retains its identity without change, so the Divine Soul passing into creation after its quiescence remains the same unchanged unity.

⁵³ Thus the Supreme Spirit reflects the shadow of its great Consciousness in the forms of creation and dream. Hence neither this creation nor the sights in dreams are anything in substance other than a mere shadow of the picture in the Divine Mind. ⁵⁴ The bright picture of the Divine Mind in the emptiness of the Great Consciousness exhibits its form and the ideal appearance as visible creation, like a fairyland in dream.

⁵⁵ It is impossible for the world to appear by any of the means conjectured by different schools. From the lack of any prior cause, it must be that Consciousness saw itself exhibited in its own emptiness.

⁵⁶ In the beginning of creation, the formless void of Consciousness showed itself in this visible and

intangible form, representing itself as a picture of its mind or dream or its imagination.⁵⁷ Like a dream, it is a blank without any attribute. It is changeable but not breakable. Although it has the substance of intellectual emptiness, yet it is corrupted with the stain of our misapprehension of it, called ignorance.⁵⁸ Like a dream, it seems to possess some properties in its appearance, but in substance, it is wholly devoid of any. It is never different from the spiritual nature of the Lord, though it appears otherwise to our misconception of it.

⁵⁹ The phenomenal world is like a mountain seen in dream and is inseparable from the soul in which it resides. Therefore the visible appearing in the emptiness of Consciousness is more empty than the vacuum of space.⁶⁰ That which is the Supreme Soul and is devoid of all form, the very same and of the same nature is all this which we call the visible world.⁶¹ Whatever conception we have in our dream, the same is the display of our intellect. The cities and castles we see in the dreams are no real existences, only appearances presented to us by the intellect.

⁶² As the recognition of our acquaintance in dream and the memory of impressions in our mind are altogether insubstantial, so are the sights of the visible and the perception of things also quite unreal.

⁶³ Therefore leaving these unrealities of our recognitions, perceptions and memories which are so much relied upon by the ignorant, we should take these forms in the light of the direct manifestations of God.⁶⁴ As waves constantly roll on the surface of the sea, so innumerable worlds continually revolving on the surface of the Supreme Soul are of the same nature as the Supreme Soul.

⁶⁵ All laws and their exceptions and all varieties and complexities unite in harmony in the Divine Nature.⁶⁶ Therefore Brahman is all in all and there is none and nothing besides. He alone is the soul of all, as all these live in him.

⁶⁷ The wandering mind thinks the world is wandering about with all its contents. But the steady minded take it to be quite calm and quiet. Hence it is impossible even for the learned to settle their minds without the habitual calmness of their attention.⁶⁸ There is no other means to suppress the mind from the sight of the visible, only the constant habit of attending to the lectures on this sacred scripture.⁶⁹ Though it is difficult to repress the mind from its thoughts of this world, either in its states of living or death, yet it is possible to do so immediately by eliminating its impressions through the study of this spiritual scripture.

⁷⁰ Knowledge that the visible body is nothing, and knowledge that the mind lacks any body, both in this world as well as in the next, will always serve to preserve our peace and quiet.⁷¹ The mind, body and all that is visible are suppressed under the sense of their nothingness, just as the mind, its force and moving clouds all disappear in the absence of their cause.

⁷² The only cause of restlessness is ignorance which is altogether dispelled by the study of this scripture. Those whose minds are enlightened a little become composed from attending to the recital and preaching of this work.⁷³ The unintelligent will be able to understand the teachings. He who understands the words and meanings of these lectures will never return disappointed.⁷⁴ Know that this scripture is the best means to drive away error and to produce a universal indifference or sameness everywhere.⁷⁵ Therefore try your best to weigh well the teachings of this scripture. Whether you study one or both parts of this work, you will doubtless be freed from your misery

thereby.

⁷⁶ Should this scripture prove distasteful, owing to it being the composition of a holy sage, then the student may consult the sacred scriptures to perfect his spiritual knowledge.

⁷⁷ Do not spend your time in false reasoning or offer your precious life to fame and ashes. Let your wise understanding commit the visible to the invisible soul. ⁷⁸ No one can buy a moment of his lifetime for all the gems in the world. Yet there are many who foolishly misspend their time in their worldly dream.

⁷⁹ Though we have a clear conception of the world, yet it is a false sight together with that of its beholder, the living soul. It is as false as dreaming the wailing of one's friend at one's own death.

Chapter 176 — Brahma Gita, the Story of Brahma: the Cosmic Egg

¹ Rama asked, “There are innumerable worlds in the universe. Many have gone before, many are in existence, and many are yet to be. Sage, how can you persuade me to believe they do not exist?”

² Vasishta replied:—

You well know, Rama, the relationship which the world bears to a dream. Both mean a passing scene. This meaning cannot be denied by anyone in this audience.

³ The words spoken by the wise, who know their application and sense, are neither understood nor received in the hearts of common people, though the words are in common use. ⁴ When you come to know the knowledge of the One, then you will discern the three times (past, present, and future) clearly and see them all as present before you.

⁵ It is only consciousness that displays itself in the form of the world in our dreams. In the same way, Divine Consciousness exhibits the worlds in itself in the beginning of creation. There is no other cause for the production of creation. ⁶ Hence there are innumerable worlds spinning like atoms in infinite space. There is no one who can count their number or discover their modes and natures.

⁷ It was of old that my honorable father, the lotus-born Brahma, all besmeared with the fragrant dust of that flower, delivered a discourse on this subject, which I will now relate to you. ⁸ It was of old that my father Brahma told me about the number of worlds and their respective situations in the heavens where they appear to us.

⁹ Brahma said:—

O sage, all that is manifested as the world is Brahman. It is the infinite entity of the deity in its abstract essence. But viewed in the concrete, the world is a nonentity. ¹⁰ Listen to my story which is as happy to the soul as it is pleasant to the ear. It is called the story of the Cosmic Egg, the mundane mass.

¹¹ In the infinite void there is an empty substance known as the empty Consciousness in the form of a minute atom. ¹² It saw itself in a dream as being as a living soul, resembling the movement of wind in empty air. ¹³ Thus the Lord became a living being. Forsaking its empty form, it thought itself to have become the ego in its intangible form. ¹⁴ He had his egoism, an egoistic sense in himself. This was the knowledge of himself as an unit, which is only an act of delusion.

¹⁵ Then he thought himself as changed into the conditions of understanding, mind and ego, all as in his dream. He was inclined of his own choice to impose mutability upon his immutable nature. ¹⁶ Then in his mind, as if in dream, he saw the five senses attached to his body. These are as formless as the appearance of a mountain in dream, which the ignorant are apt to take as a solid body.

¹⁷ Then in the atom of his consciousness, he saw that his mental body was comprised of the three worlds in their abstract forms, apparent to view but without substance or solidity or any basis at all.

¹⁸ This stupendous form was composed of all beings, whether of the conscious or inert kinds. ¹⁹ He saw all things comprised in himself just as they are seen in a dream or reflected in a mirror. The triple world appeared in his person like the picture of a city newly printed on a plate. ²⁰ He saw the three worlds in his heart, just as they are seen in a looking glass, together with all things in it with

their varied, vivid colors.

²¹ He observed more minute atoms existing within the minute atoms, and stupendous worlds on high clustering together in groups and rings. ²² These seen in ignorance of their natures appear as gross material bodies. Viewed in the clear light of their essence, they prove to be only the display of the Divine Mind. ²³ Thus the viewer who sees the world in the light of Brahman finds this view of it: a vision in a dream. He comes to know that there is no real viewer to view it, or any cause for it, or any duality whatsoever.

²⁴ All things that appear everywhere around us are quite motionless in their nature, existing only in the Divine Spirit as their main substratum. They are all situated in the Universal Soul from eternity to eternity. ²⁵ Numberless worlds situated in the Divine Spirit appear to be settled outside it, just as the waves of the sea rise above its waters and scatter its salt spray in the air.

Chapter 177 — Brahma Gita, There Can Be No Cause for Creation

¹ Rama asked, “If the world has no cause and proceeds of itself from the essence of Brahman, as our dreams, thoughts and imaginations proceed of themselves from the nature of our minds,² and if it is possible for anything to proceed from no cause, then tell me sage, why does everything we see have its proper cause?”

³ Vasishta replied:—

Rama, I am not speaking about what men commonly perceive, the production of anything by application of its proper causalities. I am speaking about the creation of the world, which is not in need of any atomic principle or material elements, as the Atomists maintain.

⁴ People see this world in whatever light they imagine. Someone else sees it in a different manner according to his own imagination.⁵ Some imagine it as the diffusion of the Divine Soul and think it is one with the nature of the deity. Others think of it as the living body of Viraj, with the unconscious parts resembling the hairs and nails growing upon his body.

⁶ The concepts of causation and lack of causation do not apply to God because the Lord, being almighty, has the power to be either the one or other as he likes.⁷ If there is anything whatever that is supposed to be other than Brahman in its essence, then it is reasonable to suppose Brahman to be the cause of that which otherwise could not come to existence.⁸ But when all things that appear to be so different from one another are without beginning or end and are coeternal with the Eternal One, then tell me, which of these can be the cause of the other?

⁹ Here nothing comes to exist or desist at anytime. All eternally exist in the self-existent One as one and the same with his empty Self.¹⁰ What is the cause of anything, and to what purpose should anything be caused at anytime? The Lord expects nothing from his creatures, and therefore their creation is equal to their not being created at all.¹¹ Here there is no emptiness or fullness and no entity or nonentity either, or anything between them, as there is nothing attributable of the infinite emptiness of Brahman.¹² Whatever is simply is, and what does not may not be. But all is Brahman only, whether what is or is not.

¹³ Rama asked, “Tell me sage, how can the Divine Spirit not be the cause of all when all who are ignorant of its quiet inactive nature believe that it is the sole cause?”

¹⁴ Vasishta replied:—

No one is ignorant of God. Everyone has an innate conviction of God as his own consciousness. Whoever knows the empty entity of God also knows that this nature admits of no scrutiny or discussion.¹⁵ Those who know the unity of God and his nature of motionless quiet, full of intelligence, also know that God’s unknowable nature is beyond all scrutiny.

¹⁶ Ignorance of God abides in the knowledge of God because one acknowledges the existence of God, yet says he is ignorant of God’s nature. This is like our dreaming is included under the state of sleeping.

¹⁷ I say that God is the soul of all, or is the all in all, to describe the omnipresence of God only for the instruction of the ignorant. In reality, his holy spirit is perfectly pure without decay.¹⁸ Different

understandings entertain different views regarding existence, whether caused or uncaused.¹⁹ Those who see phenomena from a proper perspective have no reason to assign any cause to them whatever. Therefore, creation is without any cause whatever.²⁰ Therefore assigning a cause to this creation, either as matter or spirit, undermines one's self-consciousness of divine permeation. It is all merely useless words of philosophers using clever arguments that serve only to confuse.

²¹ In absence of any other cause, creation is nothing other than like an appearance in our dream. There is nothing such as the gross material form or its visible appearance whatsoever.²² What cause can the ignorant assign to their sight of a land in their dream other than the nature of Consciousness which exhibits such phenomena to minds? Say if there can be any other meaning to dreams?²³ Those who are unacquainted with the nature of dreams are deluded to believe them as realities. But those who are acquainted with their falsehood are not misled into believing them or this world to be real.

²⁴ It is the impudence of fools to introduce any hypothesis of causality, either by their supposition, arrogance or in the heat of their debate.²⁵ Is the heat of fire, the coldness of water, or the light of luminous bodies as the ignorant suppose them to be, or any other nature of things and their respective causes?²⁶ There are hundreds of speculative theorists who assign as many causes to creation without agreeing upon any. Let them explain the cause of the aerial castles of their imagination.

²⁷ The virtues and vices of men are formless things that bear fruit upon the spiritual body in the next world. How can they be causes of our physical bodies in this world?²⁸ How can our finite and shapeless knowledge of things be the cause of the constant rise and fall of endless and minute bodies in the world, as it is maintained by the Vijnana Vada gnostic school?²⁹ It is nature, says the Naturalist, which is the cause of all events. But as nothing results from the nature of anything without its combination with another, it is too indefinite in its sense.

³⁰ Therefore all things appear as causeless illusions to the ignorant and their true cause is a mystery to them. The intelligent know them to be the wonderful display of Divine Consciousness that shows everything in itself.³¹ As one who knows the falsehood of dreams is never sorry at his loss of anything in dream, so those who have the knowledge of truth never feel any sorrow even at the possession or separation of their lives.

³² In the beginning there was no production of the visible world. It is nothing more than the emptiness of the intellect. In its own and true form, it appears as a dream, and it is nothing other than a dream in its essence.³³ There is no other hypothesis which is more accurate than the world resembles a dream. This conception of the world has only the great Brahman for its ground work.

³⁴ As fluidity, waves and whirlpools are the inherent properties of pure water, the revolutions of worlds are only appearances on the surface of the Divine Mind with the divine spirit of Brahman at their bottom.³⁵ As velocity and ventilation are inborn in the nature of pure air, the creation and preservation of the world are ingrained and intrinsic in the nature of God.³⁶ As infinity and emptiness are inherent properties of the great void, so the knowledge of all things existent and nonexistent, and of creation and annihilation are immanent in the Divine Mind.

³⁷ All things in existence and lying dormant in the Divine Mind are perceptible to us because we participate in the very same mind.

³⁸ This creation and its destruction both abide side by side in the dense intellect of the Divine Soul, just as thickening dreams and sound sleep reside together in the calm sleeping state of our soul. ³⁹ As a man passes from one dream to another in the same sleeping state of his soul, so the Supreme Soul sees the succession of creations alternately taking place in its own essence. ⁴⁰ The clear atmosphere of the Divine Soul, utterly devoid of earthly and other material substances, yet appears to be possessed of them all. In the same manner, the human soul sees many things in its dream without having any of those things in itself.

⁴¹ As the human mind sees the forms of a pot or painting rising before it in a thought, so the all seeing mind of God sees worlds upon worlds appearing at once in its presence with a glance of its thought.

⁴² The all seeing soul sees all things as they are in itself. It finds them to be of the same intellectual nature as its own intellect, and all things are equivalent to the words that express them.

⁴³ What is the use of scriptures and what good is reasoning upon words when our lack of desire is the best way to bliss? There being no creation because it has no cause, we have nothing to do with what appears only seemingly so. ⁴⁴ It being proved that the absence of desire is our best bliss below, the sensation of desire must be the source of perpetual misery to man. Though our desires are many, yet the feeling of it is one and the same. They betray the craving mind, just as the various dreams by night disclose the intense desire nature of the soul.

Chapter 178 — How Spirit Can Perceive Physical; Story of Indu's Ten Sons, the Aindavas (again); How Yogis Perceive Creation

¹ Rama asked, “The world is known to consist of two sorts of beings, namely the physical or material substances and the incorporeal or subtle essences. ² Subtle ones do not strike one another. Those are said to be solid which push and dash against each other. ³ Here we always see the dashing of one solid body against another. But we know nothing of the movement of subtle bodies or of their coming in contact with another. ⁴ We do know something about the quick motion of our subtle senses to their respective objects, without coming in contact with them. For example, we can perceive the distant moon.”

⁵ “I repudiate the theory of the half-enlightened who maintain the material world is the production of the will or imagination. I cannot believe that the immaterial intellect can either produce or guide the material body.”

⁶ “I believe the will is the material breath of life, moving the living body to and fro. But tell me sage, what is that power which propels the living breath in and out of beings? ⁷ Tell me sage, how can the intangible intellect move the tangible body and carry it about, like a porter carrying his load? ⁸ If the subtle intellect is capable of moving the solid body at its will, then tell me sage. Why can't a man move a mountain by his own will?”

⁹ Vasishta replied:—

The opening and closing of the mouth of the aorta in the heart lets the vital breath in and out through the passage of its hole and the lungs. ¹⁰ Like the hollows of an ironsmith's bellows, the hollow of the aorta lets vital air in and out by the breathing of the heart.

¹¹ Rama asked, “It is true that the ironsmith closes and expands the valves of the bellows. But tell me sage, what power blows the wind pipe of the heart and lets the air in and out of the inner lungs?

¹² How does the single breath of inhalation become a hundredfold, and how do these hundreds combine again into one? Why are some beings conscious and others as unconscious as wood and stone? ¹³ Tell me sage, why the inert have no vibration at all and why only moving bodies have pulsation and mutation?”

¹⁴ Vasishta replied:—

There is an internal perception which moves the interior cords of the body, just as we can see the ironsmith work his bellows.

¹⁵ Rama asked, “Say sage, how is it possible for the subtle and intangible soul to move the vital airs and tangible internal parts in the animal body? ¹⁶ If the imperceptible observant soul can move the intestinal and other inner parts of the body, then it should be equally possible for a thirsty soul to draw distant water to itself. ¹⁷ If tangible and intangible can come together at will, then what is the use of the active and passive organs of action? ¹⁸ As the intangible powers of the soul bear no connection whatever with the outward objects of the world, some think they can have no effect on the internal organs of the body.”

“So please explain it more fully to me. ¹⁹ Tell me, how do you yogis perceive the outward material

things in your inner incorporeal souls? How can your formless souls have any command over or any contact with solid bodies?"

²⁰ Vasishta replied:—

Listen to me explain so that all your doubts are rooted out. These words will not only please your ears, but they will give you a conception of the unity of all things.

²¹ There is nothing here at anytime what you would call a solid substance or a material body. Everything is a wide and extended emptiness of the fine and subtle spirit. ²² This spirit is of the nature of pure intelligence, quite calm and intangible. All material things such as the earth are as imaginary as our dreams, the creatures of imagination. ²³ There was nothing in the beginning, nor shall there be anything at the end, for lack of a cause for its creation or dissolution. Present existence is an illusion, like any fleeting shape or shadow appearing before the dreaming mind.

²⁴ The withdrawn yogi loses sight of the earth, sky, air and water, and the hills and rivers that ordinarily appear to sight. Through his meditation, the yogi sees them in their ideal and intangible forms. ²⁵ The outer elements and their inner perceptions, the earth, wood and rocks, are all only empty ideas of the intellect, which is the only real substratum of ideas and besides which there is no reality.

²⁶ Listen to the story of Aindavas which explains this doctrine. This will not fail to please your ears, though I have told it to you once before. ²⁷ Listen to the story which I am going to repeat in answer to your question. You will come to know that these hills and others things are identical with your intellect.

²⁸ Once in days of the past in some part of the world, there lived a certain brahmin named Indu who was famous for his religious austerities and observance of Vedic ceremonies. ²⁹ He had ten sons by whom he was surrounded like the world by its ten sides. The sons were men of great souls, magnanimous spirits respected by all good and great men. ³⁰ In the course of time the old father met with his death and departed from his ten sons like the eleventh Rudra at the time of the dissolution of the world. ³¹ His chaste wife, for fear of the miseries of widowhood, followed his funeral by cremation, much like evening twilight follows departing daylight like a faithful bride, with the evening star shining upon her forehead. ³² The sons performed the funeral ceremonies and, in sorrow for their deceased father, they left their home and domestic duties and retired to the woods for holy meditation.

³³ They practiced the best method for the intensity of their concentration, best calculated to secure the accomplishment of their meditation. This was constant reflection upon their identity with Brahman.

³⁴ Thinking so in themselves, they sat in lotus posture. Wishing to gain knowledge of the unity of all things, they did what you shall be glad to learn from me. ³⁵ They thought the whole world presided over by the lotus-born Brahma was contained within themselves. They believed they had been transformed into the form of that mundane god. ³⁶ Believing themselves to be Brahma, they sat long with the thought of supporting the world. They remained with their closed eyes as if they were mere figures in a painting. ³⁷ With this belief they remained fixed and steady at the same spot, and many a month and year glided over their heads and motionless bodies. ³⁸ They were reduced to dry skeletons, parts of which were beaten and devoured by hungry beasts. Some of their limbs were torn and

disappeared from their main bodies, like parts of a shadow by the rising sun.³⁹ Yet they continued to reflect that they were the god Brahma and his creation, and the world with all its parts were contained in themselves.

⁴⁰ In the end their ten bodiless minds were thought to be converted into so many different worlds, in their abstract meditation of them.⁴¹ Thus by the will of their intellects, each became a whole world in himself and remained so in a clear or abstract view of it, without being accompanied by its grosser part.⁴² In their own consciousness they saw the solid earth with all its hills and other things in themselves. Since all things have reference to the intellect, and are viewed intellectually only.

⁴³ What is this triple world? It is only its knowledge in our consciousness, without which we have no perception of it and with which we have a clear conception of everything. So all things are of the empty nature of our consciousness, and not otherwise.⁴⁴ As the wave is nothing other than the water of the sea, so there is nothing movable or immovable whatever without our conscious knowledge of it.

⁴⁵ As the Aindavas remained in their empty forms of intellectual worlds in the open air, so are these blocks of wood and stone pure intellectual beings or concepts in the sphere of our minds.⁴⁶ As the will of the Aindavas assumed the forms of the world, so did the will of lotus-born Brahma take the form of this universe.⁴⁷ Therefore this world together with all these hills and trees, and also these great elements and all other bodies, belong only to the intellect which is thus spread out to infinity.

⁴⁸ The earth is the intellect and so are its trees and mountains. Heaven and sky are also only the intellect. There is nothing beside the intellect, which includes all things in itself, like the intellectual worlds of the Aindavas.

⁴⁹ The intellect, like a potter, forms everything upon its own wheel and produces this pottery of the world from the mud of its own body.⁵⁰ The conscious will is the cause of creation and the framer of the universe. It could not have made anything which is either unconscious or imperfect in its nature, and even mineral mountains and plant life are not devoid of their sensations.

⁵¹ If we say the world is the work of design, or the memory of former impressions, or the work of Divine Will, these are still only different powers of Consciousness. The world still proves to be a product of Consciousness.⁵² Therefore there cannot be any gross substance in Divine Intellect which blazes with the shining light of Consciousness in the Universal Soul of God, like a mine of bright gems.⁵³ Anything however mean or useless is never apart from the Divine Soul. Sunlight shines on all objects. So does the light of Consciousness take everything in the light of the great Brahma which pervades alike on all.

⁵⁴ As water flows indiscriminately upon the ground, and as the sea washes all its shores with its turbulent waves, so does Consciousness ever delight to shed its light over all objects of its own accord without any regard to its near or distant relation.⁵⁵ As the great Creator evolves the world in the first formative period of creation, like the petals of his lotus navel, so does the Divine Intellect unfold all parts of the mundane system from its own sanctuary, which parts are therefore not distinct from itself.⁵⁶ The Lord is unborn and uncreated and unconfined in his nature and purely empty in his essence. He is calm and tranquil. He is immanent in the interim of existence and nonexistence. Therefore this world is no more than a reflection of the intellectual or its ideal pattern in the Divine

Mind.

⁵⁷ Therefore the wise are aware of the consciousness in all creation and laugh at ignorant men who declare the insensibility of inanimate objects. Rocks and trees in this ideal world are not wholly devoid of their sensations and feelings. ⁵⁸ The learned know that these ideal worlds in the air are full with the Divine Soul. They know this creation of Brahma's will to be only an ethereal paradise without any substantiality. ⁵⁹ When this material world is viewed in its ethereal and intellectual light, the distresses of this delusive world take to flight and its miseries disappear. ⁶⁰ As long as this intellectual view of the world does not reveal itself to the sight of a man, the miseries of the world trouble him stronger and closer on every side.

⁶¹ Men, infatuated by their continued folly and blind to the view of the world as intellect, can never have reprieve from the troubles of the world or find their rest from the hardness of the times. ⁶² There is no creation, no existence or nonexistence of the world, and no the birth or destruction of anyone here. There is no entity nor nonentity of anything. There is only the Divine Soul glowing serenely bright with its own light in this manner. There is no light whatever except the manifestation of the Divine Spirit.

⁶³ The cosmos resembles a vine with multitudes of its budding worlds. It has no beginning or end. It is impossible to find its root or top at anytime, or to discover the boundless extent of its circumference. Like a crystal pillar, it bears innumerable statues in its recesses which are thickly studded together without end. ⁶⁴ There is only one endless being stretching his innumerable arms throughout the infinity of space. I am that empty soul embracing everything without limit. I find myself to be that stupendous pillar in my uncreated and all comprehensive soul which is ever as tranquil and transparent and without any change in itself.

Chapter 179 — Phenomena Are Points of Consciousness; Dreams Evidence Things Exist without Cause; — Each Soul Is Conscious of Multitudes within

¹ Vasishta continued:—

When the triple world is known to be a purely intellectual entity, then there is no possibility of the existence of any material substance, as it is believed by the ignorant majority of mankind.² Then how can there be a tangible body, or any material substance at all? All that appears to our sight is only an intangible extension of pure emptiness.³ It is the emptiness of our intellectuality contained in the emptiness of the Divine Intellect. It is all an extension of calm and quiet intelligence existing in the serene intelligence of the Supreme One.⁴ All this is only tranquil consciousness, like a dream of which we are conscious in our waking state. It is a pure spiritual extension, though appearing as a consolidated expanse of substantial forms.

⁵ What are these living bodies and their limbs and members? What are their inner parts and their bony frames? Are they not mere shadows of ghosts and spirits appearing as visible and tangible?⁶ The hands, the head, and all the other parts of the body are seats of consciousness or perception. They are the seats of the imperceptible and intangible in the form of the brain or sense impressions.

⁷ The cosmos appears as a dream in the emptiness of the Divine Mind. The cosmos may be described as caused and uncaused owing to its repeated appearance and eternal inherence in the Eternal Mind.

⁸ It is true that nothing can come from nothing, nothing can exist without its cause. But what can be the cause of what is eternally destined or ordained in the Eternal Mind?⁹ It is possible for a thing to come into existence without any assignable cause. Such is the presence of everything that we think of in our minds.¹⁰ If it is possible for things to appear in their various forms in our dreams, and even in the unconscious state of our sleep, then why should it be impossible for them to appear in the daydream of our waking hours, the mind being equally watchful in both states of its being?

¹¹ Things of various kinds are present at all times in the all comprehensive mind of the Universal Soul. These are uncaused entities of the Divine Mind. They are also described as caused when they are brought to appearance.

¹² As each of the Aindavas thought he had become a hundred in his imagination, so every one of these imaginary worlds swarms with millions of beings.¹³ Everybody is conscious of being many, either consecutively or simultaneously at the same time, just as we think of our diversity in the different parts and organs of our bodies.¹⁴ As the one universal body of water diverges itself into a thousand beds and basins, branching into innumerable channels and creeks, and as one undivided duration is divided into all the divisions of time and seasons, so does the one and uniform soul become many.

¹⁵ All compact bodies are only ethereal phantoms of our dream rising in the empty space of our consciousness. They are as formless and subtle as a hollow mountain in a dream.¹⁶ Our consciousness consists of only the concepts and ideas of things. Therefore the world must be considered to exist only as an idea. It appears as fleeting ideas of things glide over the emptiness of the intellect.

¹⁷ Our knowledge and ignorance of things resemble the dreaming and sleeping states of the soul. The world is same as the intellect, like the identity of air with its breeze.¹⁸ Ideas and phenomena are the

same state of the Intellect. Ideas are the subjectivity of its empty self, and phenomena are the objectivity of its own reasoning and dreams. Therefore this world appears as a protracted dream in the hollow cavity of the sleeping mind.

¹⁹ The world is a nonentity. The error of its entity is caused by our ignorance of the nature of God from the very beginning of creation. In our dream of the world, we see many terrific aspects of ghosts and the like, but our knowledge of its nonentity and of the vanity of worldliness dispel all our fears and cares. ²⁰ As our single self-consciousness sees many things in itself, so it beholds an endless variety of forms appearing in the infinite emptiness of the Divine Mind. ²¹ As many lighted lamps in a room combine to emit one great blaze of light, so the appearance of this diverse creation displays the omnipotence of one almighty power. ²² Creation is like a bursting bubble, or foam and froth covering the ocean of omnipotence. It appears as a wood and wilderness in the clouded face of the firmament, but disappears in the clear empty atmosphere of the Divine Mind. There is no speck or spot of creation in the infinite ocean of Supreme Consciousness.

Chapter 180 — The Story of Kundadanta and the Upside-down Ascetic

¹ Rama said:—

Sage, I ask you to remove the shade of a doubt from my mind, just as sunshine dispels darkness and brings to light whatever is dark and obscure in the world.

² Once I saw a self-controlled ascetic who came to the Gurukula school where I was sitting among the council of the sages and learned men, conversing on subjects of theology and divinity. ³ He was a learned brahmin of godly appearance. He came from the land of the Videhas and was practiced in religious austerities. The shining luster of his body was as unbearable as the terrible seer Durvasas himself.

⁴ On entering the assembly, he made his obeisance to the illustrious persons. We also saluted him in return and provided a seat for him to sit down. ⁵ The brahmin being well seated, I picked up many discourses with him from the Vedanta, Sankhya and Siddhanta philosophies. When his weariness was gone, I asked him this question. ⁶ “Sage, you seem to be tired with your long journey to this place. Please tell me, O eloquent brahmin, from where you have started here today?”

⁷ The brahmin (Kundadanta) replied:—

So it is, O fortunate prince. I have taken great pains to come here. Now hear me tell you the reason that brings me here to see you. ⁸ There is a district here named Vaideha. It is populous and prosperous, resembling a heavenly paradise. ⁹ There I was born and educated and lived. I was named Kundadanta because of the whiteness of my teeth, bearing resemblance to the buds of white kunda flowers. ¹⁰ Afterwards I renounced my worldly concerns and traveled far and wide about this earth. I stayed in the ashrams of holy sages and saints and the shrines of gods to rest from the fatigue of my travels.

¹¹ I stayed near sacred Srisailam Mountain where I sat silently for a long period practicing my meditation austerities. ¹² There I found a desert devoid of grassy pastures and woody trees where the light of the sun and the shade of night reigned by turns, as the place was completely open to the sky.

¹³ In the middle of this desert was a branching tree with a few green leaves and leaflets. The bright sun dispensed his gentle beams from the upper sky through its cooling foliage. ¹⁴ Under one of its branches, there hung a man of holy appearance. He blazed as the resplendent sun hanging in the open air by the cords of sun’s wide extending beams and radiating rays. ¹⁵ The man’s feet were tied up by a thick cord of munja grass. His head hung downward towards the ground beneath. This gave him the appearance of an offshoot of a banyan tree rooted in the earth below.

¹⁶ After a while I approached him. I saw that his two folded palms were affixed to his breast.

¹⁷ Advancing nearer to the body of the brahmin, I found it was alive and breathing, having the feeling of touch and the perception of heat and cold and that of the breeze and change of weather.

¹⁸ Afterwards I devoted myself to attending upon that holy person. I underwent all the difficulties of the sun and seasons until I was received into his confidence. ¹⁹ Then I asked him, “Who are you lord, that you have taken up this sort of painful meditation? Tell me, O far sighted seer, what is the object of your protracted state of self-mortification at the expense of your precious life?”

²⁰ He replied to my question, "First, O devotee, tell me what is the object of your tapas and those of all others who are devoted to whatever they pursue?" ²¹ This was his introduction to what he was going to say. Being pressed further by my troublesome questions, he gave the following answer to my questions. ²² "I was born at Mathura where I grew up in the house of my father and acquired my knowledge of philology and the arts in course of time. ²³ I also learned that princes are the receptacles of all pleasures and enjoyments and that early youth is capable of enjoying all the fruits of life. ²⁴ Since then I began to reflect upon possession of the seven continents of the earth and to foster the ardent expectation of gratifying all my desires of this life. ²⁵ That is why I came here, to meditate in order to attain the objects of my desire. ²⁶ Therefore, O my disinterested and self offered friend, return to your own country and desired home. Leave me to remain in this state, with my firm resolution to accomplish my desired object."

²⁷ Being instructed by him to leave, listen now to what I said to him. This will amaze you and the wise will be gladdened in their hearts. ²⁸ I addressed him saying, "O holy saint, let me remain here at your service underneath this holy tree until you obtain the desired reward of your meditation." ²⁹ The humble minded devotee remained as cool and quiet as a block of stone. His eyes remained closed as he persisted in his quiescence like a dead body, without any motion in his outer limbs.

³⁰ I stayed with him for six months. I remained quiet and quiescent like a block of wood, enduring the rigors of climate and seasons without shrinking. ³¹ Once I saw a person bright as the blazing sun descending from sun, then standing in the presence of the devotee. ³² The ascetic mentally offered his adoration to this divine person and I bodily prostrated myself before him. He uttered his words, in a tone as sweet as the flowing out of ambrosial sweetness.

³³ He said, "O persistent brahmin who has long been hanging from this branch of a banyan tree, suspend your severe austerities and accept your desired reward which I am ready to confer upon you.

³⁴ As you wish, you shall reign over the seven oceans and continents of this earth with your present body for seven thousand years." ³⁵ In this manner, this second sun gave his blessing to the devout ascetic, then plunged into the bosom of the ocean out of which he had come.

³⁶ The god having departed, I approached the ascetic hanging below the branch and said to him, "I witnessed today what I had heard before, that the gods are ever gracious to their suppliants. ³⁷ Now O brahmin, as you have gained the object of your desire, it is desirable that you should give up your austerity and pursue the proper callings and the course of your life."

³⁸ He agreed to my proposal. I climbed the tree and loosened his feet, like they loosen the feet of an elephant from its chains. ³⁹ Then, having bathed himself, he made offerings with his pure hands for the remission of his sins. Then with the fruit which he was fortunate to pluck from the tree, he broke the fast of his long penitence. ⁴⁰ By virtue of his meritorious devotion we obtained plenty of the delicious fruits of that holy tree. We refreshed ourselves lived on that fruit for three days.

⁴¹ Thus this brahmin, desiring to obtain sovereignty of the earth with its seven continents encircled by the seven oceans, completed his painful fasting hanging upside down until he obtained his desired reward from the god of day. He refreshed himself for three days in that place, then both of us set out on our journey towards the city of Mathura.

Chapter 181 — Kundadanta and the Ascetic Travel, Find a Hermit at What Was Gauri's Ashram by the Kadamba Tree

¹ The guest Kundadanta resumed his narration and said:—

We journeyed homeward towards the holy city of Mathura, which was as fair and splendid as the solar and lunar mansions and Indra's celestial city of Amaravati. ² We reached the rural town of Raudha and stayed by a rock in the mango forest. Then we turned towards the city of Salisa where we remained two days cheerful in spirits. ³ We passed our time with that cheerfulness of heart that always comes with travelling through unknown places and scenes. We rested under the cooling shade of woodland trees, and refreshed ourselves in the cooling brooks and breezes.

⁴ Faded flowers falling in profusion from flowery vines growing on river banks of rivers, the splashing of the waves, the humming of the bees, and the singing of birds are delightful to the souls of passing travelers. ⁵ We enjoyed thickening and cooling shades of trees on the shores of rivers, herds of deer and flights of chirping birds, and frozen ice and dew drops hanging quivering like pearls on tree leaves and blades of green grass. ⁶ We passed many days through woods and forests, over hills and valleys, through caves and narrow passages, over marshes and dry lands, and in cities and villages. We also crossed over a great many rivers and channels and running waters. ⁷ We passed our nights under trees of thick plantain forests. Being weary with walking over snow and dew, we rested on beds made of plantain leaves. ⁸ On the third day we came to a jungle full of gigantic trees which, for lack of human homes, seemed to have divided the empire of heaven among themselves.

⁹ Here that devotee left the right path and entered into another forest, uttering these useless words to me. ¹⁰ The ascetic said, "Let us go to the sanctuary of Gauri here, where many munis and sages from all quarters stay. It is the ashram where my seven brothers went to attain their objects. ¹¹ We are eight brothers in all. All of us fostered great ambitions in various respects. We are all equally resolved to devote ourselves to rigorous austerities to succeed in our determined purposes. ¹² This is why I seek their shelter in this holy ashram where they practiced various acts of self mortification with fixed determination, whereby they have been cleansed from their sins."

¹³ "Before this I accompanied my brothers and remained here with them for six months. Now I find this same sanctuary of Gauri in the same state as I had seen it before. ¹⁴ I see this ground overhung by the shady flowers of trees. I see the young animal cubs resting in this their peaceful retreat. I also see leafy branches with birds listening to sages underneath reciting the scriptures."

¹⁵ "Therefore, let us go to the ashram of the sages which resembles the throne of Brahma crowded by the brahmins on all sides. Here our bodies shall be purified of their sins and our hearts will be sanctified by the holiness of the place. ¹⁶ By seeing these holy men of superior understanding, the minds of learned and saint-like persons and even those who know truth are purified."

¹⁷ Upon his saying so, we went to that ashram of sages and hermits, but to our great disappointment, we saw nothing, only total desolation. ¹⁸ There was not a tree or a plant or even a shrub or vine to be seen. There was no man, muni or child, nor any altar or priest anywhere. ¹⁹ It was only a vast desert, all void and devoid of bounds, an unlimited space of burning heat. It looked like a blank expanse of sky had fallen down of the ground below.

²⁰ “Ah woe to us! What has all this come to be!” we said to each other. We continued to wander about for a long while until we chanced to see a tree at some distance.²¹ It presented a thick shade and cooling aspect, like that of a dark and drizzling cloud in the sky. There we saw an aged hermit sitting in meditation beneath it.²² We two sat upon a grassy area out in front of the hermit. We sat there for a long time, yet we could find no rest in the hermit’s withdrawn meditation.²³ I felt uneasy being there for such a long while, so I broke my silence in impatience and cried out in a loud voice, saying, “O sage, suspend the long meditation of your mind.”

²⁴ My loud cry awakened the muni from the trance of his reverie, like the roaring of a rain cloud awakens the sleeping lion, rising straight with his yawning mouth.²⁵ The hermit asked us, “Who are you pious people here in this desert? Say, where has that sanctuary of Gauri gone? Who has brought me here? Tell me, what does this change mean? What time is this?

²⁶ I replied, “You, O sage, know all this and not we. Tell us, being a sage and a seer how do you not know yourself?”

²⁷ Hearing this, the holy man meditated again and saw all the events that had occurred to him and to us also.²⁸ He remained a moment in deep thought, then coming to himself from his meditation, he said to us, “Learn about this marvelous event, and by your good common sense, know it to be only a delusion.”

The hermit speaking:—

²⁹ This young kadamba tree that you see here giving me shelter in this desert is now flowering in kindness to me.³⁰ It was for some reason or other that the chaste goddess Gauri lived upon it for a full ten years in the form of the goddess of speech. She suffered all the harshness of the seasons sitting in this tree.³¹ An extensive forest of trees grew by her at this place which became known by her name. The forest was decorated by plants of all seasons.³² It was a romantic spot for all grades of gods and men who sang and played here with the melodies of tuneful and playful birds.

The air was filled with clouds of flowers, bright like multitudes of moons in the sky. The pollen of full blown lotuses perfumed the air everywhere in the forest.³³ The pollen of mandara and other flowers perfumed the air around and the opening bud and blooming blossoms brightened like moons. Flowering vines sent forth their fragrance all about and the whole courtyard of the forest seemed to be scattered with perfume.³⁴ Its branches were the seats of the god of the spring season and plants. An orchestra of black bees sat and sang in concert with their mates on the top of flowers. Flower beds were spread out like sheet of moonlight and like swings for the swinging play of spiritual masters and celestial apsara nymphs.

³⁵ Here brooks were frequented by cranes, herons and other aquatic birds of various kinds. Spacious lawns were graced by cocks, peacocks and other land birds of various colors.³⁶ Gandharvas and yakshas, siddhas and the hosts of celestials bowed down to this kadamba tree. Their crowns rubbed against the branch sanctified by the touch of the feet of the goddess Saraswati who is also known as Gauri. The flowers of the tree looked like the stars of heaven and exhaled their fragrance all around.

³⁷ Gentle breezes played among the tender vines diffusing a coolness throughout secret branches, even in the light and heat of the blazing sunshine. The flying pollen of kadamba and other flowers spread a

yellow carpet over the ground.

³⁸ The lotus and other aquatic flowers were blooming in the brooks frequented by storks and cranes and herons and other watery birds that played upon them while the goddess entertained herself amidst the flowery groves, which displayed her wonderful powers in the variety of their flowers.

³⁹ It was in such a forest as this that the goddess Gauri, the wife of the god Shiva, resided for a long time for some cause known to her godly mind. Then by changing her name and form to that of Kadamba-Saraswati, she waved as gracefully as a kadamba flower on the crown of the head of her spouse and partner, Lord Shiva.

Chapter 182 — The Kadamba Tree Hermit Describes the Tapas of the Eight Brothers, Their Wives' Austerities, and Durvasa's Curse

¹ The old hermit resumed and said:—

The goddess Gauri, of her own accord, lived on this same kadamba tree for a full ten years, then she left this tree of her own will in order to join her Lord Shiva on his left side.² This young kadamba tree, blessed by the ambrosial touch of the goddess, never becomes old or fades or withers, but ever remains as fresh as a child in the lap of her mother.

³ After the goddess left this place, that great garden was converted to a common bush and was frequented only by woodmen who earned their livelihood by woodcutting.⁴ As for myself, know me to be the king of the country of Malwa. I have abdicated my kingdom and have become a refuge in this hermitage of holy ascetics.⁵ When I came to this place, I was honored by the inhabitants of this holy ashram. I made my home beneath this kadamba tree, where I have been in meditation ever since.

⁶ It was sometime ago that you, sage, came here with your seven brothers to practice religious austerities.⁷ You eight have lived here as holy devotees since that time, respected by all the resident devotees of this place.⁸ It came to pass in process of time that one of you left here for Srisailam Mountain, then the second went out to worship Lord Kartikeya in another place.⁹ The third left for Benares and the fourth to the Himalayas. Four remained here and employed themselves in rigorous austerities.¹⁰ It was the earnest desire of each and everyone of you to become the sovereign lord of all the seven continents of the earth.

¹¹ In the end, all succeeded and accomplished their objects of desire, which were all the same, by the grace and reward which they obtained from the respective god each worshipped who was pleased with the austerity of his particular devotee.¹² The brothers returned to their home while you were employed in meditation. After their enjoyment of the rewards of this earth in the golden age, they ascended to the highest heaven of Brahma.

¹³ O sage, your brothers, finding their respective gods favorable to them and willing to confer blessings, made the following request of the gods, saying,¹⁴ "You gods! Make our seven brothers lords of the seven continents of the earth and let all our subjects be truthful and sincere, attached to the occupations of their respective orders."¹⁵ The gods who they adored gladly fulfilled their prayers and having assented to their request, disappeared and vanished in the open sky.

¹⁶ Afterwards, all the ascetics gathered here went to their respective homes and met death except this one who is now here.¹⁷ Only I have been sitting alone, devoutly intent upon meditation. I have remained as motionless as a stone beneath this kadamba tree which is sacred to the goddess of speech.¹⁸ Now as the seasons and years have been rolling over my devoted head, I have lived to see this forest broken and cut down by the woodmen who live in the outskirts of these trees.¹⁹ They have spared only this unfading kadamba tree, which they made an object of their worship as the home of the goddess of speech, and me also whom they believe to be absorbed in rigorous meditation.

²⁰ Now sirs, as you seem to have recently come to this place and bear the appearance of aged ascetics, I have told you all that I have come to know only through my meditation.²¹ Rise then, you righteous men, and go to your native homes where you will meet your brothers in the circle of their

family and friends.²² You will find eight of your brothers remaining in their home and resembling the eight high minded Vasus sitting in the high heaven of Brahma.

Kundadanta speaking:—

²³ After that great devotee had said his much, I interrupted him saying, “I have a great question about your wonderful story. Please explain it to me.²⁴ We know this earth is composed of only seven continents. Then how is it possible for eight brothers to be the lord of them all at the same time?

²⁵ The kadamba ascetic said:—

What I have told you is not inconsistent. There are many things which seem inconsistent but become evident when they are explained.²⁶ These eight brothers, when they complete their periods of asceticism, will all become lords of the seven continents of the earth in their domestic circles.²⁷ All eight brothers will remain in their respective houses on the surface of the earth and there become the lords of the seven continents, in the manner as you shall now hear from me.

²⁸ Every one of these eight brothers had a wife at home who was of unblemished character. They resembled the eight stars or planets of heavens in the brightness of their bodies.²⁹ After these eight brothers departed to conduct their protracted meditation abroad, their love-born wives became saddened at their separation, which is altogether intolerable to faithful wives.³⁰ In their great sorrow of spirit, they made painful austerities to the memory of their absent lords. They completed a hundred chandrayana vows and rites to the satisfaction of the goddess Parvati.³¹ After each had performed her daily devotion to the goddess, she appeared invisibly to each separately in her inner apartments and spoke to her.³² The goddess said, “O child, you have been fading away by your austerities, like a tender shoot under the scorching sun. Now accept this reward to your heart’s desire, both for yourself and also for your husband.”

³³ Hearing the voice of the goddess of heaven, Lady Chirantika offered handfuls of flowers to Parvati and began to address her prayer to the goddess.³⁴ The reserved and close tongued lady uttered her words in a slow flattering voice flushed with joy. She addressed the heavenly goddess like a peacock accosts a rising cloud.³⁵ Chirantika said, “O goddess, as you bear eternal love for Shiva, the god of gods, such is the love I also bear to my husband. Make him immortal.”

³⁶ The goddess replied, “Know, O good minded lady, that according the fixed decree of destiny, ever since the creation of the world, it is impossible to gain immortality. No devotion, austerity or charity can buy immortal life. Therefore ask for some other blessing.”

³⁷ Chirantika said, “O goddess, if it is impossible to attain immortality, then grant this much, that he being dead, his soul may not depart beyond the confines of this his house.³⁸ When my husband’s body falls dead in this house, then grant me this reward that his departed soul may never depart from this place.”

³⁹ “Be it so, O daughter, that your husband being gone to another world, you may still continue to be his beloved wife, even after his death.”⁴⁰ Saying so, the goddess Gauri remained silently in the air, as if the sound of clouds had stopped after indicating the welfare of the world.⁴¹ After the goddess disappeared into the air, the husbands of these ladies returned from all sides, and after the lapse of

some time the wives received their desired blessings.⁴² Husbands were restored to their wives, brothers met each other, and friends and relatives conversed.

⁴³ Now listen as I tell you about a wonderful event that happened to them at this time. It presented itself as an obstacle towards the achievement of their noble purpose.⁴⁴ While the brothers were employed in meditation, their parents went out with their wives to search for them. With sorrowful hearts they were wandering about the hermitages of saints.⁴⁵ Unmindful of their personal pains and pleasures, concerned only for the welfare of their sons, they intended to see the village of Kalapa which lay on their way.⁴⁶ Passing by the village of munis and saints, they saw a white man of short stature with grey and erect hairs on his head, his body smeared with ash.⁴⁷ Thinking he was ordinary old pilgrim, the parents forgot to do him due honor and let the dust of the ground they trod upon fly upon his sacred person.

This irritated the old sage, who spoke out in anger.⁴⁸ You great fool going on pilgrimage with your wife and daughters-in-law, you don't respect me, Sage Durvasa. You neglect to do me due reverence.

⁴⁹ For this act of your negligence, the rewards so dearly earned by your sons and daughters-in-law will go for nothing and the results will have a contrary effect."

⁵⁰ On hearing this curse the old parents and their daughters-in-law began to do him reverence, but the ancient sage disappeared and vanished in the air.⁵¹ The parents and their daughters were greatly dismayed and disheartened. They returned home with sad faces.

⁵² Therefore I say, this was not the only strange thing, that each of the brothers reigned over the seven continents all at once. There were many other inequalities awaiting them as there are on all human wishes. These occurred as thickly one after the other as sores and ulcers grow on the throat.⁵³ There are as many oddities and vanities always occurring in the wishes and aerial castles of the empty mind, just as numberless portents and comets and meteors and unnatural sights are seen to appear in the empty sky.

Chapter 183 — Blessing and Curse Argue before Brahma; — the Blessings Bear Fruit in the Minds of the Brahmin Brothers

¹ Kundadanta said:—

I asked the hermit of Gauri's ashram, whose head was hoary with age, and whose hair resembled the dried blades of withered grass.² "There are only seven continents on this earth. Then how could every one of the eight brothers become the sole lord of earth at the same time?³ How could a person who never left his house conquer the seven continents or govern them himself?⁴ How could they who had a reward on one hand and its opposite curse on the other, go either way? They are opposed to one another, like the cool shade of trees and the heat of sunshine.⁵ How can opposite qualities reside together at the same time? It is as impossible as the container and contained becoming the same thing.

⁶ The kadamba tree hermit replied:—

Listen, O holy man, as I relate the sequel of their tale and you will come to see the sequence of their contrary fates.

⁷ As for you two, you will reach your home after eight days from this place. There you will meet your relatives with whom you will live happily for some time.⁸ These eight brothers also, having joined with their families at home, will breathe their last in course of time. Their bodies will be burnt by their friends and relations.⁹ Then their conscious souls will remain separately in the air for a little while in a state of sluggishness, such as in the insensibility of sleep.¹⁰ During this time their acts will appear in the empty space of their minds for the sake of receiving their punishment and justice. The blessings of gods and the curse of the sage will visit them at his time.

¹¹ Their acts will appear in the shapes of the persons to whom they were done. The blessings and curse also will assume their particular forms in order to make their appearance before them.¹² The blessings will assume the forms of fair moon-bright bodies with four arms holding a lotus bud, a club and other weapons.¹³ The curse will take the forms of Shiva with his three eyes, holding lance and mace in either hand and having a dark terrific body with an arrogant grim and frowning countenance.

¹⁴ The Blessings will boastingly say, "Be far away you accursed curse! It is now our time to work, as it is with the seasons to act their parts at their proper times."

¹⁵ The Curse will say in his turn, "Be far away from here, you blessed blessings. Do not intrude upon my time. It will take effect like any one of the seasons. There is none capable of counteracting its wonted course."

¹⁶ The Blessing will reply, "You, cursed curse, are only a creature of a human sage. But we are messengers of the god of day. Now as the first born god of light has preference over a human being, it is proper that we should have our precedence here."

¹⁷ Upon the blessings saying so, the personified curse of the sage Durvasa became enraged and replied, "I am no less the creator of a god than you since we are born of the god Rudra by his wife Rudrani.¹⁸ Rudra is the greatest of gods, and the sage was born with a portion of Rudra's bravery." Saying so, the accursed curse lifted its head as high as the exalted summit of a mountain.

¹⁹ On seeing the haughty high-headedness of the personification of curse, the personified image of the

blessing smiled scornfully at him. He replied with a speech of well weighed words.²⁰ “O you criminal curse, leave your wickedness and think on the end of this affair. Think about what is to be done after we are done arguing.²¹ We must go to the father of the gods to get a decision on this case. It is better if we go now as sooner or later he is the one to make the determination.”

²² On hearing these words from the personified blessing, the Curse replied, “Well, I agree to what you say. Even a fool cannot decline to accept a reasonable proposal.”²³ The Curse agreed to go with the divine Blessing to the home of Brahma because the wise always seek the company of great minded gods for answers to their questions.²⁴ Curse and Blessing kneeled down before Brahma and related all that had occurred between them. The god, on hearing the whole of both sides, replied in the following manner.

²⁵ Brahma said, “Listen unto me, you masters of blessing and curse, and let him have precedence who is possessed of intrinsic merit and essence.”²⁶ Upon hearing this from the mouth of the great god, each entered into the heart of the other in order to estimate his understanding and discover his respective parts.²⁷ Having searched into the eternal essentialities of the other, and having known the other’s character, each returned before the presence of the god and implored him in turn.

²⁸ The Curse said, “I am overcome, O lord of creatures, by my adversary. I have no internal merit in myself. I find the blessings of my foe are as sound and solid as a hard rock or a powerful thunderbolt.

²⁹ But Blessings and I, being only intellectual beings, have no material body whatever to boast of at anytime.”

³⁰ The Blessing replied, “The intellectual blessing given to the eight brahmins is here present before you, entrusted to my charge.³¹ Each person’s body is the evolution of his intelligence. This body enjoys the consequence of the curse or blessing that is passed on according to his knowledge of it, whether his eating or drinking or his feeling in all his wanderings at all times and places.³² In time, the blessings received strengthen in the recipient’ mind. At last, the blessing acting forcibly within one’s self overcomes the power and effect of the curse.”

³³ “The gift of a blessing to a devotee becomes strong and effectual only when it is deeply rooted and duly fostered in one’s self.³⁴ Through continued culture of our conscious goodness and by the constant habit of thinking about the results of our boons, they become perfected in one’s self and convert their possessor to their form.³⁵ Only pure and remorseful conscience consummates one’s consciousness in time. But the impure conscience of the evil minded never finds any peace or tranquility. Therefore, the brahmins’ thoughts of the blessing took possession of their minds, and not the curse. The earlier one, though it be minute, takes priority over the latter, and there is no rule or force of pride to counteract this law.”

³⁶ “Hence the gods’ blessings, being prior to the sage’s curse, must take precedence over the latter. In fact nothing would like to increase the impact of a curse.³⁷ But where both sides have equal force, both must have joint effect upon the same thing. So the curse and blessing joined together must remain like water mixed with milk.³⁸ The equal force of blessing and curse must produce a double or divided effect on the mind of man, just as a person dreaming of the fairy city thinks he has become one of its citizens.”

³⁹ "Now pardon me, O lord for repeating the same truths which you previously have taught me. Permit me to take leave and depart for my place." ⁴⁰ Upon Blessing saying so, Curse felt ashamed and fled from the presence of the god, just as the ghosts and demons fly away when darkness is dispersed from the sky.

⁴¹ Then the other Blessing, the one that the departed ghosts would remain in the confines of their houses, came forward and presented itself before Brahma instead of Curse and began to plead his cause, as a substitute does for his dependent. ⁴² He said, "O lord of the gods, I do not know how human souls can fly over the seven continents of the earth after separation from their dead bodies. ⁴³ I am the same blessing of the goddess who promised them dominion over the seven continents in their own house, and also their conquest of the whole earth. ⁴⁴ Now tell me, O lord of the gods, how am I to restrain their spirits to the narrow limits of their own homes and, at the same time, confer the domain of the sevenfold earth to each of them?"

⁴⁵ Brahma responded, "Hear me, O you Blessing of conferring the realms of the seven continents on each of them, and you Boon of detaining their departed spirits within the confines of their home. Both of you are successful in executing your respective purposes on them. ⁴⁶ Now retire from here with full assurance that the delivered ghosts of these brothers will never depart from their present homes after their deaths, but will continue to live there forever with the belief of being lord of the seven regions of this earth. ⁴⁷ After the loss of their frail bodies, their souls will remain a proper distances from each other. Each will consider himself as lord of the seven regions of earth, though dwelling in the empty air of their own homes. ⁴⁸ How could there be the eight regions and seven continents of the earth, when to all appearance the surface of the earth is a flat level everywhere?"

Blessing asked, ⁴⁹ "Tell us lord! Where are these different divisions of the earth situated? Where is of their petty home? Is it not as impossible for their small house to contain the wide earth as it is for a small lotus bud to hide an elephant?"

⁵⁰ Brahma replied, "It should be quite evident to you as it is to ourselves that the universe is composed of only infinite emptiness. It can be contained within the hollow of the human heart or in a minute particle of the empty mind which contains all things in the manner of its dreams. ⁵¹ If the minute granule of their empty minds can contain the images of their houses and their domestic circles, why should it be impossible for them to compress the greater and lesser circle of this earth within their ample space?"

⁵² "After the death of a person, the world exhibits itself in the minute atom of his mind. This is only an empty mass of the visible and material world in its invisible and imaginary figure. ⁵³ In this invisible particle of the mind, the world is seen in its abstract form within the precincts of the body in each person's home. This earth appears drawn like on a map, with all its sevenfold continents and their contents. ⁵⁴ Whatever manifests in the mind is only a mere mental conception inborn in the mind. In reality, there is no such thing as an extraneous or material world. The vacant mind presents these fanciful ideas of the world and everything else that is visible, just as the empty sky shows varieties of atmospheric appearances to our sight."

⁵⁵ Having learnt this abstract truth from the mouth of divine Brahma, personified Blessing who had conferred this reward upon the brahmin brothers abandoned his false conception of the material

world and returned to the homes of the deceased brothers who had been released from the mistake of their mortal bodies.⁵⁶ Personified Blessing bowed down to the bounteous Brahma, then departing with speed, entered the room of the eight brother kings in his eightfold spiritual personality.

⁵⁷ They saw the brothers in their respective homes, each sitting as the lord of the earth with its seven continents. Each one was occupied performing his sacrifices and enjoying his blessings, like eight lordly Manus for the whole period of a day of Brahma.⁵⁸ They were all friendly to each other, though unacquainted with the others respective dominions. Each was employed with his concerns with the world without clashing with the other's authority over it.

⁵⁹ One of them, handsome in the bloom of his youth, held his happy reign over the great city of Ujjain located in the precincts of his own house, or rather, in the boundaries of his own mind.⁶⁰ Another had his empire over the country of Sakadwipa where he settled to conquer the Naagas. He sails as a privateer over wide foreign seas, victorious on every side.⁶¹ Another reigns secure in his capital of Kusadwipa conferring perfect security to his subjects from all dangers. Like a hero who has conquered his enemies, he rests in peace on the bosom of his beloved.⁶² One of the brothers indulges himself playing with the celestial vidyadhari nymphs, skimming over the waters of the lakes on mountain tops, and in the gushing waterfalls on mountain sides.⁶³ Another is engaged these eight days conducting his horse sacrifice in his royal palace at Kraunchadwipa, which he has greatly increased with gold collected from other continents.⁶⁴ Another is occupied waging a battle in Salmali Continent where his war elephants have assembled and have been uprooting the boundary mountain from their bases with robust tusks.⁶⁵ The monarch of Gomedha Continent, who had been the eighth and last of the brahmin brothers, was smitten with love for the princess of Pushkara Continent. He enlisted a large army to seize her in warfare.⁶⁶ The monarch of Pushkara Continent, who was also the master of the mountainous regions of Lokaloka, set out with his deputy to inspect the land of gold mines.

⁶⁷ Thus every one of these brothers thought he is the lord of his respective province, just as his imagination portrayed himself in the region of his mind.⁶⁸ Blessings, having renounced their several forms and personalities, became united and one with the consciousness of the brahmins. They felt and saw whatever passed in them as if they were passing in themselves.⁶⁹ These brothers became and found in themselves what they had long been longing after. They attained their respective lordships over the seven regions of the earth, which they have continued to enjoy ever since to their heart's content.

⁷⁰ In this manner these men of enlarged understandings obtained what they sought in their minds through austere meditation and firm devotion to their purpose. So it is with the learned that they find everything beside them, whatever they are intent upon in their minds, through acting upon the same principle and using the proper means leading to that end.

Chapter 184 — The Kadamba Tree Hermit Explains to Kundadanta: — Diversity in the One, Fate Governs All, and No Original Memory

¹ Kundadanta said:—

I asked the devotee sitting beneath the kadamba tree to tell me how the seven large continents of the globe could be contained within the narrow limits of the homes of each of these brothers.

² The kadamba tree hermit replied:—

The essence of consciousness, though so very empty in itself, is the largest and exists everywhere in anything in existence. It is present in its own nature with all things wherever they are known to exist.

³ The soul sees the form of the triple world, and everything else besides in itself, as a part of its own nature and without changing itself into anyone of them.

⁴ Kundadanta asked, “You see variety as intrinsic to everything in nature, but how do you attribute multiplicity to the purely simple and immutable nature of the Supreme Soul?”

⁵ The kadamba tree devotee replied:—

The sphere of the intellectual void is all quiet and serene. There is nothing of any multiplicity in it. The changes apparent in its face are no more than the waves and whirling currents on the surface of the changeless sea.⁶ Infinite creations seem to be continually whirling about the immensity of intellectual emptiness, just as rising waves are seen whirling in the sea. They appear to sink in its fathomless depth, the waters in the hollow of the deep.

⁷ The forms of substantial things that rise in the insubstantial essence of the intellect are like the various forms of substances seen in the dreaming state of the soul, all of which are utterly forgotten in the state of sound sleep.⁸ As a hill seen in dream is no hill at all, and as things appearing to be in motion in dreams are found afterwards to be perfectly motionless, so all things in nature are only mere unrealities, though as real from the real nature of soul itself.

⁹ The intellect is an immaterial substance. It neither creates nor perceives anything material by itself, but conceives everything as it is manifested to it in its idea in the beginning.¹⁰ The intellect sees a great variety of objects in dream which it takes to be reality for the time. In the same way, the intellect's belief in the reality of its ideas causes it to conceive them as real entities.¹¹ The empty intellect, flashing of itself in its own state of transparency, comes to find the world shining in the same light within itself.

¹² As we have consciousness of heat in the fire, even when seen in dream, so we are conscious of the presence of everything in our minds, even though the thing itself is absent from us.¹³ As we have the idea of the solidity of a pillar in our dream of it, so have we the idea of the great variety of things in existence even though there is no diversity or difference in the nature of the one unchanging unity that pervades the whole.

¹⁴ In the beginning all substances were as pure and simple as the essence of their maker. They still continue to be in the same state of their ideal purity as they were originally made out of that airy entity and unity.¹⁵ As a tree is diversified in the various forms of its roots, fruits, leaves, flowers and trunk, so the Supreme Unity is varied in all and everywhere in his same and undivided essence.¹⁶ In the

fathomless ocean of the Supreme Essence, the immensity of creation exists like the waters of the deep. An infinite number of worlds have been rolling on in their original empty and apparently visible forms in the boundless space of that transcendent emptiness.¹⁷ The transcendental immaterial soul and the comprehensible material world mean the same, like tree and bower. Their difference lies in the intelligibleness of the one and unintelligibility of the other. True intelligence leads us to the unconceivable One, while our ignorance deludes us into the knowledge of the many, which tends only to our distress.

¹⁸ The mundane and super-mundane are surely the same according to the deduction of spiritual philosophy. The knowledge of this sublime truth is sure to lead one to his ultimate liberation.¹⁹ The world is the product of the will of God. Will is a power or faculty belonging to the personality of God. God is transmuted to the form of the world. Therefore, it is proved that the world is the formal part of the Supreme Soul.

²⁰ He whom no words can define and yet who defines the senses of words, who is subject to no law or prohibition, or to any state or condition of being, but appoints them for all sorts of beings, is indeed the only Lord of all.²¹ He who is ever silent but speaks through all, who is inactive as a rock but acts in all, who is always existent and appears as nonexistent, is the Supreme Lord of all.²² That subtle essence that constitutes the solidity of all gross bodies and remains without decay in all frail bodies, is the pure Brahman himself. He neither wills nor lacks will to create or destroy. There is no possession or lack of the property of anything.²³ It is the one and unchanging Soul who always rests in its state of rest and sleep and perceives the succession of creation and destruction of the world in its alternate states of dream and sound sleep, which present themselves as two pictures before its sight.

²⁴ Unnumbered worlds seem to rise and set in succession in the substratum of Consciousness. They appear like pictures passing before the mind, without being painted there.²⁵ As the mixing of one thing with another produces a different effect in the mixture, so the union of the mind with the organs of sense causes a variety of impressions to be imprinted in consciousness.²⁶ All things exist only in the essence of consciousness. Without consciousness, nothing is knowable to anyone. Hence there is nothing in nature other than a representation of the original idea in the mind.

²⁷ Our consciousness that things are identical with the essence of our intellect proves them to be as immaterial and immovable as their fixed ideas in the mind.²⁸ Thus the world, so visible and perceptible to us, is nothing but a mere nothingness in reality. Whatever appears to exist, together with the great gods and celestial beings, are no more than the false visions in our dream and fancy.

²⁹ We see various fluctuations and phenomena rising in the waters of the vast ocean of Consciousness and appearing in the forms of our joy and grief, and those of moving and unmoving bodies in creation.

³⁰ The nature and course of the world obscures the bright mirror of Consciousness, hiding it under the dirt of our passions and covering it under the clouds and snows of our ignorance.³¹ As apparitions and dissolving views appear in the air before the sight of the dim sighted, so does this shadow of the world appear as substance to the view of the spiritually shortsighted.³² Whatever we imagine, the same we find and seem to enjoy for the time. We are delighted with the scene of an imaginary city during sleep, and we indulge ourselves in the sight of this imaginary city of the world.³³ As we seem

to enjoy our ecstasy in the imaginary city of our fancy, so under the belief of its reality, we are fooled by the delusion of this unreal world.

³⁴ There is one eternal destiny which ever runs swiftly in its accustomed course and preordains all beings to continue in their allotted careers as ever before. ³⁵ Destiny produces moving bodies from living beings and the inert ones from the inert. Predestination has destined the downward course of water and fluids and the upward motion of the flames of fire. ³⁶ Blind impulse compels the limbs of the body to their respective actions and makes the luminous bodies emit their light. It causes winds to blow about in their continuous course and makes mountains stand unmoved in their proper places. ³⁷ It makes the stars of heaven roll on in their regular revolutions and causes the rains and dews of the sky to pour down in their stated seasons. This eternal destiny directs the courses of years, ages and cycles, and the whole chariot of time to run its accustomed course. ³⁸ Divine ordinance has ordained the limits of the earth and the distant ocean and seas and has fixed the position of hills and rocks. It has allotted the natures and powers of all things and prescribed the laws of rights and duties for everyone.

³⁹ Kundadanta said, "The memory of the scenes of past life occurs in the present state of existence, in the forms of our imagination and our desire for them. These inner thoughts become the foundation that frames our current lives. But tell me sage, how could the first created beings in the beginning of creation have any memory upon which their lives and natures were framed?"

⁴⁰ The kadamba tree devotee replied:—

All that offer themselves to our view are quite unprecedented and without their original patterns in the mind. They resemble the sight of our own death in a dream. The omniscience of Brahma caused the first creation, and not his memory of the past as it is with us and other created beings.

⁴¹ It is the nature of our consciousness to represent the imaginary city of the world in its empty emptiness. It is neither a positive reality nor a negative unreality, being now apparent and then lost to sight by itself. ⁴² The clarity of the intellect represents the imaginary world in the manner of a dream. But the pure empty intellect neither sees nor bears the memory of the world in itself.

⁴³ The wise who are devoid of joy and grief, remaining unchanged in prosperity and adversity, are men of right integrity and equanimity in their nature. They move on as steadily as the wheel of fortune leads them onward.

⁴⁴ As the intellect retains the memory of what it has seen in its dream, so it retains the false impression of this triple world to its end. ⁴⁵ That which passes under the name of the world is only the reflection of our consciousness. Knowing the nature of your consciousness to be mere emptiness, you will blot out the impression of the world. ⁴⁶ Know that the all and everything from which all have issued and in which they exist is that all which fills all space in which all things are situated.

⁴⁷ Thus I have fully explained how you may come to know this creation as its creator, the great Brahma himself. I have also explained the means whereby you may get rid of your impression of the phenomenal world. ⁴⁸ Now rise you brahmins and return to your homes, just as bees return to their cells and outer petals of lotuses at the dusk of the day. Go and perform your evening services, while I remain here in my pensive meditation, absorbed in my spiritual ecstasy forever.

Chapter 185 — Kundadanta Completes His Story, Attains Liberation from Listening to Vasishta

¹ Kundadanta narrates:—

The old sage, having said this much, closed his eyes in meditation. He became as motionless as a statue or picture, without any action of breath or mind. ² We prayed to him with great fondness and endearment, yet he uttered not a word to us. He seemed to be so rapt in his meditation as to have become utterly unconscious of the outer world.

³ We then departed from that place, our hearts broken and faces dejected. After a few days journey, we were received at home by our glad friends. ⁴ We live there in joyous festivity, as long as the seven brothers were living. We passed our time narrating our adventures and stories of bygone times. ⁵ In course of time, the eight brothers perished one by one into the vast ocean of eternity, like the seven oceans at the end of the world. They were released from their worldly cares, like so many of my other friends.

⁶ After some time, my only remaining friend also sank like the setting sun into darkness. I was left alone to lament their loss in sorrow and misery at our separation. ⁷ Then, with sorrow in my heart, I returned to the devotee under the kadamba tree to derive the benefit of his advice to dispel my mental suffering. ⁸ There I waited on him for three months until he was released from his meditation, when upon my humble request, he decided to answer me as follows.

⁹ The devotee replied, “I cannot pass a moment without being engaged in my meditation. I must return to my meditation practice without any loss of time. ¹⁰ As for you, you can not derive benefit from my transcendental advice to you unless you diligently engage in the practice of my teachings. ¹¹ Now I tell you to go to the city of Ayodhya where King Dasharata reigns and lives with his son Rama. ¹² Go now to this Rama who has been listening to the lectures of sage Vasishta, the preceptor and priest of the royal family who delivered these lectures before the princes assembled in the imperial court. ¹³ There you will hear the holy sermon on the means of attaining our final emancipation, and thereby you will obtain your highest bliss in the divine state like that of mine.”

¹⁴ Saying so, he became absorbed in the cooling ocean of his meditation. I came here and arrived at last before Rama and this princely assembly. ¹⁵ Here am I, and all these are the incidents of my life, as I have related, regarding all that I have heard and seen and experienced.

¹⁶ Rama said, “Eloquent Kundadanta who has just made this speech has been constantly sitting by my side in this assembly. ¹⁷ This same brahmin named Kundadanta has sat here all along and has heard the entire sermon delivered by the sage on the means of obtaining our liberation. ¹⁸ Now ask this Kundadanta, who is sitting here by me, whether he has understood the context of this lecture and whether his doubts are wholly dispelled or not.”

¹⁹ Vasishta said:—

Upon Rama saying so to me, I looked upon Kundadanta and asked him the following questions.

²⁰ “Tell me, O good brahmin Kundadanta, what have you learnt and understood by your long attendance upon my lecture calculated to confer liberation on men?”

²¹ Kundadanta replied, “Sage, your lecture has wholly removed the doubts of my mind. I find myself

to be perfect master of myself, by my victory over all selfish passions and by my knowledge of the knowable one.²² I have known the pure One that is to be known and seen the One without decay that is worth our seeing. I have obtained all that is worth obtaining and I have found my rest in the state of transcendent bliss.²³ I have known this totality to be the condensation of that transcendental essence, and that this world is only a manifestation of this same soul (*chidakasa*).²⁴ The Universal Soul, being also the soul of every individual, is likewise the soul inherent in all forms of things. Only the self-existent Soul becomes apparent in all existences and all places.”

²⁵ “It is possible for the human mind, which is smaller than the molecule of a mustard seed, to contain the whole world in itself, though it is nothing but a mere zero before the clear sight of the intelligent.

²⁶ It is possible for a little room to contain the seven continents of the earth, though the room itself is no more than a mere empty space.²⁷ Whatever object is perceptible to us at any time or place, is only the concrete form of the Divine Spirit which is quite apart from everything that is being experienced.”

Chapter 186 — Demonstration of All Nature as Brahma; Intellect Equally Everywhere in Varying Degrees of Individual Awareness; Curse or Blessing is All Ordained in the Beginning

¹ Valmiki said:—

After Kundadanta finished talking, venerable Vasishta delivered his enlightening speech on spiritual knowledge, saying:—

² The elevated soul of this person has found rest in the paradise of spiritual philosophy. He will see the world like a globe in his hand, glowing with the glory of the great God.

³ The phenomenal world is a false conception. It is truly the uncreated Brahman himself shining in this manner. This false conception is the same Brahman, one, ever calm and without decay. ⁴ Whatever thing appears anywhere, in any state, form or dimension, it is the very same Deity showing himself in that condition of his being, form and mode of extension. ⁵ This unborn, self-existent Deity is ever auspicious, calm and quiet. He is without decay, imperishable and pure and extends through all as the wide and endless space.

⁶ Whatever state of things he proposes in his all-knowing Intellect, the same he causes in a thousand ways, like a plant branching out in the rains. ⁷ The great cosmic egg is situated like a particle in the bosom of the great Intellect of God. This world of ours is also a mere particle in a grain of our brains.

⁸ Therefore, my good friend, know that your intellectual sphere is boundless, without beginning or end. Absorbed in the meditation of your personal extinction (nirvana), remain as quiet as you are sitting, relying upon your unperturbed and imperishable soul.

⁹ Wherever there is anything in any state or condition in any part of the world, there you will find the presence of the Divine Spirit in its form of emptiness. The Divinity, without changing its nature of calm serenity, assumes to itself whatever form or figure it likes. ¹⁰ The Spirit is itself both the view and its viewer. It is equally the mind and the body and the subjective and objective. It is something and yet nothing at all, being the great Brahman or Universal Soul that includes and extends throughout the whole.

¹¹ Phenomena are not to be supposed as a duality or anything else other than the same Brahman. Phenomena are to be known as one and the same with the divine Self, like the visible sky and its emptiness. ¹² The visible is the invisible Brahman and the transcendent One is manifest in this apparent whole. Therefore the manifest is neither inactivity nor in motion, and the formed is altogether formless. ¹³ Like dreams appearing to the understanding, these visions present themselves to view. The forms are all formless conceptions of the mind, mere intangible ideas of the brain.

¹⁴ As conscious beings become unconscious of themselves in their state of sleep, so all these living and intelligent beings become unconscious and ignorant of themselves and their souls, becoming like sluggish trees lost to their sensibility. ¹⁵ But in time, the intellect is capable of returning from its state of vegetable sluggishness to its true awareness, just as the dormant soul turns to see dreams in sleep, then behold the vivid outer world after waking. ¹⁶ Until the living soul is liberated from its charm of self delusion, it is subject to seeing its deceitful reveries of elemental bodies appearing as a series of airy dreams before the mind's eye in sleep. ¹⁷ The mind gathers the waste of dullness about it, just as the soul draws the sheath of sleep upon itself. This dullness or dimness of apprehension is not

intrinsic in the mind, but an extraneous relation contracted by it from without.

¹⁸ The intellect molds the form of one who is conversant with material and unconscious things into a motionless and immobile body. The same intellect shapes the forms of others who are conscious of their intellectual natures into the bodies of rational and moving beings. ¹⁹ But all these moving and unmoving beings are only different modifications and aspects of the same intellect, just as the nails and other parts of the human body are only diverse qualities of the same person.

²⁰ The order and nature of things have invariably continued the same as they have been ordained by the Divine Will ever since its first formation of the world. Creation is a copy of its original mold in the Divine Mind. It is as ideal as any working of imagination or vision in dreaming, both in its states of being and not being. ²¹ But the intangible and tranquil Brahman is ever calm and quiet in his nature. He is never permeated with the nature of things, nor is he assimilated with the order of nature. ²² He appears as the beginning and end of creation, or as its cause of production and dissolution. But these are the mere dreams of Divine Consciousness which is always in its state of profound sleep and rest.

²³ The world is ever existent in his spiritual nature, without any beginning or end himself. The beginning and end of creation bear no relation to his self-existent and eternal nature. ²⁴ There is no reality in the nature of visible creation or in its existence or dissolution. All these are nothing other than representations shown in the spirit of God, like figures painted in a picture. ²⁵ As an army drawn in painting does not differ from its model in the mind of the painter, so these tangible objects of creation, with all other endless varieties, are not different from their prototype in the mind of God.

²⁶ In spite of the lack of any difference between the ideal and phenomenal worlds, yet the mind is inclined to see differences of subjectivity and objectivity, just as it is prepared to differentiate its own doings and dreams in the states of its sleep and ignorance. It is profound sleep and drowsiness of the soul that cause its liberation from this mistaken view, just as its sensibility serves to bind it more tightly to the bondage of the visible.

²⁷ The reflection of the invisible soul exhibits the visible to view, just as the subtle sunbeam displays a thousand solid bodies glaring in sight. The soul shows the different phases of creation and dissolution as in its visions in dreaming. ²⁸ The dreaming state of sleeping consciousness is called its existence in idea, and the waking state of the self-conscious soul is termed its existence in being, just as in the examples of men and gods and other intellectual beings. ²⁹ After passing from these, and knowing the unreality of both these imaginative and speculative states, the soul falls into its state of profound sleep or trance (*sushupti*) which is believed by those who seek emancipation to be the state of liberation.

³⁰ Rama said, "Tell me, O venerable sage, in what proportion does intellect abide in men, gods and demons respectively? How does the soul reflect itself during the dormancy of the intellect in sleep? In what manner does it contain the world within its bosom?"

³¹ Vasishtha replied:—

Consciousness abides the same in gods and demons, as well as in all men and women. It dwells also in asuras, pisachas, rakshasa, naagas and in all beasts and birds, reptiles and insects, including plants and all inert things. ³² Its dimension is both boundless and as minute as an atom. It stretches to the

highest heaven and includes thousands of worlds within itself.

³³ The capacity that we have of knowing the regions beyond the solar sphere, and even of penetrating into the darkness of Lokaloka Mountain, is all the quality of our intellect which extends all over the boundless space and is perfectly transparent in its form and nature. ³⁴ So very great is the extent of consciousness that it comprehends the entire universe in itself. Mundane creation originates from the act of Consciousness comprehending the whole universe. ³⁵ Consciousness spreads all around like the current of a river gliding over the ground both high and low, leaving some parts of dry and filling others with its waters. So does Consciousness supply some bodies with intelligence while it forsakes others, leaving them in ignorance.

³⁶ Consciousness is the living soul of the body, which is otherwise said to be lifeless and unconscious. It resides in all bodies, like air in empty pots, and becomes vivid in some and imperceptible in others, however it likes. ³⁷ Knowledge of the soul removes the error of its materiality. Ignorance of its spiritual nature tends to foster the sense of its materiality, like one's false conception of water in a mirage.

³⁸ The mind is as minute as the minutest ray of sunbeams. Truly the living soul contains the whole world within it. ³⁹ All this phenomenal world is the phenomena of the mind as it is displayed in its imaginary dreams, all being the display of the living soul. There is no difference at all between the ideas of things and their expression as phenomena. ⁴⁰ The intellect alone is assimilated into all these substances which appear to have substantiality of their own. Whatever is seen without intellect is like its imaginary dream, or like the various forms of jewelry made of the same gold.

⁴¹ As the same water of the one universal ocean appears different in different places in its multiple forms of waves and billows, so does Divine Consciousness exhibit the various forms of the visible in itself. ⁴² As the fluid body of waters rolls on constantly in different shapes within the basin of the great deep, so do these multitudes of visible things, inherent in and identical with Divine Consciousness, glide on forever in its fathomless bosom. ⁴³ All these worlds are situated like statues, as if engraved sculptures in the ethereal column of Divine Consciousness. They are all alike, immovable and without any motion of their own through all eternity.

⁴⁴ We see the world in the empty space of our consciousness, just as we see the appearances of things in our airy dreams. Moreover, we find everything fixed in its own sphere and place, continuing in its own state without any change of position or any alteration in its nature. ⁴⁵ The exact conformity of all things in this world to their conceptions in men's minds, with respect to their unchanging equality in form and property, proves their identity with one another, or the relation of one being the container of the other.

⁴⁶ There is no difference between the phenomenal and ideal worlds, just as is there none between those in our dream and imagination. They are, in fact, the one and same thing, just as the identity of waters contained in tanks, rivers and seas, and between the curses and blessings of gods.

⁴⁷ Rama asked, "Tell me sage, is a curse or blessing the effect of any prior cause, or does it cause subsequent consequences? Is it possible for any effect to take place without an adequate cause?"

⁴⁸ Vasishtha replied:—

The manifestation of the clear firmament of Divine Consciousness in itself is called the world, just as the appearance and motion of waters in the great deep is called the ocean and its currents.⁴⁹ The revolutions of eternal thoughts of the Divine Mind resemble the rolling waves of the deep. The sages call these the will or volitions of the ever willful mind of God.⁵⁰ In course of time, through habitual meditation and reasoning and by naturally good disposition and evenness of mind, a clear minded soul comes to regard this manifestation of the Divine Will in its true spiritual light.⁵¹ A wise man with perfect wisdom and learning becomes acquainted with the true knowledge of things. His understanding becomes wholly intellectual. He sees all things in their abstract and spiritual light and is freed from the false view of material duality.⁵² The philosophic intellect, unclouded by prejudice, is the true form of the great Brahman himself who shines transparently manifest in our consciousness and has no other body besides.⁵³ An enlightened soul sees this entire infinite fullness of creation as a display of Divine Will, an exhibition of the tranquil and transparent soul of the divinity, and nothing else.

⁵⁴ This manifestation of Divine Will in the boundless space of the universe is similar to an aerial castle of our imagination or a city of palaces seen in our dream.⁵⁵ This will that produces all is identical to the Divine Soul. It produces whatever it likes any place or time.⁵⁶ Like a boy thinking of flinging stones at the aerial castle of his imagination, so Divine Will is at liberty to scatter numberless of balls in the open and empty space of boundless emptiness.⁵⁷ Everything in all these three worlds is the manifestation of Divine Will. There is nothing such as a blessing or curse that is separate from the Divine Soul.

⁵⁸ As in our fancy we can see oil gushing out of a sandy desert, so can we imagine creation coming out from the simple will of the Divine Soul.⁵⁹ It is impossible for an unenlightened understanding, never free from its knowledge of particulars and their differences, to understand that both good and evil come under the heading of universal good.⁶⁰ Whatever is willed in the beginning by the omniscience of God remains unchanged at all times unless it is altered by the same omniscient will.⁶¹ The opposites of unity and duality dwell together in the same manner in the formless person of Brahman, just as the different body parts of an embodied being remain side by side in the same person.

⁶² Rama asked, "Why are some ascetics of limited knowledge so very ready to confer their blessings or pour their curses on others? Are they attended with their good or bad results?"

⁶³ Vasishta replied:—

Whatever is disposed in the beginning by the Divine Will existing in Brahman afterwards comes to pass, and nothing else.⁶⁴ Brahma, the lord of creation, knew the Supreme Soul in himself and thereby he became the agent of the Divine Will. Therefore there is no difference between Brahma and the Divine Will.⁶⁵ Whatever the lord of creatures, Brahma, proposes to do at first is inspired in him by the Divine Will. The same takes place immediately and the very same is called this world.⁶⁶ It has no support or receptacle for itself, but appears as an empty bubble in the great emptiness. The world resembles a chain of pearls fleeting before the eyes of blind men in the open sky.

⁶⁷ Brahma willed the productions of creatures and the institution of the qualities of justice, charity and religious austerities. He established the Vedas and scriptures, and the five systems of philosophical

doctrines.⁶⁸ The same Brahma also ordained that whatever devotees learned in the Vedas pronounce in their calmness or dispute takes place immediately.

⁶⁹ Divine Will has formed the chasm of emptiness in the inactive intellect of Brahma and filled it with the fleeting winds and heating fire together with liquid water and solid earth.⁷⁰ It is the nature of this intellectual principle to think of everything in itself and to conceive the presence of everything within it, whether it be a thought of you or me or of anything else.⁷¹ Whatever the empty intellect thinks in itself, it sees present before it, just as we come to see the unreal sights of things in our dreams.⁷² As we see the unreal flight of stones as a reality in our imagination, so we see the false appearance of the world as true by the will of God and the contrivance of Brahma.

⁷³ Whatever is thought of by pure consciousness must likewise be of a purely intellectual nature. There is nothing that can do anything otherwise.⁷⁴ We are inclined to conceive things in our consciousness according to how we think about them. We don't see things in a way in which we are not accustomed. Hence we conceive all that we see in our dreams as true because of they are similar to what we are used to in our waking state.⁷⁵ By uniting one's intellectuality with the universal and Divine Consciousness, and by the union of the subjective and objective and their perception in one's self by means of *triputi* yoga (observer, observation, and observed), we can see the world in its true light.

⁷⁶ One universal and empty consciousness, being all pervading and omnipresent, by itself is the all seeing subject and all seen objects. Hence whatever is seen or known to be anywhere is the very truth of the intellect and nothing else.⁷⁷ As vibration is inherent in air, and fluidity is inherent in water, so is largeness inherent in Brahma and absolute fullness is innate in the Divine Mind.⁷⁸ I also am Brahma in his self manifest form of Viraj which embodies the whole world as its body. Hence there is no difference between the world and Brahma, just as there is none between air and emptiness.

⁷⁹ As drops in a waterfall assume many forms and run their several ways, so the endless works of nature take their various forms and courses at different places and times.⁸⁰ All beings devoid of senses and understanding issue like waters of a waterfall from the pouring forth of the Divine Mind. They remain forever in their uniform courses with the consciousness of their existence in Brahman.⁸¹ But that which comes forth from the Divine Mind with senses and intellects in their bodies deviate in different ways, like liquid water, in pursuit of their many worldly enjoyments.⁸² They do not know that the world is identical with the uncreated spirit of God, so because of their lack of good sense, they are insensibly led to regard this world as theirs.

⁸³ We see the existence and distribution of other bodies in us, and the inertness of stones in our bodies. In the same way the Lord perceives the creation and annihilation and inertia of the world in himself.⁸⁴ In sleep we have both sound sleep and dreams. In the same way the Divine Soul perceives creation and its annihilation in its state of perfect rest and tranquility.⁸⁵ In its state of tranquility, the Divine Soul perceives the two phases of creation and destruction succeeding one another as its day and night, just as we see our sleep and dreams recurring like darkness and light.

⁸⁶ As a man dreams of both moving bodies and immovable rocks in his sleep, so the Lord perceives the ideas of both stable and unstable in his intellectual tranquility.⁸⁷ As an absent minded man has no

heed of the dust flying on any part of his body, so the Divine Spirit is not polluted by entertaining the ideas of gross bodies within itself.⁸⁸ As air and water and stones possess consciousness of their airy, watery and solid bodies, so are we conscious of our material, intellectual and spiritual bodies.⁸⁹ As the mind freed from seeing visible objects and liberated from entertaining all thoughts and desires flows along like a stream of clear water, so the current of the Divine Spirit eternally glides on with the waves and whirlpool currents of creation and dissolution perpetually rolling on and whirling.

Chapter 187 — Cosmology of the Living Creation; Ideas Beget Words Beget Objects

¹ Rama asked, "Tell me sage, how can one paramount destiny guide the fates of these endless chains and varieties of beings? How can one uniform nature be the predominant feature of all these various kinds of beings? ² Why is the sun so very shining among the multitudes of gods? What is the cause of the lengthening and shortening of days and nights?"

³ Vasishta replied:—

Whatever the Lord has ordained at first of himself, the same appearing as the accidental formation of chance, is called the system of the universe. ⁴ All that is manifested in any manner by omnipotence is and continues as real in the same manner because what is made of the core of the Divine Will and intelligence can never be unreal. Nor is it possible for the manifest and obvious to be impermanent.

⁵ All that appears to us in any manner, being composed of Divine Consciousness, must continue to remain forever in the same manner. The appearance of creation and its disappearance in dissolution are both attributed to the unseen power of its destiny. ⁶ To say this one is such and that is otherwise is to attribute these qualities to the manifestation of Brahman. These formations together with their ultimate dissolution are called the acts of their destiny.

⁷ The three states of waking, sleeping and dreaming that appear to the nature of the soul are in no way separated from it, just as the fluidity and motion of water are nothing other than properties of the same clear liquid. ⁸ As emptiness is the property of air and warmth of the sunshine, and as scent is the quality of camphor, so the states of waking, sleeping and dreaming belong to the nature of the soul and are inseparable from it.

⁹ Creation and dissolution follow one another in the one and the same current of Divine Consciousness which, in its empty form, exists in the empty spirit of Brahman. ¹⁰ What is believed to be creation is only a momentary flash of Divine Consciousness. That which is thought to be a period of a kalpa age is only a transient reflection of the light of Divine Consciousness. ¹¹ Sky, space, things and actions that come to our knowledge at anytime are like mere dreams occurring to us by a flash of the shining nature of Divine Consciousness. ¹² The sights of things, eternal thoughts, and whatever else occurs at anytime or in any place are all presented to us by our minds from their formless shapes or ideas in the empty intellect of God. ¹³ Whatever is manifested by the mind or designed by it at anytime is called its destiny, which is devoid of any form like the formless air.

¹⁴ Natural philosophers who know all nature use the word nature to describe the uniform state of things for a whole kalpa age, measuring only a moment of Brahma. ¹⁵ The one soul (consciousness) is diversified into a hundred varieties of living beings. Every portion of this general intelligence retains the same reasoning like its original, without forsaking its nature. ¹⁶ Some of the intelligences that belong to and manifest themselves in the supreme Intelligence of God imagine to assume to themselves some embodied forms, in utter ignorance of their intellectual natures.

¹⁷ Earth, air, water, fire and vacuum are severally the receptacles of many properties. Empty consciousness is the great repository of these that appear as dreams hovering all about it.

¹⁸ Consciousness is the vast receptacle that receives all tangible and solid bodies. This spacious earth with all the population on its surface is seated in the midst of it. ¹⁹ It has place for the vast ocean and

affords a seat to the sun. It has a space for the course of the winds and an emptiness containing all the worlds in it.²⁰ It is the reservoir of the five elements which are the fivefold principles of our knowledge. It is the container of the highest essence of Brahma, what is seen or anything else before it.²¹ The learned call this Consciousness the intellect and omniscience. It has all forms and one form and is all-pervading, perceived by all owing to its greatness and its great magnitude.

²² Brahma the son or offspring of Brahman is the same Brahma who, by expanding his intelligence, has expanded the void under the name of space, like an awning of silk cloth.²³ When delusion rules over the consciousness of Brahma and over subtle and gross matters, how is it possible for other things that are only parts of them to stand good in law?²⁴ It is simply by his will that this god Brahma stretched the network of the universe, like a spider weaves its web out of itself. The universe revolves like a disc or wheel in the air and whirls like a whirlpool in the hollow depth of Consciousness, appearing as if it were a perceptible sphere in the heavens.²⁵ This sphere presents some bodies of great brightness and others of a lesser light. Some are scarcely visible to us and all appear like figures in a painting.²⁶ All created objects appear in this manner, and those that are not created never appear to view. But to the sight of the learned, they all appear as visions in a dream.

²⁷ Consciousness is the one soul and lord of all. The seeming visible is all really invisible. They are all impermanent because they lack any body that lasts. They are not visible by themselves, nor are they ever perceptible or seen by us.²⁸ Empty intellect sees these as its dreams in the great emptiness of the intellect. This world being nothing other than a phenomenon of the empty intellect, can have no form other than that of mere void.

²⁹ Whatever is manifested by the intellect in any manner is called its form and body. The expression of that manifested form for a certain period is called its nature or destiny.³⁰ The first manifestation of Divine Consciousness is the form of emptiness and the vehicle of sound. Afterwards that became the source of the world, which sprouted forth like a seed in the great granary of emptiness.³¹ But any account given of the origin of the world and of the creation of things one after the other is a mere fabrication of sages for the instruction of the ignorant and has no basis on truth.³² There is nothing that is ever produced of nothing or reduced to nothingness at anytime. All this is as quiet and calm as the bosom of a rock, and ever as real as it is unreal.

³³ As there existed no separate body before, so it can have no end either. All things exist as an inseparable infinitesimal with the spirit of God. Therefore nothing can rise or set in it where they are always present.³⁴ The empty world exists in the vacuum of the Divine Spirit. It is a pure emptiness. Therefore, how is it possible for the world to rise or set or go beyond it to rise or set elsewhere?³⁵ The world is only a ray of the ever shining gem of Divine Consciousness, before whose omniscience, everything shines forever in its own light and nature.

³⁶ Divine Spirit, though unknown to all, makes itself somewhat conceivable to us in our consciousness of it and in our ability to think about it through reasoning and reflection.³⁷ We can get some knowledge of it by our reason, as we can draw inferences of future events by means of our reasoning. This knowledge is rarer than the subtle element of air and fainter than our foresight into the future of all things.³⁸ Then this transcendental essence of the Divine Spirit, being about to reflect in itself, becomes the thinking principle called the intellect, which is somewhat intelligible to us.

³⁹ Having then the firm conviction of its consciousness in itself, it takes the name of the living soul, which is known by the title of soul (*jiva*), meaning the Supreme Spirit or soul.⁴⁰ This living soul embodied in itself the nameless ignorance which shrouded the atmosphere of its intellect and superseded the title of the pure intelligence.⁴¹ The living soul forgets its spiritual nature and becomes completely occupied in thoughts of its bodily conduct and worldly affairs.⁴² Having forgotten its nature of emptiness, which possesses the property of conveying the sound, it becomes preoccupied with the error of taking future material bodies for real instead of the reality of the intellect.

⁴³ Next it gets the notion in its spiritual body of its egoism and the idea of time, then these two run together in quest of the material elements, which are the seeds for the growth of the forthcoming world.⁴⁴ Then the thinking power of the living soul begets the sense of consciousness within itself and produces therein the conviction of the unreal world as a positive reality.⁴⁵ After this the thinking principle or the mind bursts out like a seed into a hundred sprouts of its wishes. Then, by reflecting on its egoism, it immediately thinks it is a living being.⁴⁶ Thus pure spirit, under the name of living soul, becomes entangled in the maze of its false and unreal reality and rolls like a heaving wave in the depth of the Universal Spirit.⁴⁷ The mind, which at first reflected on the empty nature of the living soul, in the end becomes foolishly misled to think it is solidified into animal life or the vital air and breath of life.

⁴⁸ The mind becomes the source of articulate sounds or words which express certain meanings and signify certain things that were to be created afterwards and were to be embodied in the wording of the Vedas.⁴⁹ From him was to issue the would-be world through the words he spoke to denote the things he meant. The words he invented were filled with meanings and produced the things they expressed.⁵⁰ The intellect being employed in this manner is called a living being which, being clothed in significant words, produces all existent entities.⁵¹ This self-existent entity produced the fourteen spheres that fill the whole space of emptiness and which give rise to so many worlds that exist within.

⁵² Before this being had the power of speech and of the use of limbs and body, it remained to reflect only on the meanings of words, having only his mind as the active part of himself.⁵³ As air develops the seed of a plant by exhaling on its outer coat, so does the intellect develop the bodily functions of living beings by working in its internal parts.⁵⁴ As the vibrating intellect or mind happens to come across the idea of light, it beholds light appearing to view as it is conveyed before it by its significant sound.⁵⁵ Light is only our reasoning or idea of it. It is nothing without its idea. In the same way, feeling is our consciousness of feeling and not the perception derived by means of the touch of anything.⁵⁶ Sound is only our consciousness of it. Sound is a subjective conception of our mind, just as emptiness is a conception of the empty mind that serves as the receptacle of sound.⁵⁷ Sound is known to be the product of air in its own emptiness, so everything else is the product of our consciousness and there is nothing as a duality beside it.

⁵⁸ The properties of scent and flavor are also substances of sound and air and these unrealities seem as real, like the dreams that are seen and thought of in our minds.⁵⁹ Heat (*tejas*), which is the seed or seat of the tree of light and evolves itself in radiance and luminous bodies, are forms of the same intellect that shows itself in all things.⁶⁰ So flavor is merely a quality of empty air, though it is thought

of as a reality in every article of our food and drink. It is a mere name without substance.⁶¹ All other things which were designated by different names such as fragrance and the like are only so many forms of the thoughts and desires existing in the mind of this living being Brahma.

⁶² This being had in his mind the seed of all forms and dimensions from which proceeds this terrestrial globe that was to become the support of all creatures.⁶³ All things yet unborn appear as already born in this Divine Mind which is filled with the models of all future existences of every kind. All these formless beings have their forms afterwards, as it thought and willed them to be.

⁶⁴ These forms appear to view as if by an act of chance. The organs whereby they come to be seen are afterwards called eyes, or the visual organs of sight.⁶⁵ The organs which give the perception of sounds are named ears. Those which bear the feeling of touch to the mind are called the organs of feeling.⁶⁶ The organ of perceiving the flavors is called the tongue or the organ of taste. That which receives the perception of smell is called the nose or the organ of scent.

⁶⁷ The living soul is subjected to its physical body, yet the imperfect and lifeless bodily organs really do not perceive any distinction between time and place.⁶⁸ All things are only imaginations of the soul, ideas of the intellect that are wholly confined in the soul. They neither appear nor set on the outside, but are set as silent engravings in the stony and stiff bosom of the soul.

Chapter 188 — Creation Stories Are Fiction; How Yogis See Creation

¹ Vasishta continued:—

As said before, the story of in the beginning and the first rise of the living soul from the calm and quiet spirit of God is only a fiction meant to explain that the nature of the animate soul is the same as the Supreme Soul.² The fiction serves to explain that the individual soul is not only a part of the Supreme Soul, it truly is the same with it.

When the subjective soul is employed with thoughts of the objective, it is called the living God or individual soul.³ The inclination of the self-intelligent or subjective soul towards the objects of thought garbs it under a great many fictitious names, which you, O Rama, shall now hear me describe in all their varieties.

⁴ It is called the living soul or *jiva* from its power of living and thinking. From its addiction towards thoughts, it is called the thinking (*chitta*) principle and the intellect.⁵ It is termed intelligence for its reasoning (*buddhi*) of this thing as that, as well as for its knowledge of what is what. It is called the mind (*manas*) from its minding, willing and imagining of many things.⁶ The reliance in self that "I am" is what is called egoism (*ahamkara*). The vulgar call the principle of perception mind which, when freed from everything, is called the intellect by the wise and those acquainted with the scriptures.⁷ It is called the sum total of the eightfold principles (*puryastaka*) or totality of existence when it is combined with all its wishes of creation. It is named subtle nature (*prakriti*) for its production of the substantial world.⁸ Being absent or imperceptible to our perception, it is called hidden nature.

In this way, many other fictitious names are given to God by way of fiction or fabrication of our imagination.⁹ All these fictitious names that I have mentioned are mere inventions of our fancy for the one formless and changeless Eternal Being.¹⁰ In this manner, all these three worlds are only the fairylands of our dreams and the castles of our imagination. They appear as objects made for our enjoyment and bliss, but in reality, they are an intangible emptiness imperceptible to touch.

¹¹ So must you know, O best of embodied beings, that this body of yours is of a spiritual and intangible nature. It is the intellectual body formed of the empty intellect, which is rarer than rarefied air.¹² It neither is born nor dies in this world, but continues with our consciousness of ourselves until our final liberation from the sense of our personalities.

This mental body or mind of ours is the recipient of the fourteen worlds and all created objects.¹³ In the course of time, millions of worlds continue to be created and dissolved in the extensive regions of our minds. An unnumbered train of created beings are growing and falling like fruit in the mind over the long run of time.¹⁴ This intellectual body beholds the world, both inside and outside of it, like a looking glass reflects and refracts its outer and inner images, and as open air reflects and shows us the upper skies.¹⁵ The mind must bear these images in its mirror until its final dissolution with all things at the end of the world when all minds and bodies and all the world and their contents are to be incorporated in the great emptiness of the Divine Mind.

¹⁶ The compactness of the Divine Mind, which comprehends all images or ideas in itself, imparts them partly in all individual minds, which are only parts of itself and which are made to think

likewise.¹⁷ This spiritual body that is occupied in viewing the inborn world in itself is called the form of the great Brahma by some, and the god Viraj by others.¹⁸ Some call him the everlasting and others give him the name of Narayana or floating on the surface of the waters. Some name him Isha (Lord) or Prajapati, the lord of creatures.

¹⁹ This suddenly chanced to have his five organs of sense seated in the various parts of his body, where they still retain their seats as before.²⁰ Then his delusion of phenomena seems to extend far and wide without any appearance of reality, all being a vast waste and void.²¹ It is all the appearance of that eternal and transcendental Brahman, and not of the phenomena which is never real. It is the same Brahman without beginning or end appearing in a light quite unintelligible to us.

²² Our inquiry into the spiritual form of God leads us to take the world to be a delusion, just as the longing of an ardent lover after his loved one leads him to see her swelling body in his dream.²³ As we have the blank and formless notion of a pot presented in the real shape of the pot in our minds, so have we the ideas of our bodies and the world represented as realities in dreams and imagination.

²⁴ As dreamed objects of our empty minds seem to be real while we sleep, so all these ethereal objects in nature appear as solid substances in the delusion of our dreams by daylight.

²⁵ This spiritual and formless body of the *jiva* comes to be gradually perceived in us, and by itself also, as we come to see ethereal forms presenting themselves to us in our dream.²⁶ Then the forms are embodied in a gross body composed of flesh and bones and all its organs and its covering of skin and hair. In this state it thinks of its carnal desires.²⁷ Then it reflects on its birth and acts in that body and upon the duration and end of that body, and it entertains the false ideas of the enjoyments and incidents of its life.²⁸ It comes to know that it is subject to decay, decrepitude and death. It wanders on all sides of the wide sphere of this globe. It gets knowledge of the knower and known, and also of the beginning, middle and end of all acts and things.

²⁹ And thus the Primordial Spirit, being transformed to the living soul, comes to know the elementary bodies of earth, air, water and fire and the varieties of created beings and conduct of men. Having been the container of all bodies and space, it finds itself contained and confined within the limits of its body and of this earth.

Chapter 189 — The Creation of Brahma's Thoughts

¹ Vasishta continued:—

This spiritual body, as Prajapati Brahma, the primeval creator of all, being possessed of volition, by an act of chance and of its own motion, comes to think and brood on its thoughts.² It continues to remain in the same state as it is ever conscious of in itself and sees of its own nature this universe exposed before it as it had in his mind, nor is there any wonder in this.³ Now this viewer, Brahma, and his viewing and the view of the world, must either all be false or they must all be true, having the spirit of Brahma at its foundation.

⁴ Rama asked, “Now sage, please tell me. How can this spiritual and shadowy sight of the primeval lord of creation be realized in its solidified state? What reality can there be in the vision of a dream?”

⁵ Vasishta replied:—

The spiritual view is ever apparent by itself within ourselves. Our continuous and ceaseless sight of it gives it the appearance of a solid reality.⁶ As the sights in our dreams come to be realized by our continuous thinking about them, so the spiritual appears as real by our constant habit of thinking them as such.⁷ The constant thought of the reality of our spiritual body makes it appear as a real object to our sight, just as a deer’s constant craving after water makes it appear in a mirage of a parched desert.⁸ The sight of this world, like every other fallacy, has misled us, like the poor thirsting deer, to the misconception of water in the mirage. This and all other unrealities appear as real ones in our ignorance.

⁹ Many spiritual and intellectual objects, like a great many unreal things, are taken as material and real by the eagerness of their desires and ignorant admirers.¹⁰ The impression that “I am this” and “that one is another” and that “this is mine” and “that is his” and that “these are the hills and skies about us” are all as false as a conception of reality in our dreams and the false phantoms of the brain.

¹¹ The spiritual body was at first conceived in the sight of the prime creator of all, Brahma, as the material form of the cosmic egg.¹² The living soul of Brahma, being born of the cosmic egg in a corporeal body, forgot, or rather, abandoned thinking of his incorporeal intellectuality and thought himself as composed of his material body. He looked into his thought and thought that this thought was his body and the recipient of his soul.¹³ Then he becomes confined in that body by his belief that his thought is a factual reality. Then he thinks of many things within himself, and goes on seeking and running after them all.

¹⁴ Then this god makes many symbolic sounds and forms, invents words for names and actions, and at last, upon his utterance of the mystic syllable Aum, the Vedas rang out and sang in currents of many words.¹⁵ Then through the medium of those sacred words, the god ordained the ordinances for the conduct of all mankind. Everything turned out to be as he wished and thought it to be in his own mind.

¹⁶ Whatever exists in any manner is Brahma himself. Yet nobody perceives it as such owing to everyone’s predominant error of believing the unreal world to be a real existence.¹⁷ All things from the great Brahma down are only false appearances like those of dreams and a magic show, yet this spiritual reality is utterly lost to sight under the garb of material unreality.¹⁸ There is nothing such as materiality anywhere at anytime. All is only spiritual which, by our habitual mode of thinking and

naming, is said to be substantial, elemental and material.

¹⁹ This, our fallacy of materiality, has come to us from our very source in Brahma, the creator who entertained the false idea of the material world and transmitted this error even to the minds of the wise and very great souls. ²⁰ How is it possible, O Rama, for the intelligent soul to be confined in a piece of earth? All this must either be an illusory scene or a representation of Brahma himself.

²¹ There can be no other cause of this world except the eternal causality of Brahma who is self-existent without any action or causation of himself. The Supreme Soul is wholly devoid of the attributes of cause and effect. What can this world be other than an extension of the Divine Essence?

Chapter 190 — Rama's Enlightenment: Short Answers to Many Questions

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Gaining knowledge of what is knowable is called our bondage in this world. Our release from the bonds of knowable objects is called our liberation from it.

² Rama asked, “But sage, how is it possible to escape from knowledge of the knowable? How can we remove our rooted knowledge of things and our habitual sense of bondage to them?”

³ Vasishta replied:—

Our misjudgment is removed by the perfection of our knowledge and the feeling of it as such. Then, after our inborn bias disappears, we get liberation from error.”

⁴ Rama asked, “Tell me sage. What is that simple uniform feeling that completely releases a living soul from its chains of error? What is said to be that complete and perfect knowledge?”

⁵ Vasishta replied:—

The soul is full of subjective knowledge, intuition. It has no need for objective knowledge of the knowable without. Perfect knowledge is our inner sense and is not expressible in words.

⁶ Rama asked, “Tell me sage. Is the internal knowledge of the soul the same or separate from itself? Is the word knowledge to be understood in its instrumental or abstract sense?”

⁷ Vasishta replied:—

All perception is knowledge and knowledge also describes causation. Hence there is no difference between knowledge and the knowable, as there is none between air and its movement.

⁸ Rama asked, “If it be so, then tell me. How does the error arise of perceiving a difference between knower and the known? The idea of the materiality of the perceptible or objective world must be as false as that of the horns of a rabbit which have never existed and are unlikely to exist anytime in the future.”

⁹ Vasishta replied:—

The error of the reality of external objects also gives rise to the error of believing our knowledge of them to be real. But no inner object of thought and no object of the outward senses has any reality to it.

¹⁰ Rama asked, “Tell me, O sage. How can you deny the existence of objects that are evident to your and my senses, and all others' alike, and which are ever present in thoughts in the minds of conscious beings?

¹¹ Vasishta replied:—

When the world was first created, the self manifested god Viraj exhibited the outline of the cosmos in a corner of his all-comprehensive mind. But as nothing was produced in reality, there is no possibility of our knowing any as a knowable or real entity.

¹² Rama asked, “How can our common sight of the present, past and future prospects of this world and our daily perception of things, which are felt by all in general, be regarded as nothing by your

teaching?"

¹³ Vasishta replied:—

Just as the dreamer's vision in sleep, the deer's mistake of water in a mirage in sand, the illusory sight of a second moon in the sky, and the appearance of our delusive fancies all disappear on correct observation, so the false perceptions of worldly things and the mistaken conceptions of our own existences are as false as the sights of false lights in empty air.

¹⁴ Rama asked, "If our knowledge of "I" and "you" and this and that is as false as that of all other things in the womb of the world, then why were these brought into existence? Why were they not left as ideas in the mind of their creator, as they had existed before he created them?"

¹⁵ Vasishta replied:—

It is certain that everything springs from its cause and not otherwise. What could be the material cause for the creation of the world after the dissolution of everything at the universal destruction?

¹⁶ Rama asked, "Sage, why cannot that being be the cause of recreation? That being remains undestroyed and indestructible after destruction of creation."

¹⁷ Vasishta replied:—

Whatever substance abides in the cause is also in its effect. Hence the essence of Brahma, being composed of only intellect, could not give rise to the material world from itself, just as the substance of a pot cannot produce a painting or cloth.

¹⁸ Rama asked, "Sage, why has the world existed in its subtle ideal state in Brahma's mind, from which it issued forth anew after dissolution of the former creation?"

¹⁹ Vasishta asked:—

Tell me, O intelligent Rama. How could the Lord God conceive the essence of the world in himself, which, like the productive seed, sprang out in the form of the future creation? Tell me, what sort of entity was it?

²⁰ Rama said, "It is an entity of Divine Intelligence situated in that form in the subjective soul of God. It is neither a empty nothingness nor an unreal entity."

²¹ Vasishta said:—

If it be so, O mighty armed Rama, that the three worlds are only Divine Intelligence, then tell me why bodies formed of pure intelligence and those having intelligent souls in them are subject to birth and death?

²² Rama said, "If there has been no creation at anytime, then tell me sage. From where has this fallacy of the existence of the world come to be in popular acceptance?"

²³ Vasishta replied:—

The nonexistence of cause and effect proves the nothingness of being and not being. All that is thought of to exist is the thought and thinking of the Divine Soul, which is the triple entity of thinker, thinking, and thought together.

²⁴ Rama asked, “The thinking soul thinks about the implements and the acts, just as the looker looks on the objects of his sight. But how can the divine looker be the dull spectacle, unless you maintain that the objective fuel burns the subjective fire?”

²⁵ Vasishtha replied:—

The viewer is not transformed into the view owing to impossibility of the existence of an objective view. The all seeing soul shows itself as one solid fullness of space in itself.

²⁶ Rama asked, “The soul is only pure consciousness without beginning or end. It thinks only on its eternal and formless thoughts. How then can it present the form and appearance of the visible world?”

²⁷ Vasishtha replied:—

All that is thinkable, being all causeless of themselves, has no cause whatsoever. Taking away what is thinkable indicates the liberation of the intellect.

²⁸ Rama asked, “If it is so, then tell me how we have the thoughts and conceptions of ourselves, our knowledge of the world, and our sense of motion and the like?”

²⁹ Vasishtha replied:—

The impossibility of cause precludes the possibility of any production. From where could the thinkable proceed when all is quite calm and quiet everywhere and the knowledge of creation is only an error and a delusion?

³⁰ Rama asked, “Sage, describe how this error comes to overshadow the unknowable, unthinkable, and the immovable being that is self-manifest and ever untainted and clear by itself?”

³¹ Vasishtha replied:—

There is no error or mistake here owing to the lack of any cause for it. Our knowledge of “I” and “you” is drowned in that of one permanent unity.

³² Rama asked, “O venerable sage, I am so bewildered by the error of my consciousness that I do not know what other question to ask. I am not as enlightened as the learned to be able argue more on this point.”

³³ Vasishtha replied:—

O Rama, do not stop asking your questions concerning the causality of Brahma until you are satisfied with the proof that he is without cause. Such questions test the purity of gold in stone. By knowing this, you will be able to rest in the blissful state of the supremely blessed.

³⁴ Rama asked, “Sage, I grant as you say that there is no creation for lack of its cause, but tell me now. From where do I get my error of the thinkable and its thought?”

³⁵ Vasishtha replied:—

There is no error in the belief of uncaused creation and its perfect calmness. Because you lack the habit of thinking this way makes you so restless.

³⁶ Rama asked, “Tell me sage, from where rises this habit and how do we discontinue our mode of thinking? How does rest proceed from the one mode of thought and our disquiet from the other

mode?"

³⁷ Vasishta replied:—

Belief in the eternal God breeds no error in that of the eternity of the world. The habit of thinking otherwise creates the error of creation. Therefore, be as sound in your mind as the calm minded sages have been.

³⁸ Rama asked, "Please tell me sage, as you preach these lectures to your audience, what other mode of practice there may be to attain a quietude like that of the living liberated sages?"

³⁹ Vasishta replied:—

The lesson we preach is to know one's self as Brahman resting in the spirit of Brahman. This knowledge is sure to release the soul from its longing for liberation and its fear of bondage in this world.

⁴⁰ Rama asked, "Your doctrine, by its all negative distinctions of any knowledge of time and space, and of our actions and things, serves to drive away our consciousness of all existence whatsoever from the mind."

⁴¹ Vasishta replied:—

Yes. All our objective knowledge of the distinctions of time and place and of actions and things is the effect of our ignorance of the subjectivity of the soul. There is no substance other than the soul before the liberated spirit.

⁴² Rama asked, "The absence of any knowledge of an intelligent agent or an intelligible object completely deprives us of any intelligence at all. The impossibility of unity and duality being combined must preserve our distinct knowledge of the knowing principle and the known or knowable object."

⁴³ Vasishta replied:—

You get knowledge of God by your act of knowing him. Therefore the word is taken in its active sense by you and others. But with sages like ourselves who possess our intuitive knowledge of ourselves as the deity, it is only a self-reflexive verb.

⁴⁴ Rama asked, "But how do you feel your finite selves or sense of ego and your limited knowledge to be the same as the infinite soul and omniscience of God? Do you ascribe your imperfections to the transcendental divinity, who is purer than the purest water and rarer than the rarefied ether?"

⁴⁵ Vasishta replied:—

What we call individual ego is the feeling of the perfections of the Divine Soul in ourselves, and not attributing our imperfect personalities to him. The duality of living souls and the Divine Soul resembles the unity of the blowing breeze with the universal and still air.

⁴⁶ Rama asked, "As waves of the ocean have been continually rising and existing in it, so the objective thoughts of one's egoism and the world besides must be always rising and falling in the subjective soul of the Supreme Being, as well as in the souls of self-liberated persons."

⁴⁷ Vasishta replied:—

If so it be, then tell me. What is the fault, so much criticized in the popular belief of duality, in the creed of unity which is eternal and infinite, full and perfect in itself, quite calm and quiet in its nature, called the transcendent one?

⁴⁸ Rama asked, "If it be so, then tell me sage. Who and what power conceives the ego, you, and others, which feels and enjoys all as their agent, if the fundamental fallacy of the world be the root of all?"

⁴⁹ Vasishtha replied:—

The knowledge of the reality of the objective or knowable things is the cause of our bondage in this world. True knowledge does not recognize their reality. Full intelligence which assumes the forms of all things in itself sees no difference between bondage or liberation.

⁵⁰ Rama asked, "Intelligence, like light, does not show us all things the same way. Intelligence shows us the difference between a pot and a picture, just as light shows white and black to view. Again as the light of our eye sight shows us the different forms of outward objects, so our intelligence confirms and indicates the reality of our visual perceptions."

⁵¹ Vasishtha replied:—

All outer objects, having no cause for their creation or any source for their production, are as incredible as the offspring of a barren woman. The appearance of their reality which is presented to our sight is as false as that of silver in a conch shell or in glittering sands.

⁵² Rama asked, "The sight of this miserable world, whether it be true or false, is like a frightening apparition in a dream, attended only with pain. Therefore tell me the best way to avoid and get rid of this error."

⁵³ Vasishtha replied:—

The world, being no better than a dream, is the reflection of the idea of its reality. That view is the best way to get rid of the trap of its tempting joys and sorrows.

⁵⁴ Rama asked, "But how to effect this perspective to gain our bliss and rest? How do we put an end to the sight of the world which shows the sights of falsities as realities in a continuous series of deluding dreams?"

⁵⁵ Vasishtha replied:—

It is the due consideration of the antecedent and subsequent states of things that must remove the false impression of their reality. It is no different from how we reflect upon our dreams. Their reality is eliminated once we examine them.

⁵⁶ Rama asked, "But how do the rising apparitions of the world disappear in the depth of our minds? What do we come to perceive after the traces of our memories of material substance have faded away?"

⁵⁷ Vasishtha responded:—

After the false appearance of the world has vanished from view, like the faded sight of a city, the detached mind of the unconcerned soul looks upon the world as a painting wholly washed out by rain.

⁵⁸ Rama asked, "Then what becomes of the man after worldly sights and desires are decreased from his mind, like the material-looking objects of a dream, and after the mind rests in a state of total detachment?"

⁵⁹ Vasishta replied:—

The world recedes from his sight. His liking of it and his desire for its enjoyment depart and die away along with it.

⁶⁰ Rama asked, "How can this blind and deep rooted inclination, which has accompanied the soul from many previous births and branched out into multiple desires, suddenly give up its hold of the human heart?"

⁶¹ Vasishta replied:—

The knowledge of truth serves to disperse the rooted error of the material world from the mind. In the same way, the sense of the vanity of human desires and the bitterness of their enjoyment suddenly dispel their seeds from the heart.

⁶² Rama asked, "After the error of materiality and the visible spheres of worlds dissipate, what is that state of the mind which follows? How is its peace and tranquility at last?"

⁶³ Vasishta replied:—

After dispelling the error of the material world, the mind reverts to its seat in the immaterial soul where it is released from all its earthly bonds and finds its rest in the state of detachment and mental indifference.

⁶⁴ Rama asked, "Tell me sage, if the error of the world is as little as that of a child's idea of sorrow, then what trouble is there for a man to remedy it?"

⁶⁵ Vasishta replied:—

When all our desires, like the fond wishes of children, are wholly extinct in the mind, there remains no more cause for any sorrow. This you may well know from the association of desires in all minds.

⁶⁶ Rama asked, "Tell me sage, what is the mind and how are we to know its nature and workings? What good do we derive by our best investigation of mental powers and properties?"

⁶⁷ Vasishta replied:—

The inclination of the intellect towards intelligible objects is called the mind because it minds only what is thinkable. The right knowledge of the mind's workings leads to the extinction of all our worldly desires.

⁶⁸ Rama asked, "Tell me sage, how long does this tendency of the intellect towards the thinkable continue? When does the mind eliminate thoughts, which causes our extinction in the state of nirvana?"

⁶⁹ Vasishta replied:—

If there is a complete absence of thinkable things, what is left for the intellect to be intent upon? The mind dwells only upon its thoughts, but the lack of thinkable objects leaves nothing for it to think

upon.

⁷⁰ Rama asked, "How can there be an absence of thinkable when we have ideas accumulated in memory to think and reflect upon? There is no one who can deny the existence of ideas which are always imprinted in the mind."

⁷¹ Vasishta replied:—

Whatever idea the ignorant have has no truth and is denied by the learned. The only conception the wise have is that of a nameless and formless unity.

⁷² Rama asked, "What do the ignorant know of this triple world which has no truth or reality to it? What is the true knowledge of the wise about the world which is inexpressible in words?"

⁷³ Vasishta replied:—

What the ignorant know about the duality of the world is wholly untrue from first to last. The true knowledge of the wise neither recognizes a duality nor acknowledges its production.

⁷⁴ Rama asked, "Of course, whatever is not produced in the beginning cannot exist at anytime. But how is it that this unreal and unapparent nothing could come to produce in us its conception of a something?"

⁷⁵ Vasishta replied:—

This causeless and uncaused unreality of the world appears as a real entity like a daydream presents the false sight of the cosmos as a reality.

⁷⁶ Rama said, "What we see in our dreams and the images we conceive in our imagination are only perceptions derived from our impressions of them in our waking state."

⁷⁷ Vasishta replied:—

O Rama, tell me whether the things you see in your dream or conceive in your imagination are exactly of the same forms that you see in your waking state?

⁷⁸ Rama said, "The things we see in our dream and conceive in our imagination appear to us in the same light as they show themselves in our waking state."

⁷⁹ Vasishta questioned:—

If the impressions of the waking state appear in our dreaming, then tell me Rama, why do you find your house standing in the morning which you saw to have fallen down in your dream?

⁸⁰ Rama answered, "I understand that the things seen in waking do not appear the same in dreams. But tell me sage, why do they seem to resemble those that have been seen before?"

⁸¹ Vasishta replied:—

It is not the idea of anything that appears as a reality in our minds, but the inherent impression of the world in the soul that exhibits it to us from first to last.

⁸² Rama said, "I understand that this world is no better than a dream. But tell me sage, how do we remove our fallacy of its reality which holds us fast like a demon?"

⁸³ Vasishta replied:—

Consider how this dream of the world came into fashion and what may be its cause. Knowing that the cause is not different from its effect, see this visible creation in the light of its invisible origin.

⁸⁴ Rama said, “But as the mind is the cause of the sights seen in our dreams in sleep, it therefore must be the same with its creation of this world, which is equally insubstantial and without decay as itself.”

⁸⁵ Vasishta replied:—

So it is, O most intelligent Rama. The world is truly the mind of God, which is nothing other than the consolidation of Divine Consciousness. Thus the world being situated in the mind, it is only this mind that exhibits these dreamlike shows which originate from it. There is no other source.

⁸⁶ Rama asked, “But why can I not identify creation with Brahman, the Divine Mind? The relationship of sameness exists between a component part and its integral whole, as there is between the branch of a tree and the tree itself. But it would be absurd to identify the undivided and formless Brahman with the divided and formal world.”

⁸⁷ Vasishta replied:—

It is impossible, O Rama, to identify this frail perishable world with the eternal Brahman, who is uncreated, quite calm and quiescent, and intact in his nature.

⁸⁸ Rama added, “In the end I find by a haphazard way that my conception of the world from first to last is false, as is the error of my attributing the qualities of activity and passivity to the nature of the transcendent being.”

⁸⁹ Vasishta concluded saying:—

Now I have fully exposed the false views of the world, both by the elegance of my poetic speech and by the enlightening reasoning of the learned. Both eloquence and reasoning are calculated to remove the mistaken views of the emptiness and delusion of the world by establishing the truth of all being composed of the essence of the one sole and Supreme Entity.

Chapter 191 — Solution of Great Question of Unity & Duality

¹ Rama asked, "If it is as you say, sage, the world must be a great riddle as it can neither be said to be in existence with all its contents, or be a perfect nothing with everything quite extinct in it. ² This existence that shows itself to sight as the world appears as a delusion or deception, though it cannot properly be called an illusion if it is composed of divine essence as you say."

³ Vasishta replied:—

The accidental appearance in which Brahman manifests himself of his own accord is known to him as the world and exists in himself.

⁴ Rama asked, "How does Brahman manifest himself as the world before space exists and after its extinction? How does the Divine Spirit shine itself as the world when there is no light in the heavens?"

⁵ Vasishta replied:—

The world shines with the light of Divine Consciousness. Know that this light proceeds from the Divine Spirit which is thus diffused all over the universe. ⁶ As the light of the lamp enlightens a house with its brightness, the holy light of the Divine Spirit shines of itself without presenting an outward appearance or having anyone to look upon it. ⁷ Thus it is an immaterial and imperishable entity, without any appearance or observer to see it. It shines with the light of the intellect upon the basis or stand of the Divine Spirit.

⁸ It shines with an appearance visible only in the sight of the spirit which constantly looks upon it, as it sees its dreams in sleep. ⁹ It shines only in the light of the intellect and it appears as the created world before its creation. All creation's visible and shining brightness is derived from the Supreme.

¹⁰ The one Supreme Intellect alone assumes the triple forms of the sight, seer, and seeing in the beginning of creation. It shows itself as the created world of its own nature and accord.

¹¹ Our dreams and imaginations resemble this appearance. In the same manner, this creation shines before us with the light of consciousness. ¹² This world is like an empty body appearing in the emptiness of Consciousness. Creation has neither beginning nor end. It is a development of the Consciousness which is distributed through it.

¹³ It has become habitual to our nature to suppose the existence of the world, but the false impression of its sight is lost in the consciousness of high-minded men. ¹⁴ To them this creation presents no visible form, or any sensible appearance at all. To them creation is only the appearance of a fallacy, like the mistake of a man in a statue or taking a false apparition as real. ¹⁵ In this manner the blunder of a duality in the soul produces a dualism in the mind. But before the existence of creation, there existed no dualism of the creator and the created, or of the one who manifests and the manifested.

¹⁶ The lack of a cause causes the appearance of a duality. But tell me how could there be a cause when there is no creation in existence? ¹⁷ Only Divine Consciousness manifests itself in the manner of the world. There is a complete absence of all visible objects. Though this seems to be the waking state of the Supreme Soul, yet it is neither its waking, sleeping or dreaming state.

¹⁸ The visible world is no production of dream but a manifestation of Brahman himself. Only Divine

Consciousness exists in the manner of the infinite void before the birth of the atmospheric void of the world.¹⁹ The Intellect which beholds this universe as its body, without being distributed or changed in the form of the world, is purely a spiritual or empty form that manifested itself in this visible form before it came to existence.²⁰ This visible world that is so manifest to view is as void and empty as the empty air.

²¹ Now knowing this in your own understanding, you must remain devoid of all dualism in your mind. Be as mute as a block of stone. Give no heed in your heart to the words of the universe. Do not care for their sayings of earthly enjoyments.

Chapter 192 — Rama Realizes there Is No Error, No Ignorance

¹ Rama said:—

Alas that I have so long strayed about in the false maze of the world without knowledge of it being a mere void. ² Now I come to know the fallacy of my conception of the world, which is only a mere nothingness, which never is or was, and which never will be proven to be a positive reality. ³ It is all still without any support, existing only in our false knowledge of it. It is an endless formation of solid intellect, a mere empty conception that we have without any figure or form or color or mark of its own.

⁴ The world is the transcendental emptiness of a wholly inconceivable nature. Yet how wonderful it is, what we call our world, our earth and the sphere of our action. ⁵ How it appears as a duality, and how these worlds and mountains are seen as separate and solid bodies when in reality they are only the transparent sky appearing as thick and opaque to our misconception of them. ⁶ This creation and the future world are like the dreams that we see, the workings of our imagination. Only consciousness shows itself as these intelligible objects, which otherwise could not present their visible aspects to us.

⁷ The thought that I am in heaven or hell in this life makes this world appear as such to us because all that is visible are objects or creatures of our consciousness of them. ⁸ There is nothing such as visible or its vision, nor this world or its creation, unless it is caused by consciousness within us. It is neither a scene in our waking or sleeping, nor is this anything real in its nature.

⁹ If this is only a false conception of the mind, then how could such negative error produce this positive spectacle? Tell me, O sage, how could this blank fallacy bring forth the thought of this real existence? ¹⁰ How is it possible for error to creep into the infallible mind of omniscience? It is improbable that error should reign at large over this perfect creation. Therefore, it is the Lord himself who exhibits his glory in this manner.

¹¹ How else can we think of the continuity and infinity of space, emptiness and time other than they are attributes of omnipotence? How are we to look on the transparency of air and crystal without thinking them as manifestations of his nature? ¹² A false notion is as false as the sight of one's own death in a dream. But how can this world which is so perceptible to sight be lost or expunged from our sight without losing our sight of the One who manifests its?

¹³ Of course, the sights of a mirage, fairy cities and double moons in the sky are deceptions of vision and productions of our error. But the same analogy does not apply to our sight of the world.

¹⁴ Children's apparitions of ghosts never lay hold on adults and the waking, or on anyone in the daylight and open air. This and similar errors arise only in our ignorance and vanish upon second thought and true knowledge.

¹⁵ It is improper in this place to raise the question from where this imaginary demon of error could arise among mankind because it is evident from our own reasoning that there is no such thing as ignorance ever in existence. ¹⁶ It is evident by rational reasoning that whatever is invisible and imperceptible to us is called not being, and the conception or idea of that is called an error. ¹⁷ That which is not clearly obtained by any proof or reasoning, and is as impossible as a sky-flower or the

horn of a rabbit, cannot be believed to be anything in existence.¹⁸ And a thing however apparent to sight, but having no cause or evidence of its reality, cannot be believed as a thing in existence, but must be a nothing like the child of a barren woman.¹⁹ Therefore there can no error at anytime, nor can an error ever produce anything whatever. It is therefore the manifest omniscience of providence that is conspicuous in every part of this wide and grand display.

²⁰ Whatever we see shining before us is the manifestation of the Supreme Being itself. The same Supreme Spirit fills this fullness of space and is full with it in itself.²¹ There is nothing that is either shining or not shining here at anytime, unless it is the calm and quiet and transparent spirit of God that inheres in its body of the mundane world.²² The one unborn, undying and unchanging everlasting being is the most adorable and ever adored lord of all who fills and pervades the whole with his essence. He only is the word ego, self-manifest, pure and all pervading, while I and all others are without our individual egos and shining in that unity.

Chapter 193 — Rama Realizes that All Questions Become Meaningless upon God Realization

¹ Rama said:—

There is the only One alone whom neither the gods nor the rishis know or comprehend. He is without beginning, middle or end. It is that being who shines himself without this world and these phenomena.

² It is useless for us to mind the difference between unity and duality, or to be led to the questions created by the misleading words of false doctrines, without relying upon the state of one tranquil and unvarying spirit. ³ The world is as clearly an empty body appearing in the womb of emptiness like a string of pearls or aerial castles seen in the open sky. ⁴ The world is attached to the solidity of the invisible intellect in the same manner as emptiness is inherent in vacuum, hardness in stone, and fluidity in water. ⁵ Though the world appears to be spread on all sides of space, yet it is no more than an empty void lying calm and quiet in the hollow womb of the great Intellect.

⁶ This world which appears so fair and clear to the sight of ignorant people vanishes like a phantom into nothing at the sight of the boundless glory of the transcendent God. ⁷ The impression of difference and duality that exists among worldly men between creator and creation vanishes upon reflection, like waves in the waters of the sea. ⁸ The existence of the world, together with all our miseries in it, vanishes before the light of our liberation, just as the darkness of night flies away at sunrise and the light of the day disappears before the gloom of night.

⁹ Whether in plenty or poverty, or in birth, death or disease, or in the troubles and turmoil of the world, the wise man remains unshaken, though he may be overpowered by them. ¹⁰ There is no knowing or error in this world, no pain or pleasure, and no distress or delight in it. They are all attributes of God whose pure nature is unsullied by them.

¹¹ I have come to know that this existence is pure Brahman himself. Lack of knowledge means thinking there is anything other than the spirit of the great God. ¹² I am awakened and enlightened in divine knowledge. I find external existence ceases to exist in any presence. ¹³ Perfect knowledge tells us that all these worlds are only Brahman himself. But lack of this knowledge says, “I was not Brahman before, but now I have become so by my knowledge.” ¹⁴ The known and the unknown, and the dark and the bright are all only Brahman, just as emptiness and unity, and brightness and blueness all belong to the one and same sky.

¹⁵ I am extinct by nirvana in the Deity and sit unafraid of anything. I am devoid of all desire with my leaning in perfect blessedness. I am as I am, seized in my infinite bliss, without my sensibility of what or which. ¹⁶ I am wholly that one and sole entity which is nothing but perfect tranquility. I see nothing but a calm and quiet which utterly absorbs and enraptures me. ¹⁷ Knowing the knowable is to un-know one’s self and ignore the visible. As this knowledge continues to dawn in the soul, the whole cosmos sinks into oblivion and seems like only a block of stone, without the name or sign of anything being known.

Chapter 194 — Rama Understands that Knowledge of the One Is Indescribable, Describes Realization

¹ Rama said:—

In whatever manner and form the individual soul conceives the Universal Soul within itself, it has the same conception or idea presented before it, agreeably to its concept.² All these worlds lie in concert in their spiritual state in the boundless spirit of the great Brahman. But they appear to us in various lights, like different rays radiating from the one and same gem.³ The great and bright quarry of the Divine Mind contains all these sparkling worlds in its unbounded bosom. All of them unite to shed and scatter their joined light upon us like the mixed rays of jewels in the womb of a vast mine.⁴ All these different worlds, shining together like so many lamps of a reflected light, are clearly perceived by some and are imperceptible to others, just as the blaze of daylight is dazzling to the clear-sighted but quite dim to the blind.

⁵ As the rushing of the contrary currents create whirlpools in the waters of the deep, so the contact and conflict of elementary atoms produce the consolidation and dissolution of worlds, which are no acts of creation.⁶ Creation everywhere is only a joining together of the drizzling drops of the icy Consciousness. Therefore, who can count the countless watery particles that are constantly flowing out of Consciousness and condensed in the forms of worldly, spherical bodies?

⁷ As a part is not different from the substance of the whole, so creation is not different from its creator other than the difference between the two words used to describe creation and creator.⁸ The causeless and un-causing unity is the original model of infinite variety. These numberless multiplicities are only copies of that sole part, and neither a duality nor pluralities whatever. These copies and counterparts never rise or fall apart from their original prototype.⁹ That intelligence shows the objects of the intellect in itself. It produces these unproduced productions to view, just as sunlight exposes the visible to light.

¹⁰ From my non-desire of all things in existence I have accomplished perfection and acquired that prosperity which is called mental detachment or nirvana.¹¹ Realization does not come from understanding this bliss, nor can we have any knowledge of this bliss by our perception. There is no knowledge whereby we may know the unknown one who alone is to be known.

¹² It is a knowledge that rises of itself, a waking of the soul from its sleepiness. It throws a light like that of the midday sun in the innermost soul. It is neither confined in nor absent from any place or time.¹³ After all desires are dispelled and all actions with desires ended, this stillness attends upon the enlightened soul.¹⁴ The saint of awakened understanding who is confined in himself and absorbed in meditation is inclined neither to the craving of anything nor to the avoidance of anything whatever.

¹⁵ In this state of rapture, the mind of the saint, though in full possession of its mental faculties, remains as fixed and inactive and unmindful of all worldly things and bodily actions as a burning candle that consumes itself while it illuminates others, without any shaking or motion of its own.

¹⁶ The soul becomes united with the world (*vishwarupa*) in its condition of thoughtfulness and is called the mundane soul (*vishwatma*). Or else it is said to be situated in the state of the immense void of Brahman when it is devoid of thoughts. Hence creation and its cessation both belong to the Divine

Intellect in its state of activity or thoughtfulness and its state lacking thoughts or nirvana.

¹⁷ He who is enrapt in divine ecstasy and settled in his belief in the identity of God and his thinking of Him remains closely confined in himself with his rapture and secure from the distractions of his mind.

¹⁸ He who relies only upon meditation on his self, regardless of all other things in the world, comes to find the reality of only his self-absorption, and everything else besides is as void as empty air.

¹⁹ The man of enlarged understanding has an unbounded store of knowledge in himself, but this ultimately ends in the knowledge of the unspeakable one. ²⁰ It is therefore in our quietism that we feel the very best being of our consciousness to be either dormant or extinct. This state of tranquility of the mind is inexpressible in words. ²¹ The summit of all knowledge is the abstract and concealed knowledge of all as the true one. Hence the world is a real entity, in as much as it abides in the eternal one.

²² The bliss of nirvana-ecstasy, with the utter extinction of all desire and the consciousness of a cool and calm composure of one's self, is the supreme good or highest state of bliss and perfection that is aimed at to be attained even by the gods Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. ²³ All things are always present with it in all places and at all times. They are always accompanied with our concepts of them in Consciousness, which is the only pure entity that is ever in existence and is never dissolved.

²⁴ Too hot is the busy commotion of the world and very cooling is the bliss of nirvana insensibility. It is therefore far better to have cold heartedness of detachment than a heart burning with the heat of worldliness.

²⁵ As an artist conceives the design of a statue sculptured in relief in the slab of his mind, so the great Brahma sees this universe inscribed in himself in relief, and not carved out of him. ²⁶ Just as the spacious ocean looks upon the waves heaving upon the surface of its waters, so the great Brahma sees the multitude of worlds rolling about in the midst of its Consciousness.

²⁷ Ignorant people of dull understandings see those fixed, inseparable spectacles in the light of separate apparitions appearing in various shapes and forms in the spheres of their consciousness. ²⁸ In whatever manner anybody conceives anything in his mind, he truly thinks and sees it in that same light because of his habitual mode of thinking it as such. ²⁹ A man waking from his sleep finds no truth in anything he saw in his dream, whether it was the death or presence or absence of a friend. In the same way, the enlightened soul sees no reality in the life or death of any living being seen in this visible world, because none lives by himself or dies or departs away of himself. All are delegated alike in the tablet of the eternal mind. ³⁰ Whatever appears to pass under and away from our sight is the fixed inert and quiescent rehash of its divine original. The conviction of this truth in the mind is enough to prohibit the mind from falling into the error of taking the copy for its mold.

³¹ This lesson will certainly tend to lessen the enjoyments of your body. No enjoyment will ever serve to prevent the body's fall to nothing. This lesson will also protect you from the error of taking for real what are numberless and, at best, only passing sights in your dream. ³² Lack of desire for earthly enjoyments increases our wisdom, and wisdom serves to diminish our worldly desires. Thus they mutually serve to increase one another, like open air and sunshine. ³³ The knowledge which tends to create aversion to riches, family and friends is averse to your ignorance and dullness. Acquisition of

the one immediately serves to put an end to your ignorance.³⁴ That is the true wisdom of wise men, unmixed by greed. This is the true learning of the learned, uncorrupted by any yearning.

³⁵ But wisdom and renunciation, alone or combined, are of no good unless they have attained their perfection. Unless perfected, they prove as vain as the blaze of a sacrificial fire in a picture which has no power to consume the sacrifice offered upon it.³⁶ The perfection of wisdom and renunciation is a treasure which is called liberation because anybody attaining it remains in a state of infinite bliss freed from all the bonds of care.

³⁷ In this state of emancipation we see past and present, and all our sights and doings in them, as present before us. We find ourselves situated in a state of even calm and tranquility of which there is no end or any interruption whatever.³⁸ The self-contented man who finds all his happiness in himself is ever cool and calm and tranquil in his soul, devoid of all desire and selfishness in his mind. He relies upon his cool hearted detachment and apathy to all worldly objects and sees only a clear void stretched before him.

³⁹ We scarcely find one man in a hundred thousand human beings who is strong enough and has the bravery to break down the net of his earthly desires, like a lion breaking the iron bars of his cage.

⁴⁰ The inner light of clear understanding dispels the mist of desires that overcasts the craving mind, melting thickened greed like sunshine dissolves thickened ice in autumn.

⁴¹ Lack of desire is the knowledge of the knowable and stands above all things that are desirable or worth desiring. It resembles a breath of air without any external action.⁴² He sits quiet and firm in himself, his thoughts fixed upon discerning the truths and errors of the world. He looks upon all others in the light of himself, without having anything to do with them or have any desire for them.⁴³ He sits rested in the immensity of Brahman with his enlightened view of the visible as existing in him. He remains indifferent to all things, devoid of desire for anything, sitting quietly in the inactive silence of liberation which the wise call liberation (*moksha*).

Chapter 195 — Vasishta Tests Rama: Why Didn't God Create the World?

¹ Vasishta said:—

Bravo Rama! You are awakened to light and enlightened in your understanding. The words you have spoken are calculated to destroy the darkness of ignorant minds and rejoice the hearts of wise.

² These phenomena that appear so very bright to our sight lose their glowing brightness with our lack of desire and disregard of them. Knowledge of this truth is attended with peace and tranquility, and liberation and calmness. ³ As we suppress our imagination of phenomena, all these imaginary sights vanish from our view like lack of movement in winds reduces them to one common and calm air.

⁴ An enlightened man remaining unmoved as a stone or moving quietly in his conduct in life is truly said to have his clear liberation. ⁵ Look at yogis like ourselves, O Rama, who have attained this state of liberation, have been cleansed of all our iniquities, and are now set at quiet rest, even while we are engaged in our worldly affairs. ⁶ Know that the great gods Brahma, Vishnu and others are situated in this state of quiet and freedom. They remain as pure intelligences even while discharging the offices of their divinity.

⁷ O Rama, attain the enlightenment of holy sages and remain as still as a stone like ourselves.

⁸ Rama said:—

I see this world as a formless void situated in the infinite emptiness of Brahma. It is an uncreated and insubstantial nothing. With all its visibility, it is an invisible nothing. ⁹ It is like the appearance of water in a mirage or a whirlpool in the ocean. Its glare is like the glitter of gold in dust or the sands on a beach in sunshine.

¹⁰ Vasishta said:—

Rama, if you have become so enlightened and intelligent, then I will tell you more for the enlightenment of your understanding. Let me ask you some questions so that your answers will remove my doubts.

¹¹ Tell me, how can the world be a nothing when it shines so very brightly all about and above our heads? How can all these things be nonexistent which are so resplendent to sight and always perceptible to our senses?

¹² Rama said:—

The world was never created in the beginning, nor was anything ever produced at anytime. It is therefore as nonexistent as the offspring of a barren woman. It is only a creation of our imagination.

¹³ There is no result without its cause and nothing comes from nothing. What can be the cause of the world when it is a nothing, a production of only our error? ¹⁴ The immutable and everlasting deity cannot be the creator without changing itself to a finite form. Therefore how can God be the cause of these frail and finite forms?

¹⁵ It is the unknown and nameless Brahman that shows himself as the cause of the world which proceeds from him and is his very self. The word “world” does not bear any other sense.

¹⁶ The first intelligence called the god Brahma arises from and abides for a little while as that

unknown and nameless category of the Universal Spirit which we call the conscious soul with a spiritual body.¹⁷ Then it suddenly comes to see the luminaries of the sun and moon and the heavenly hosts rising in the infinity of the Divine Mind. It thinks a small moment to be a long year in its reverie of a dream.¹⁸ Then it perceives the ideas of space and time and their divisions and motions. The whole universe appears to its sight in the vast immensity of emptiness.¹⁹ Upon completion of the false world in this manner, its false contriver, the self-styled Brahma, is employed wandering all over the world as his creation.

²⁰ So each living soul, deluded by its mistaken conception of the world as a positive reality, traverses up and down and all about creation, repeatedly wandering in its false world.²¹ Although the events of life take place according to the wishes of the soul, yet these are mere accidents of chance. It is a mistake to think they are permanent results of fixed laws.²² Because it is as wrong to suppose the substantiality of the world and the permanency of the events, just like it is wrong to grant the birth of a child born of a barren woman and feeding it with the powder of pulverized air.

²³ Nothing can be positively affirmed or denied regarding the existence of the world except that whatever it is, it is nothing other than the diffusion of the all pervasive spirit of the Eternal One.

²⁴ The world is as clear as the transparent atmosphere and as solid as the density of a rock. It is as mute and still as a stone and quite indestructible in its nature.²⁵ The world is originally an idea from the ideas of the Eternal Mind. Then it is spiritual from the permeation of the all pervading spirit of Viraj. Thus what appears to us as a solid body is a mere void.

²⁶ Thus Brahma being the great void and its fullness, where is there any other thing such as the world in it? The whole is a dead calm like death, a void devoid of beginning or end.²⁷ As waves continuously heave and dive in the bosom of the waters of the deep, and as the waves are not distinct from the waters, so the worlds continuously rolling in the breast of the empty Brahman are nothing other than the very same essence of Brahman himself.

²⁸ The few who are versed in their superior and esoteric knowledge, as well as in the inferior or exoteric knowledge, live as long as they live then dive at last into this Supreme, like drops of water mix into the sea.²⁹ The exoteric phenomena of the world abides in the esoteric ideal of Brahman and is of the same transcendent nature as the Divine Mind. For it is never possible for the gross, changing and transitional nature to exist in the pure, unchanged and quiet state of God.³⁰ If one knows the nature of dream to be false and a mirage as a fallacy, how can he ever believe them to be realities? Anyone who knows visible nature to be of the nature of Brahman can never ever take it to be dull and gross material substance.³¹ An enlightened sage who has esoteric knowledge of the world and reflects its spiritual sense cannot be misled to see it in its gross material light. A holy man who tastes ambrosia is never inclined to drink impure wine.

³² He who remains in nirvana meditation by turning his view away from the sight of the visible towards mental examination of his self, and who represses his mind from the thoughts of thinkable objects, is truly seated in the tranquility of the Supreme Spirit.

³³ Vasishta asked:—

If visible creation is situated in Brahman, their cause and origin, then why not consider creation to be

substance and God its cause, like the sprout of a plant is situated in its seed?

³⁴ Rama said:—

The sprout does seem to be situated in the seed, but as it is produced from the same essence, the sprout appears to be the same substance as the seed.³⁵ If the world as it appears to us is inherent in Brahman, then it must be of the same essence and nature as Brahman. These being eternal and imperishable in Brahman, then the world also has to be so.³⁶ We have never seen or heard that any finite, material or perishable thing has ever proceeded from an infinite, formless and imperishable cause.³⁷ It is impossible for a formless thing to remain in any form whatsoever, just as it is never possible for an atom to contain a mountain in its bosom.

³⁸ Only an idiot would say that the stupendous world with its gigantic form abides in the formless abyss of Brahman, like bright gems are contained in the hollow of a box.³⁹ It is inappropriate for anybody to say that the transcendent and tranquil God supports the material and moving world upon it, or that a physical body is an imperishable thing.

⁴⁰ Our perception of the world having a form is no proof of its reality because there is no truth whatsoever to the many curious forms that present themselves in our dreams.⁴¹ It is an unprecedented dream that presents the sight of the world of which we had no innate or preconceived idea. By comparison, our usual dreams are commonly known to be the reproduced representations of our former impressions and perceptions, the results of our memories.⁴² It is not a daydream, as some would have it, because night dreams disappear in the daytime. But how does a dreamer of his own funeral at night come to see himself alive upon waking in the day?⁴³ Others again maintain that no bodiless things can appear in our dream because we dream only of certain bodies. But this belief has no truth in it, since we often dream of and see the apparitions of bodiless ghosts both by day and night.

⁴⁴ Therefore the world is not as false as a dream, only an impression settled like a dream in our very conscious soul. The formless deity manifests itself in the various forms of this world to our understanding.⁴⁵ As only our consciousness remains despite the forms and other things appearing to us in dreams as we sleep, so Brahman remains solely in himself in the form of the world that we see. God being wholly free and apart from all can not have any accompaniment.

⁴⁶ There is nothing that is either existent or nonexistent in him because we have no conception of him ourselves, nor can we form any concept of him.⁴⁷ What is this nameless thing that we cannot know in our understanding? It is known in our consciousness, but whether it exists or not, we know nothing.

⁴⁸ It is a nonexistence appearing as existent and an existence seeming to be nonexistent. All things are quietly manifest in it at all times and in all forms.⁴⁹ It is the development of Brahma in Brahman, just as the sky evolves in emptiness. Nothing can be found to fill the emptiness of Brahman except Brahman himself.

⁵⁰ Therefore I, my seeing, and my sight of the world are all mere fallacy. Only the calm and quiet extension of Divine Consciousness fills the infinite emptiness of his own spirit, and nothing beside.

⁵¹ As the aerial castle of our imagination has no building or reality in it, so this world is only a calm and quiet emptiness, an unfailing vacant idea.⁵² It is a boundless space full with the essence of the Supreme Spirit. It is without beginning or end, wholly inscrutable in its nature, and quite calm and

quiet in its aspect.

⁵³ I have known my own state to be without birth or death, as calm and quiet as that of the unborn and immortal Brahman himself. I have come to know that I am as formless and indefinable as the Supreme Soul. ⁵⁴ I have now given expression to all that I find impressed in my consciousness, just as whatever is contained in a seed comes to sprout out of it.

⁵⁵ I only know what I have in my consciousness, and nothing about unity or duality, because the question of unity and duality arises only from imagination. ⁵⁶ All these knowing and living liberated men, liberated from the burden of life by their knowledge of truth, are silently sitting here devoid of all their earthly cares, like empty air in infinite emptiness. ⁵⁷ All efforts of mixing with the busy commotion of the world are at an end. They are sitting here as quiet and silent as a mute and motionless picture on the wall, engraved on the bright regions in their minds. ⁵⁸ They are as still as statues carved in rock, or as people described in fairy tales living in the city that Sambara built in the air.

⁵⁹ This world truly is a phantom appearing in our dream of creation. It is a structure without any foundation, a figure intangible to our touch. Where then is its reality? ⁶⁰ The blinded ignorant see the world as a positive reality. The keen-sighted sage finds the world to be a negative nothing. He sees it in the light of Brahman and a manifestation of Brahman, as still as the calm air resting in the quiet emptiness of that transcendent spirit. ⁶¹ All these existences, with their moving and unmoving beings, and ourselves also, are mere void and vacant nullities in the knowledge of the discerning and philosophic mind.

⁶² I am void and so are you. We and the world beside are only mere blanks. The intellect is a void also, and by doing all the different voids in itself, it forms the immense intellectual vacuum which is the sole object of our adoration. ⁶³ Being thus seated with my knowledge of the infinite emptiness of Brahman, I take you also, O you best of two-footed beings, as indistinct from the knowable one, who is one and same with the all comprehending void, and so I make my obeisance to you.

⁶⁴ This world rises and sets by turns from the all comprehensiveness of empty consciousness. It is as clear as transparent air and has no other cause except the vibration of consciousness. ⁶⁵ This knowledge of the nature of Brahman is beyond all other existences and above the reach of all scriptures. By attaining this state of transcendentalism, one becomes as pure and superfine as empty air. ⁶⁶ There is no self, my feet or hands, or this pot or anything else that I perceive, which has any material existence. All is air and empty and insubstantial as air. Knowing this, let us turn ourselves to our subtle intellects only.

⁶⁷ Sage, you have shown me the nothingness of the world and the vanity of all worldly things. The truth of this doctrine is evident in the light of our spiritual knowledge, in defiance of the clever arguments of our opponents. ⁶⁸ The agnostic philosopher who upsets the silent sage with his clever arguments can never expect to see the light of spiritual knowledge shining upon him. ⁶⁹ The being who is beyond our perception and conception, without any designation or indication, can be only known in our consciousness of him and not by any kind of reasoning or argument. ⁷⁰ The being who is without any attribute, sight or symbol of his nature is purely empty and entirely inconceivable by us except by means of our spiritual understanding.

Chapter 196 — Realization Cannot Be Obtained from Scriptures; Story of the Wood-Cutters and the Philosopher's Stone

¹ Valmiki relates:—

After the lotus-eyed Rama, had said these words, he fell into a trance and remained silent, his mind reposing in the state of supreme bliss.² He felt supremely blessed resting in the Supreme Spirit. Then, awaking after a while from his holy trance, he pensively asked a question of his sagely teacher.

³ Rama asked:—

O venerable sage who dispels my doubts like clear autumn scatters dark clouds, a doubt which has so long troubled my heart has at last quite been set to rest.⁴ I find this knowledge to be the best and greatest of all, capable of saving me from the noisy ocean of this world. It transcends all other doctrines which are mere words to trap the careless minds of men.

⁵ If all this is certainly the same Brahman and our consciousness of him, then O venerable sage, he must be unspeakable and inexpressible in words, even by the most learned and wisest of men.

⁶ Remaining in meditation of the knowable one, without any desire in our minds for any earthly good, we are able to attain consciousness of our highest bliss which is unattainable by learning and inexpressible in words.⁷ How can this certain and unchanging state of bliss be obtained from the dogmas of the scriptures which are at variance with each other and are employed in listing of categories?⁸ We can gain no true knowledge from the doctrines of different scriptures. At best they only contradict one another. Therefore it is vain to expect any benefit from scriptures that are based upon mere theories of our pretended leaders.

⁹ Therefore, O venerable sage, tell me whether it is of any good for us to learn the doctrines of the scriptures or attend to the teaching of our preceptors?

¹⁰ Vasishta replied:—

So it is, O mighty armed Rama, that the scriptures are not the means to divine knowledge. Scriptures are profuse with words; divine knowledge is beyond the reach of words.¹¹ Yet hear me tell you, O best of Raghu's race, how the dictates of the scriptures and the lectures of your teachers are of some help towards improving your understanding.

¹² There lived in a certain place some wood-cutters who had always been unfortunate and miserable in their lives. They wasted and faded away in their poverty, like trees withering in summer heat.

¹³ Extreme poverty made them cover themselves with patched up rags. They were emaciated in their despair, like fading lotus flowers lacking water.¹⁴ Dried out by famine and despairing for their lives, their only thought was how to fill their bellies.¹⁵ In this state of distress and despondence, only one thought shone in their minds: to cut wood day by day, take it for sale as fuel in town, and live upon the income.¹⁶ Thus determined, they went to the forest to cut down wood, because any plan made in distress is best used to preserve life.¹⁷ Thus they continued daily to go to the forest to cut wood, bring it to town for sale, and fill their bellies and support their bodies with the proceeds.

¹⁸ It happened that the outskirts of the forest where they went were full of woods with loads of treasure consisting of gold and precious gems lying hidden under the trees and exposed to view.

¹⁹ Then it turned out that some of the wood-cutters happened by their good luck to discover the brilliant gems which they took to their homes. ²⁰ Others saw valuable sandalwood trees, some saw beautiful flowers in some place, and some found fruit trees somewhere, all of which they took and sold for their food and livelihood. ²¹ Some men of dull understanding neglected all these goods and kept collecting blocks of wood which they carried to edge of the forest where they sold them at very low prices. ²² Among all these woodmen employed cutting wood, some by their good luck happened to find some precious gems which set them at ease for every care.

²³ Thus amongst all who had been working in the same field of labor, some happened to obtain their desired reward: the philosopher's gem (*chintamani*) which converts all things to gold. ²⁴ Having obtained the desirable gem, which bestowed all blessings of wealth and prosperity, they became preeminently happy with their fortune and remained quite content in the same woods. ²⁵ So the seekers and sellers of worthless wooden blocks, having gained the bountiful gem of their heart's desire, remained happily with themselves, like gods dwelling in harmony in heaven. ²⁶ Thus the Kirata woodmen, having obtained the best gain of what is the core and foundation of every good in the land, remained quiet and contented in themselves. They passed their days without any fear or grief enjoying their everlasting mental peace and bliss.

²⁷ This world is comparable to the wilderness. All its busy people are like the laboring Kirata foresters, daily working and suffering in their hard work for the sake of their daily bread. Some are happy to find the precious treasure of true knowledge, which gives them the real bliss of life and lasting peace of mind.

Chapter 197 — The Value of the Scriptures

¹ Rama said:—

O greatest of sages, please give me the best treasures of knowledge, like the wood-cutter obtained his precious treasure of the philosopher's stone, whereby I may attain the full, perfect and indubitable knowledge of all things.

² Vasishta replied:—

The woodmen I mentioned symbolize all mankind in general. Their great poverty that I have described refers to the extreme ignorance of men which is the cause of all their miseries.³ The great forest where they live is the vast wilderness of knowledge which humans have to traverse under the guidance of their teachers and scriptures. Their labor cutting and selling wood for daily food is the hard struggle of humans throughout their lifetimes for their simple food and support.

⁴ Men who are not craving or employed in business, yet desire to enjoy life, are those who devote themselves to acquire learning.⁵ Those who earn a living teaching and dependent on others for their support become successful acquiring learning by their practice of teachings and diligent study habits.

⁶ The wood-cutters initially sought worthless wood but in the end obtained valuable gems. In the same way, men pursuing their studies for a small maintenance and self support, in the end succeed in gaining divine knowledge.

⁷ There are some skeptics who say derisively that there is no good to be derived from studying books. But in the end, even they turn out to be true believers.⁸ Worldly men devoted to achieving the fruits in this life and acquainted with the objects of mental and spiritual truths, come distrustfully to listen to the doctrines of the scriptures. But in the end, they become fully convinced of their truths.⁹ Men are led many ways by the different doctrines of different scriptures and by their different desires and inclinations. But at last they meet in the same path of glory, like the wood-cutters and their treasure gem.

¹⁰ He who is not inclined to injure others but goes on in his own beaten course is called an upright man. His judgment is sought and followed by everyone.¹¹ Men ignorant of truth earn their living and are doubtful of the benefits of righteous conduct or the study of the scriptures.¹² But men persisting in righteousness gain both their livelihood and liberation, just as the honest woodmen obtained their wood as well as the gems, and in the same place.¹³ Among the woodmen, some obtained sandalwood, some gained precious gems, while others found some common metals. A great number found only the wood of the forest trees.¹⁴ Some of us gain the objects of our desire and some acquire riches or deeds of virtue and merit. Others obtain their liberation and attain skill in the scriptures.

¹⁵ Know, O Rama, that the scriptures deal only with instructions to acquire the triple blessings of livelihood, riches and virtue. They give no direction for knowing the Supreme One who is inexpressible in words.¹⁶ Words and their meanings serve only to express the intelligible objects which they signify, such as the seasons signify the fruits and flowers which they bear. But knowledge of the Supreme Being is derived from one's intuition and is felt only in our consciousness.

¹⁷ The scriptures state that Divine knowledge transcends the knowledge of all other things, and that the brilliance of the Divine Person surpasses the brightness of all objects, just as the beauty of the female

body excels the luster of the brightest gems.¹⁸ Transcendental knowledge of God cannot be derived from the doctrines of the scriptures, or from the teachings of our preceptors. We can never know the unknowable one through gifts and charities, or by divine service and religious observances.¹⁹ These and other acts and rites are falsely said to be the causes of divine knowledge, which can never be attained by them.

Now listen to me, O Rama, and I will tell you the way to your rest in the Supreme Soul.²⁰ The study of the scriptures serves, of course, to purify the mind from vulgar errors and prejudices. But the lack of desire or aversion to worldly enjoyments makes the mind look within itself where it clearly sees the image of God shining.²¹ Scripture establishes right understanding instead of ignorance, and this right reasoning serves to drive away all gross errors from the mind.²² Scriptures or learning principally and initially serve to cleanse the mirror of the mind from its impurity of errors, then it purifies the person of its possessor by the force of its doctrines.

²³ As the rising sun casts his image spontaneously upon the dark surface of the ocean, so the light of the scriptures and learning of its own accord sheds the bright light of truth in the minds of ignorant.

²⁴ As the sun enlightens all objects by his presence, so the light of learning by its gracious appearance illuminates the dark understanding of the illiterate.²⁵ In this manner there is an intimate relation between learning derived from the scriptures and the mind of the man who desires his liberation, in as much as scriptures alone afford the knowledge of the otherwise unknowable one to our minds.

²⁶ As the sight of the sun and the ocean shows us the blue waters of the one turning to a bright expanse by the rays of the other, so the scriptures and their doctrines show the enlightenment of human intellect by means of the other.²⁷ As children play with pebbles, rubbing them together in water and having their hands cleaned of dirt, so discussions of the scriptures and refuting disagreeable opinions clear minds of their errors.²⁸ It is in this way that learned men, by refutation of offensive and hateful doctrines, clear minds of doubts and questions. They become perfected in forming right principles and ascertaining truth from falsehood.

²⁹ The scriptures are the distilled sweetness of holy texts. They infuse the sweet healing ointment of true knowledge into the mind. They are as full of sweetness as the sugarcane oozes with its sweet juice which is so delicious to taste.³⁰ As the rays of sunlight falling on the walls of houses become perceptible to us through the organ of sight, so the light of spiritual knowledge pierces the souls of men through hearing the scriptures through the organ of hearing.³¹ Learning acquired to obtain the triple good of this world, namely virtue, wealth and the objects of our desire, is no learning at all without the knowledge of the scriptures leading to our liberation. Much learning, both in theory and practice, is worth nothing without the salvation of our souls.³² The best learning gives us the knowledge of truth. True knowledge causes our mental evenness in all states of our being. That is called perfect equanimity and it produces our trance in waking.

³³ Thus all these blessings are obtained from learning the scriptures. Therefore let everyone devote himself to the study of the scriptures with all diligence.³⁴ Hence, O Rama, know that the study of the scriptures and meditation upon their hidden meanings, together with one's attendance on his teacher and listening to his lectures and counsel, as well by equanimity and observing vows and discipline, a man can attain supreme bliss in the everlasting God, who is beyond all worldly things and is the

supreme Lord God of all.

Chapter 198 — Excellence of Equanimity, Humility and Universal Benevolence

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Rama, hear me tell you something again to perfect your understanding. The repetition of a lesson serves to impress it more deeply in the memory of inattentive persons.² Before I told you about the existence of the world. I spoke at length about its creation or production, whereby you have come to know that both the appearance and existence of the world are mere fallacies of our understanding.

³ Next I explained in the Upasama Prakarana (Book V), my lecture on detachment, of the necessity of observing and maintaining a total indifference with regard to all creation.⁴ In my discourse on detachment, I described the different stages of detachment. The attainment of the highest summit of detachment ultimately will contribute to your obtaining the blissfulness of the nirvana numbness, which is discussed in this book on nirvana samadhi.⁵ Now you shall have to hear about how the learned conduct themselves in this phenomenal world, after they have learnt and obtained whatever there is to be known and obtained here.

⁶ Having received his birth in this world, a man from his boyhood should accustom himself to see phenomena as they are without any concern for himself in order to be secure and happy without reliance upon others.⁷ Regard everything in the same light as yourself and observe a universal benevolence towards all beings. Then placing your reliance upon your own self-control, you can be safe and secure everywhere.⁸ Know that this plan of your even-mindedness produces fruit of the most pure and delicious taste, bearing blossoms of unbounded prosperity and flowers of unfading good fortune.⁹ Humble disposition yields the fruit of universal benevolence and makes the prosperity of the whole world wait at its service.¹⁰ Neither the possession of a kingdom on earth nor the enjoyment of the best beauties here can yield that everlasting and essential happiness derived from the equanimity of the humble.

¹¹ The utmost limit of a cool disposition and a entire lack of all anxious cares are the two remedies to ignore the fervor and vapors of sorrow from the human mind.¹² Among the spheres of all these worlds it is very rare to meet a person filled with the nectar of cool mental detachment who is friendly to his enemies and whose enemies are his friends, and who looks on all alike as he does to himself.¹³ The mind of the enlightened man shines as brightly as the luminous moon and dazzles with drops of ambrosial dews. The sages all lived to drink the cooling drink of immortality, as you learn from the lives of the royal sage Janaka and others of immortal fame.

¹⁴ The man practicing his equality of self restraint has his faults described as his qualities, his sorrows seem as his pleasure, and his death is eternal life unto him.¹⁵ Equality is always accompanied by good grace, good fortune and serenity, all of which constantly attend the detached sage, just as a faithful wife fondly clings to the sides of her beloved husband.¹⁶ Equanimity is the perpetual prosperity of the soul, and not the transitory merriment of the mind. Therefore there is no treasure whatsoever that is a stranger to humility of spirit.

¹⁷ He who is honest in all his dealings, steady in his own profession, and liberal in his mind is as valuable as the richest gem and is treasured by all as a god upon earth.¹⁸ An even minded man, righteous and upright in all his doings and dealings, magnanimous in his soul and benevolent in his

mind, is neither burnt by fire nor stained by water.¹⁹ Who can defeat the man who does what is right and observes things in their true light, who is not susceptible of joy or grief?²⁰ All his friends and enemies rely upon a righteous and unflinching man. He is honored by his king and master and loved by all wise men with whom he has any dealing.

²¹ Wise and even sighted men are of indifferent minds. They do not try to flee from evil or rejoice receiving any good. They are content with whatever comes to pass upon them, whether good or bad, because they care for nothing.²² Humble minded men are unmindful of any good or desirable thing which they may happen to lose because they rest in the happy state of their equanimity of which no calamity or chance can deprive them.²³ Men enjoying the bliss of equanimity laugh to scorn at the tribulations of the world. They live uninjured under all the varying circumstances of life. Even the gods venerate them because of the unchanging sameness of their minds.

²⁴ If the unfavorable course of events ever happens to pass a shadow over the face of a patient man, the inner equanimity of his mind still serves to shed ambrosial beams of a tranquil moonlight within himself.²⁵ Whatever an even minded man does for himself and whatever he says to criticize others' misdeeds are all praised with applause by the majority of men.²⁶ The public approve whatever good or evil is known or done by an impartial observer at anytime whether past or present.²⁷ A man who sees all things in the same light of detachment is never displeased or dejected with any calamity or danger that may befall him at anytime.

²⁸ Prince Shibi of old is recorded in history as having given away pieces of flesh from his own body to feed a hawk and save the life of a pigeon captured in its claws.²⁹ Consider the impassive King of Anga who did not sink into despondence seeing his beloved consort maltreated before his sight.³⁰ Mind also how Yudhishthira, the King of Trigarta, lost a wager with a horrible rakshasa yet offered his only son to the fiend.³¹ Look at the great King Janaka, how he remained undismayed and undejected at the burning of his well decorated city of Mithila.³² Look at the quiet and submissive prince of Salyadesa, how he calmly struck off his own head from his body, as if it were the plucking a lotus flower from its stem, in order to satisfy the demand of a god.³³ The Sauvira sovereign, who had won the big Airavata elephant of the god Indra in combat with him, in the end returned the elephant as a gift to the same god with as much unconcern as one offers a heap of white kundu flowers or huge heaps of rotten straw upon a sacrificial fire.³⁴ You have heard how the elephant named Kundapa used his trunk to help the brahmin's cows, lifting them from being stuck in the mud. Afterwards he devoted his body to serve the brahmin, for which he was taken up to heaven in a celestial car.

³⁵ Let your continued observance of toleration preserve you from acts of intolerance, which tend at best to oppress others. Know that the spirit of intolerance is like the demon of Kadamba forest.

³⁶ Remember the young and gentle Jada Bharata who by the natural dullness of his mind devoured the firebrand that was thrown into his alms pot, thinking it was a piece of meat, and without any injury to himself.³⁷ Think of the sober-minded Dharmavyadha who in spite of his following the profession of a butcher all his lifetime, was after death taken to heaven and placed in the company of the souls of righteous men.³⁸ Think of the detachment and lack of desire of the royal sage Kapardana, who being seated in the garden of paradise in his youth, surrounded by celestial ladies, felt no desire for any of them.

³⁹ Know how many princes and lords of peoples, from the unperturbed detachment of their souls, have renounced their realms and society of mankind and taken themselves to lonely forests and solitary caves of the Vindhyan Hills where they spent their lives in motionless samadhi. ⁴⁰ Think of the great sages and saints and divine and devoted adepts who have passed away and were adored by even the gods for the steadiness of their holy meditation observing their rigid and steady vows of universal indifference. ⁴¹ Remember the many examples of monarchs, ordinary men, and base and mean hunters who have been honored in all ages and countries for their observance of an undisturbed equality in all states and circumstances of their lives.

⁴² All intelligent men strictly observe the rule of preserving their equanimity throughout life, whether it be to achieve success and understanding of every kind in this life or the next. ⁴³ They neither long for longevity nor desire their death in difficulties but live as long as they have to live, and act as they are called to act, without any grudge or murmur. ⁴⁴ The business of a wise man is to conduct himself in life with a content mind and tranquil attitude in favorable and unfavorable circumstances, as well as in the happiness or misery of himself or others.

Chapter 199 — Varieties of Ways in which Living Liberated Men Live in the World

¹ Rama said, "Tell me sage, when a wise and liberated man is endowed with spiritual light and bliss and his mind is freed from all earthly cares, why does he not abandon all earthly affairs?"

² Vasishta replied:—

Observing or avoiding all ritual and pious acts are the same and of no avail to a truly enlightened man who is indifferent to anything of good or evil.³ There is nothing in this frail world that may be desirable to a man of right understanding, nor anything of positive evil that deserves to be avoided or loathed.⁴ A wise man derives no positive or permanent good from doing of any act prescribed by custom or usage. Nor does he lose anything by neglecting them. Therefore, it is best for him to stand in the middle course and act according to the common rules of society and his country.

⁵ As long as there is life in the body, it is called a living body and it has its motion. Therefore measure your movements according to the breaths of your life, neither accelerate nor slacken them beyond their just measure.⁶ If it is the same for anyone to walk one way or the other to his journey's end, yet it is much better to walk by the beaten path rather than taking a strange and unknown way.

⁷ Whatever action is done at anytime with humility and mild disposition, and with a calm frankness of the mind, is always held as perfectly pure and humble in its nature and is never blamed in any manner.

⁸ We have seen many wise, learned and farsighted men conduct themselves very honorably and blamelessly in this world full of faults and pitfalls, harassed by traps and snares on every way.

⁹ Everyone is employed with perfect composure discharging the duties of the particular sphere in which he is placed. Some begin their lives as a householder, ascending gradually to state of living liberation.¹⁰ There are many wise and well discerning kings and princes, like yourself and others sitting in this assembly, who are vigilantly occupied ruling their respective states without attachment and without desire of reaping any reward, but simply as a disinterested discharge of duty.

¹¹ Some follow customs from the true sense of the Vedas and take their food from what is left after their daily offerings to the sacrificial fire.¹² All men belonging to any of the four castes are employed observing their respective rites and duties, and in the acts of worship of the gods, and in their meditations with different ends and views.¹³ Some men of magnanimous minds and higher aims of future liberation have renounced all ritual acts and remain with their spiritual knowledge of the only one, inactive like ignorant people.

¹⁴ Some are seen sitting silently and insensitive in deep and unbroken meditation in dreary and dismal deserts where even deer and other wild beasts do not traverse, and in other distant and lovely solitude where no trace of a human beings is ever seen, not even in a dream.¹⁵ Some are found living in some sacred place of pilgrimage where they perform their acts for future rewards. Others are known to rest in some holy hermitage or sacred shrine of saints, there passing their lives quite unknown to other men practicing renunciation and detachment.¹⁶ Many are seen to leave their own houses and quit their native countries to avoid the hatred and scorn of their fellow countrymen. They go to other lands where they settle as strangers.¹⁷ There are many who, being dissatisfied with their families, forsake their company and desert their homes. They wander about as wanderers from forest to forest, over hills and valleys, and cities and towns, without settling anywhere.

¹⁸ Many travel to the great city of Benares, the holy city of Prayaga, the sacred shrine of Badarikasrama, and visit other holy hills and cities. ¹⁹ Many rest in the holy places at Salagrama, the sacred cave in Kalapagrama, the holy city of Mathura, and the sacred hill at Kalinjar. ²⁰ See the number of pilgrims thronging in the woodlands on Mahendra Mountains, upon tablelands of Gandha Madana hills. See also the pilgrims on the plains of Dardura Hills and upon the level lands of Sahya Mountains. ²¹ See pilgrims thronging on the crags of the Vindhyan range, and those dwelling in the hollows of the Malaya Mountains. See them living in the happy groves of Kailash and in the caves of Rikshavata Mountains. ²² In these and many other holy places and mountains, you will find a great many hermits and far-sighted devotees dwelling in peace, wholly devoted to their holy meditation.

²³ Some have deserted their prescribed duties and become renunciant monks. Those who are Brahmacharins strictly observe the law and their sacred rites. Those who have faith in Buddha are apostates forsaking the holy faith, becoming fanatics in their practices. ²⁴ Some have left their native homes and others have left their native lands altogether. Some have settled homes in some place and others lead their nomadic lives from place to place. ²⁵ Among these, O Rama, those who live in the nether or hell regions of this world are known as Daitya demons.

²⁶ Some have clear understanding and are well acquainted with the civil laws of their society. Some have enlightened understanding. Others are acquainted with the past and have foresight into the future.

²⁷ Some have unenlightened understanding, always in suspense with suspicion in their minds. They are addicted to vice, unable to govern themselves, and always under the government of others. ²⁸ Some are half-enlightened, proud with all of their knowledge of truth, so they break away from observing customary duties and therefore are not yet an esoteric yogi or spiritualist. ²⁹ Thus among these great multitudes of men crossing the vast ocean of life, everyone is striving to attain according to his different aim and object.

³⁰ But one does not cross the impassable gulf of this world by confining himself at home, or remaining in his native country, or going to a hermitage or living in some solitary forest, or observing customary duties, or practicing painful austerities. ³¹ No dependence on righteous acts or forsaking them, or observing customary usages, or any attainment of great powers can be of any use to save a person from the troubles of the world. ³² Only one's self-control is the means to salvation. The man whose mind is not attached or tied down to anything in this world is said to have passed over it.

³³ It makes no difference what a man does or neglects, or the righteous deeds of his religion and society, provided he keeps a humble mind and is never attached to anything. Such a man is considered a sage and is saved from having to return to this world of suffering. ³⁴ The man who does nothing righteous or unrighteous in life, but has his mind fixed upon this earth and is attached to earthly objects, is considered a hypocrite and is destined to revisit this earth in repeated births. ³⁵ Our minds are like nasty flies prone to fly about and suck upon the sores of worldly pleasures. It is hard for us to deter them, as it is impossible for us to kill them all at once to attain salvation.

³⁶ Sometimes it happens by good fortune that a person's mind of itself turns towards perfection. By a flash of inner light, he comes to see the presence of the Divine Spirit in his own soul. ³⁷ The mind, being enlightened by the flash of spiritual light in the soul, becomes enrapt at the sight and loses all earthly attachment. It is unified with the Supreme Unity.

³⁸ Being unmindful of everything and conscious of yourself as a particle of infinite emptiness, remain perfectly happy with yourself in the everlasting bliss of your soul. ³⁹ Being filled with knowledge of transcendental truth and devoid of the faults and frailties of your nature, have the magnanimity of your soul with equanimity of mind and elevation of your spirit. Thus, O support of Raghu's royal race, remain without sorrow or fear of death and rebirth. Be as holy as the holy of holies.

⁴⁰ Know the clear state of the most holy Brahman is quite clear of all the grossness and foulness of nature, free from all the qualities and properties that are attributed to him. He is beyond our conception and above the reach of our thought. He is uncreated and ever existent of himself, manifest in his home of our intellect. Knowing him as yourself, remain quite free and fearless forever.

⁴¹ There is nothing more that can be gathered on this subject from the use of any more words. Nothing remains to be communicated to you for instruction in divine knowledge. You are roused, O Rama, to your full knowledge of the essential doctrines of divinity. You have become aware of whatever is knowable and hidden in nature.

⁴² Valmiki says:—

After the chief of sages had said this much, he saw Rama rapt in ecstasy and lacking mental efforts. The entire assembly sat fixed in meditation. They were all entranced in their reveries and meditations upon the mysterious nature of God like humming bees ramble over lotus petals with their soft and silent murmur and revel upon the sweetness of the flowers' honey cups.

Chapter 200 — Loud Applause for the Sage's Speech

¹ Valmiki continued:—

Upon completion of the holy sermon on nirvana, a loud commotion arose outside the court which put a stop to the sage continuing any discourse.² The entire audience in the court hall was immersed in a state of steadfast trance, settled attentive in the Supreme. The faculties of their mind were quite clear and their workings at rest.³ The entire audience, on hearing the lecture on the investigation after consciousness, became passengers on the raft of existence and they all gained salvation.

⁴ Immediately a loud chorus of applause arose from the mouths of emancipated sages and spiritual masters dwelling in the upper regions of the skies. The vault of heaven was filled with the acclamations of praise for the venerable sage.⁵ Shouts of praise also arose from the holy sages seated in the assembly, including Vishwamitra, the son of Gadhi, who sat at their head.⁶ A swelling sound filled the face of the four quarters of the sky, just as blasts of wind fills the hollows of withered bamboo in the forest, making them resound with a soft sweet melody.⁷ Next arose a flourish of trumpets from the celestials, mingling with the praises of the spiritual masters, which rumbled together and resounded loudly amidst the hollow caves of distant mountains and valleys.

⁸ Along with the fanfare of celestial trumpets, showers of flowers fell from above like cascades of snow covering all sides of heaven.⁹ Flowers were scattered over the floor of the court hall and the fanfare of drums filled the mouths of hollow caves. Flying dust covered the face of the sky and the rising smell of after rain were carried upon the wings of winds everywhere.¹⁰ Then there was a mingled rumble of shouts of applause and the sound of heavenly trumpets joined with the whistle of hissing showers of flowers and the rustling of the winds all about.

¹¹ The courtiers looked around with uplifted faces and eyes, struck with wonder and surprise. The beasts all about the palace and in the parks remained amazed at the event with ears uplifted.

¹² Women and children inside sat staring with wonder-stricken eyes. Princes sitting in the court hall looked astonished at one another with smiling faces.

¹³ The face of the sky became exceedingly brightened by falling showers of flowers from above. The great vault of the world was filled with the hissing sound of falling rain.¹⁴ Showers of flowers and drizzling raindrops with their hissing sounds gave a festive appearance to the royal palace.¹⁵ Not only the palace, but all places in the worlds seemed to celebrate their festive joy, tossing flower garlands and joining with the celestial music.¹⁶ The shouts of spiritual masters and their utterances of joy rolled and growled high in the upper sky as rolling billows and bellowing waves howled in the depth of the ocean.

¹⁷ After the commotion of heavenly hosts subsided, the following words from the spiritual masters above were heard uttered in an audible and distinct voice.¹⁸ The spiritual masters (*siddhas*) said, "Since time first began, we have listened to thousands of sermons in the assembly of spiritual masters on the means of attaining liberation. But never before have we heard a lecture so impressive on the mind as this last lecture of the sage.¹⁹ We see children and women and brute creatures, together with creeping and crawling animals, all enrapt by this soothing speech which will doubtless enrapture its readers and hearers in the future.²⁰ The sage has used every argument and example to rouse Rama to

his bliss. It is doubtful whether he has ever shown such affection even to his wife Arundhati."

²¹ "Hearing this lecture on liberation, even brute beasts and birds became emancipated from the burden of their base bodies. As for men, they altogether forget the nets of their bodies in their embodied state. ²² Our drink of these nectar drops of divine knowledge through the vessels of our ears has not only satisfied our appetite for wisdom, but renewed our understanding and added a fresh beauty to our spiritual bodies."

²³ On hearing these words of the heavenly host of spiritual masters, the citizens of Ayodhya were struck with wonder and looked upward with open eyes. Then, as they cast their looks below, they saw the surface of the court hall scattered with flowers and lotuses falling in showers from above. ²⁴ They saw heaps of mandara and other celestial flowers piled to the roof of the lofty hall. They saw the courtyard covered with blossoming plants and vines and with garlands of flowers without space between. ²⁵ The surface of the ground was covered with blossoms of parijata plants. Thick clouds of santanaka flowers covered the heads and shoulders of the assembled people in the court. ²⁶ The saffron flowers of yellow sandalwood hung over the jeweled crowns of princes like an awning of rain clouds spread over the glittering ceiling lights of the assembly hall.

²⁷ Seeing these events in the court, all the people repeatedly shouted with loud applause, talking with one another of this and that as befitted the solemnity of occasion. ²⁸ They adored the sage by prostrating their bodies and limbs, offering him their obeisance with offerings of handfuls of flowers.

²⁹ After the loud sounds of applause had somewhat settled down, the king also rose and prostrated himself and worshipped the sage, offering a tray of presents and flower wreaths held in his hands.

³⁰ Dasharata said, "By your teachings, O husband of Arundhati, I was released from my mortal frame and gained the transcendent knowledge which filled my soul and joined it with the supreme essence in perfect bliss. ³¹ I think we have nothing in this earth or with the gods in heaven which is worthy enough to be given as a proper offering in your adoration. ³² Yet I beg you to ask something in order to free myself of my duty to you, and to render my services to you and have them prove effectual to me. I hope you will not be irritated at what I am saying. ³³ I adore you with my queens and my wealth in both worlds, together with all my dominions and servants. ³⁴ All my possessions are yours, so my lord, take them as yours and make them part of your hermitage. Please dispose of these as you please or use them as you like."

³⁵ Vasishta replied, "Know, O great king, that we brahmins are pleased with the mere obeisance of people. We are truly satisfied receiving reverence from men, and this you have already done and shown to me. ³⁶ You know how to rule the earth. Therefore its sovereignty is suitable to you. You cannot give an example of any brahmin who has ever reigned as a king. Therefore keep what is yours and prosper."

³⁷ Dasharata answered, "What is this insignificant realm to me, which I am ashamed to call and own as mine? It cannot lead me to the knowledge of its true lord. Therefore lead me to this knowledge so I may clearly and truly know the most high."

³⁸ Valmiki relates:—

As the king was saying this, Rama rose from his seat and threw handfuls of flowers on the sacred

body of his preceptor. Then lowly bowing before him, he addressed him as follows.³⁹ “Venerable sage, as you have made the king speechless by telling him that you are pleased with mere obeisance of men, so I am taught to wait here with my simple prostration at your venerable feet.”⁴⁰ Saying so, Rama bowed his head down lowly at the feet of his guide, then scattered a handful of flowers on his pure body, just like trees on mountain sides sprinkle their dew at the foot of the mountain.⁴¹ Then the pious prince repeatedly bowed in reverence to his venerable preceptor, while his lotus-like eyes were filled with the tears of his inner joy and piety.

⁴² Next rose the brother princes of Dasharata’s royal race, namely Bharata, Satrughna and Lakshman, together with their equals in friends and kindred relations. They all advanced to the sage and bowed down to him with respectful reverence.⁴³ The other chiefs and nobles and regents who sat in their order at a distance, together with saints, sages and the priest at large, rose in groups from their seats and paid their homage to the sage, flinging handfuls of flowers upon him.⁴⁴ At this point, the sage was almost covered and hidden under heaps of flowers poured upon him from all sides, just like the snowy Himalaya Mountains are wrapped and concealed under the snow.

⁴⁵ After the clamorous sounds and exuberances of the assembly was over and the loud ringing sounds of their hailing had ended, Vasishta remembered what he had said to the assembled sages, sharing with them the truth of his doctrines and removing the doubts of his audience regarding the miracles he had effected.⁴⁶ Then with both arms he shoved heaps of flowers from his sides revealing his fair face, as if the moon had appeared from behind hoary clouds.⁴⁷ There followed a hush over the flourish of the trumpets and a silence upon the fanfare of applauses. The falling of flowers was at a stop and the murmur of spiritual masters above ceased with the noise of the assemblage below.⁴⁸ After the princes and assembled nobles had made their obeisance and greetings, there was a calm stillness in the assembly, like a lull in the atmosphere after a storm.

⁴⁹ Then the chief of sages, Vasishta, having heard the applause poured upon him from all sides, spoke softly from the unblemished purity of his soul to the royal sage Vishwamitra.⁵⁰ “Hear me, O sage who is the lotus of the princely race of Gadhi, and you other sages who are assembled here, namely Vamadeva, Nimi, Kruta, Bharadwaja, Pulastya, Atri, Narada, Ghrishti and Sandilya, and⁵¹ also you sages Bhasa, Bhrigu, Bharanda, Vatsa and Vatsayana, together with all others now assembled here who have had the patience to listen to my unworthy discourse⁵² with your well known graciousness to me. Please point out to me whatever you have found to be meaningless or unintelligible or ambiguous in my discourse.”

⁵³ The audience responded, “O venerable sage, we have never heard or marked a single word in your spiritual and divine discourse that is meaningless or unintelligible to anybody.⁵⁴ We confess that whatever foulness was inbred in our natures by our repeated births in this sinful world has all been cleansed out by your holy lecture, just as the alloy in gold is burnt away by purifying fire.⁵⁵ O sage, our minds are as expanded by your divine sermon like blue lotus buds are opened to bloom by the cold and ambrosial beams of moonlight.⁵⁶ We all bow down to you, O chief of sages, as our best guide in divine knowledge and the giver of true wisdom with regard to all things in nature.”

⁵⁷ Valmiki relates:—

The sages hailed and bowed down to Vasishta again. Their united applause for him rose as high as the loud roar of raining clouds.⁵⁸ Then the speechless spiritual masters again poured down showers of flowers from above which covered the sage's body like the clouds of winter cover rocks under ice and snow.⁵⁹ Afterwards, the intelligent and learned men in the court praised King Dasharata and Rama saying that the four princes were no other than the fourfold incarnation of the god Vishnu himself.

⁶⁰ The spiritual masters said, "We hail the four princes of Dasharata's line who are the fourfold forms of the self incarnate Vishnu, quite liberated from the bonds of flesh in these their living states of humanity.⁶¹ We hail King Dasharata as having the mark of sovereignty over the whole world that extends to the limits of the four oceans and lasts forever with his race.⁶² We hail sage Vasishta who is as bright as the sun and stands at the head of the whole host of sages, and also the royal sage Vishwamitra of renowned fame and dignity.⁶³ It is through their means that we have had this fair opportunity to hear this divine discourse, so full of knowledge and filled with reason that it serves to dispel the great gloom of error at once."

⁶⁴ So saying the spiritual masters of heaven again let fall handfuls of flowers in showers, making the assembly look up to them in silence with uplifted eyes and gladdened minds.⁶⁵ Then there were greetings between the spiritual masters from above and the assembled people below.⁶⁶ At last the assembly broke with their respectful greetings to one another, accompanied with mutual offerings of flowers and salutations. The celestial and terrestrial, the great munis and sages, the pundits and brahmins, together with princes and nobles bade farewell to and took leave of one another.

Chapter 201 — The Assembly Gathers again; Rama Describes His State; Vasishta Exhorts Him to Serve Vishwamitra and Dasharata

¹ Valmiki related:—

When the assembly returned the next day, there was a profound silence and a cheerfulness in the faces of princes enlightened by the previous lecture. ² Having come to the light of truth, people seemed to be smiling from reflecting on their former errors and follies. ³ The wise men in the assembly appeared to be sitting fixed in their steadfast meditation. The feelings and passions of their minds were curbed and subdued upon their access to the taste of true knowledge.

⁴ At this time, Rama with his brothers sat in lotus posture with legs crossed over each other, palms of their hands folded together, their eyes fixed steadfastly upon the face of their preacher. ⁵ King Dasharata remained in a sort of entranced meditation, thinking himself liberated in his lifetime and placed in a state of infinite bliss. ⁶ The sage remained silent while he was adored by his reverential audience, then spoke to them at last in distinct words. He wanted to know what they would like to hear about.

⁷ He said, “O lotus eyed Rama, who is like the cooling moon in the clear sphere of your race, tell me what you now wish to hear. What is the most desirable and delightful to your mind? ⁸ Tell me the state in which you find yourself at present and in what way you view the appearance of the world now before you.” ⁹ Being thus addressed by the sage, Rama looked at his face then spoke to him in his distinctly audible voice, with plain and unfaltering accents.

¹⁰ Rama said:—

It is all owing only to your favor, O venerable sage, that I have attained my state of perfect holiness and become as pure as the clear sky in autumn calm and serenity. ¹¹ I am entirely freed from all the errors which are so harmful to the right course of our lives in this world. I am as pure as the clear sky in the true state of infinite emptiness. ¹² I am set free from all bonds and released from all attributes and parts. I find myself situated in a crystal sphere, shining there as clear as crystal.

¹³ I am quite pacified in my mind. I am neither willing to hear nor do anything else. I am quite satisfied in myself and require nothing more for my satisfaction. I am quite at rest as in a state of trance. ¹⁴ My mind is quite calm in its thoughts and entirely pacified in its wishes. All my desires have fled from my mind and I find it resting in perfect peace and supreme bliss. ¹⁵ All my thoughts are settled and my desires subdued while I live in this waking world. I am enrapt and entranced while quite sane and sound and sleepless at all hours by day and night.

¹⁶ With my soul devoid of all wishes and expectations, I live while I am destined to live in this material body of mine. I remain rejoicing as long as I sit listening to your inspiring lessons. ¹⁷ Now I have no more need of reproof or instruction from the scriptures. I have no need to acquire riches or friends, nor do I have any need to get rid of them either. ¹⁸ I have found and I enjoy that pure happiness which attends on one in heaven or paradise, or in his attainment of the sovereignty of the whole world.

¹⁹ The world which I perceive within myself by my outward senses is conceived to be far brighter

and more transparent than the outer atmosphere because I see it in the light of consciousness and consider it to be a part of its infinite empty sphere.²⁰ I think this world certainly is an emptiness. My belief in the nothingness of phenomena has awakened me to my immortality.

²¹ Let me remain content with all that is or comes to pass on me, whether they are desirable to me or occur themselves. Let me act without fail as the full extent of the law requires, but without any object or expectation of reward.²² I am neither contented nor discontented with anything, nor do I rejoice or complain at any event. I do what is my duty in society without retaining any false conception of reaping their reward.²³ Let this creation be otherwise or go to utter destruction, let the winds of the last destruction blow with their fury also, or let the land smile in its plenty and beauty, yet I sit unmoved by them and remain in the divine self or spirit.

²⁴ I rest in myself which is unseen or dimly seen by others and is untainted and without decay in itself. I am not chained to my wishes but am as free as the air which you cannot compress in your clutches.

²⁵ As the fragrance of flowers upon trees is blown by the breeze and deposited in the air, so my soul is carried away from the confines of my body and placed in emptiness.²⁶ As these princes and rulers of people live and enjoy themselves in their realms at pleasure, whether they are enlightened or not, they are employed in their respective occupations.²⁷ So I enjoy myself with the steadiness and equanimity of my mind freed from all fear, grief or joy and desire.

²⁸ I am happy above all happiness. My happiness is in the everlasting one. There is no other happiness which I may prefer. But because I live here as a human being, you are at liberty to appoint me to any duty, in common with all mankind and appropriate to humanity.²⁹ I cannot be averse to manage myself with the unimportant things of this world as long as I am destined to them. In the same manner children are never to be blamed for indulging themselves in the playthings of their childhood. Sage, as long as I have to live in this body, I must do my bodily acts, but with my mind fixed in only upon the sole One.

³⁰ I must live to eat and drink and continue in the course of my business in life, but I am freed from all fear of my failings in them, by your kind counsels to me.

³¹ Vasishta replied:—

O bravo Rama! You have chosen the most meritorious course of life. You shall never have to repent from the beginning to the end of your career.³² By this cold detachment in yourself and complete equanimity in every state, you have truly become established for the unbroken rest in your life, as the visible sky has found infinite emptiness.³³ By your good fortune, you have gotten rid of your sorrows. It is fortunate that you have become so well composed in yourself. It is your good luck to be freed from the fears of both worlds and it is happy for you to be at your heart's ease and rest.³⁴ You are lucky, my lord, to have purified the lineage of Raghu to be so filled with holy knowledge and the knowledge of present, past and future.

³⁵ Now prepare yourself to accomplish Vishwamitra's request to complete his holy sacrifice and, at your father's request, continue to enjoy sovereignty of the earth subject to your royal parent.³⁶ May the mighty king reign forever in prosperity over his prosperous realm in association with you and his other sons, relatives and nobles, and in possession of all his infantry, cavalry, chariots and elephants, and without any disease or fear of his enemies.

Chapter 202 — Rama Describes His State

¹ Valmiki related:—

Upon hearing these words of the sage, the assembled princes and lords of men in the court felt a coolness in their souls, as if they had all been sprinkled with ambrosial waters.² Rama, with his lotus-like eyes and moonlike face, remained as resplendent as if they were filled with the nectar of the Milky Ocean.³ Then sage Vamadeva and others who were filled with divine knowledge exclaimed their admiration for the preacher, “O the holy instruction that you have given us this day!”⁴ The face of the king, his soul pacified and mind joyous, shone as if he had a new light infused in him.⁵ After many other sages who were well acquainted with the knowledge of the knowable One had pronounced their praises, enlightened Rama opened his mouth again and spoke in the following manner.

⁶ Rama said:—

O seer who knows past and future, you have cleansed away all our inner impurities like fire purges gold of its impurity.⁷ Venerable sage, we have now become all knowing by our knowledge of the Universal Soul, though we are confined in these our visible bodies and seeming to all appearance as knowing nothing beyond them.

⁸ Now I feel I am perfect and full in all and have become quite without decay in myself. I am freed from all fear and apprehension and I am quite aware of all things.⁹ I am overjoyed to no end and I am happy beyond all measure. I have risen to a height from which there is no fear of falling. I am elevated to the supreme summit of prominence and perfection.

¹⁰ I am cleansed by the holy and cooling water of divine knowledge which you have so kindly poured forth in me and whereby I am as happy as a full blown lotus in the lake of my heart.¹¹ By your favor, I am now set in a state of joy which makes the face of the universe bright to me with ambrosial delight.

¹² Now I hail myself, that I have become so fair within myself with the clarity of my mind and by the disappearance of all sorrow from it. I have received a grace in my face from the peace of mind and purity of my wishes. I am joyous in myself with my inner joy and I am wholly pure with the purity of my soul.

Chapter 203 — Valmiki Describes the Noon Sun; Assembly Retires; — Dasharata's Largesse; Sunrise; Assembly Reconvenes

¹ Valmiki related:—

As Rama and the sage were talking in this manner, the sun advanced towards its zenith to listen to their holy conversation in the royal hall.² Sunbeams spread on all sides with greater force and brightness as if to expose the sense of Rama's speech to clearer and greater light.³ Then the lotus beds in the ponds of the royal palace pleasure gardens began to expand their enclosed buds to bloom before him, just as the princes shone forth brightly the royal hall.⁴ The air was gladdened with joy at hearing the holy lectures of the sage. The air seemed to be dancing with the sunbeams, glistening in strings of pearls suspended at the windows of the palace.⁵ The early gleams of the sun brightly glistened on the glittering glass doors and shining ceiling lights of the court hall, just as the gladdened hearts of the audience glowed in response to the sage's enlightening speech.

⁶ After Rama was settled in his calmness, his face reflected the rays of the sage's look upon it and shone as bright as a blooming blue lotus.⁷ The sun advanced towards the summit of the horizon, like an ocean fire rising on the surface of the blue ocean, and by his darting flames dried up the dewy humidity of the sky, just as an undersea heat swallows the waters of the deep.⁸ The blue sphere of heaven appeared like a lake of blue lotuses and the shining sun looked like the golden petals of the flower. His bright beams resembled the golden powder of flowers and his slanting rays were like the slanting flowers in the air.⁹ He shone like the dazzling crown upon the head of the goddess Lakshmi, queen of the worlds, and was hanging like a resplendent earring pendant on the ear of heaven, while the crown lay hidden under his glaring light like bits of diamonds concealed under the brightness of a blazing ruby.¹⁰ The ethereal maids of all the quarters of heaven held out the mirrors of silvery clouds before his face, their uplifted arms of the mountain peaks all around, and these were adorned with solar rays like rainless clouds on mountain tops.¹¹ Sunstones in the quarries on earth emitted a fury blaze which adorned the skies with a greater light than that of the sun.

¹² Trumpets sounded aloud with the wind blown by the mouths of trumpeters, and conch shells blew as loudly at midday, just as the winds of the last deluge set sea waves to their tremendous uproar.

¹³ Then drops of sweat appeared on the faces of the princes, like dew drops falling on lotus leaves. They were so closely connected together as to appear like strings of pearls.¹⁴ The thickening noise of the hurry and flurry of men resounded harshly within the hollow walls of the hall filling the ears of men like crashing waves fill the curved depression of the hollow sea.¹⁵ Waiting maids came forward with cups of liquid camphor in their hands to sprinkle on the princes' bodies and reduce the intensity of the solar heat.

¹⁶ Then the assembly broke, and the king rose from his seat accompanied by Rama, the princes and Vasishta, together with all the lords and nobles present in the assembly.¹⁷ The assembled lords and princes, the ministers of the state and religion, together with the high priests and sages rose from their seats. Having gladly made their greetings to one another, they took their leave and departed to their respective homes.

¹⁸ The front of the royal inner apartment was fanned with flapping fans of palm leaves blowing clouds

of camphor powder scattered for reducing the midday heat.¹⁹ Then the chief of sages, Vasishta, opened his mouth and spoke to Rama while the instrumental compositions of noonday music resounded amidst the walls of the royal hall.

²⁰ Vasishta said:—

Rama, you have heard whatever is worth hearing. You also know all that is worth knowing. Now I see there is nothing left worth communicating to you for your higher knowledge.²¹ Now you have to reconcile in yourself, by your best understanding, all that I have taught you and what you have read and learnt in the scriptures, and harmonize the whole for your guidance.

²² Now rise to do your duties while I hasten to perform sacred bathing rites. It is now midday and the proper time for our bathing is quickly passing away.²³ Then whatever other questions you may have to satisfy your wishes, you can ask them of me tomorrow morning when I shall be happy to elaborate on the subject.

²⁴ Valmiki related:—

After the sage spoke in this manner, mighty King Dasharata saluted the parting chiefs and sages, honoring them according to their proper ranks and degrees.²⁵ Then, as advised by Vasishta, the virtuous king with Rama by his side proceeded to give due honors to the sages, spiritual masters and brahmins, one after the other.²⁶ He gave them gems and jewels, money and bouquets of flowers. He gave some riches equivalent to the values of gems and jewels, while to others he gave strings and necklaces of pearls.²⁷ He honored some with his respects and deference and others with money suited to their worth and degree. To others he gave gifts of cloths and seats, food and drink, and gold and lands.²⁸ He saluted others with perfumes and aromatic spices and wreaths of flowers. He honored the elders with due respect and gave his bare regards to others.

²⁹ Then the king rose from amidst the assembly with the whole body of his courtiers and the holy sages and Vasishta with him, just as the splendid moon rises in the sky with the retinue of stars about him.³⁰ The rising of the assembly and its people was attended with a rumbling noise like that heard when men tread over a marsh of knee-deep mud and mire.³¹ The clashing of the concourse against one another and the cracking of their armlets and wristlets by their friction with each other, joined with broken jewels and scattered pearls slipped from the nobles' torn necklaces, gave the floor of the court hall the appearance of the star sparkling heaven.³² Bodies of sages, saints, brahmins, princes and nobles all jumbled together. There was a rapid waving of chowry fans waving in the hands of fanning maid servants.³³ But there was no crowding or dashing or pushing as they were intent upon reflecting upon the sense of the sage's preaching. Rather, when they came in contact with each other, they asked to be excused with the gestures of their bodies.

³⁴ At last the king and the sages and nobles approached one another with sweet and soft words and took their parting leave.³⁵ Then they left the palace and proceeded to their residences with gladdened faces and contented minds, as when the immortals return to all parts of heaven from the heavenly council of King Indra.³⁶ After everyone had taken leave of others and arrived at their respective houses, they employed themselves in the discharge of their ritual services of the day.³⁷ Thus the king and all performed their daily ritual bathing and services as usual, until the end of the day.

³⁸ As the day ended with the discharge of the duties of the daily ritual, the tired sun, the traveler of the ethereal path, sat down to rest in the west. ³⁹ After performing evening prayers, Prince Rama and the people at large passed their nights awake talking and thinking about the discourse of the day. ⁴⁰ Then the rising sun advanced in the east, sweeping away the dust of darkness from before his path, scattering the starry flowers on his way in order to fix his seat in the middle of his dome of the universe. ⁴¹ The new rising sun reddened the skies with his rays resembling the crimson color of kusambha flowers. Then he embarked on the board of his bright globe amidst the wide ocean of the ethereal region.

⁴² Then the reigning princes and lords of men, together with the nobles, peers and their ministers, met at the assembly hall of King Dasharata. The great saints and sages, with Vasishta at their head, also gathered there. ⁴³ They entered the assembly hall and took their seats according to their different degrees and ranks, just as the stars of heaven appear and occupy their places in their respective constellations and circles in the expanse of heaven. ⁴⁴ Then the king and his ministers advanced and bowed down to Vasishta and ushered him to his high seat and pulpit. They all poured forth their praises to the sage after he was seated in the speaking pulpit.

⁴⁵ Now the lotus-eyed Rama, who sat before the king and the holy sage, opened his lotus-like mouth and spoke in the following manner, with his natural good sense and usual elegance of speech. ⁴⁶ Rama said, "O venerable sage who is acquainted with all religions and is the great ocean of knowledge, you are the axe to all knotty questions and doubts, removing the grief and fears of mankind. ⁴⁷ Please tell us whatever more is worth hearing and knowing, for you know best whatever remains to be said for the enlightenment of our knowledge."

⁴⁸ Vasishta replied, "Rama, you have gained full knowledge and you have nothing more to learn. You have attained the perfection of your understanding and obtained the supreme good which is sought by all, wherewith you are quite content in yourself. ⁴⁹ It is better if you consider and tell me how you find yourself and your inner mind at present, and consider what else you wish to know and hear from me."

⁵⁰ Rama asked, "O sage, I find myself fully perfected in my understanding. I am possessed of the peace and tranquility of my mind from the blessing of nirvana and the ultimate bliss of my soul. I have nothing to ask or desire of you. ⁵¹ You have said all that you had to teach me and I have known all that is worth knowing. Now sage, take your rest with the goddess of speech, who has done her utmost to instruct us all. ⁵² I have known the unknown and knowable one that is the only One to be known as the true reality. Knowing this all as the one Brahman, I am freed from my knowledge of duality. I have gotten rid of the deception of the diversity of the visible and I am released from reliance upon any worldly thing."

Chapter 204 — All Forms, Dream or Awake, Are Manifestations of Intellect

¹ Vasishta resumed and said:—

O Rama, let me tell you a few words on transcendental knowledge. The mirror of the mind shines more brightly when it is cleaned and polished of external images, rather than when it is clouded by outer shadows. ² The significant words that describe what we know are as insignificant as the hissing murmurs of waters and waves. Phenomena are only an apparent resemblance of ideas, just as a dream is the reflection of the mind and the visible world is only a reflection of a visionary dream. ³ The waking state is that of dreaming and its scenes are those of our dreams. These scenes present themselves before us in both waking and sleeping states from our memories of them. They are the inner concepts of our consciousness appearing to be situated outside our consciousness.

⁴ I am conscious of the clarity of my intellectual sphere in spite of seeing fairylands in its state of dreaming. In my waking, I find my mind to be equally clear of all its imaginary forms of the three worlds and their contents, which in reality are a formless emptiness only.

⁵ Rama asked:—

If all things are formless in the formless void of the universe as an empty emptiness of the intellect, then tell me sage. How do these endless shapes and forms arise, such as earth, water and fire, and those of these hills, rocks and pebbles? ⁶ Tell me why the elements have different forms and qualities and why the empty air, space and time have no form or property. What makes the wind so very fleet and what causes the motions and actions of moving bodies? ⁷ Why is space only a vacuum? Why is the mind also empty? These are all the various properties of things. I would like a good explanation for my own knowledge.

⁸ Vasishta replied:—

Rama, you have asked good questions as they naturally occur to everyone who seeks the truth. But tell me, why do you see varieties of earth and sky and all other things that you see in your dream? ⁹ From where does the water you see in your sleep come? How are the pebbles scattered about you in your dream? Why do you see flaming fires and all sides of heaven appearing before your sight? ¹⁰ How do you have the idea of time in your dream? How do you perceive the actions and motions of people and things in dreams? From where do all those accidents proceed that you see occurring in your sleeping and dreaming moments? ¹¹ What creates, produces and gives the formless dream its fascinating form, then dissolves it to nothing in the end? You find it produced and presented to your view, but you cannot say how it acts and of what stuff it is composed.

¹² Rama said:—

The dream of the dreaming world has no form or position of its own. Its soul and substance are empty. The earth and rocks which dream presents to sight are a traceless nothing, as if in the clouds. ¹³ Only the empty soul is the cause of dream, which likewise is as formless and without support like the soul. The formless void is never in need of support.

¹⁴ Consciousness never produces anything or has any relationship with anything. All we perceive are only reflections of consciousness situated in the recess of the mind. ¹⁵ The mind is the evolution of the

intellect which reflects images of things in the form of ideas upon the mind. Hence the ideas of time and space, and of air, water, hills and mountains are all reflections of the intellect upon the mind.

¹⁶ Our consciousness is also a void which receives the impressions of emptiness in the form of its emptiness, and the impressions of earth, air and water in the forms of their solidity, vibration and liquidity. ¹⁷ In reality there is nothing in existence such as the earth or any solid body or its form or sight. They all exist in their abstract states in the great void of consciousness, and are as equally void in their natures as consciousness itself. ¹⁸ In fact there is nothing in reality which is visible to sight. There is only the infinite emptiness of consciousness which represents all things in itself and is identical with all of them.

¹⁹ Conscious Intellect has the idea of solidity in its abstract notion of it. Thereby Intellect conceives itself in the forms of earth, rocks and hills. ²⁰ So by its conception of vibration and fluidity, it perceives the form of air and water in itself. By its inner conception of heat, it feels the fire in itself without forsaking its intellectual form. ²¹ Such is the nature of this intellectual principle. It is an airy and empty form called spirit, soul or mind that develops itself in all these various qualities and schemes without any cause or incentive.

²² There is nothing anywhere in nature beside these intellectual attributes of intellect itself, just as there is no sky or vacuum without its emptiness, or any vast expanse of the ocean without water.

²³ Know then there is nothing else anywhere, not even the sense of yourself or myself or anything else, except in the recess of intellectual emptiness. So commit yourself to that all filled void and remain quite calm in yourself.

²⁴ As you see earth and heaven and all their contents in your dreams and creations of your fancy in the recess of your mind and in the midst of this house of yours, so should you see everything in their incorporeal forms to be contained in the vast space of the infinite vacuum of Divine Consciousness and its all-knowing intelligence. ²⁵ The emptiness of Consciousness shines forth as the substratum of all bodies, but without a body of its own in the beginning of creation because there is no prior material cause for any material existence. It must be understood that only Consciousness, through our own ignorance, exhibits all material existence in its empty space. ²⁶ Know that your immaterial mind, understanding and individual ego, together with the material existences of the elements, these hills, skies and all others, are situated as dull and dumb rocks in the quiet, calm and clear sphere of Infinite Intellect. ²⁷ Nothing produced or destroyed. There is nothing which may be said to exist of itself. This world as it appears exists in the emptiness of Divine Intellect.

²⁸ The sunshine of the Consciousness manifests the world in its visible shape and form, just as sunlight shows objects hidden in darkness, and as the fluidity of water gives rise to waves and bubbles. ²⁹ This appearance of the world is no real appearance. In its true and proper sense and light, and as it is viewed by the wise, the world is only the representation of the intellectual void. The ignorant may view it in any light as they please.

Chapter 205 — There Can Be No Material Cause for Material Creation

¹ Rama asked:—

Sage, if the whole fullness of space is emptiness, like the phenomena in our dreams, it must follow that the world we see in our waking state is also emptiness. There can be no doubt in it.² But answer my important question. How does the formless and bodiless intellect appear to become embodied in all these various forms of bodies that we see in our waking dream?

³ Vasishta replied:—

Rama, visible phenomena that appear to view in our waking dream by daylight are all empty bodies. They are born, rest and are supported in empty emptiness. Hence you cannot on any reasonable basis doubt their emptiness.⁴ This infinite and eternal void is entirely devoid of any and all material causes. It is impossible for any material creation to come from this nothing.⁵ The formless intellect could not bring forth material earth to form solid bodies. It is impossible to believe that any phenomena which appear has any real existence in nature.

⁶ Therefore the airy intellect sees the visible in the daytime in the same manner it sees visions in its dreams at night. It sees them all rising in their intellectual light within itself, but appearing as real and material objects set outside itself by its delusion.⁷ The reflection of the workings of the intellectual soul appears as real within the hollow sphere of the intellect. What we see awake resembles what our memories represent in the mind in our sleep, and it takes the name of the visible world.

⁸ The clear perception of these intellectual representations in the emptiness of the mind is called a vision or dream. The gross conception of them in the mind is called the gross or material world.⁹ The intellect itself gives different names to its different views of the same internal thought and ideas. It calls the finer and purer ones thoughts, and the grosser ones visible or material objects.¹⁰ The same reflection of the intellect is called both dream and the world. The workings of the mind and its reflections in itself are natural to intellect. Though the dreams vanish upon waking, yet the working and reflections of the mind are never at rest, either in waking or dreaming.

¹¹ Many such visions of creation alternately rise and set in the emptiness of Brahma's mind. They are never apart from it, just as empty air is either in motion or at rest in the hollow of the great void and is always inseparable from it.

¹² Rama said:—

Sage, you have told me that there are millions of worlds. Tell me now, which are situated within the sphere of the cosmic egg and which are beyond?¹³ Which worlds are the terrestrial globes and which are empty spheres? Which are fiery bodies in the sphere of fire and which are the airy bodies in the regions of air?¹⁴ Which have surfaces of earth situated in the midst of emptiness on which hills and forests are set at the opposite sides of the globe, hanging up and down perpendicular in empty air?

¹⁵ Which are the aerial bodies with their living souls and which have inhabitants of darkness with their dark shapes? Which are formed of only emptiness and which bodies are full of worms and insects?¹⁶ What sorts of beings settle the ethereal sphere and what live in the midst of rocks and stones? What dwell in bodies of water and what live in the air like birds?¹⁷ Tell me, O greatest of philosophers, how this cosmic egg of ours is situated among all these worlds.

¹⁸ Vasishta replied:—

These wonderful unknown, unseen and unheard of worlds are mentioned and described in the scriptures which also give examples. They have been received and believed as true by their students.

¹⁹ Rama, the cosmology of the world has been described and explained by gods and sages in hundreds of their scriptures called the Agamas, all of which you are well acquainted with. ²⁰ Now as you are well acquainted with the descriptions given in the scriptures, it is not necessary to relate them again here.

²¹ Rama replied:—

Yet tell me, O venerable sage, how the great void of the intellect came to be produced from Divine Spirit? Tell its extent and duration in time and space.

²² Vasishta replied:—

The great God Brahman is without beginning or end and is ever existent and without decay. There is no beginning, middle or end of him, nor are there any materials or shapes in his transcendent emptiness. ²³ The emptiness of Brahman is without beginning or end and is spread unspent and unbounded to all eternity. It is this which makes the universe which is ever without beginning or end.

²⁴ The reflection of the intellectual void in its own emptiness is called the universe by itself to no purpose. ²⁵ As a man sees a fair city in his dream by night, so he sees the sight of this world in his dream by daylight. ²⁶ Do not think that solid rock has any solidity in it, or fluid waters have any fluidity in them. Do not think that empty space is emptiness or the passing time has any flight or counting of it. ²⁷ All things are fixed in their formless, unchanging and ideal states in Divine Consciousness. The false and unsteady nature of the human mind gives and views them in different forms according to its own fancy.

²⁸ The mind sees the uncreated eternal ideas of the intellect as created objects, just as in its dream it sees rocks where there are no rocks and sky where there is none. ²⁹ As the formless and unconscious mind sees material worlds in its sleep, so it sees the invisible and formless world as a material form during its waking hours. ³⁰ As air even at rest is always in motion, so the spirit of Brahman is constantly vibrating without its rise or fall.

³¹ This world resides in the Divine Spirit of Brahman just like the property of fluidity resides in water, emptiness resides in vacuum, and substantiality resides all substances. ³² The world is neither produced nor external to the soul. The world does not occur to anyone or develop from the life or death of anybody. The world is causeless. It comes from no cause and is neither joined with nor separate from the Divine Spirit, ³³ the one who has no beginning or end or any indication of itself. It is formless, only an intellectual emptiness. It can never become the cause of a visible, material creation.

³⁴ Thus as parts and features together make an entire body, so this empty world is situated in the undivided and formless emptiness of Brahman.

³⁵ All creation is without substance other than pure intelligence without any materiality or foulness. There is no entity or nonentity here, nor can anything be said to exist or not exist. ³⁶ All this is only an air drawn city of our imagination and dream. Everything here appears to be stretched out in a fairy

dance all about us. But in reality, it is only a calm and quiet emptiness full with the unchanging and un-decaying spirit of God.³⁷ The whole is the hollowness of the divine heart and the empty sphere of the omniscient Consciousness. Its reasoning intellect reflects many a transparent image in its own sphere and to no end. This is called the world or the image of the Divine Soul, which continues forever and ever.

Chapter 206 — The Story of King Prajnapti Asking How Immortal Can Create Material — (the Great Buddhist Inquiry)

¹ Vasishta resumed:—

The appearance of the uncreated phenomenon of creation is nothing in reality. Only the transcendental principle of supreme Brahman is the true reality. ² Once someone asked me about this subject. Now I will share with you how I answered that question so that you, O high-minded Rama, may have a strengthened understanding.

³ The great island of Kushadwipa is surrounded by seas on all sides like a watery belt. This land is renowned for its beauty all over the three regions of the world. ⁴ On its northeastern side there is a city called Ilavati surrounded by a series of pillars gilded all over with gold, glittering with radiant beams reaching from earth to the skies. ⁵ There formerly reigned a king called Prajnapti who ruled on earth like the god Indra in heaven and to whom this land paid homage.

⁶ On one occasion I happened to encounter this king, as the sun descends on earth on the last day of desolation. ⁷ The king hailed and adored me with offerings of flowers and presents and made me sit by him with due reverence. Then in the course of my conversation with him, he fondly asked me as follows.

King Prajnapti speaking:—

⁸ Tell me sage, what becomes of the world after the destruction of all things, when the causalities of recreation are all extinct and annihilated in the indefinable vacuum of desolation? ⁹ What becomes the prime cause of things at the recreation of the world? What are the accompanying elements to reproduce objects? How and from where do they arise?

¹⁰ What is the world and what was the beginning of its creation? What was the primeval chaos and whence is this earth? What is the air, the support of the seas, and the hell filled with worms and insects? ¹¹ What are the creatures contained in the womb of air and what creatures live in the bosom of mountains? What are the elementary bodies and their productions? How have understanding and its faculties come into existence? ¹² Who is the maker of all these and who is their witness? What is the support of the universe and what are the things it contains? I am quite certain that the world can never have its ultimate destruction.

¹³ All the Vedas and scriptures are opposed to one another in their different views and interpretations. Each one makes a hypothesis according to its own particular view. ¹⁴ From our knowledge of the world, we do not know whether it is indestructible or an unreality.

¹⁵ Tell me, O chief of sages, what is the form and cause of those bodies that are doomed to dwell in hell after men die on this earth and their bodies are cremated and destroyed? ¹⁶ What causes bodies to regenerate after they are destroyed upon death? The virtues and vices of departed souls, all being immaterial things, cannot cause the formation of their material bodies. ¹⁷ It is absurd to reason that something that is immaterial could possibly produce a material body, just as it is impossible to believe that there can be a child without the original cause of its parents.

¹⁸ Tell me sage, what could possibly cause the production of material bodies? For lack of any such

cause, it is also improper to deny the existence of a future state.¹⁹ It is contrary to the dictates of Vedas and scriptures, and also to the conviction and common sense of mankind, to deny the future state of our existence. The resurrection of our bodies is as unavoidable as exile to a distant land by decree of law, though it be against our wish or will.

²⁰ How are beings born and put into action over the course of their lives by invisible causes that are quite unconnected? Pillars of stone were converted to gold, not just gilded, by the word of the brahmin. How did the brahmin suddenly obtain this vast treasure?²¹ Why call something great which lasts only for a moment? What is the need to frame strict laws for the present to reap a harvest in future when all that is not based on sound reasoning?

²² Tell me sage, how do you reconcile such disagreements in the Vedas which mention the existence of being and not-being in the beginning? Tell me also how that not-being existed before creation, and then the being or creation was born of the not-being.²³ How could the primeval nonentity become Brahman? How could Brahma be produced or born from a mighty emptiness? Then tell also me sage, how come there are no other Brahmans born of its spacious womb?

²⁴ Tell me how plant and other creations are produced without their different sources. How do they derive their nature of being able to propagate their own kinds by their own seeds?²⁵ Tell me why the life and death of a man are contemporaneous with those of his friend or adversary. How do people happen to obtain their wishes in their next lives by dying in holy places such as Prayaga?²⁶ Should the wishes of men be crowned with success in their next lives, then tell me sage, why isn't the sky filled with multitudes of moons? The worshippers of the moon are seen dying each day with the expectation of becoming a brilliant moon in the next state of their existence in heaven.²⁷ How can men attain their wishes for the future when most of them desire the same object? It necessarily falls to the lot of only one of them, just as a maid expected to be wedded by many is destined to be married only by one man.

²⁸ Again, how can a woman be called a wife who is either unchaste or leads a life of celibacy even when dwelling in her husband's house?²⁹ What is the difference between the blessing and curse pronounced on the brahmin brothers for their sovereignty over the seven continents on the one hand, and having no such thing on the other, when they remained thinking themselves as monarchs of the world in their own house?

³⁰ The acts of piety, whether charities, austerities or subservient ceremonies, which are supposed to produce some unknown reward in the next world, are of no benefit on this earth to those who practice them. So what is the good derived if they afford no earthly benefit to the earthly body, but to a future body with which no one here has any concern?³¹ Should it be said that the soul of the pious observer reaps the reward in its future state, then this also is impossible because the disembodied soul is incapable of enjoyment. Should it have another body to enjoy hereafter, of what use is that distant body to the body of the present observer (of the pious acts)?³² Should these acts be accompanied with any reward, either in this life or in the next, they should be known to the actor. Lacking this knowledge, their observance appears to be an irreconcilable inconsistency.

³³ These are my doubts which I beg you will kindly remove by your cool and clear reasoning, like moonlight disperses evening twilight.³⁴ Now sage, please dispel my doubts in my inquiry after

transcendental truth so that it may lead to my good in both worlds. The company of the righteous is ever filled with very great blessings to all people.

Chapter 207 — Vasishta Replies to the Questions (of the Buddhist): Non-Dualism in a Nutshell

¹ Vasishta replied:—

Hear me prince and I will clearly expound to you the doctrine which will immediately root out your doubts.

² All these entities in the world are nonexistent nothings forever though they appear as realities in our consciousness. ³ We do not consider the true nature of reality, so we think that whatever appears in any manner in our consciousness is as real as it seems to be. ⁴ That is the nature of consciousness. Everyone who knows what consciousness is thinks it is the same as the bodiless soul. ⁵ Its body is the knowledge in the mind, either in waking or dreaming. This false consciousness is believed to be its body, and there is nothing else besides this that they call a solid body.

⁶ The world shines before us like the sights seen in a dream. The absence of all causes for the production of the world prove that it is nothing other than the phantom of a dream. ⁷ This pure and unstained knowledge of the universe is called Brahman himself. The very same shines as the world, which is nothing other than that.

⁸ Thus the world remains quite pure and unchanged from ever before and forever more. So it is thought and said to be by the Vedas and all good and great scriptures, and also by the common agreement of all thinking men in all ages and countries. ⁹ Those who deny the sole existence of the Being which is impressed in the consciousness of all beings, the Being full and perfect everywhere and acknowledged by all great souls, are the most ignorant fools and resemble croaking frogs living in the recesses of dark caves and pits.

¹⁰ There are many who are deluded by their ideas of the appearances of things and the evidence of their senses. They have fallen into the error of understanding the gross body as causing consciousness and inner impressions. ¹¹ They are exuberant with their wrong ideas. They are not worthy of our discourse because one cannot converse with those who are intoxicated without liquor and are learned fools. ¹² When the discourse of the learned is not capable of answering the questions of men in all places, such discourse is to be understood as foolish talk of the universe. ¹³ He whose beliefs rely upon only what can be sensed and who regards the believer of the invisible to be a fool, is considered for his illogical reasoning to be like a block of stone. ¹⁴ The fool who maintains this materialistic doctrine in opposition to all rational philosophy is said to be like a frog in a dark cave because he is blind both to the past which is out of his sight and to the invisible future. He is concerned only with what is present before him.

¹⁵ The Vedas, the sayings of wise men, and the inferences of their right reasoning, as I have maintained in these lectures, can remove doubts in these matters. ¹⁶ If the conscious body is consciousness, then why is the dead body unconscious of anything?

¹⁷ This world is an imaginary city of the Divine Mind in its form of Brahma, the creator. Hence the phenomenon of the world appears to our minds like a phantom in our dream. ¹⁸ Therefore all that you see is only the creation of Divine Consciousness which is an intellectual entity in itself. You are not mistaken in your judgment if you consider them as phantoms in your dream appearing in the emptiness of your mind. ¹⁹ Hence this earth and the skies, these hills and cities, are all only appearances in the

void of the intellect, the conceptions of your mind like those appearing in the reveries of dream, or like castles built in the air.

²⁰ The dense emptiness of self-consciousness is called the great Brahma or the personal god of creation. The display of his will in the material is known as Viraj or the visible universe. Thus the pure and distinct consciousness of Brahman is condensed into the form of the world. ²¹ Whatever is imagined in the imaginary city of Brahma is conceived as existent in reality, just like you imagine objects of your desire or fancy to be actually present before you. ²² Whatever is thought of in one's imagination, whether a fancied city or a fairyland, seems to be present before him for the time being. ²³ Brahma, in his form of the mind, thinks of living and dying bodies, so are they thought of by all mankind.

²⁴ After the great dissolution of the world, it is said that the world is reproduced from nothing, but because there is no material cause that can produce a material world, it is certain there is no material being in existence. ²⁵ Brahma, the lord of creatures, having got rid of the world upon its dissolution, was also freed from all his memories and ideas of creation forever. Therefore only the reflection of divine light appears as the world before us. ²⁶ Thus the Supreme Soul of Brahma reflects itself in itself in the beginning in the manner of an imaginary castle of his will, which is as air-drawn as the visible sky in the invisible vacuum. This is known as the cosmos or world existing in empty space.

²⁷ An imaginary castle is the creation of the intellect and presents only its intellectual form to our minds. In the same way, the world appears to us in its intellectual form, an evolution of the intellect without any other cause for its appearance. ²⁸ Whether there is anybody anywhere, there is empty Consciousness which is everywhere. Know that the Divine Spirit pervades all over this totality, whether it be an embodied duality or an empty unity.

²⁹ Hence the empty mind of a dead body sees the form of the whole world within its emptiness. The empty mind of a living being, in its imagination or dream, sees the shapes of both solid and subtle bodies. ³⁰ The living man thinks this immaterial world is a solid mass of dull matter. The dead person thinks this empty universe is a solid and substantial existence lying exposed before him in its mind.

³¹ But the enlightened or awakened soul of a living body sees no trace of scenes of its dream upon waking, so the soul of a redeemed dead being sees no trace of the objects and sights of this world upon its redemption and bliss in the next world. ³² The very same is the case with the enlightened soul of everybody in this world. It bears only inner conceptions within itself. There is no outward perception. Therefore there is no material reality in existence because there is no material cause in emptiness.

³³ As a sleeping man sees an imaginary world in his dream as if it were real, so the unenlightened person sees the phenomenal world as a factual reality before him. In the same way, the souls of the dead see the world of their departed spirits in the emptiness before them. ³⁴ The souls of the departed see earth and heaven and mountains and everything else as they had seen before appearing in the open air. ³⁵ The departed soul perceives its separation from a dead body and thinks of its rebirth in another body on earth where it will have its enjoyments and suffering again as before. ³⁶ The soul never gets rid of this delusion of its reincarnation as long as it neglects to seek its salvation and final liberation. It is freed from its error of reproduction through knowledge of truth and the absence of desire.

³⁷ The consciousness of the soul, its righteous or unrighteous desire, represents the picture of this airy world in the hollow sphere of the mind. ³⁸ Therefore the world is neither substantial nor empty but the display of Divine Consciousness. The lack of this knowledge is the source of all misery to man. Its true knowledge, that it is a show of divine wisdom, is filled with all bliss and joy.

Chapter 208 — Vasishta Explains that Everything is the Expression of an Idea in God, — including Laws and Secondary Causes

¹ Vasishta continued:—

Now hear me tell you why men happen to meet with good or fortune at home and how, in the same way, rewards and punishments come upon departed souls from unforeseen causes in the far distant world.

² You know that the entire world is a creation of Divine Will. The world appears as material phenomena to our outer sight, as concepts to our inner insight, and as concepts to Brahman himself in its spiritual light. ³ In this volitional world, everything appears in the same way as you want to see it.

⁴ In your own house, you are master of your children and you can dispose of your things and affairs as you please. In the same way, the Lord is the sole disposer and dispenser of all things in this world of his will, as he likes of his own accord. ⁵ In your own home you find everything to your liking as you wish it to be. In the same way, the Lord directs and disposes all things in His world.

⁶ The disorder that appears to take place in the order of nature is to be attributed to the Divine Will as the sovereign law of all. ⁷ The good or evil which waits on men owing to their obedience or transgression of the law is both attributable to Divine Will. ⁸ It is also the dispensation of Divine Will whereby all living bodies have their perceptions of worldly things, just as they have the conception of the existence of the world which, in reality, has no substance. ⁹ It is by will of Divine Intellect that everything appears to exist before us. It is the opening and closing of Intellect which causes the appearance and disappearance of the world to our view.

¹⁰ King Prajnapti asked, “Tell me sage, if the world is the production of Divine Will, why did it not exist before, with the eternity of Divine Will, and why did it came to be manifested afterwards? Is the world an unstable and vanishing appearance in the air, or it has any fixity in the Divine Mind or stability in nature?”

¹¹ Vasishta replied:—

Such is the nature of the empty and volitional city of Divine Consciousness. It comes into being and not being in succession in the states of repeated waking dreams of creation and in the sleeping oblivion of its desolation.

¹² Like the mud-built house of playful children and the air-drawn castles of fanciful men, the appearances of creation appear both real and unreal in Divine Consciousness, as well as to our minds. ¹³ You build and break your imaginary city in the air. You make and unmake a fabric of your will elsewhere, whether of your own choice or for any other reason. In the same way, the Divine Will constructs and retracts any of its works at its pleasure. ¹⁴ Thus all beings are continually rising and falling in this empty city of the Divine Will which is ever shining in its nature with the pure light of the Divine Mind. ¹⁵ The whole fullness of the world is an emptiness full with the dense intelligence of omniscience. This omniscient intelligence does whatever it thinks upon and wills.

¹⁶ Therefore it is not the hidden but the self manifest God that does all things, even at a distance of millions of miles and over multitudes of ages, as if they lay before him at the present time. ¹⁷ So there is nothing in any country or in any world which is not known or thought of by the sole and unhidden

soul of all.¹⁸ As a brilliant gem reflects its light and shade within itself, so does the gem of Consciousness reflect the various changes of the world in itself by its own light.

¹⁹ Laws and prohibitions necessary for the preservation of people are implanted in the human soul.

²⁰ The soul neither dies nor revives. Brahman himself is the source and origin of the human soul. The human soul is his reflection constantly emanating from the Divine Soul.²¹ Being the viewer, it supposes itself to be the view and thinks its imaginary world is a visible phenomenon. In the same way it thinks itself to be born, living and dying.

²² When the soul of its own nature ceases to cast its reflection, or suppresses it within itself, and remains quietly in the empty sphere of Divine Consciousness by assimilating itself into the Universal Soul of Brahman, then it is said to be quiet in death or vanishing from the world.²³ The emission and admission of its reflection are as natural to ignorant and imperfect living souls of animal beings as vibration and calm are inherent in air.

²⁴ In the city of your imagination, you see the growth, decay and death of people at different times and places.²⁵ In the same way, the nature of this imaginary city of God is to exhibit these changes everywhere, as in the cases of animals, plant and all other things in all three worlds.²⁶ But God neither wills nor does everything himself in this creation of his will. He acts by general laws and secondary causes, like children playing, growing grass from grass, producing trees and their fruits from seeds, and everything else.²⁷ The nature of the almighty intellect of God is to bring forth whatever it wills to be in being.

²⁸ All things originally have an intellectual form. Afterwards they appear in whatever forms and different natures as the Almighty Intellect invests them with.²⁹ Hence everything here, because they originate from Divine Intellect, ultimately and truly is of an intellectual form. Because the intellect includes all things in itself, it displays every form and shows itself in any form it likes.

³⁰ This same intellect is the omniscient and Universal Soul without beginning, middle or end. It is omnipotent, something which is nothing, and an entity appearing as nonentity. It appears such as it remains anywhere and shows itself as anything. It is the origin of all things and beings and the source of all plants and grass.

Chapter 209 — Judgment and Reincarnation; Any Idea Can Manifest

¹ Vasishta continued saying:—

The life of a person is dear and useful to him as long as he lives and not afterwards. But hear me tell you the good of a man dying in some holy place with a wish for future reward in his next life. ² God has ordained certain virtues and merits to certain places, even in the beginning of his imaginary city of this world. ³ Whatever merit is assigned to any place awaits on the soul of a person after its release from bondage when he has performed the acts of piety commanded by the scriptures. ⁴ Hence any great sin committed by anybody anywhere is either partly or wholly erased by the good act of the person, according to comparative merit of the holy place or the degree of remission in the mind of the penitent sinner. ⁵ If the sin is insignificant compared to the holiness of the place, the sinner is completely released from his guilt and attains the object of his wish. ⁶ If the sin is equal to the holiness of the place, the penitent man receives two bodies in his next life, a physical body and a spiritual soul. ⁷ Such is the effect of the earliest guilt and merit of mankind. They are endowed with double bodies, physical frames and spiritual souls. Such is the Divine Soul even from before.

⁸ The principle is called Brahman in its sense of the whole. It is called Brahma as the totality of living souls (*jivas*). It is called I or the ego to refer to any living soul in particular. As God remains in any manner, whether whole or part, so he manifests himself as the world.

⁹ The reflection of purity acquired in some holy place appears to the penitent soul. It appears to be the opposite to the guilty soul which is not freed from its sin in any holy place.

¹⁰ A person sees visions of his own death, his living relatives weeping, and considers himself to be a departed ghost in the next world, all alone and without a single soul beside him. ¹¹ He also sees the deaths of his friends there, and he also thinks that he hears the wailings of their relations at that place. He sees all these mental illusions in his frenzy, just like a man with deranged body functions sees the apparitions of imaginary demons in his confused state.

¹² So it also happens with great souls. They see the sights of both good grace and fear according to the measure of their merit or guilt in this life. Thus thousands of hopeful and hideous shapes float about in the imaginations of men, owing to the purity or depravity of their natures.

¹³ The friends of a dying man, lying unconscious as a dead body, weep and wail over his corpse then take him to the funeral ground for cremation. ¹⁴ But a guiltless man, accompanied by his self-conscious and righteous soul, approaches his infirmity and death with firmness and without any feeling of sorrow. ¹⁵ With his material body he sees himself as a living being. With his invisible part, his inner soul, he sees his conquest over death by the merit of his holy pilgrimage. ¹⁶ The guiltless man fears his death only momentarily. He is conscious of the indestructibility of his inner soul, just like a man clad in armor is fearless of the arrows of his lightly armored enemy. ¹⁷ In this manner the deceased's relatives find his pure soul obtaining immortality after his death. Life and death are indifferent to the virtuous and purified person.

¹⁸ The sights of all three worlds are equally false both in their tangible and intangible forms, just as the vision of an object in a dream is as false as another (in a waking state) in their visionary nature.

¹⁹ We have a clear understanding that the dreams and imaginations arising in our minds are

deceptions. But the deceptions of our waking dreams in broad daylight appear more real and are less conspicuous.

²⁰ King Prajnapti asked, "But tell me sage, how do virtue and vice, both of which are bodiless things, assume the bodily forms of living beings in the course of their reincarnation?"

²¹ Vasishta replied:—

There is nothing impossible for the creative power of Brahman to produce in the imaginary fabric of this world of his mind. The substantive Divine Will is able to give substantial forms to intellectual things. ²² There is nothing which is unimaginable and there is nothing that cannot be produced by the mind of Brahman. It is the same with us. The only things we know are what we imagine in our finite minds.

²³ A visionary city in a dream and an imaginary castle of imagination both present a similar, ideal form to the mind. Both are composed of a collection of ideas which appear as real objects for the time being. ²⁴ All the numerous thoughts that lie like a dead and dormant mass in the states of our deep and sound sleep appear to us in endless forms in the visions of our dreams and our waking imagination and leave their traces in the memory. ²⁵ Who has not had the idea of aerial castles of his dreams and imaginations and found them composed of only his ideas in the airy world of empty consciousness? ²⁶ Therefore, what is there that is not capable of being produced in this aerial world? Everything can be produced in the airy imagination of the empty intellect, and its substance is the same.

²⁷ Therefore what appears in the form of the visible universe is only a fallacy. There is nothing in real existence or nonexistence. All things appear to be existent and non-existent in the luminous conscious space (*chidakasa*) of the Divine Mind. ²⁸ Anything that is perceived in any manner is a manifestation of a thought, an inspiration of it. The enlightened seekers of truth find nothing wrong in believing this.

²⁹ Therefore, if the doctrines of his religion teach a man to hope for the enjoyment of a heaven with flowery banks and streams flowing with nectar, then it is very probable that he will meet with the same things in his future life in the next world. ³⁰ Therefore, the acts done in this world by anybody are attended with their like rewards for him in the next. There is nothing inconsistent in this belief, though it appears so to the unbeliever.

³¹ Should there be anything which may be said to be permanent in this world, it must be always be present in the sight of its viewer. If this is the standard, then let any man identify what always remains in his sight. Only the ideas of things in his mind are ever present in his knowledge and never lost sight of in his consciousness.

³² I have compared dreams and thoughts to prove the essentiality of our notions and ideas. Because the worlds belong to the will and exist in the mind of omniscience, they are nothing other than the essence of the great Brahman himself. ³³ There is nothing wanting or impossible in the aerial castle of your imagination. There is nothing which does not and cannot exist in the will and mind of the Almighty.

³⁴ Whatsoever form is conceived in the Divine Mind, the same remains fixed there and appears situated before our sight like a picture or a screen play. ³⁵ Therefore this appearance of the Divine Mind is perceived only by our internal senses. There is nothing to be perceived by any external organ,

or to both internal and external at once, because only our minds perceive the impressions of the Eternal Mind and it is our minds that impel the internal organs to receive those reflections.

³⁶ As the Lord has willed everything at first, so it lasts with him to the very end of his creation when his will of creating the world anew gives another form to the state of things in future. ³⁷ The Lord manifests himself as he wills, in the manner of his will and in the form of another world in every kalpa duration of creation. In the same way the minds of men come to see another world and another state of things in each successive dream.

³⁸ There is nothing which does not exist in this worldly city of Divine Will. All that exists there is nothing but the production of Divine Consciousness. Therefore this world is to be known as full of the forms of the productive mind of God.

Chapter 210 — We See What We Believe; Karma; upon Realization, Phenomena Disappear

¹ Vasishta resumed and said:—

Now let me reply to your question why heaven is not filled with a hundred moons. If a hundred people wish to become the moon in their future lives, and if their efforts are crowned with success, why do we not see a hundred moons? ² Those who aspire to become as bright as the full moon of heaven actually became so in their conception of themselves in the sphere of their minds, and not by their situation in the vault of the sky or in the globe of that luminary.

³ Tell me who has ever anywhere gotten into another's imaginary city? Who has ever obtained any fancied treasure except the person who framed the fancy and fabricated the wish for wealth?

⁴ Everyone has a heaven of his own in his conception of creation. That is where he is situated and shines as a bright, full moon without phases of wane or wax. ⁵ All those aspirants to luminosity had thought of entering into the moon of his own mind. There he found himself resting at last with full light of that luminary and the delight of his conscious soul. ⁶ Each thought of entering the shining moon in their minds. Each felt as glad in their situation as if they were seated in the globe of the celestial moon.

⁷ Whatever one seeks and searches after, the same becomes natural with his consciousness. If one has a firm belief in some state, he thinks and feels himself to be the very same. ⁸ As everyone who aspires to be the full moon comes to be according to his conception, so the marriage suitors of the same bride become wedded to her according to his own conception of her. ⁹ The one pure maiden who is thought of as taken to wife by many men in their minds is never defiled by anyone of them. They have a simple enjoyment of her idea only.

¹⁰ As the sovereign ruler of the seven continents holds his sway over them without ever going out of his city, so the soul passes through everything while remaining in the precincts of its body, and so does every man see his imaginary castle in the sphere of his own house. ¹¹ When the whole universe owes its origin to the imagination of its omniscient originator, the self-born Brahma, what else can the universe be but an intangible void, quite calm and quiet in itself?

¹² Now let me tell you about the unknown and invisible results of the acts of piety such as charity, funeral rites, religious austerities and the repetition of holy mantras which accumulate to the departed ghosts of bodily beings in the next world.

¹³ Souls marked with traces of pious acts in them come to see them vividly as actual works painted in lively colors fabricated by their lively intellects, like their dreams. ¹⁴ A carnal mind distrusts the reality of these impressions of consciousness and disregards the internal operation of the inner intellect. It becomes restless for its sensuous enjoyment and the exercise of the outward organs of action. Only by decrease of this passion does it become restored to inner peace and tranquility.

¹⁵ The theme of early poets tells us that the impressions of acts of piety and charity are imprinted in the intellect and reflected in the passive soul in the next world when the conscious soul continues to keep the gratification of those acts. ¹⁶ Thus the rewards of charity and miserliness are equally felt in the gratification and dissatisfaction of the soul in this world in which everything is according to our feelings of it.

¹⁷ Thus I have fully answered whatever you have asked of me. Now from all this, know that the sensible world is an intangible dream, an air-drawn spectacle of the mind.

¹⁸ King Prajnapati asked, "But sage, please tell me how could the intellect exist alone before the production of the body? How can a light exist without its receptacle of a lamp?"

¹⁹ Vasishta replied:—

The sense in which you use the word "body" is quite unknown to spiritually minded persons who discard the material meaning of the word, just as they reject the idea of rocks dancing in the air.

²⁰ The meaning of the word "body" is the same as that of Brahman. There is no difference in meaning, just as there is none between the words fluid and liquid.

²¹ The body is an imaginary appearance. The great body of Brahma is like a phantom in vision which represents the forms of all things in the stupendous fabric of the universe as in a dream. ²² The difference between your dream, or what you see, and the fullness of Brahman is that what you see is the result of only what you have previously thought and they disperse and vanish upon your waking. But the universe exhibited in the fullness of Brahman is not so impermanent. ²³ What is this thing we call the body, and how does it appear to us in the shape of something in our dream? Why does anything appearing as a reality in dream vanish and appear as nothing and an error upon our waking?

²⁴ There is no waking, sleeping or dreaming or any other condition of being in the *turiya* transcendent state of Brahman. It is something like pure and primeval light, like transparent air, all quiet and still.

²⁵ It is the same as the unknown and inscrutable light which shows and glows before us to this day. It is the same primeval and primordial light that first showed the sight of the world to view, as if a dream in the gloom of night.

²⁶ A body traveling from one district to another, though proceeding onward, is always in the middle of its circuit, yet never fixed at any spot. In the same way, all things are in endless rotation in this world, whether singly or collectively.

²⁷ The sight of the world, like that of a dream, presents a favorable aspect to some minds, but it presents a clear and serene prospect to men of unclouded intellects. ²⁸ The same empty Intellect is the emptiness of space and the innumerable fullness of objects in space, the reflection and the eclipse of all things, the existence and nonexistence of the world and matter, and unity and duality. ²⁹ The world is entirely a complete evolution from the fullness of God. The world stands as a complete counterpart of the original. It is neither a shining nor a not-shining body by itself, but is as bright as the contents of a crystal within its bowels.

³⁰ Wherever there is the evolution of the world in the Intellect, there is the presence of the subtle soul. Whenever there is a speck of thought anywhere, it is attended with the thought of the world also.

³¹ The emptiness of Intellect is present everywhere. This omnipresence is the divine presence which is termed the world. ³² The Divine Soul is as quiet and unchangeable as this universe is stable and stationary. The fluctuation of the supreme mind causes these variations in the face of the city of the Divine Will.

³³ The impossibility of any other inference proves that the universe is necessarily of the same essence as God. Any hypothesis of agnostic philosophers is unreasonable and inconsistent with this subject.

³⁴ The common belief of mankind, the testimony of the scriptures, and the statements of the Vedas are established and incontrovertible truths. Therefore nobody can have any doubt about the reality of the Divine Spirit. ³⁵ This being acknowledged, it becomes evident that the world is God itself. When the world appears as one with God, it is seen in our clear spiritual insight to be extinct in the Divine Essence.

³⁶ Because the impermanent sight of the world is ultimately the same as God, when the living soul is conscious of the Intellect, the sight of phenomena is lost. This is the doctrine of Pantheism in which all of nature is seen as God. ³⁷ He who is conscious of the sphere of his intellect is also conscious of the tree of the world that is dependent upon consciousness. He sees the three worlds in himself, whether he is in the state of bondage or liberation. ³⁸ The visible world, though so manifest to view, is entirely lost to sight upon its right knowledge. He who knows this becomes like the setting sun, wholly invisible to public sight, and remains as mute as a lump of silent stone.

³⁹ The way established by the Vedas and accepted by the general consent of wise men must be acknowledged as the right path leading to sure success. ⁴⁰ He who adheres steadily to his own purpose by utter disregard of all other objects is said to be firmly determined and is sure to reap success in the end.

⁴¹ Everything appears in the same light in which a person is accustomed to see and know it. Whether the object of one's faith is true or false, it still appears to each person as he is accustomed to believe it.

⁴² This is the conclusion of your question, as I have determined and delivered to you. Now be quick and walk your way with perfect ease of your mind, health of your body, and agility of your limbs.

Chapter 211 — Seeing the Supernatural; All Is the Creation of the Viewer

¹ Vasishta resumed:—

After I said these things to the king, he honored me with his obeisance. Then thinking I had finished my task for him, I rose up to proceed on my aerial journey.² Thus I have related to you this day, O most intelligent Rama, regarding the omnipresence of the Divine Spirit. Keep this empty view of Brahman before your sight and proceed everywhere with the peace of your mind.³ Know all this to be Brahman itself, only a nameless and insubstantial emptiness. It is something unborn and uncreated, all calm and quiet, without beginning, middle or end.⁴ It is said to be the reflection of intellect and it is called Brahman because of its immensity. It is also called the most transcendent, and something without any name at all.

⁵ Rama asked, “Tell me sage, how can we see the celestials, the siddha spiritual masters, the perfect (*sadhyas*) spirits, Yama, Brahma and the heavenly vidyadharas and gandharvas? Tell me also, sage, how people of other spheres can be visible to us?”

⁶ Vasishta replied:—

The celestial siddhas, *sadhyas*, the gods Yama and Brahma, and the vidyadhara demigods, together with all other beings of great souls and wonderful might,⁷ are all visible to you both day and night, and above, below, behind and ever before you, if you will only look at them with the eyes of your mind. But if you shut your mental eye against spirituality, you can never see spirit presented before your view.⁸ If you become used to seeing these spiritual beings, they are never far away. They are described as self-willed beings and they are said to be always wandering everywhere.

⁹ These volitional beings are as unsteady as the living creatures of this earth, like the volatile winds which blow at random in every direction.¹⁰ They resemble the airy creatures of your imagination and dreams which hover fluttering in the air and gather about you by day and night. Others have no will or motion and remain stationary in their respective spheres.¹¹ Through silent and steadfast meditation, then in the calm quiet of your mind and soul, you can see the reflection of any of these spirits and, without fail, you can visit them in the innermost recess of your soul.¹² This is how men see the gods and spiritual masters, arrayed with all their majesty and glory as they are imagined to be in their intense meditations.¹³ Men of steady minds find themselves soaring to heaven accompanied by spiritual masters and clad in all their glory. Those of unsteady and unsettled minds must take great pains to gain control of the fleeting object of their contemplation.

¹⁴ The world is an insubstantial and imperceptible thing, ever a silent and serene void, the emptiness of the intellect. However, it appears to be a solid and compact mass, according to the notion we have of it in our consciousness.¹⁵ It does not exist in our unconsciousness, it does not appear to exist, and it is not a dull, unconscious or unthinking being. It is an emptiness and a nothing, an utterly intangible and imperceptible thing to our senses and consciousness.¹⁶ The nature of consciousness is to reflect in itself. All that we see about us is the shadow of that reflection. The knowledge that this shadowy reflection is substantial proceeds from the vanity of the intellect, and not from its nature which is free from mistake.

¹⁷ There can be no talk of causation, production or vegetation in the nature of the universe. It is an

absolute void entirely devoid of the elements of cause and effect.¹⁸ That which appears to be produced is only a void in the midst of primeval emptiness. There can be no attribution of unity or duality to infinite emptiness.¹⁹ Yet the world appears to your mind as something that exists and it is visible to your eyes. This happens in the same manner as you have consciousness and sight of dreams in the undisturbed calm of your empty sleep.²⁰ Imagination causes mountains to rise in the empty sphere of our minds, but in reality there are no mountains. Such is this creation, an airy working of the Divine Mind.

²¹ Hence the wise and intelligent remain as quiet and mute as motionless blocks of wood. Great minds manage themselves like wooden puppets, moving as they are moved by the prime moving power of God alone.²² As waves are seen rolling on the surface of waters and as currents whirl round and hurl headlong into the deep, so all of creation and all created things turn about the axle wheel of the great Brahma.²³ As emptiness is inborn in space and vibrations are immanent in the air, so these creations are inherent and inseparably connected with the Divine Spirit in their formless and ideal shapes.²⁴ An air-drawn castle of our will or imagination, with all its lack of substance, presents a substantial shape before us. In the same way, this world appears as a compact frame shown before us in spite of its situation in the formless mind of Brahma.

²⁵ All three worlds that we are accustomed to believe as real, the sites of our temporal and spiritual concerns, are all void and formless and as unreal as the airy castles of our imagination.²⁶ The imagination of our minds creates populated cities. In the same way, the thought of the mind of God creates these numerous worlds and presents them to our minds and eyes.

²⁷ Though we always think of this visible world as a reality, it bears no meaning at all. It resembles the sight of a man's own death in his dream.²⁸ A man sees a dream in which his own funeral is conducted by his son. In the same way, the unreal world is seen as a reality, in as much as it is reflected as such by its supreme contriver.²⁹ Both the existence and non-existence of the universe constitute the body of the pure God in the same way as a made-up name applied to a person makes no difference to his character.

³⁰ Whether what I have said is true or not, you have nothing to lose or gain. It is useless for wise men to expect any reward by casting offerings into Falgu River. So to the intelligent who have known the true God, there is no value to take the pains of invoking the aid of the minor gods.

Chapter 212 — On Ascertainment Of Truth

¹ Vasishta resumed:—

The man who possesses intellect and intellectual powers and considers himself as “I am that Brahman” is elevated to the rank of Brahman and contains the whole world in himself.² As Lord Brahma Hiranyagarbha remains in this state, he is not then the creator of the world but was also the uncreated Brahman, the everlasting God, as he continued from all eternity.

³ The world appears in our consciousness like a mirage in a desert, an unreality that appears as a reality.⁴ Since creation this primeval emptiness began to present the illusion of the world in itself. How can such an illusion arise unless it was presented by Brahman himself?⁵ The world is a revolving sphere in the vast empty ocean of Brahman. How can the question of unity or duality arise in this? How can we talk of dualism in the whirling currents of the waters of the deep, or of unity if there is a lack of duality?⁶ The great Brahma is profoundly quiet. Having his intellect inherent in himself, he is conscious of his being the great or sole “I” in his mind. He sees himself as a vast expanse of emptiness.⁷ As fluctuation is inherent in air, heat is innate in fire, and the moon contains its coolness, so the great Brahma broods over the eternal ideas of things contained in the cavity of his fathomless mind.

⁸ Rama asked, “Tell me sage, how does the Divine Mind come to think and brood upon his creation when it is always employed in its reasoning process of intellect?”

⁹ Vasishta replied:—

It is even so, O Rama! The great Ego of God always thinks of everything in itself. There is nothing unknown to the uncreated and ever existent spirit of God.¹⁰ Empty Brahma is always and everywhere present in both creation and non-creation. There is nothing known to him as existing or not existing at anytime.¹¹ As the mind is conscious of its fluctuation, the moon of her coldness, and the air knows its emptiness, so Brahma knows himself to be Ego and never thinks himself without the other.¹² Such is the entity of God, never otherwise. As Brahma is imperishable, this world must be without beginning or end.

¹³ You are led to a belief in duality of the non-dualistic unity of God only from a lack of sufficient intelligence and a prejudice arising from the idea of non-ego.¹⁴ In reality, there is no one and nothing that thinks of anything of itself other than the Divine Ego.¹⁵ The apparent threefold world is always one with and inseparable from God who dwells alike and evenly in all and who composes one uniform whole without any mixture of diversity or duality.

¹⁶ O Rama, know that nothing like a rock or tree is produced in empty emptiness. These seemingly solid worlds can never be produced in the empty spirit of Brahma. Know this and go on freely in your own way.

¹⁷ Teachings cannot persuade men of little intelligence and doubtful minds of the truth. As long as they cannot comprehend the unity, they are ever apt to believe in the multiplicity of objects.¹⁸ No teaching or scripture can lead the ignorant to the knowledge of truth unless they can get rid of their prejudice of diversity which the creator Brahma has spread over the minds of men.

¹⁹ Rama asked, "Sage, I understand what you say, but I ask you to give some illustration so that I may understand better. ²⁰ What does the supreme Brahma do by assuming the title of Ego or thinking to himself he is an agent? (What happens when the notion of "I" arises in God?) You know everything, but the audience's understanding is less than satisfactory."

²¹ Vasishta replied:—

The Supreme One was quite indistinct. He assumes the title of Ego to himself and becomes divided and distinguished into the distinct essences of emptiness, space and its directions, and time with all its divisions. ²² Then the Ego assumes its personality and finds many such distinctions appearing before itself which are quite imperceptible in its state of impersonality. ²³ The knowledge of these empty principles and their qualities and attributes is preserved in the soul as abstract ideas. Afterwards they are expressed by certain symbolic sounds or words, which are also as empty as air. ²⁴ Thus the formless and empty principle of the Ego entertains in itself the ideas or knowledge of time and space in their ideal forms.

²⁵ This universe which appears as an expression of the ideal of the Ego and seems to be visible and substantial is in reality only the intangible Brahma appearing as the tangible non-Brahma. ²⁶ The world is truly the quiet spirit of Brahma. It is one with him without beginning, middle or end. It is truly the void of Brahma who assumes to himself the titles of Ego and the living soul, empty himself in his own vast and extensive empty self.

Chapter 213 — Rama's Prior Learning under Vasishta

¹ Vasishta continued:—

O Rama, the destroyer of your enemies, this same question which you asked me today, you asked me before when you were a student under my teaching.² In a former age we had a spiritual discourse when you were my student in a certain forest. The present is only a repetition of a past life. The wheel of life rolls and revolves constantly from age to age.³ I sat there as your teacher and you sat before me as my student. You asked me this very same question with the gravity of your understanding.

⁴ The Student said, “Sage who knows all things, please remove my doubt and difficulty. What perishes and doesn't perish in the final, great flood?”

⁵ The Teacher replied:—

My son, know that the traces of all things are utterly destroyed at the last deluge, just like your dreams disappear in your sound sleep.⁶ Hills and rocks on all ten sides of the earth are all destroyed without distinction. Nothing is left of the actions of men and the routine of their business.⁷ All beings are destroyed at the end, and the great void that is the receptacle of all bodies becomes a perfect void.

⁸ The gods Brahma, Vishnu, Indra, Rudra and others who are the prime causes of the causal agencies of this world all become extinct at the end of the world. No trace of them remains.⁹ All that remains is the great emptiness of Divine Consciousness which is ever existent without decay. This is known from the Divine Spirit who remains witness to both annihilations and regenerations of past and future worlds.

¹⁰ The Student said, “The entity never becomes a non-entity and the non-entity never becomes an entity. Therefore, tell me where the past world has gone when it disappears, and from where does the future world comes to existence?”

¹¹ The Teacher replied:—

This world, my boy, is not wholly destroyed. It is quite true that nothing never becomes anything and anything never proceeds from a nothing.¹² That which is an entity in reality can never become a non-entity. How can that which is nonexistent of itself ever become a nothing and nonexistent afterwards?

¹³ Where is the water in a mirage? Where are the two seeming moons seen in the sky? Where are the delusive hairs found floating in the air, and when does a false conception prove to be true?

¹⁴ My son, know that all these phenomena are mere delusions without any reality. They appear like the cities and towns in our dreams.¹⁵ They are liable to vanish from sight in the end, just like our dreams vanish upon waking, and just like our waking scenes vanish under the veil of sleep.¹⁶ When we wake up, we do not know where the city of our dream has vanished. When the universe vanishes at its dissolution, we are equally ignorant about its location in the chaotic void.

¹⁷ The Student asked, “If the world is a nothing as you say, then sage, please tell me what is it that appears to us and disappears by turns? What is that empty intellect which presents this extensive view before us? How does the void present its reflection as the fullness of space and to what purpose?”

¹⁸ The Teacher replied:—

My boy, the empty sphere of consciousness shines with its transparency. Its reflection is called the world. It is nothing else but this.¹⁹ It is the reflection of the widely extended substance of the great void of the intellect. This apparently material form is nothing other than the transparent form of that intellect.

²⁰ The incorporeal Brahman, like all corporeal bodies, presents both a fair and a dark complexion. He also discloses himself sometimes and hides at another, which causes the creation and annihilation of the world.²¹ The clarity of the Divine Spirit always remains the same and unaltered, whether before or after creation and its dissolution. It's like a fountain of clear water that always remains clear even though it may or may not reflect the shadows of bordering trees.

²² As a man remains unchanged in his sleep, whether he is dreaming or enjoying deep sleep, so the Spirit continues unchanged in its intellect, whether it is in the act of creation or annihilation.²³ The ideal world appears to be calm and quiet in both the dream of the dreamer and his sound sleep. This visible world of ours is always viewed as calm in the tranquil spirit of the Lord and in the tranquil spirit of the contemplative saint.

²⁴ Hence I do not recognize the existence of an emptiness or a sky anywhere that is independent of our soul. The same appears in the souls of others as it does in ours according to our view of it.²⁵ If we can perceive the light of our intellect even at the point of our death when the world disappears from us, then why should we not believe the same happens to others, that they also perceive the same intellectual light in their consciousness.

²⁶ The Student said, "If such is the case, that others who are awake have the same view of the world as the dreamer has in his dream, then I believe that all those who are living have the same view of the world as those who are dying."

²⁷ The Teacher replied:—

So it is, O my intelligent lad. The world does not appear in its real form because it appears as a reality to ordinary perception.²⁸ In reality, the world does not appear and is nothing. There is nothing in the world that has any reality to it. It is a mere reflection of the intellect, and there can be no reality in our false sight of it.²⁹ It is apparent and seems to be everywhere always, but it does not exist in any way anywhere or at anytime.³⁰ Because it is both the real and unreal form of Brahman, it is both a reality and an unreality. Being an intellectual void, it is never destroyed.

³¹ The empty entity of Supreme Consciousness exhibits the phenomena of creation and its destruction. If we have any degree of concern for it, it is only for our misery. We are unaffected if we remain altogether unconcerned with its casualties.³² All these appearances exist everywhere at all times in the same manner as they appear to the ignorant. But in truth, they appear nowhere in any manner or at anytime to the wise and learned.

³³ The same being appears as a god in one place and a pot in another. Here he is seen as a hill and there as a stream or valley. He is a tree here, a shrub there, and spreading grass in another. He is the moving and movable somewhere and the unmoving and unmovable elsewhere. He is fire and all other elements everywhere.³⁴ He is entity and nonentity, both emptiness and solidity. He is action and duration, and earth and sky likewise. He is the being and not being and their growth and their

destruction. He is good as well as the evil that attends on one and prohibits another.³⁵ There is nothing that is not he who, though one, is always all things in all places. He is in and out of everything and extends along the beginning, middle and end of all things. He is eternity and duration and the three divisions of time also.³⁶ He is all and exists in all things and in all places and times. Yet he is not the all and does not exist with anything at anytime or place.

Vasishta speaking:—

³⁷ Rama, know now that Brahman is the Universal Soul. He is all in all places and times. Because Brahman is the conscious soul, he exhibits all things to our consciousness like images in our dreams or the creatures of our imagination.

³⁸ The maker of a material world must have a material body. The framer of the woody trees must have a wooden frame. But the Lord God of all has no material body or shape.³⁹ Some make a mountain god the lord of all. Some even make and worship a human figure as the supreme god.⁴⁰ Some make a picture the lord and maker of all. Others make some image and worship it as the great god of all.

⁴¹ But there is only one Supreme Being who is the maker, supporter and the Lord God of all others. He is without beginning or end. The spirit of Lord Brahman upholds and supports all others.⁴² A straw-made image or an earthen pot is attributed with divine powers and is represented to be the most high. So the formless God is shown in frail images made and destroyed by human hands.

⁴³ An outward object is made the actor and enjoyer of acts. The wise know only consciousness to be the active and passive agent of all actions.⁴⁴ The truly wise acknowledge no active or passive agent of creation, although many among the wise recognize one God as the only actor and enjoyer of all.

⁴⁵ All these views may be probable and may very well apply to the most High, the sole object of all these theories, because there is nothing which can be positively affirmed or denied of Him.⁴⁶ All these believers see and manifest God as they desire in the empty space of their intellects, and by viewing the whole world in themselves, they remain without decay at all times.⁴⁷ All that is visible, all laws and prohibitions, and all desires and designs of men are confined within men as ideas. Hence those who are true to their faith and firm in the observance of their duties and performance of their acts, by seeing all of creation within themselves, truly are of the nature of the Divine Soul.

⁴⁸ This same doctrine was taught to you before, when you had been a student under my tutelage. But as you could not fully comprehend it then, you are condemned to another birth to learn it from me again.

⁴⁹ The world represents a long, dark and dreary winter night, yet is also presents the pure light of knowledge, shining with the serene and cooling beams of the autumn moon.

Now, O Rama, as you are improved by pure intelligence, shake off the impurity of dull ignorance and continue to discharge your duties as they have descended upon you and your royal race.⁵⁰ Remain released from your attachment to all things of this temporal world. Rely solely upon the one supreme and Universal Soul whose pure nature is perceptible throughout all nature. Be as clear as the transparent sky with the peace of your mind and delight of your soul. Learn to rule your realm with justice and impartiality.

Chapter 214 — Description of the Great Celebration

¹ Valmiki related:—

As the sage finished saying these things, the celestials sounded their trumpets from heaven and the clouds showered nectar-like rain. The face of the sky was whitened everywhere, as is if by snowdrifts in hoary winter, and the surface of the earth was covered by rain dropping like showers of flowers.² Earth appeared to be blessed with prosperity in the beauty of flowers stretching their pistils and stalks, like beautiful women with their evening decorations, and sending far away the fragrance of their powdery dust, like the perfume on the bodies of fairies. Their outer ornaments and inner cool sweetness are truly gifts of the gods.³ The rampant hurricane of heaven made flowers fall from the dried branches of heavenly trees. Vying with the glittering stars, the flowers scattered all over the face of the sky, laughing with bashful and blushing smiles.⁴ Then clouds descended upon the assembly hall with sounds of trumpets, drizzling raindrops and falling flowers, like snow falling on Himalaya's head, filling the assembly with wonder, gaping mouths and staring eyes.

⁵ The assembly seated in their order, took handfuls of these heavenly flowers and poured them upon Vasishtha with their obeisance, casting away all their earthly cares and sorrows with those celestial offerings to the sage.

⁶ King Dasharata said, “O wonder that we are so lightly released of our cares and sorrows in this wide extended vale of miseries of the world. Our souls are now lightened of their pain by your grace, like the heavy clouds lightened of their weight and at last floating lightly on the Himalayas.⁷ We have reached the goal of our acts and we have seen the end of our miseries in this life. We have fully known the knowable one and we have found our rest in that supreme state.”

⁸ “We know to rest in the ultimate void in our meditation and to get rid of our false thoughts of bodies by our intense application to the abstract,⁹ by ridding ourselves from the inventions and wanderings of our imagination, by escaping from the hot passion for the sights of this dream world, by ceasing to mistake the shells of clams for silver, by our deliverance from falsely judging ourselves as dead either in our sleep or dream,¹⁰ by our knowledge that the wind and its movement are identical and water is the same as its fluidity, by our distrust in this magical world and fairyland of our fancy,¹¹ by our disbelief in the magical scenes of this world and the aerial castles of fairies, by our mistrust of water in a mirage, gardens in the sky, and double moons of heaven,¹² by knowing it is no earthquake if our tottering footsteps should shake and slip in our drunkenness, and by not seeing a ghost in a shadow as children do, or seeing the braids of hair hanging down from the clouds in heaven.¹³ Sage, from these and other examples that you have given for our instruction, you have suddenly erased our belief in the visible sights of this world.”

¹⁴ Rama added, “My ignorance is dispelled. I have come to the knowledge of truth by your good grace. O chief of sages, I acknowledge you as having brought me from impenetrable darkness to light.

¹⁵ I am freed from my doubts and set to the light of the true nature of God. Now I will act as you say, acknowledging the transparent truth (of viewing God as manifest in nature).¹⁶ Remembering and reconsidering your words, so filled with ambrosial sweetness and full of delightful taste, I am filled with fresh delight, though already satisfied and refreshed by their sense.”

¹⁷ “I have nothing to do for myself at present, nor is there anything left for me to do. I am as I am and have ever been, always without any craving for myself. ¹⁸ What way can there be to our true bliss other than what you have shown? Otherwise, I find this wide-extended field of the earth is full of only sorrow and misery. ¹⁹ I have no foe to annoy me or a friend to give me any joy. I have no field to work in, no enemy to fear, and no good soul to rely upon. Our misunderstanding makes this world appear so troublesome, while our good sense makes it all agreeable.”

²⁰ “How could we know all this without your good grace? It is never possible for a boy to cross over a river without the assistance of a boat or a bridge.”

²¹ Lakshman said, “I have come to know the truth today through your divine sermon, holy sage. You have removed the doubts that had been inherent and inherited in my repeated births. All this is by virtue of the merit I acquired in former births. I feel the radiance of a holy light in me, shining as brightly as the cooling beams of moonlight. ²² It is strange that men disregard this heavenly bright light and become entangled in a thousand errors to be burnt in the end like dried wood by their foul mistake and great misfortune.”

²³ Vishwamitra said, “Through our great merit we have heard this holy lecture from the mouth of the sage which has cleansed our inner souls like a thousand baths in the clear stream of the Ganges.”

²⁴ Rama said, “We have seen the highest peak of all prosperity and the best of all that is to be seen. We have known the end of all learning and the last extremity of adversity. We have seen many countries and heard many speeches, but never have we heard or seen or known anything better than the discourse on the beauty of the soul which the sage has shown to us today.”

²⁵ Narada added, “Today our ears are purified from hearing what we have never heard before, whether preached by Brahma, the gods above, or men below.”

²⁶ Lakshman replied, “Sage, you have entirely dispelled all our inner and outer darkness. You have shown us the transcendent light of the bright sun of the Divine Soul.”

²⁷ Satrughna said, “I am satisfied and tranquilized and thought free in the Supreme Soul. I am forever full and perfect in myself. I sit quite content with my singleness.”

²⁸ Dasharata repeated, “By the merit of our deeds of repeated lives, O chief of sages, we have been sanctified this day by your sacred and sanctifying speech.”

²⁹ Valmiki related:—

As the king and his courtiers were speaking this way, the sage opened his mouth again and spoke words filled with pure and purifying knowledge. ³⁰ Vasishta said, “Hear me, O moonlike king of Raghu’s race, and do as I ask. Rise now and honor the assembled brahmins who deserve their due honor at the close of a discourse. ³¹ Rise therefore and satisfy their desires with your plentiful gifts. Thereby you will obtain the merit that attends on the learning of the Vedas, doing your duties according to their dictates. ³² It is the obligation of even a mean, worm-like man to honor the brahmins to their utmost at the end of a sermon on salvation. How much more important it is for a monarch to discharge this necessary duty.”

³³ Hearing this command of the sage, the king held reverent silence and signaled his messengers to go

to all ten sides of his dominions and invite thousands of brahmins who were acquainted with the Vedas to come without delay to the royal court.³⁴ He ordered them to go to Mathura, Surashtra and Gauda and bring with due respect all the brahmins born of Vedic families who lived in those districts.

³⁵ More than ten thousands of brahmins assembled at the royal palace. The king fed them all alike, paying particular regard to the more learned among them.³⁶ He treated them with the best sorts of food and rice, honored them with their rewards, and gave them a good many gifts. After honoring them in this manner; he offered his oblations to the spirits of his departed ancestors and gave his offerings to the family gods of his house.³⁷ Next King Dasharata treated his friends and relatives with proper food, then fed his companions and servants and the citizens all on the same day. His attention was at last directed to the feeding of the poor and needy, and of the lame and blind and lunatics.

³⁸ Having discharged the duties of the festival to his utmost, he commanded a great festival to be held in his hall, all decorated with silk and embroidery and with gold, gems and pearls.³⁹ The city was adorned and lighted like the ever bright Mount Meru. There were celebrations and merry dancing of exuberant girls and players in every house.⁴⁰ Bells rang and cymbals sounded everywhere, drums beating at every door. Flutes and wind instruments blew on every side, and guitars and stringed instruments were played competing with each other.⁴¹ Markets were closed. Buyers and sellers stopped their business. Raised arms of merry dancers in the streets, shaking and waving, looked like a grove of plants shaking in the air. The glittering light of the teeth of strolling players, displayed in their comic dance and loud laughter, looked like the starry heaven.⁴² There were heroic dances attended by the players' loud shouts, and melodramas accompanied by the soft and sweet musical compositions of performers. There was also a staggering and strutting dance on one leg, thumping the ground with the other.

⁴³ Here they flung flower wreaths glittering like stars and falling down in showers. Flowers scattered over the ground like raindrops were indiscriminately trodden under the feet of passersby.⁴⁴ Here actresses danced with loose ornaments and gestures of love. There the bards chanted their hymns with clarity as brahmins recited and songstresses sang.⁴⁵ Here fools and drunkards drank their fill of wine and food mongers fed upon their foods of various kinds.

⁴⁶ The insides of houses were whitewashed like bodies of princes with ointments of moonlight color.

⁴⁷ Servants and maids attending on the king idly walked about adorned in flashy clothes of various colors. They graced the royal festival with their decorations of necklaces and sweet perfumes on their bodies.⁴⁸ Sprightly ballet girls, smeared with perfumed pastes and decorated with glittering ornaments, promptly ran to the ball at the royal hall.

⁴⁹ Thus King Dasharata entertained for a whole week, passing a full seven nights in festive rejoicing while he distributed gifts and food for as many days, which contributed to inexhaustible prosperity on earth.

Chapter 215 — Eulogy on This Work and the Mode of Its Recital

¹ Valmiki said:—

O most intelligent Bharadwaja, the chief of my students, now you have heard how the great Rama and others came to the knowledge of the knowable One. They passed across this vale of misery and sorrow by attending to these lectures.

² Fix your sight upon the light of Brahman and conduct yourself gladly by abandoning all your affections and cares of this world and by remaining brave with your living liberation and tranquility of mind. ³ O you sinless one, know that the learned and the humble do not mix with worldly men but remain steady as Rama and others in their right principles. They are never liable to be deluded although they are troubled by temptations on all sides. ⁴ Thus these men of great natures such as King Dasharata, Prince Rama and his brothers, together with their companions, all attained the state of the living liberated.

⁵ Now, my son Bharadwaja who naturally is of a liberal mind, you have become more liberated by hearing these sermons on the salvation of souls. ⁶ It is possible even for children to obtain liberation by attention to those holy lectures. They are the most evident and surest means to salvation. Therefore they cannot fail to convince you of their truth. ⁷ The high minded, sinless and sorrow-less sons of Raghu's race attained the holy state of perfection and self-liberation. So you also obtain that best and highest state by attending upon the lectures of the divine sage Vasishta. ⁸ Weak men of good understanding can know the knowable though the advice of the good and service under the great, and by humble questions and the explanations of the learned, just as the Raghavas and others did under Vasishta.

⁹ The ties of greed and affection that have tightly bound the hearts of the ignorant all tend to prevent them, like playful children, from inquiring into the means of their liberation, until they become too old to benefit by their knowledge. ¹⁰ Only those who can discern the minds of high minded men can come to the knowledge of truth. Only such men no longer return to this world of sorrow. This is the substance of all that I can speak to you. ¹¹ Having first received your instruction from the teacher, you must weigh well and digest its meaning in yourself. Then communicate its sense to the most sensible and intelligent student. Sages and saints say that this constitutes the three liberal arts of science. Know this and you need no more to become wise when your boyhood is over.

¹² Whoever read this book with some understanding of its meaning, and whoever copies it without expectation of getting a fee, and whoever recites or causes it to be recited either with or without any desire of reward, shall have his ample reward in the land of the Aryas. ¹³ These men receive the same reward as performing a *rajasuya* sacrifice. They are entitled to heavenly seats in their pure essence as often as they ascend after their death on earth, and until they attain final liberation.

¹⁴ The god Brahma of unknowable form first composed this work in his excellent diction. Considering it to be the only means to liberate mankind, Brahma had revealed it to the assembly of saints. Therefore let nobody take the truth of this saying to be an untruth.

¹⁵ At the close of reciting these lectures on the way to attain human salvation, it is suitable for every sensible man to honor brahmins with diligence and serve them with desirable gifts of food and drink

and furnish them with good houses for their lodging.¹⁶ They should also be rewarded with gifts and payments and supplied with money to their hearts' desire and to the utmost capacity of the donor. Then the giver or master of the ceremony should rest assured of having discharge his duty and reaped the merit according to the intent of the scriptures.

¹⁷ Thus I have repeated to you this great scripture which explains divine knowledge and pure truth with many great tales and stories that serve as examples and illustrations so that you may clearly understand these concealed doctrines. May your hearing these serve to lead you to utter indifference of this world and to desire your liberation while you are alive in this world. May this also tend to your continued prosperity and engage your attention towards perfection of your knowledge and devotion, and to the discharge of the duties of your station in life without fail.

Chapter 216 — The Celestial Messenger's Message of Liberation

¹ Valmiki continued to say:—

Thus I have related to you, O King Arishtanemi, whatever the pot-born Vasishta taught and preached to the princes. It is certain that you will attain the same elevated state as they did by hearing these lectures on sacred knowledge.

² King Arishtanemi replied:—

O venerable sage, your kind look is enough to free us from bondage in this world. Hence I am not only brought to light, but saved from the ocean of this world by your favor.”

³ The Heavenly Messenger said (to the apsara Suruchi):—

After saying this, King Arishtanemi seemed amazed. Then he began to speak these words to me with a graceful voice. ⁴ The King said, “I bow down to you, O divine messenger, and wish all safety to attend on you. It is said that the friendship of the good is attended with seven benefits, all of which you have conferred upon me. ⁵ Now return safely to your seat in the heaven of Indra. Know that I am both gladdened and grown unconcerned with worldly concerns by hearing this discourse from you. ⁶ I shall continue to remain here for ever more without feeling any anxiety. I will think well and ponder deeply into the sense of all that I have heard from you.”

Now I tell you, O lady, that I was quite surprised to see so much courteous behavior on the part of a king. ⁷ He said, “I have never heard before such words filled with so much knowledge as I have come to hear from you. It has filled my inner spirit with as much joy as if I have drunk my fill of ambrosial nectar.”

⁸ Then I came to you, O sinless apsara, at the asking of Valmiki, in order to relate to you all that you have asked of me. Now I shall turn my path towards the celestial city of Indra.

⁹ The apsara said:—

Now I must thank you, O very fortunate messenger of the gods, for all that you have related to me. My knowledge of this and its benign influence has entirely calmed my spirit. ¹⁰ I am quite satisfied in myself, and will remain always free from sorrow and all the sickening cares of life. You may now go to your destination at Indra’s world with all speed attending on your journey there.

Agnivesya speaking:—

¹¹ So saying Suruchi, the best of the apsara nymphs, continued to keep her seat on the slope of the Himalayas, near the Gandhamadana Mount of fragrance, and reflect on the sense of what she had heard of divine knowledge. ¹² Now my son, as you have fully heard all the teachings of Vasishta, you are at liberty to do as you like upon considering well their meaning.

¹³ Karanya said:—

The memory of the past, the sight of the present, and the talk of future events, together with the existence of the world are all as false as the sights in our dreams or of water in a mirage or the birth of a child to a barren woman. ¹⁴ I gain nothing from my deeds, nor lose anything by what is left undone. I live to do as it happens, or at the impulse of the occasion and without any effort on my part.

¹⁵ Agastya said:—

O Sutikshna, saying thus Karunya, the worthy son of Agnivesya, continued to pass his time in the discharge of his duties, as they occurred to him from time to time. ¹⁶ You, O Sutikshna, should never keep any doubts regarding the acts you must perform after you attain divine knowledge. Doubt destroys the virtue of the deed, just as selfishness takes away its merit.

Unnamed person speaking:—

¹⁷ Upon hearing the sage's speech which reconciles the two incompatible fields of action and reflection into the unity of their combination, Sutikshna bowed to his teacher and uttered the following words with due submission to him.

¹⁸ Sutikshna said:—

Any action done in ignorance of the actor is reckoned as no act of his. It is one's act only if done with full knowledge. But actions done with reason by reasonable men are invaluable in their nature. All our acts are best seen by the light of the intellect, just like the actions of actors on a stage lit by candlelight. ¹⁹ The presence of the Supreme Soul in us, the action of our hearts, directs the motions of our bodies. It is like the malleability of gold that allows it to be molded into many forms of jewelry. ²⁰ The great body of waters gives rise to roaring waves and little playful waves that heave and move in our sight. So the inherence of the great Soul fills great and small alike.

²¹ I submit and bear with all that happens to me because there is no escape from destiny and no neglecting the sound sayings of sages. O venerable sage, I acknowledge my knowledge of the knowable one only by your good grace. ²² I owe it to myself to be quite happy with your favor. I prostrate on the ground before you for lifting me up from the sorrowful pit of the world. There is no other way to repay my gratitude to my venerable teacher. ²³ There is no other act whereby one may express one's obligation to the teacher for his salvation in this world. I can only offer myself to your service with my whole body and mind and the words of my mouth.

²⁴ By your good grace, O my good sage, I have passed over the ocean of this world. I am filled with infinite joy amidst all these worlds. I am set free from all my doubts. ²⁵ I bow down to that Brahman who is sung of in the Sama Veda as filling all this universe, like the waters of the ocean fill the boundless deep, whose memory fills our souls with ecstasy. ²⁶ I also bow down to sage Vasishta who is pure knowledge incarnate, who is immersed in the joyous ecstasy of divine bliss, who is beyond all duality and sees only the one in the unity of infinite emptiness, who is ever like the pure and stainless one, who witnesses the innermost of all minds, who is beyond all states and conditions, and who is quite devoid of the three qualities.

²⁷ Here ends the Maharamayana of sage Vasishta with its continuation by his recorder Valmiki and the speech of the celestial messenger at the latter end of the Book on Nirvana, the ultimate extinction of the living soul.