

YOGA VAASISHTA

Part V

THE CALM DOWN

1. Background:

We had seen in Part II and III of our Series on Yogavaasishta that the venerated Vedic dictum:

*“Yatovaa imani bhutani jaayante
Yena jaataani jeevanti”* - Taittiriya Upanishad

was the fundamental principle based on which Sage Vasishtha designed the course of his talks in imparting philosophical wisdom to Lord Rama. After an opening discussion as an introductory to the subjects of detachment and intense longing for liberation, (Part I of this Series on Yogavaasishta), the sage dealt with Origination (*Utpatti*) of the visible universe (*Jagat*) and later its Sustenance (*Sthiti*) in accordance with the above scriptural statement. In the chapter on Creation (Part II in this Series) it was maintained that the origination of the universe was purely incidental to the mind of the onlooker. In the chapter on Sustenance (Part III in this Series) it was established that the universe draws its sustenance also from mind. Now it remains to be shown that the dissolution of the universe too is dependent on the mind of the seer.

But could the dissolution, i.e. ending of the universe, depend on mind? If mind at all exists, the universe inevitably follows it one way or other - either by origination or by sustenance. So there is no possibility of the universe being annulled by the mind if the mind manages to continue its existence. For this reason it was repeatedly pointed out in the earlier chapters (refer to Part II and III of Yogavaasishta) that the universe would end only when the mind ended and there was no other way to dissolve the universe. Sage Vasishtha, hence, counseled Lord Rama to make the best of effort to eradicate the mind. After delivering such a sermon, there hardly remains anything further to be added. Therefore, Sage Vasishtha did not want to talk any more about ending the world. Instead he planned to discuss the ways and means of annihilating mind.

As a matter of fact, Vasishtha did not prefer the word ‘annihilation’. Instead he talked of “Calming down” the mind. “Calming down” here implies quietening. It is like containing fire. Like extinguishing flames. An ember may burn for sometime; but subsequently the fire dies out. The shape of the original piece of wood or coal from which the ember had come remains even after the fire gets extinguished. Similarly when once the mind is dissolved, the world (*Jagat* = universe) also gets extinguished though remaining in form like a burnt out ember. The world gets contained. It is subjugated, quietened. It is dissolved.

Accordingly, the subject matter Sage Vasishtha tackles in the fifth Chapter Upasama (The Calm Down) of Yogavaasishta concerns questions like: What are the ways and means of dissolving the mind? What methods can be adopted to achieve a quiet mind? Which processes help in calming down the mind?

Sage Vasishtha from this Chapter on turns his attention to a discussion on the applied aspects – developing methods of practice from the theory so far spoken about. Aspirants of liberation, therefore, hold this 5000 *sloka* (verse) strong Chapter in very high esteem. It is considered as an invaluable source of techniques for practical observance (*saadhana*).

2. Valmiki's Narrative Skills:

Sage Valmiki, the author of Yogavaasishta, was a great poet and a skillful storyteller. He uses his own inimitable style of lyrical elegance in depicting the shift in gear adopted by Sage Vasishtha in steering the discussions towards the practical side.

Sage Valmiki writes thus:

Sage Vasishtha's teaching continued for a period of ten days with two sessions a day – one in the morning and another in the afternoon. On the eleventh day, however, Vasishtha ended the day's discourse by noon. He said that they should meet again the next day.

Uncharacteristically deviating from the main story at this point, Sage Valmiki, for the first time in Yogavaasishta, resorts to a detailed presentation on the daily ritualistic acts of ablutions observed by Sage Vasishtha. He also depicts the routine followed by the Royalty of the time in general and that of Rama and his brothers in particular. The minute-by-minute activities on that specific afternoon were spelt out very meticulously. (This digression on daily rituals has a significant message for spiritual aspirants, as we shall see shortly.)

Though Rama had gone through his daily chores as usual, his mind was totally occupied with Sage Vasishtha's teachings. In fact his mind was so infatuated with these thoughts that its state could be compared to that of a youthful elephant in heat:

kariṇīm kalabho yathā (sarga2- śloka 13)

It is quite appropriate to take the word “*Kalabha*” here to mean an adolescent he-elephant. It is well known that he-elephants in heat chase the female elephants with unswerving focus. Rama too was similarly ruminating on every word of Vasishtha with single-minded attention.

As the night progressed, all his brothers fell asleep. But Rama was unable to get even a wink. He sat up on the bed. He recalled each word spoken by Sage Vasishtha sequentially from day one. He reviewed and examined every statement incisively. Not stopping at that, he analyzed the truth behind each of the statements in his own way. Commendable indeed was the one-pointed attention of the Lad, Rama!

ki midam nāma saṁsāra
bhramaṇam ki mime janāḥ |
bhūtāni ca vicitrāṇi
ki māyānti prayānti kim || (sarga 2 -śloka 14)

“What is this world? What are all these people? What are the elements (*Pancha bhutas*) that constitute the world? Wherefrom do they come? How do they form? Where do they go to and how?”

He mused over again and again Sage Vasishtha's teachings recollecting each section and each chapter.

Soon it was dawn. The Royal bands began playing auspicious tunes of wake up calls. As Rama was already awake, he proceeded straight to complete his morning ablutions after a bath. His brothers followed him. All of them went to Sage Vasishtha's hermitage. They found Vasishtha in deep meditation. So Rama and his brothers waited for Vasishtha to conclude the latter's meditation.

It was full morning by then. Several nobles, princes, saints, and many others also reached Vasishtha's abode. Vasishtha got up after a while and greeted everybody. Thereafter, he went to King Dasaratha's (Rama's father) court by a chariot along with Sage Viswamitra who was also camping at Vasishtha's hermitage. Sri Rama and his retinue walked in front of the chariot paying their respect to Vasishtha and welcoming him to the Royal court. All persons took up their respective positions in Dasaratha's court. King Dasaratha enquired about the welfare of Sage Vasishtha. He praised Vasishtha on the excellent education being imparted by him to Rama and others. He then asked Rama to get his doubts, if any, cleared.

As we already said, there was a good reason for Sage Valmiki to describe elaborately the daily routine and rituals as well as the churnings going on in Rama's mind while penning the eleventh day discourse. Valmiki is indirectly conveying that whatever may be the state of spiritual attainment of a person, whatever may be the level of philosophical knowledge, he should not forsake the daily routine sanctioned and prescribed by Vedas. We can infer this from the description of the schedule followed by Vasishtha. Rama's observance of prescribed ablutions, in spite of himself being firmly absorbed in Self-inquiry, indicates to us that all aspirants, irrespective of their state of renunciation and intensity of Self-inquiry, have necessarily to fulfill their daily obligations.

Next comes the question as to why did Vasishtha discontinue the lessons on the afternoon of the eleventh day. This intermission was introduced with a purpose. It was to emphasize the fact that it would not suffice to merely audition a course in philosophy continuously by an aspirant. The aspirant had to digest what was taught, mull it over and thoroughly understand what was taught leaving no scope for even an iota of doubt to linger. Every teacher should adopt this method of providing a break, as was done by Vasishtha, so that the student has time for reflection and a self-review. Teaching should be resumed only after such breaks.

This interpretation is not a guess or an assumption on our part. Vasishtha implied as much. When King Dasaratha (Rama's father) encouraged Rama to come up with well thought out questions for clarity on what was so far taught to him, Vasishtha did not let Rama speak. Instead he posed some questions to Rama.

kaccit smarasi vākyārtham
pūrvāpara vicāritam
kaccit smarasi sarvāsām
vibhāga marimardana

vākyārthaścakhilaḥ kaṣcit
tvayā rāma vicāritaḥ

hyastansya vicārasya
rātrau ṛḍiniveeśitaḥ (sarga 4 śloka 11)

“Rama! Did you recall what was taught by me and mentally revise it? Did you review the number of ways I classified the subject matter? Did you examine fully the meaning of my words? Please appreciate that any thing taught will be effective only if one repeatedly mulls over it in one’s own mind!”

Not stopping at that, Vasishtha summarized what had been taught thus far and asked Rama if the latter could remember everything.

The purpose of providing half-day break in his tutoring can be inferred from the following questions posed by Vasishtha:

Vasishtha:

hyastanasya vicārasya rātrau ṛḍi niveeśitaḥ
(sarga 4- śloka 21)

“Did you review the day’s lessons each night? Do you remember every topic?”

Rama’s reply was fittingly appropriate.

Rama:

apāsta nidreṇa mayā
vākyaṛtho ṛḍi cintitaḥ! (sarga 4-śloka 26)

“I thought over the issues through out the night without resting even for a moment.”

3. What Originates and Grows is merely the Mind :

As Rama did not have any clarifications to be sought in what was imparted thus far, he did not raise any questions. So, Vasishtha continued with his discourse.

Vasishtha: “Please listen to me carefully as I shall now teach you the most supreme of all topics — ways to calm down the mind. Just like pillars bear the weight of a building, *Raajasic* and *Taamasic* people carry on their shoulders the unlimited illusion of a world. But *Satvic* natured persons like you can leave this burden as easily as a snake sheds its skin. The only way to do it is through an understanding of the essence of Truth (*tatva vicharana*).

“Whatever is not existent at the beginning and also at the end, but appears only in-between cannot be Real. Whatever stays permanently at all times (past, present and future) only can be True. How does a thing that has no existence at the beginning and at the end appear to be born and to exist in-between? The fact of the matter is neither anything is born nor anything has grown. All of this is entirely a play of the mind!”

jāyatee mana eevēha
mana eeva vivardhatee |
samyagdarśana drṣṭyā tu
mana eeva hi mucyate || (sarga 5- śloka11)

“What is born here is mind, what develops is also mind. If you consider properly, what is liberated also is mind!”

Rama: “You said so very clearly earlier too. It is for sure that the one who is bewitched by the illusory world is mind; what ages and dies too is mind. Certainly I could understand that. Revered Teacher! Please show the way to transcend the mind.”

Vasishta: “Listen then, Rama. There are seven steps to achieve this. They are:

1. Study scriptures from the very beginning.
2. Keep company of noble persons (*Sajjana sangatya*) and draw the benefits of the Four-fold Accomplishments (*Sadhana Chatustaya Sampatti*).
3. Purify the mind or in other words cultivate complete renunciation.
4. Take refuge under a learned teacher giving up any egoistic feelings.
5. If the teacher recommends worshipping a deity with attributes (*saguna*), follow his advice and pray to that deity observing all the prescribed rituals. Thus obtain the blessings of the deity.
6. Proceed then with an enquiry into the Truth of “Self”.
7. Only after that an individual will be able to realize the Supreme Self hidden minutely within one’s own self like the way a prospector recognizes a particle of gold in (a heap of) muck.”

“If one goes along these steps sequentially, it becomes clear that the Supreme Self is different from the embodied worldly living-being. A leaf of lotus may exist in water or water may fall on a lotus leaf; but neither one sticks to the other. Similarly the Supreme Self does not get affected by either worldliness (*samsaratva*) or by being an individual self (*jivatva*). World and the Supreme Self are totally irreconcilable. Even then, there is an impression created as if the perfect Self is embodied and is immersed within the affairs of the world. The reason for this is mind. I have been saying this many times and to many people.”

pr̥thagātmā pr̥thagdeehī
jala padmalavoopamau
ūrdhva bāhurvi raumyeṣa
na ca kascicchṛṇoti mee | (sarga 5 sloka 26)

“I holler from roof tops (*lit.* shout with hands thrown up in air). But nobody cares.”
(This sentence is usually ascribed to Sage Vyasa. It appears here in Yogavaasishta also. May be it proves that all great minds speak alike!)

Vasishta: “Rama! People think that they experience sorrow and happiness in the world. In reality for whom is this sorrow or happiness? Is it for the inert body or for the Supreme Self that transcends everything? It is not possible for sorrow and happiness to impact the inert body. There is no question of sorrow or happiness affecting Self which transcends them. Obviously then, nobody has happiness or sorrow!”

“Everything in this world is imbued with Supreme Self. Supreme Self is infinite. It is ever tranquil. Hold on firmly to this view.”

“I talked sometime ago about “Creation and Visualization (*Srishti – drishti*).” I said to you that the entire ‘visible world’ (i.e. ‘creation’), was nothing but ‘visualization’.

Nothing was really created. The visible world (visualization of the creation) is no more than ripples in a pond. Or specks of light that appear to a giddy person.

“Rama! Do not worry whether the visible world and Reality (Brahman) are one and the same or two different things. Answering either way would be wrong because the world you see is an apparition. Suppose you see a snake at dusk. You find out later under good light that it was actually a rope. The snake is not there any more. Now would you say that the snake and rope are one or two different things? One may argue that they are different because the rope was not seen as such and a snake had been seen. Another may dissent saying that they should be considered as one because a snake, distinctly separate from the rope, could not be found again. But in fact both arguments are visualization-based (*drishti vada*)!

“Strictly speaking, the rope and the snake are not one; nor are they two (different things). In a similar vein, *Brahman* and *jagat* are not one or two. That is the reason why Vedas declare, “*Sarvam khalvidam Brahma*” (Everything here is Brahman), “*Aatmaivedam sarvam*” (All this here is Self only), “*Brahmaivedam sarvam*” (Everything here is Brahman only) and many equivalent statements.

“Therefore, Rama, let go of the false impressions like “I am different (from that) – that is different (from me).” Go beyond dualities. Stay forever in *Satvic* Quality (*satva guna*). Do not go after acquiring and saving things. Do not allow sorrow to affect you. Be calm and serene and live in aloneness. Subjugate your thought processes.

“Rama, accept things as they come. Do not regret to experience things. Don’t wish for any thing. Do not exert yourself to procure any thing. Do not fantasize. Do not invite nor reject anything.

“If you follow the above, Rama, you will attain the Supreme state transcending the world. By this way you will not be deluded even if you are involved with the world.”

eekātapatra mavanau guruṇoopadiṣṭam
samyaksupālaya ciram samayeeha dṛṣṭyā |
rājyaṁ samasta guṇa rañjita rājalookaḥ
tyāgoo na yukta iha karmasu nā pirāgaḥ || (sarga 5 -śloka 54)

“Rama! If your father crowns you, take over the reins of the kingdom and rule well with equipoise. Inspire other kings with your exemplary deeds. Having secured this life as a result of the past deeds, it does not befit a wise person who knows truth to refuse what is obtained or long for something that is not acquired.”

This is a new punch Sage Vasishtha gives to his teachings at the end of the Fifth Sarga. The next Sarga opens with a justification for what has been said.

4. Know that You are not the ‘Doer’:

Vasishtha: “Rama!

imaṁ viśva parisandam
karoomītyastavāsanam |

pravartatee yaḥ kāryeṣu
sa mukta iti mee matiḥ || (sarga 6- śloka 1)

“What is action or work done? Work done is displacement. I stated this in the very first chapter. I talked about three types of displacements or movements. They are:

Samvit spanda — Movement of Knowledge
Manasa spanda — Movement of Mind
Indriya spanda — Movement of Organs

“These three joined together become the world. Ignorant persons presumptuously claim “doership” (ownership of action) for certain of the movements (actions or works done) in this world. Impressions (*vasanas*) of the past births are the reason for such a presumption. Suppose a person rids himself of all the past impressions. Would he be still involved in actions? Surely he would be. But he has no claim of doership for the actions. He feels that actions just go on like iron filings moving towards a magnet.

“In my opinion, whoever thus lives in this world free of past impressions and without a claim of doership is a liberated person.

“Hence, Rama, perform all actions with no claim for ‘doership’. An ignoramus (*tamasic* individual) performs actions with a desire for or against something. Therefore he swings between heaven and hell. On the contrary, the pure and pious (*satvic* individuals) perform actions after a deep philosophical analysis freeing themselves from bondage of desires. They achieve “*Nishkevalam padam*” – liberation (Sarga 6; Sloka 5).”

(We may note here that Sage Valmiki used the word *Nishkevalam* instead of *kaivalyam* (absolute Oneness). *Nishkevalam padam* means *nitaram kevalam padam* i.e. absolute aloneness).

Vasishta: “*Rajasic* and *Satvic* individuals may in early stages go through a few ordinary births. They steadily improve their *satvic* quality and attain liberation. That is the way things move normally. Sometimes there could be exceptions. An individual, because of his good deeds in past births, may suddenly obtain Supreme Knowledge. It just happens like a bolt from the blue even in the absence of a Guru. It could be associated with an extraordinary event. I shall tell you a true story in order to illustrate this.”

5. The Song of Saints (Siddha Gita):

“King Janaka ruled a country called Videha. He was well known as a noble king. He went for a stroll in the nearby Himalaya Mountains on a morning during spring season. He was wandering around the hills and vales when he heard some melodious songs. A few saints sitting in a grove were singing in captivating tunes. He placed himself behind a tree and listened intently to their songs. The lyrics were somewhat as follows:

First Song:

“Senses, (eyes, ears and so on),
And the worldly objects
Conjoined together
Kindle processes
Which produce
Blissful flashes of Awareness.

That (Awareness) in truth is Self
If probed in depth.”

“Explanation of the Song: “Suppose you see a beautiful flower. You experience happiness. What exactly is happening here? A contact is established between your eye and the flower. That stimulates your cognitive processes. A response wave is generated in your mind. Pleasure is experienced as a result. Wherefrom had the pleasure come? It had not come from anywhere outside. It is there everywhere! Under ordinary circumstances, it is concealed because of illusion. It is covered up by a veil. In the instant example, a mental process caused by a flower partially and temporarily lifted the veil. A streak of glee flashed across as a result of this uncovering. But the individual does not realize that the ecstasy experienced is part of the infinite Supreme Consciousness present everywhere. He thinks that the blissful pleasure has come from the beautiful flower. Therefore, the veil comes back and obscures the all-pervading joy. A person, who understands this process, realizes infinite pleasure in every sensory experience, irrespective of the specific sensory faculty through which it is perceived. He disregards the object and immerses himself in the Supreme Bliss. He sees only the rapturous Supreme Self in every object of the world. And that is the way we contemplate upon. Thus is the notion conveyed by this song of the holy saints.”

Second Song:

draṣṭṛ darśana drśyāni
tyaktvā vāsanayā saha |
darśana prathamābhāsaṁ
ātmānaṁ samupāsmāhee || (sarga 10- śloka 8)

(This is a highly meaningful verse. We should try understanding the wisdom behind the original Sanskrit words in order to appreciate fully the profundity of the message. Therefore, we leave this song as it is without rendering it into English lyrics.)

“Explanation of the Song: “Every individual who is bound is governed by triads (*triputi*). The triad of Seer-Seeing-Seen is the most common (and hence important) of all the triads. The three components of the triad in seeing the objective world are:

I am the seer
It is **I** performing the **act** of seeing or **I see**
All this is **seen by me**.

These are respectively referred to in Sanskrit as:

Drashta - Subject;
Darsana - Predicate;
Drisyā - Object.

“These three thoughts are fundamental to every one. Impressions (*vasanas*) carried forward from previous births are the cause for the occurrence of the above triad (three thoughts). If one has to free oneself from the triad, impressions from past births have to cease. Is there a way to end the impressions?

“We experience several perceptions in our daily life. I see, I eat, I hear and so on are all sensory perceptions! At the head of any of these statements is “I.” “I” is at the beginning of every action. If “I” is the true seer, what should “I” perceive first? “I” should see itself

first as “I” is closest to itself. Every individual commits the mistake of missing to perceive “I” which is the nearest and which exists everywhere; however, he/she easily “perceives” the distant objects (objective world). Correcting this mistake, if “I” can see “I” in the very first action of seeing, the impressions of past births come to an end. What is seen first in such a process of seeing is the Supreme Self. And that is the way we contemplate upon. Thus is the concept behind this song of the holy saints.”

Third Song:

“Staying neutral betwixt disputants
Of the debates on whether Self ‘Is’ or ‘Isn’t,’
Remaining a mute witness
To Being and Not-being
It is but Supreme Self
That shows them both.”

“Explanation of the Song: “There is an unending debate on whether Self exists or not. Persons holding diametrically opposing views argue on forever. One school of thought sees the Self as non-existing. Another school sees Self as existing. But “Self” itself stays neutral in the debate. It remains a mere witness of both beingness and non-beingness. It shows beingness to those who say It ‘is’ and shows non-beingness to those who say It ‘is not’. Therefore, we contemplate on that ever-existing Supreme Self who is just a witness beyond beingness and non-beingness. Thus is the gist of this song of the holy saints.”

Fourth Song:

“Inside what,
Belonging to who
Because of who,
For whom,
By who and
About what
Did the world form?
Self Supreme Is That.”

“Explanation of the Song: “In this song all cases (like, nominative, genitive, accusative) are used. There are seven cases in Sanskrit language and a reverse order from Seventh to the Second is followed in framing the questions and the song ends with the First Case. The questions emulate approximately the Vedic statements like:

*“Yatova imani bhutani jayante!
Yena jatani jeevanti
Yatprayamtyabhisam visamtiti!!”*

“It conveys the sense that one should meditate upon that eternal Supreme Self which, precedes and follows every thing seen in the world. Thus is the view of the holy saints.”

Fifth Song:

“ ‘A’ is at the head and ‘Z’ is at the tail-end
All other sounds (letters) are in-between.
The word AZ (*Aham*) joining both ends
Is truly Self Supreme.”

(The third song is developed based on Sanskrit language. A little acquaintance with Sanskrit is necessary to bring out the beauty in this song. Sanskrit alphabet has 49 letters. The first letter is “a” (pronounced as ‘u’ in but, gut) and the last letter is “h” (pronounced as ‘h’ in hut, hurt). “a” is a vowel. “h” is a consonant. All possible sounds are covered by letters falling between ‘a’ and ‘h’ in Sanskrit language. Therefore, a word like “aham” in Sanskrit formed with the two end-letters (‘a’ and ‘h’) includes symbolically everything in-between. “Aham”, incidentally, means “I” in Sanskrit language).

“Explanation of the Song: “The Fourth song is a composition based on Sanskrit grammar. In the argot of grammar if a letter in the alphabet is joined with another in the sequence, it is implicitly taken to represent all letters falling in-between the two. Taking English as an example:

“A to D	or AD	stands for	A, B, C and D
L to P	or LP	stands for	L, M, N, O and P .

“In Sanskrit language this symbolical notation is used even for naming certain characteristic features of an entity. For example taking the letters “b” and “l”, the word ‘baala’ is formed to connote the group of six letters (including the four that fall in between them) in Sanskrit alphabet. These six letters constitute the seed-letters (*bija akshara*) of *Swadhistana chakra* (corresponds to Prostatic nerve plexus). Therefore, this chakra is also referred to as *Baala chakra*.

“In a similar way, joining ‘a’ and ‘h’ the word ‘aham’ is formed. It would stand for all the 49 letters that fall in between. Letters are, after all, sounds. Accepting the concept that Sound makes up the world, we can say that the word ‘aham’ would represent all sounds and hence every entity in the world. That is why every creature in the world refers to itself as ‘aham’ (I), ‘aham’ (I). Though ‘aham’ (I) is merely a symbolic name, everyone feels it represents himself/herself/itself and no other.

“We meditate on that Supreme Self which appears as if confined inside in every one but actually present in each entity and permeates every thing. Thus is the conviction of the holy saints.”

Sixth Song:

“People, blind to the Self
That dwells within their very heart,
Look for a god hither and thither.
They are like Knights
Who search for a pebble
Ignoring the precious jewel
That’s already in their palm.”

“Explanation of the Song: “Many theists believe in a God. They worship Him through elaborate rituals thinking that He resides in some symbol, — an idol, a temple, a pilgrimage center like Kasi or a Heavenly world like Vaikuntha. As a matter of fact, the Supreme God is right here in our heart.

“People do not realize the simple truth that the one who resides in one’s own heart cannot be different from himself and hence he, himself, is the Supreme Self. They vainly look for gods all over. Such persons are like the fools who hunt for precious stones in a heap of pebbles

neglecting the very crown jewel like Kaustubha (most valuable gem worn by Lord Vishnu) that has come to their hand. Hence, we contemplate on the Supreme Self who is right in our heart. Thus is the intention of the holy saints.”

Seventh Song:

“When once all craving vanishes
The Supreme Self makes
His sparkling presence.
With the appearance of Supreme Self,
Every entangling creeper of desire
Is severed at its very root.”

“Explanation of the Song: “This is an approximate rendition of the Upanishadic mantras (chants) like:

yadāsarve pratiyantee
kāma yeesya hṛdisthitāḥ |
atha martyo’ mṛtoo bhavati
atra brahma samaśnutee || (kathopanishat)

“One becomes Supreme Brahman when one rids oneself of all desires and is free from the impressions of past births. When this experiential feeling becomes reinforced, desires get cut at their very root. Therefore, we meditate on the Supreme Self, the Absolute, that is obtained in a desire-less state. Thus is the feeling of the holy saints.”

Eighth Song:

“If a man desires worldly objects
Knowing full well
Their hollowness,
Would he be wise?
No, surely he would be an ass.”

“Explanation of the Song: “The eighth song makes a derogatory reference to the learned people who, from a reading of scriptures and the teachings of Gurus, understand the world to be uninteresting and shallow. Such people grasp the philosophical truth merely at an intellectual level. Hence, they are unable to wriggle out of worldly attractions. By calling them “Asses”, the song stresses the importance of renunciation in reaching the Supreme Self. Thus is the thinking of the holy saints. ”

Ninth Song:

“Just like Indra, the Chief of Gods,
Battered the hills
With his thunderbolt,
The oft-rising snakes of senses
Should be whacked down
In order to subjugate them,
Using the truncheon of discretion
Such that they cannot pop up any more.”

“Explanation of the Song: “This song alludes to achieving renunciation through the technique of control of mind and sensory systems (*Sama* and *Dama* practices in Yoga). An aspirant should remind himself about the transitory nature of the worldly objects each time a

desire arises in him. Thus he should divert his senses from impermanent worldly attractions towards the everlasting Supreme Self. Thus is the opinion of the holy Saints.”

Tenth Song:

“Control of mind and senses
Results in sacred happiness
And a tranquil mind.
A quietened mind is indeed the route
To Blissful State Supreme.”

“Explanation of the Song: “In this final song the holy men sum up in a nut shell the path to be followed by a spiritual aspirant. There is many a method of spiritual practice available in the world. Some of these are action-oriented sacrifices etc., worship-oriented rituals etc., and yoga -oriented techniques like chanting sacred hymns or breath control exercises. However, the best of all methods is *sama* and *dama* approach – control of the mind and senses. This does not mean forceful containment of mind. A pleasure should automatically emanate from the practice of disciplining the mind and senses. Only such a *sama* and *dama* are sanctified because they yield a placid mind. Placid mind does not mean a calm mind with reduced perturbations. All thought waves have to be totally attenuated in a tranquil mind. When once the mind is thus quietened, subjugated, a supreme happiness, superior to that resulting from *sama* and *dama*, will be experienced. This ineffable bliss, the true state of the Self, will stay forever. Thus is the notion behind the tenth song of the holy saints.”

“King Janaka began to cry after hearing the ten songs when once the initial pleasure of music had waned. He gathered himself however and returned home from his walk. He went to his room and sat alone in contemplation. The ten songs of the holy men continued to ring in his ears. In fact it was not the song and music but the philosophical truth behind the songs that arrested his attention. He wondered about his own spiritual status and his level of understanding. He lamented thus:

hā kaṣṭa matikaṣṭāsu
looka loola daśā svayam |
pāṣāṇeṣviva pāṣāṇā
āluṭhāmi balā daham || (sarga 9- śloka 5)

“How sad! How sad!! So many stages have gone by in my life. Thinking of the past events, I feel like a rolling stone that has gathered no moss.”

[Note: Sage Valmiki closed the 9th Sarga describing the introspective soliloquy of King Janaka in sixty verses starting with the above verse. The Sarga is sprinkled with maxims of poetic splendor that can create a lasting impression on an aspirant’s mind. It provides detailed advice on the way spiritual quest has to be pursued depending on the social position of the person - a ruler, warrior or an official. The 9th Sarga is very important to spiritual seekers. We shall not, however, dwell further on this Sarga as many of the issues dealt with therein are a repetition of what had been discussed previously. We will, therefore, continue on with the main story.]

“King Janaka deliberated on the songs of the holy men again and again. Constant contemplation on the meaning of the songs not only helped him in getting rid of desires but also freed him from the impressions of past births. Consequently wisdom dawned on him. He determined that he would abide firmly within himself. Thus through a few hours of self-analysis, King Janaka reached the Seventh step in the Sevenfold Yoga. He became still like a statue.

“An aged guard of the palace providentially came by the room. The serviceman was surprised to see the King sitting alone without attending to the morning routines of ablution. As he was older than the king in age, he ventured to address the king as follows:

Guard:

deeva! doostambha viśrānta
samastavasudhā bhara | (sarga 10-śloka 2)

“Oh, Mighty King! You carry the burden of the whole world on your shoulders!

“Please rise up sir. Kindly prepare yourself to attend to the daily routine of royal duties. Beautiful damsels are carrying on their heads pots of water mixed with fragrant flowers, camphor and vermilion. They are like river-goddesses awaiting your arrival at the bathing halls. In case you prefer to have a bath in an enchanting lake, a pond with exquisite lotus flowers is made ready. The banks of the pond are covered with colorful picnic umbrellas. Several warriors with their chariots and horsemen are ready to serve you while you bathe.

“Learned Brahmins who have already purified themselves are waiting to assist you in the worship of God. They will recite sacred hymns as you bathe, if you so desire. There are other servants waiting to blow gentle breezes (with hand-held fans) at you if you come to the dining hall. Oh, King! Please do move quickly. Great men like you do not wish to default on achieving targets on time.” The guard eloquently appealed thus reminding the king of his grandeur and responsibilities.”

Sage Valmiki provided here an interesting account of the habits and living conditions of the then nobility, the way they spoke, the dignified conduct of their service-men and how the rich masters responded to such entreaties and so on.

6. Janaka’s Contemplation:

“King Janaka heard silently what the sentry said. He neither agreed nor denied. He went back into his contemplation. He started to muse, “Ruling, Royalty and Riches! Oh!! The sentry talks so gloriously!!!

kiyanmātramidaṁ nāma
rājyaṁ sukhamiti sthitam | (sarga 10 -śloka10)

“What for are these kingdoms and comforts? How long do they last? These are transitory. Should I exult at these? I had been enjoying these for so long. But what am I left with but for mirages? I should at least now wake up to Reality. I will not be tempted by these illusions any more. I shall learn to stay calm and serene like the mighty ocean whose waves are subdued.

“But Oh, Mind! You are truly mischievous. You are an adept at running after comforts though superficially you say no to them. At least now step back and yield. You pretend as if you are beaten. But you do not really relent. You hunger after coziness and luxury. You don’t really care for either virtue or vice. You merely feign to be vigilant of good deeds or sinful acts. You may occasionally be less extravagant because of a fear of

either being disgraced by the society or going to Hell. But it is not because you are truly averse to enjoyment.

“Oh, Mind! Did you ever feel gratified by the luxuries and comforts? So stop hankering after comforts. Take refuge in permanent Supreme Self.”

“Musing thus, King Janaka stayed put in philosophical contemplation for some more time. The guard was baffled at the king’s behavior. He did not know what to do next. But having served the nobility for long, he decided that it was best not to say anything further. He remained quiet.

“A little later King Janaka resumed deliberating within himself. His thoughts were more restrained (*sama*) this time. He reflected thus: “What should I strive in this world for? Everything is impermanent. What is there for me to seek?”

“Is it not ‘intention’ to act that is destroying me? Don’t I yearn for ‘doership’? Is it not ‘doership’ that is destroying me in this world? Should I not then shun ‘doership’ and obtain ‘non-doership’?”

“If that is so, what does it mean to earn non-doership? Who is after all the doer, the actor? To whom does the action belong? Action is done by the body. To whom does non-action belong? Or in other words to who does actionlessness belong? Even this has to belong to the body. How about me? I am not the body. I have nothing to do with the body. How can then either doing action or non-action adhere to me? Taking action implies ‘doership’. Taking non-action means non-doership. Neither can cling to me. How could I then earn ‘non-doership’?”

“Therefore, I do not seek action or non-action. I want neither doership nor non-doership. I am Pure Supreme Self. How can there be a downfall for me? How could there be an end for me?”

nābhinandāmyasamprāptam
samprāptam na tyajāmyaham |
svastha ātmani tiṣṭhāmi
yanmamāsti tadastu me || (sarga 10-śloka 24)

“I do not want what I do not get. I do not wish to abandon what I have. Even if what is lost is happiness and what has come about is sorrow, I am myself and shall be within my Self. Whatever it may be, I am not concerned.”

“King Janaka mulled over thus for some more time. This line of thought, however, changed his earlier intention to observe silence and to be in seclusion. He resolved to carry on with the chores his body was habituated to. He decided to function without any attachment to the physical body and without succumbing to the pleasures and pains dictated by the mind. So he had a bath and performed daily worship etc. as suggested by the guard.”

During the following night, sitting alone, King Janaka again cogitated on the essence of truth. Sage Valmiki portrayed Janaka’s thought process in about 30 slokas in the eleventh Sarga.

Valmiki established in this description the qualities of a liberated person (*Jeevanmukta*). The state of King Janaka as a liberated person was described in the following 12th Sarga.

bhaviṣyaṁ nānusandhattee
nātītaṁ cintayatyasau |
vartamānanimeṣaṁ tu
hasanneevānuvartatee || (sarga 12 - śloka 14)

“The King was not worried about the future. Nor did he delve into the past. He happily followed on with whatever happened in the present. It was *not* that he *went through*; he *went along with* present. In other words, he stayed as blissful Self within himself! Though attending to all his royal obligations, he essentially remained in Self without falling for temptations.”

Sage Valmiki extended the 12th Sarga to 40 verses that depict King Janaka’s liberated state. The stream of thinking desirable in an enlightened man was charmingly portrayed in these verses. Sage Valmiki emphasized repeatedly on the need of maintaining a sustained discretionary transcendent wisdom (*prajna*).

ya eva yatnaḥ kriyate
bāhyārthopārjane janaiḥ |
sa eva yatnaḥ kartavyaḥ
pūrvaṁ prañāvivardhane || (sarga12 -śloka 26)

“There was a high-flying business tycoon. He did not care to pray nor did he have devotion to gods. He had no interest in music, poetry, theater or fine arts. But he used to get up early in the dawn and look into all his business accounts. He was always the first person to reach his office in the morning and open doors. He used to dedicate himself fully to his work till late into night. Wouldn’t you call this deep meditation (*tapas*)? He could become a millionaire as a result of his focused, disciplined and steadfast resoluteness to his business. His commitment was a deep meditation for him and his wealth was its fruit. Notice any person in this world reaching the pinnacle of glory in his chosen field. We find unswerving dedication as the most common factor. Irrespective of who it is, behind every successful individual is tenacious effort.

“A spiritual aspirant should take notice of it. Just like a man of the world toils hard resolutely to attain success, the spiritual seeker too needs to strive immensely to achieve transcendent awareness (*prajna*) capable of revealing the Supreme Self. One should not become indolent as it could dampen transcendent awareness. This awareness is a valuable jewel in the heart. Every desire gets fulfilled in its presence.”

The Twelfth Sarga consists of 40 verses with many similar motivating words for an aspirant.

The Thirteenth Sarga deals with various methods of calming down the mind as a quietened mind is essential for the emergence of transcendent awareness. Sage Vasishtha described here in detail and repetitiously the ways and means of training the mind to achieve transcendental awareness, dissolving the mind using mind itself as a tool and so on. The Sarga contains several tips for a spiritual seeker. As a result, the Sarga has grown to be 117 verses long. Still not satisfied with it, Sage Vasishtha continued the subject matter into the 14th

Sarga with another 66 verses. He discussed a few more methods of meditating on Self in this Sarga.

7. Giving up Desires – Contemplation-based and Wisdom-based Approaches:

Sage Vasishtha expanded on the subject of calming down the mind by another 27 verses in the Fifteenth Sarga. He began with a question on what was mind. He explained that the Supreme Self had become mind by a modification. He said that mind could become back again the Supreme Self by reversing the process. If, instead, he warned, we ran after the mind, we would succumb to it and would acquiesce to desire. The Sage spelt that capitulation to desire was the root cause of all our troubles. He ended the Sarga with the following advice:

etāmahambhāvamayī mapuṇyām
chitvānahambhāva śalākayaiva |
svabhāvanām bhavya! bhavānta bhūmau
bhavābhibhūtākḥila bhūta bhītiḥ || (sarga 15- śloka 27)

“Oh, Rama! Desire is another form of I-consciousness (ego). Therefore, it is unholy. Cut it out with a pair of scissors called egolessness. That way you will reach a space beyond worldliness (*bhavanta bhūmau*). That is to say that you will attain the Seventh Step of Yoga where the state of bondage (*samsara*) ends. When once you are there, you are totally fearless — you can neither harm any body nor be harmed by anybody. Reach that Supreme Seventh Step and be there forever!”

The above advice provoked Rama to raise a question. The Sixteenth Sarga opens with Rama’s query.

Rama: “Revered Teacher! Ego of an individual is comparable to the stem of a tree. If the stem is chopped off, the tree will crash down. An individual too collapses in the absence of ego. No seeker would like to die, end himself. So, my dear Teacher, how could I continue to be alive after discarding ego? How can I adopt a practice that endangers my very existence?”

Vasishtha: “Rama! It’s all the same whether one speaks of throwing away desire, giving up expectation, annulling the mind or eliminating impressions of past births. There are two ways to do it. These are:

1. Contemplation-based Eradication of Impressions, and
2. Wisdom-based Eradication of Impressions.

“The difference between them arises because egoism, the root cause of all impressions, is also of two types. These are:

1. I-Consciousness (Ego) influenced by the ensemble of body and sense faculties etc.; and
2. I-Consciousness dependent on the essence of Oneness of Supreme Consciousness.

“I shall first explain the I-Consciousness centered on body and sense organs etc.
“A person usually thinks on the following lines:

‘Physical body, various organs and the sustaining food and drink, combined together form “I”. Where would “I” be in their absence? What would “I” do? On the other hand, all things including food and drink derive existence because of me! They owe their existence to me and I owe my existence to them. All things are born for me and I am born for them.’

“Association with noble persons is advantageous for him to become wiser in course of time. His thinking then takes a new turn:

‘How can the things in the world be mine? What is the relation between the things and me? They are all inert, insentient. I am sentient and conscious. How can the two be the same?’

“These questions are followed up by him in search of truth. He concludes from his analysis that right from *pancha bhutas* (the five elements that constitute the world) up to mind are untrue. Thereon he ascribes a new meaning to “I”. He decides that “I” is that residual pure Consciousness which remains after everything from the five elements to mind is eliminated. It is same as what I referred to earlier as the second type of egoism. We called it “I-Consciousness dependent on the essence of Oneness of Supreme Consciousness.” The difference is only in nomenclature, but not in substance as such.

“To wrap up: An individual sets out with an ignorant idea that he is his body. Gradually he moves on to understand at an intellectual level that he is not his body, he is not any of the things in the visible world. Implicitly it means that he is discarding through contemplation his impression of past births that he is his body etc. Therefore, it is referred to as “Getting rid of impressions through contemplation.” You can see that a meditation-like method of contemplation is involved here. Hence the name, ‘Contemplation-based Eradication of Impressions’.

“The person in the state which is free of impressions is described as “Liberated in this Life.” Famous persons like King Janaka are examples for this. Having gotten rid of the impressions of past births, these Liberated persons live in the world unaffected by any thing. That is their remarkable trait.

“We hardly need now to expand on the second type of I-Consciousness – the one dependent on the essence of Oneness of the Supreme Self. We have discussed it already. After eradicating the impressions through contemplation and keeping the mind constantly focused thus, the aspirant enters into a ‘Thoughtless state of Deep Meditation’ - a state where his consciousness stays dissolved in the Supreme Self with an experience of total Oneness (*Nirvikalpa Samadhi*). While he is in the *Nirvikalpa Samadhi* state, his current sufferage (*Prarabdha karma*) comes to an end. His body dies. That is to say that his ego is exterminated along with its cause due to the Wisdom gained. His ego is exterminated means that the impressions of past births are wiped out. As this has happened with a gain of wisdom, it is termed as “Wisdom-based Eradication of Impressions.”

“We can understand from the above that Wisdom-based Eradication is possible only to a person who is liberated and had left the body. He will merge with the Supreme for good. The world does not have any effect on him.

“Rama, please follow this carefully. The person who practices Contemplation-based Eradication of Impressions is Liberated in this Life. The one who practices Wisdom-based

Eradication of Impressions is liberated and without body. As far as liberation is concerned, both are same. Sorrow does not affect either of them. But one is Arisen (arisen from deep meditation – *Samadhi*). The other continues to be in deep meditation (*Samadhi*). The former is with the body, but untroubled. The latter is without a body.

“Hence Rama, we cannot for sure hold that ending of egoism is equivalent to Wisdom-based Eradication of Impressions and the person would die because the current sufferage (*Prarabdha*) is totally annihilated. In case there is some residual balance of current sufferage, termination of impressions and eradication of ego will stop at the stage of Contemplation-based Eradication of Impressions. He is liberated but he will not die.

“Whoever does not think in terms of likes and dislikes, agreeing and disagreeing, acceptance and denial is known as a person “Liberated in this Life” (*Jeevanmukta*). Though awake, he lives as if he is in deep sleep without any attachment. Therefore, Rama, Be fearless to become a person Liberated in this Life through Contemplation-based Eradication of Impressions and Contemplation-based Eradication of ego.

“Let me elaborate a bit on the state of a *Jeevanmukta*.”

The sun was setting by the time Sage Vasishta’s discourse reached this point. Tradition does not admit giving up daily ritualistic functions howsoever intensely one may be involved in spiritual enquiry. So Sage Vasishta called it a day for the discussions and proceeded to perform his evening prayers. Thus ended the dialogue on the eleventh day.

Sage Vasishta resumed his dialog on the qualities of *Jeevanmukta* next morning with the same vigor as on the previous evening. Sage Valmiki used two Sargas (the Seventeenth and the Eighteenth) comprising 99 verses to narrate Vasishta’s teaching. In the first Sarga, Valmiki neatly classified the mental intentions into two groups-

- (i) Intentions that will lead an individual to *Jeevanmukti*, and
- (ii) Intentions that will lead to bondage.

In the next Sarga he described the way a *Jeevanmukta* should go about in performing his daily chores without being bound or affected by his actions. Sage Vasishta gave a detailed description on *Jeevanmukti* in order to inspire Rama to work towards it. Closing his remarks he said as follows:

Vasishta: “Rama! You must have gone through millions of births in this beginningless flow of the world! It, therefore, follows that every living creature in the world is related to you at sometime or the other. Hence you cannot consider that only a limited few are your relatives based on the present body. In one way all living beings are linked to you; in another way, if you consider that you have no connection to your body, there’s none that belongs to you.”

vividha janma śatāhita sambhramee
jagati bandhurabandhu ritikṣaṇam |
bhramadaśaiva vivalgati vastutaḥ
tribhuvanam cirabandhu rabandhvapi || (sarga 18 - śloka 65)

Sage Vasishtha continued into the next Sarga (the nineteenth Sarga) with the Story of Punya and Paavana (Punya Paavana Upakhyana) to illustrate clearly the concepts discussed thus far.

8. The story of Punya and Paavana (A Discussion on Relationships):

“Once upon a time there lived an eminent Sage by name Deerghatapa in Mahendra Hills on the banks of the river Akasaganga. He had two sons. The elder was Punya and the second one was Paavana. Both the sons practiced meditation. In due course the elder one, Punya, achieved Self-realization. Paavana attained an intellectual understanding of the Supreme Self but did not have an actual experience of the Supreme.

“Sage Deerghatapa, their father, expired suddenly one day. Their mother, though distressed in the beginning, could compose herself quickly. She left her body using yogic powers and followed her husband in death.

“However, Paavana could not stand the sad demise of both his parents at the same time. Unable to bear the loss, he ran away deep into a forest forgetting that he had to perform the funeral rites for his parents. He cried profusely over the death of his parents.

“Punya waited for sometime for his brother and then completed alone the formalities of last rites for their parents. He then went in search of his brother. He found him in the forest mourning the death of both parents. He pitied his younger brother who was lost in grief ignorant that their parents achieved liberation after leaving the body. So he addressed his brother as follows:

Punya: “My Little Brother! Why do you grieve so much shedding tears incessantly? Both the parents are liberated. Should you cry for those who achieved salvation? Is not salvation the attainment of Original Form? Both of them are in their infinite True Form, which is non-dualistic.

“On the contrary, look at yourself! You are binding yourself with illusory attachment for them as ‘my father’ and ‘my mother’. Let me ask you if she was the only mother of yours? Was he the only father for you? Or are you the only child for them?

“A tree bears hundreds of fruits in each season. Some of them dry up and some get dispersed. Some of these germinate again. Eventually they become trees and bear hundreds of fruits in turn. Similarly, you get a mother and a father in each of your births. Just as several leaves surround a fruit, there are many relatives around you in each birth of yours. Myriads of seasons elapsed so far. So also you had numerous births thus far. Innumerable fathers and mothers of yours passed away by now.

“If you opine that you should cry for your dead parents, you have to keep crying for the parents of earlier births also. But you don’t do that. Why? Is it because you don’t realize that you had past births? Don’t you know that you had parents in the past lives and they are dead now? Why do you not cry for all of them? Why do you cry only for the parents of this birth? Please think it over.

“My Brother! You are a learned man. It’s not that you are unaware. The world is a sort of illusion. We can neither call it real nor can we say it is unreal. That is why, we say it is a fallacy (an apparition, *mithya*). In transcendental absolute terms (*paramartha*), there is

no reality in the world. That is to say that you have truly no friends, no relatives, nor any birth or death.

“You may say that you see people, their births and deaths and so much happening around. Yes, surely we see all that. What you see is as true as a mirage. Entirely like the water, waves, eddies and currents in a mirage. There is no greater truth than this.”

Sage Valmiki closed the 19th Sarga abruptly here midway through the preaching by Punya. He opened the twentieth Sarga with a resumption of the oration by Punya. The reason for breaking the sermon at this point appears to be to emphasize a different aspect – that of freeing an individual from the illusion of relationships. The 20th Sarga highlights the falsity of relationships through a discussion of the sequence of births. Let us continue on with Punya’s teaching.

Punya: “Brother! You are feeling bad for your parents. Consider it in depth. Is there really a father or a mother in the world? Or is it only a concept? We do not know for sure who our parents are. For some reasons we take it for granted and accept that so and so are our father and mother.

bandhu tvee bhāvitoo bandhuḥ
paratvee bhāvitaḥ paraḥ |
viṣāmr̥tadaśeeveeha
sthitirbhāvanibandhanī || (sarga 20 - śloka 3)

“If you think a person is allied to you, he is a friend. If you think one is an enemy he becomes a foe. You reject some foods as poison. But another creature eats the same and happily lives. You may brand an insect as poisonous. It is your viewpoint. The insect has its own opinion. Every relationship in the world works likewise. Now tell me, who is truly related to you?

“I do not suppose that you are under the false impression that you are your body. Still I would like to explicate a bit on this.

“What is body? It is just skin and bones with some blood and muscle thrown in-between. All these are inert materials. But how about you? You are conscious, sentient. How could you be the insentient skin and bones? Just think it over.

“Here are two bodies. One is called Punya. The other’s name is Paavana. There is one “I” in this body and an “I” in the other body. The “I” resident in my body is not the skin and bones. The “I” in your body is also not skin and bones. In the same way your parents resident in their bodies are not the skin and bones. If that is the case, to whom does the names Punya and Paavana, father and mother belong? Do the names refer to the inert skin and bones or to the “I” residing in them? Please deliberate on this.”

Paavana: “Brother, I agree that the skin and bones is not “I”. But it is not correct to say that the subtler body inside is not “I” either. The names like Punya, Paavana, father, mother etc., pertain to subtler body residing in the respective gross body.”

Punya: “If it is so, does the subtler body remain the same through various births or does it change and a new ones comes every time?”

Paavana: “How can there be a change in the subtle body (*linga sarira*). It has been there from time immemorial.”

Punya: “Ok, Let us say so. Then it would mean that there have been a father and mother for your subtle body each time you were born. All the parents of your past births are dead now. Why don’t you grieve for them?”

Paavana: “Do you mean to say that I should find the genealogy of my past lives and grieve for all of my past parents?”

Punya: “How is genealogy relevant? You were born as a beast in some births. You were born as a tree in a forest. You were a lion in hills. You were fish in ponds. You were born as monkeys in hamlets. Sometimes you were born as a prince. You were born even as a wild crow. Once you were an elephant in Haihaya kingdom. You were born as a worm on a palm tree. You were an insect on a fig tree. You were born as an ant in a hollow of a birch tree. After that you were born straight as my younger brother. I am not referring to the present birth. This was in some past life. Once you were a dung beetle and later my brother. In another life of yours, you had been born to a woman of a hunter tribe and in the following birth you were once again my brother.

“Brother, it is not you alone. Even I had several births. I was born as a parrot, frog, eagle, crocodile, and in many other forms. In my past birth, I was the son of a teacher in the Srisaila Mountains. Now I am your elder brother. I am aware of my and your births. Having known all the births, for whom should I mourn? For which brother should I cry? For which parents should I weep?”

“There is only one way to resolve the puzzle. You say, “My relatives.” Discover what the first word “My” and “I” refer to. If you find that out truly, the concept of “I” evaporates. With that goes the illusion of relationships as well as the sorrow of losing them.

“So, first arrest the swell of sorrow overtaking you. Curb the surging desires in your mind? Look for the Self within you. By doing so, all the worldly impressions fade away automatically. You will find yourself in your natural placid, pure and pristine form. You will have enduring contentment.”

“With the above words of Punya, the younger brother attained Self-realization. He achieved Contemplation-based Eradication of Impressions of past births and a serene mind. Both the brothers gained liberation while still living (*Jeevanmukti*). They lived for long years as it pleased them wandering around in the forest.”

Sage Vasishtha wound up saying, “The moral of the story is, Rama, you should also get rid of the feeling of ‘My people, my relations.’ Take refuge in Contemplation-based Eradication of Desires; be liberated in this life itself and live as a *Jeevanmukta*.”

Though the advice was as simple as that, Sage Vasishtha actually extended it to a length of 30 verses. Any reader of the current Chapter, The Calm Down (*Upasama*) of Yogavaasishta is bound to wonder at Vasishtha’s circumlocution. But as a matter of fact, the entire scheme of Vasishtha’s teaching is hidden inside this expansion. Let us explain.

There are a total of nine stories in the Chapter: The Calm Down. Two stories have so far been narrated. The first was the story of King Janaka and the second was that of Punya and Paavana. Strictly speaking, there is nothing much in terms of a plot in any of these two stories. Sage Vasishtha took advantage of the characters of each story and developed an intricate discussion.

An intellectual explication of the Philosophical Wisdom to be imparted to Rama ended with the Chapter on Sustenance (Yogavaasishta Part III of our Series). Sage Vasishtha steered the discourse now towards a discussion on The Methods of Practice. The current Chapter was accordingly titled “The Calm Down.” Calming down refers to dissolution of the mind. Sage Vasishtha planned to talk on different types of practices available to quieten the mind and offer a reasonable explanation of the operative processes behind each of the techniques.

The Vedic dictum,
yato vā imāni bhūtāni jāyantee
yeena jātāni jīvanti, yatprayantya abhi samviśanti ||

underpins all his teachings. Consequently, his talk too had to be designed to match the order of ‘Creation, Sustenance and Dissolution of the Universe’ referred to in the above scriptural statement. Keeping this in mind, Sage Vasishtha intended to make the story of Gadhi Brahmana as the central focus of this Chapter. However, ahead of this story and following it too, he wanted to highlight a few salient aspects pertaining to the differences amongst the various methods. Instead of randomly listing them, he planned to highlight the differences in an orderly sequential manner converging onto the Story of Gadhi Brahmana and then branch out again to other minor stories.

The stories of Janaka and Punya – Paavana were the first two sub-stories coming before the principal story of Gadhi Brahmana.

King Janaka’s story illustrated how an unexpected event of hearing a good word could make a lasting impression and subsequently lead to a quietened mind. The story of Punya – Paavana demonstrated how a Self-realized person would take care of and help individuals who were mid-way in the process of achieving a tranquil mind.

The Story of Bali coming next would prove how an unplanned self-introspection reinforced by the encouraging word of a teacher could lead to sudden Self-realization.

In order to introduce the story, Sage Vasishtha addressed the following words to Rama at the beginning of the 22nd Sarga:

Vasishtha: “May you be blessed with a sudden Self-realization as happened to Emperor Bali!”

Rama: “Who was Emperor Bali and how did he get realization?”

Sage Vasishtha then recounted the story of Emperor Bali.

9. The story of Emperor Bali:

“Rama! You must have heard of Emperor Bali who is the ruler of the nether world. Lord Vishnu ordained him to the nether world in his incarnation as Vaamana. He achieved glory in his rule and has been living in opulence for eons.

“You may think that nether world is synonymous to Hell. Hell is only one part of nether world. It is the part where sinners get punished. Undoubtedly it is a miserable part. The rest of the nether world is very beautiful. The Puranas say that comforts exceeding Heaven exist in this part.

“Bali enjoyed the affluence for a very long time and got finally fed up. He was totally disgusted with luxury. He undertook an appraisal of the cycles of life and death in general and his own condition in particular. His thoughts were somewhat on the following lines:

“How long should I continue as a ruler? How long should I run after the comforts of life? Same things recur on and on like days followed by nights. I am really tired of all this. The whole thing looks very childish. How long should I put up with all this?”

“Under the weight of such intense thoughts, Emperor Bali unknowingly slipped into deep meditation. When he came out of meditation after some time, he remembered an event that had taken place during his childhood. It was a conversation he had had as a young boy with his father Virochana. Their discussion went as follows.

Bali: “Oh, Father Virochana, King of Demons! What is the limit beyond which fallacies can’t exist? Where does the mind lose its delusion? What is the place where all the three desires (viz: for wife, children and wealth) are no more there? What is the place from where there is no return to the cycle of births?”

Bali asked many such questions. As both (the questioner and the respondent) were of royal descent, Emperor Virochana replied in a style suited to the royalty.

Virochana: “My dear Son, Bali! Yes, there is a place like that. It is very huge. But there are no forests or mountains. Nor mighty oceans nor the five elements (*Pancha bhutas*). There are no men, gods or demons in that place. Only two are present there – a king and a minister!

“The Minister is very competent. He can destroy what exists or create what does not exist. He is the only one serving the king. The king stays happy in seclusion in his own place. That is the place you are asking for.

Bali: “Where is that place? How do I reach it? How do I conquer it?”

Virochana: “My dear son! The King there is alone. But the Minister has millions of soldiers under his command. Gods, Demons and everyone surrendered to him as they were unable to overpower him. Only the King can subdue him. But even he can do so only with the strength accumulated from meritorious deeds of many births. Son, you consider yourself as invincible! I will accept your valor if you can defeat that Minister.”

Bali: “Father, please tell me the way to vanquish the Minister.”

Virochana: “There is only one way! That is the Raja Yoga. If a king is with us, the minister will automatically come to us. If the minister is on our side, the king allies easily with us. That is quite normal in our world.

“It holds true in this kingdom too. You should overcome both the King and the Minister simultaneously. Only then can you get hold of the kingdom. Son, I am talking in a symbolic jargon. I hope you could grasp the meaning. Anyway let me tell you directly.

“The place I was talking about is not an ordinary kingdom. It is the state of salvation. The King there is the Supreme Self. The Minister is mind. Mind carries the impressions from past births. Just as vapor turns into clouds, the impressions carried in the mind change into physical world. They get modified. So if you win over the Minister i.e. mind, it is as good as winning the entire world. Mere physical strength is inadequate; you need dexterity to be victorious.”

Bali: “What kind of skills do I need?”

Virochana: “Son, you should be free of desire for worldly objects. That is the first skill. It is not easy to come by though. You have to cultivate it gradually. Whether one calls it Renunciation of the objective world or Contemplation-based Eradication of Impressions, it is the same thing. You should make a concerted effort to achieve it.

“In my opinion, an individual (*Jiva*) is none other than the mind in worldly terms (*vyvaharika*). Mind creates two types of things. One is the Objective type (*niyata*) and the other is Imaginary type (*aniyata*). The Objective things are what we see around in the world – trees, mountains, creatures etc. Imaginary ones are the illusory type. They are born out of our fallacy. Examples are a mirage, snake in a rope, silver in nacre etc.

“The ways of the mind are strange indeed. Along with the substances it creates, it formulates certain laws too for its products. Sometimes because of the sheer momentum of the natural laws an individual may become eligible for salvation. He will have a future birth only to attain Self-realization. That is to say he will achieve a state of deep meditation (*Nirvikalpa Samadhi*) where his consciousness stays dissolved in the Cosmic Consciousness. He shines brightly in his True form (*svasvarupa*) in this life without attachment to any thing.

“Some times the same individual may take recourse to scriptures and perform meritorious deeds. The Self inside remains unaffected whether he is in meditation or has been performing actions. It is not that Self got detached now or that it was attached. This reminds us:

sphurati sānuavat (sarga 24-śloka 35)

“There is a huge mountain slope at a distance. There are many trees on it. A person on the ground looks at it from far away. He sees the slope to be as stable as a rock. Suppose now there is a gush of wind. The trees on the rock slope begin to sway. The swing in the trees appears as if the mountain slope itself is moving. The onlooker now feels the mountain slope is unstable. In truth the mountain slope is neither moving nor unmoving. The apparent movement is because of wind. Likewise, Self has neither a tendency to meditate nor an inclination for action. The apparent feel is a trick of the mind.

“Therefore, Son, there is neither a God nor any Law of Nature in the way we imagine. What is there for sure is the mind. Let the residual thing, whatever that is, stay behind after the mind is eradicated.

manasyastaṅgatee sādho
yadbhavatyastu tattathā | (sarga 24 - śloka 35)

“The individual gets a body. With that he gets eligibility to perform rituals and to gain wisdom. He is empowered with thought. Hence whatever he intends takes place. Therefore, make a full-fledged effort to practice detachment and other methods and realize that “I am the Supreme Self.” Do not let any contrary thought disturb you.

“Desire for material comforts is the first block in realizing “I am myself Brahman.” Kill desire. For, as long as you have desire for pleasure, you are for certain stuck in the rut of the world.

na bhoogeeṣvaratiryāva
jjāyatee bhavanāśinī |
na parā nirvṛtistāvat
prāpyatee jayadāyini || (sarga 24 - śloka 38)

Bali: “How do I get rid of the desire for pleasure?”

Virochana: “Only through knowledge of Self.”

Bali: “How do I get that knowledge?”

Virochana: “Only through an inquiry into truth.”

Bali: “Is it easy to inquire into truth?”

Virochana: “No, it is not so for an average person. In order to position the immature mind on a proper path, you should divide a day into four parts. Leave two parts of the day for pleasure. Take care to see that pleasure does not exceed two parts. One part of the day should be spent in listening to scriptures. Listening does not mean mere desultory auditioning. It should become a cerebral exercise to firm up the understanding that “each statement of the Upanishads is an exposition about the truth regarding Supreme Brahman.” Only such a stream of thoughts constitutes ‘listening’. The remaining fourth part should be spent in the service of the teacher.

“As the mind gets progressively purified, utilize one of the two parts set apart for pleasure for serving the teacher. That means you would spend one part of the day on enjoyment, one part for listening to scriptures and two parts in the service of the teacher.

“With increasingly purified mind, one part of the day may be spent on listening to scriptures, the second part in practicing detachment, third part in meditation and the fourth part in the service of the teacher.

“During this practice a seeker has to protect his mind as watchfully as one would take care of a little baby.”

śanai śśanaiḥ pālanīyaṁ
yuktibhiḥ pāvanooktibhiḥ |
śāstrārthapariṇāmeena
pālāyeccitta bālakam || (sarga 24- śloka 49)

“Mind needs to be taught several tricks as we do to a child. We have to reason out. Speak encouragingly. Cajole and coax. We should keep evaluating progress as stipulated in

the scriptures. One should not rush up. Practice of detachment and Self-inquiry should go hand in hand. They develop mutually reinforcing each other. Once you are averse to pleasures, your mind turns towards the Supreme and rests there. The longer the mind stays in the Supreme, the less will be the craving for enjoyment.

“Learn to despise enjoyment. Despise doesn’t mean blaming. Recognition of the ill effects of pleasure amounts to despising it. When this recognition takes a firm root, desire for pleasure decreases and Self-enquiry proportionately intensifies. Eventually you will find nothing worthwhile for enjoyment. So desire for pleasure diminishes further. The three actions of despising joys, enquiring after truth and gaining Self-knowledge go hand in hand. They strengthen one another.

“My dear Son, you got an aversion for pleasure without trying for it. You are sanctified. You appear as Lord Shiva to me. I salute to you, whom I view as Lord Shiva.”

namasteestu sadāśiva (sarga 24-śloka 70)

“The whole conversation between Bali and Virochana took place a long ago when Bali was still a young lad. Emperor Bali, sitting in the nether world, was remembering fondly and reminiscing the event. Goosebumps grew on Bali when he recollected the scene of his father, deeply immersed in the Supreme, bowing to him with the words ‘*Namaste astu Sadashiva*’ while explaining to him about Self. He continued thinking on the following lines.

Bali: “I can recall each word of my father on that day. Fortunately, I grew averse to pleasures today. I remember how I used to run after comforts. Now that I am free of any such yearning, I am very calm.

śāmyāmi parinirvāmi
sukhamāsee śamee sthitaḥ |
ayamantaḥ prahr̥ṣyāmi
candrabimba ivārpitaḥ || (sarga 25 - śloka 8)

“I feel liberated. I am happy and peaceful. I am overjoyed in my heart. I am on cloud nine. I feel as if I am seated on the moon. I will strive to establish this feeling firmly by practicing contemplation relentlessly.

kāyaṁ tāvadahaṁ kiṁ syāt (sarga 25; śloka 18.)

“I shall enquire into issues like who I am and what this world is. But I am inadequate to do that all by myself. I shall invoke the presence of our family Guru, Sukra Acharya. I shall take his help. If he bestows me with necessary knowledge, my ignorance will come to an end. I will be able to attain my pristine original form.”

10. Discussion on Consciousness:

With these thoughts, Emperor Bali prayed intensely for his Guru. Vibrations of his prayer reached Guru Sukra. Sukra could surmise that his disciple was seeking help in his enquiry into truth. Sukra appeared before Bali. Bali welcomed the Guru with joy, paid respects with due rituals and seated him on the throne. He addressed him (Guru) in the following words:

Bali: “Revered Teacher! With your kind blessings I feel illuminated. I have grown repulsion for riches. I am impatient to know Truth. Where is the limit for worldly pleasures? What is the root cause for worldly pleasures? Who am I? Who are you? What are these worlds?”

kiyanmātramidaṁ bhooga
jālaṁ kimmayameeva vā |
koo haṁ kastvaṁ kimeetee vā
lookā iti vadāśu mee || (sarga 26 - śloka 9)

“Please do enlighten me.”

Sukra: “Sorry, I am not that free now to talk at length. I am in a hurry to go somewhere via the celestial path. Why do you have to pose so many questions? I shall tell you the crux behind all this in a few words. Please listen attentively.

cidihāsti hi cinmātram
idaṁ cinmaya meeva ca |
cittvaṁ cidaha meetee ca
lookāściditi saṅgrahaḥ || (sarga 26 - śloka 11)

“Look around carefully. What you see is nothing but Consciousness only!”

Bali: “But I see both the sentient and the insentient.”

Sukra: “That’s the mistake you do. There is Consciousness only.”

Bali: “Then how about all the inert matter I see?”

Sukra: “There is no inert material at all. What all exists is Consciousness only. What you see is a transformation of Consciousness. What appears to be inert matter is also Consciousness.”

Bali: “How could that be? I am a sentient being and therefore, I am the experiencer. The matter is inert and therefore, I experience it. This is common in the world. Do you hold that the division into experiencer and the experienced is false?”

Sukra: “The Vedas declare: *Nanyotosti drashta, nanyotosti srota*. There is no seer or listener other than Pure Consciousness. There are hundreds of such aphorisms in the scriptures. Hence both you and me considered as experiencers are also a transformation of Consciousness.”

Bali: “Okay, I agree. What about the things that we experience? What about the world comprising things that we experience?”

Sukra: “From where do they draw their existence and appearance? They are contingent upon Consciousness. They are a modification of Consciousness. There is no other way. The Vedas also state, “*Brahmaivedam viswamidam varishtam*. The entire visible world is the Supreme Brahman. Hence the world is Consciousness. Bali! In short, that is the essence of the whole Truth.”

“That’s all there to it if you examine intelligently and diligently. In the absence of an intelligent understanding, anything spoken is like trying to sweeten seawater, utterly wasteful. I shall clarify once more.”

cit ceetya kalanā bandhaḥ
tanmukti rmukti rucyatee |
cidaceetyākḥilātmeeti
sarvasiddhānta saṅgrahaḥ || (sarga 26 - śloka 23)

“It is bondage when Consciousness becomes the Seen (*Drisya*) instead of being mere Potent-Looker (*Drik*). In other words, the mutual superimposition of the Potent-Looker and the Seen is the cause for ‘attachment to the world’. It is Liberation when consciousness remains as Pure Consciousness without getting modified as the Seen. That is to say that liberation comes with consciousness losing the form of objective world. Consciousness, free of any attachment to the Seen, is the Self of all creatures. That is the perfect Self. This is the gist of all philosophy.

“My dear Bali, if you can contemplate resolutely on this, you will achieve the everlasting Supreme state.

“The Seven Great Sages have assembled in the Heaven on an important divine errand. I have to join them. Even liberated persons have to necessarily go through the effects of their past deeds (*Prarabdha*), you see.”

Speaking thus, Sage Sukra disappeared along the celestial route. Emperor Bali pondered over every word spoken by their family Guru, Sukra.

Bali: “Yes, what the Guru said was very true. Everything is Consciousness. Consciousness has become the world. It became the quarters (*Dishas*). It became the earth, the five elements, all the creatures and even I-consciousness.

“Who am I? People call this body as Bali. If the body is beheaded, is there any loss for Consciousness? In fact there are no parts within Consciousness so that it is possible to hack them. Consciousness permeates everywhere.

citaściditi yannāma
nirnāmāyā na nāma tat |
śbdātmikaiṣā ciccaktiḥ
parisphurati sarvagā || (sarga 27 - śloka 15)

“But what is Consciousness? Who gave it a name? No body gave a name to it. The primordial root substance has no name. Name and form for everything has emerged from it. How did the names and various forms come into existence? They came about only through illusory appearance. What appears is nothing but a fallacy. The names and forms are superimposed on the root substance. Even the name Consciousness has come about in the same illusory way. The primordial substance which is the substratum for all names and forms appears with a name to itself as Consciousness through the same illusory process. Therefore, even the name Consciousness appears to permeate all things just like the primordial substance.

“Usually a given name refers to a specific thing. How is it possible for one single name to represent all things? This is possible because Consciousness itself has changed into all things and if a thing is present at a place, it automatically implies that Consciousness too is present there. As Consciousness is present, the name also becomes applicable at that point. Therefore, if a thing is present in the world anywhere, the primordial substance exists there and hence the name Consciousness too is valid at that point. Hence the name Consciousness is permeating everywhere like the omnipresent primordial substance.

“I am that Consciousness. When I am ignorant, a perturbation called mind (*manas*) comes into being and I myself appear as the insentient world. If I am enlightened by understanding the truth. I lose differentiation based on name and form and get dissolved into Oneness.”

Because Bali was an extremely wise person, his mind merged into (the primordial sound) ‘AUM’ (chant) while he was thus immersed in his thoughts.

iti sañcintayaneeva
baliḥ parama koovidaḥ |
oṅkāradardhamātrārthaṁ
bhāvayanmaunamāsthitaḥ || (sarga 27- śloka 32)

The 32nd Sloka quoted above has a very profound meaning. Shri Ananda Bhodendra Saraswati, commentator of Yogavaasishta offered a detailed exposition of this sloka in his work. We provide below a synopsis of his commentary:

“It is said that while deliberating on the truth of Consciousness, Emperor Bali’s mind effortlessly merged in Aum implying a close relationship between Consciousness and Aum. What is the nature of that relationship?

“Aum has three sounds in it viz. *a*, *u* and *m*. In addition, there is also an indistinct drone. It is called the half-letter. ‘*a*’ stands for the gross, visible physical world. It represents the wakeful state. ‘*u*’ is for the subtle world and represents the dream state. ‘*m*’ is for the causal world and indicates ignorance. It represents the deep sleep state. Behind all the three states is Consciousness. In other words, it is nothing but Consciousness that prevails everywhere. The consciousness indicated by ‘*a*’ and ‘*u*’ is in a perturbed condition. Perturbation entails a modification. The perturbation is gross at ‘*a*’ and subtle at ‘*u*’. There is no perturbation at ‘*m*’. But it shrouds ignorance (nescience) — the root cause for the perturbations in the other two states. Consciousness is combined with ignorance at ‘*m*’. Thus Pure Consciousness is not obtained at any of the three states. We have it intermixed with either perturbation or nescience. We have to go beyond the admixed consciousness; we have to transcend it. Just as one who has ascended to an upper floor of a house does not see the house but what is around it, the person who goes beyond ‘*a*’, ‘*u*’ and ‘*m*’ states senses the half-letter drone beyond the three. The three states of ‘*a*’, ‘*u*’ and ‘*m*’ do not manifest at the half letter state. That is to say that neither perturbations nor nescience exist in that state. Because Consciousness is all pervading, It occurs here in uncontaminated Pure form.”

“Bali reached the state of Pure Consciousness. He contemplated on It. He experienced It with a feel “I am that.” He was completely silent in It. Every one of his sensory organs was quiet in this state (*sarvendriya mauna*) and there was no perception of any worldly objects. He reached *Nirvikalpa Samadhi* – a deep state of meditation where his consciousness is dissolved in the Supreme.

“Emperor Bali remained seated near the window like a statue in *Nirvikalpa Samadhi* for a long time. Servants who happened to notice him reported the matter to their higher ups. Gradually the word spread to the entire retinue of the king, including the ministers, army chiefs, satraps and others. Everyone came running to see him. The visitors were sad that their king lost consciousness. Some of them openly and others silently cried for him. They were all anxious at the turn of his health. In spite of all the mayhem going on, Bali stayed frozen like a rock.

“A few senior ministers helpless to find a solution, prayed to their family teacher Sukra. Sukra appeared before them and enquired the reason for their distress. Unable to speak in their deep sorrow, they pointed towards the Emperor who stayed like a frozen statue without consciousness.

“Sukra was, however, overjoyed to look at Bali. He spoke to them in jubilant words as follows:

“Oh, Brave Demons! Emperor Bali achieved the *crème de la crème*. He attained Eternal Supreme Happiness. He will not be able to come out of this deep meditation for at least a thousand years. Feel happy for him. Please cooperate with him by taking over the governance of the empire.” Thus speaking Sukra departed. Shouldering the additional responsibilities, the officials went on with their jobs.

“Emperor Bali arose from his meditation after about a thousand years as predicted by Sukra. Bali felt very blissful. He was thinking of going back into Samadhi. But his ministers and other staff surrounded him. Bali fell back into his thoughts. He debated within himself whether he should talk to them or not.

‘Should I speak to them or not?’

‘Why should I get this doubt at all?’

‘Luckily I am in this state of blissful happiness. Will I be thrown back into with the world if I get involved with them?’

‘Okay, you are now liberated. But were you bound previously that you say you are free now? Who did bind you?’

‘No, none bound me earlier. I tied me up myself in ignorance. It is foolish to think that I will get tied down by them.’

‘Were you really bound earlier?’

‘I am Pure Consciousness. There is no scope for bondage to me. I used to feel bad under the false notion that I was bound. Without any real bondage, I cried for freedom, liberation. Now that I think maturely, all of it sounds pretty silly. I need no meditation. Nor do I have to send away my visitors. I continue to be fully absorbed within the essence of Self. No wrong will accrue to me if I converse with them.’

“With this determination, Emperor Bali interacted with his officials and discharged his royal obligations with his mind emptied of the impressions of past births through contemplation (Contemplation-based Eradication of Impressions – *Dhyeya vasana tyaaga*).

“Some time later, he performed a sacrificial rite called Aswamedha. To accept the offerings made into the altar in the ritual, Lord Vishnu visited Bali along with the Lord of Gods (Indra) and others. Bali was bestowed with many boons. Bali had by then itself attained the Supreme Self. Hence he neither regretted for what was lost nor did he rejoice in getting the pleasures of nether lands.”

After narrating the story up to this point in the life of Emperor Bali, Sage Vasishtha commented as follows:

Vasishtha: “Rama! Emperor Bali would have to become the future Lord of Gods and reign over the three worlds by the sheer force of his current sufferage (*Prarabdha*). When he occupies that position, Bali would not feel elated. Nor would he give up redeeming the effect of his past actions. That was so, because Bali had achieved Contemplation-based Eradication of the Impressions. Therefore, Rama, you too emulate Bali. Inquire into Self, obtain Knowledge of the Supreme and reach the Non-Dual state.

“Rama, I told you the story of King Janaka to illustrate the point that Self-realization may happen unexpectedly just as a ripened fruit falls down from the tree. The story of Punya – Paavana shows that Self-realization may come about through a discussion with peers if it has not happened through a study of scriptures or Guru’s teaching. The story of Emperor Bali exemplifies the possibility of obtaining Self-realization from a recollection of the talk imbibed during childhood and contemplation over it later on at a mature age with timely reinforcement by the kind words of a Guru. There is yet another way to achieve the knowledge of the Supreme Self. It is through prayer to the Lord. One may get blessed with Self-realization by worshipping the Lord for a long time. I shall narrate to you the story of Pahlada, the grandfather of Emperor Bali to substantiate this possibility.

11. The story of prahlada:

“The Demon King Hiranyakasipa had a son by name Pahlada. Hiranyakasipa hated Lord Vishnu. Pahlada was a devout worshipper of Vishnu. Hiranyakasipa, therefore, used to torture Pahlada in several ways. Finally, one fine day God Vishnu reincarnated as Narasimha, killed Hiranyakasipa and several thousands of demons to save Pahlada.

“As Pahlada was the only heir to the throne, he was crowned the King of the Demon kingdom. Because of the war casualties, there was no military left in the kingdom. Pahlada watched helplessly as gods started troubling and harming the citizens of the demon kingdom. He grew remorseful at the situation.

“Pahlada thought deeply over the matter and decided to worship (*upasana*) God Vishnu with a request to liberate the demons from their troubles. The course of his worship went as follows:

aviṣṇuḥ pūjayanviṣṇum
na pūjā phalabhāgbhaveet |
viṣṇurbhūtvā yajeedviṣṇum
ayam viṣṇu rahaṁ sthitaḥ || (sarga 31 - śloka 40)

“The prayer of a Non-Vishnu to Vishnu will not yield any result. Therefore, a seeker has to become a Vishnu and then worship Him. Yes, I am Vishnu now. Vishnu is Prahlada. I am no different from him; nor is He different from me.

“Garutman with his wings spread across the breadth of the skies is my chariot. Four hands sprouted on me. Brilliant weaponry is shining in my hands. Goddess Lakshmi is fanning me with gentle breeze. Goddess Kirti is standing beside me. The Goddess Maya, creator of this whole world, is standing by me. It is dark in all directions compared to the brilliance of my body. The Panchajanya Conch in my hand blows AUM. I see a lotus flower on my belly-button and Brahma is seated on the lotus. I hold in my hands a mace, a sword, and a bow. I see infinite universes in my abdomen. Some of the worlds are disintegrating. Some are newly arising. The earth forms my feet. The sky is my head. The four quarters resemble my ribs. Evil-minded people are running away from me. Persons coming towards me with an antagonistic attitude are getting scorched like moths that fall into fire. Neither gods nor demons are able to stand the brilliance of my aura. All the Gods like Brahma, Indra, Agni, Hara are singing my glory who am in the form of Vishnu. I expand in all directions under the strength gained from going beyond the pairs of opposites. I salute my own macrocosmic (*virat*) form.”

“Prahlada contemplated thus and created the essence of Vishnu within himself.”

[From 40th to 66th verse in the 32nd Sarga, Sage Valmiki rendered in exquisite poetic splendor the way Prahlada conceived of himself as Vishnu. A daily recital of these 27 slokas is a must for those who would like to connect with their deity of worship assuming the form of the deity to their own self.

“Prahlada then began a mental worship of the essence of Vishnu he conceived within himself.

vapuṣoo vaiṣṇavādashmāt
mābhūnmūrṭiḥ parāvarā |
ayaṁ prāṇapravāheṇa
bahirviṣṇuḥ sthitoo paraḥ || (sarga 32 - śloka 2)

“May there be no other Vishnu anywhere than what I conceived within myself! May there be no other larger macrocosmic form than what I conceived of! May there be no shrunken partial (*vyashṭi*) form of the deity! Life-force flowing through my nostrils is a form of Vishnu. May that flow solidify before me as another form of Vishnu! May this be the basis for my mental worship!!

“Thinking in this fashion, Prahlada performed a variety of mental services to the living form of Vishnu standing in front of him. A little later, he went to his Prayer Hall, established Vishnu’s idol and worshipped the idol openly.

“Seeing Prahlada worshipping Vishnu openly, all his retinue joined him in the worship. Those who are away from the royal household worshipped Vishnu in their own homes. Soon the entire demon kingdom was occupied with prayers to Vishnu. All the citizens became devotees of Vishnu following the king. *Yatha rajah thatha prajah!*

“Gods were surprised at this development. In a sense they were scared too. Anxious about the sort of consequences that might befall on them as a result of the demons’ prayers to Vishnu, they approached Lord Vishnu. They expressed to him their apprehension of what might happen if the prayers were continued by the indolent (*tamasic*) demons. Lord Vishnu assured the gods that the prayers of Prahlada would not harm gods as it was the last birth for Prahlada. Prahlada’s devotion too intensified in the meanwhile. He became totally detached. He had little interest for anything other than adoring Vishnu.

“Noticing Prahlada’s passionate devotion, Lord Vishnu gave audience to Prahlada in the latter’s Prayer Hall. Prahlada’s joy knew no bounds. He praised the lord in magnificent words.”

[This prayer is available in eight slokas (from Sloka 19 to 26) in Sarga 33.]

“Lord Vishnu was pleased with Prahlada’s devotion. He asked Prahlada to wish for a boon so that the sorrow of being born again would come to an end for him.

Prahlada: “Lord! You are the one who is present in every universe. You are the one who fulfils the desires of all! Please bestow me with whatever is the best to me.”

Lord Vishnu: “Dear Prahlada! If you want to attain the supreme state of liberation dissolving all the fallacies of the world, you have to persist with relentless Self-introspection till you reach the final goal of Cosmic Consciousness. May you be blessed with such a Self-inquiry!”

“Lord Vishnu granted the boon of Self-inquiry and vanished like an upwelling wave that disappeared back into ocean water. Prahlada was quite thrilled and stayed there praising the Lord. A little later, Prahlada decided to commence an enquiry into Self because that was the blessing the Lord granted him.

kimahaṁ nāma tāvat syāṁ
yoosmin bhuvanaḍambaree |
vacmi gaccāmi tiṣṭhāmi
prayatneenāharāmi ca || (sarga 34 - śloka 8)

“What is meant by ‘I’? When I speak, it is the speech organ doing the work. When I walk, it is the pair of legs that do the locomotion. What is the work done if I just stay standing? Is any work done at all by remaining in a standing position? I am or I stand. These two are different action words. But I do not see two different types of actions.

“Or let me say, I receive some objects. What is meant by receiving? Experiencing them is receiving them. With what do I receive things? I do so with hands. Therefore, it is an action done by the hands. But the experience doesn’t end with hands. I see the shape with eyes, I smell with nose, and so on. I thus experience various things with my sensory organs.

“Say I am talking. Am I the organ of speech? When I walk, am I the organ (legs) of mobility? When I stay still without action, am I simply beingness? Though I experience various things through my sensory organs, I make an effort first with my mind. Am I the mind that works from within me? Who am I?

“I cannot be the body. I cannot be the smell. I cannot be taste. Who could possibly be ‘me’?”

“Aha! I can understand now. I am nothing but an apparition (illusionary appearance) of the changeless Consciousness. I am the force behind the sensory organs like eye, ear etc and mind. Hence I am Pure Consciousness.”

Beginning with these words, Sage Valmiki extended the description of Pahlada’s Self-introspective search to 283 verses spread in three Sargas as follows:

34 th Sarga	-	115 verses
35 th Sarga	-	88 verses
36 th Sarga	-	80 verses.

The 34th Sarga deals with how Pahlada distinguished between the Self and the rest of things that are non-Self through the strength of his discrimination and later how he determined that he was himself Pure Consciousness, the Non-Dual Supreme Self.

The 35th Sarga talks about how Pahlada analyzed the Self that he witnessed within himself as a form of “AUM” and then saluted to himself; and how he felt happy reviewing his old relationships in the light of the newly acquired wisdom.

The 36th Sarga was a depiction of Pahlada’s ecstasy of attaining the Supreme Consciousness, how he worshipped and bowed to himself in that euphoric state and how he played with himself as two loving couple would do.

The Self-analysis of Pahlada finally led him to *Nirvikalpa Samadhi*. He remained rock-solid like a statue. He stayed in that state for a long time. His followers tried hard to bring him back to normalcy but to no avail.

With the king being unconcerned, indiscipline and corruption spread far and wide in the kingdom. Thieves and muscle men ruled the roost. Women were insecure. Gods too continued to increasingly torment the citizens of the demon land. None of this could wake up Pahlada from his deep meditation.

12. The Course of Liberation And Need for Demons:

Lord Vishnu, the sustainer of the world, woke up from sleep on the eleventh day after New Moon in the month of Kartika (usually falls in the first week of November as per the Gregorian calendar) in the Milky Way (*Kshira samudra*). He reviewed the state of various worlds. He could find that the demon kingdom in the nether world was disintegrating.

Lord Vishnu felt concerned. He thought, “What a situation! Pahlada achieved the state of Supreme Bliss because of me. But his kingdom is decomposing. If demons are completely gone, gods will lose interest in reaching their goal. Gods are dominant in *Satva* (signifying goodness, wisdom, softness etc.) quality. In the absence of both desire to succeed and fear for their life, *Rajas* (signifying activity, energy, anger etc.) quality in them will diminish. *Satva* will predominate overtaking *Rajas* in them leading them to detachment and a longing for liberation. This may be good for the gods. But its effect on the world of men is ominous. If the gods run after liberation, they will neglect their devotees. If that happens, men on earth will lose interest in performing good deeds. This will result in an increase of *Rajas* and *Tamas* (signifies lethargy, lust, cruelty etc.) in men. They will be destroyed much

earlier than Dissolution (*Pralaya*). That would be a slap on my play (*leela*) of protecting the worlds.

“Some people assume unknowingly that natural dissolution (i.e. ending along with the natural cycle of Dissolution (*Pralaya*)) itself is a great attainment. That type of dissolution is more like deep sleep. It may look beneficial for the time being. But in truth, it is not permanently advantageous. It is not liberation, freedom from rebirth. Therefore, it is nothing to be aspired.

“It is advisable that a desire for wisdom should emanate from the performance of meritorious deeds. From that longing for wisdom should emerge an understanding of Truth. From a knowledge of Truth, one should experience Truth. With that would come permanent liberation, freedom from the cycle of births and deaths. This is the normal course to attain liberation.

“If the demonic people disappear completely in creation, this course would be affected. It should not happen. I should do something to get out of this trap.

“This is the last birth for Prahlada. It is so according to the Law of Nature as determined by the thought process of the Supreme. Nobody can change it. I have to save the world using the holy body of Prahlada. May Prahlada continue to reign though he stays liberated and continues with his desireless meditation! May he protect the Demon kingdom living in his body till the end of the current Kalpa (Total period of a Kalpa is equivalent to 4.32 billion earth years)! May the war between the gods and demons get resumed through him!!

tanmee krīḍā bhaviṣyati (sarga 38-śloka 23)

“May that be my play!

“It is all the same for me whether the world stays stable or disintegrated. In my opinion, stability and disintegration should follow proper order. There is no specific agenda behind my plans. There is no compulsion to act one-way or the other. I shall be flexible. Let me go to the nether world and fulfill my responsibility without fear or favor.”

“Lord Vishnu, having thus decided, went straight to the Prayer Hall of Prahlada. He appeared before Prahalda and blew hard on his conch, Panchjanya. The sound of the conch was so terrific that the demons were scared out of their wits. The life-force that reached Brahma randhra (Pineal plexus = *sahasrara*) returned to the sensory organs in Prahlada. His mind gathered its strength and entered his senses. There was a sweet voice calling in his mind to wake up. That was the voice of Lord Vishnu. Prahlada was overjoyed by the Lord’s voice. With happiness writ large on his face, he arose from his deep meditation. Observing Prhalada, Lord Vishnu said,

sādhoo smara mahālakṣmī
mātmīyām smara cākṛtim |
akāṇḍa eva kiṁ deeha
virāmaḥ kriyatee tvayā || (sarga 39 - śloka 22)

“Oh, Saintly Man! Think of the goddess of your kingdom. Think of your body. Why do you want to wither away your body for nothing?”

“You may think that the body is of no use citing the Upanishadic aphorism that as long as the body exists, feelings of likes and dislikes do not fade away.

na ha vai sasarīrasya priyāpriyayo rapahatirasthi
— Brihadaranyaka Upanishad.

“That is a mistake. How can you, who have no feelings of what is desirable and what is undesirable, be linked to the likes and dislikes existing in the body? Hence, come on, get up!

“You have to be alive with the present body till the end of the present Kalpa. That is the Law of Nature. It has to have its course. We are aware of it. You must have to live in this body till the end of Kalpa as a liberated person and rule the kingdom without emotional upsurges. Your body has been designed accordingly when it was created.

“It is not yet time for the end of Kalpa. So please do not give up your body.

“Let me tell you. It is reasonable if a totally ignorant person with a disturbed mind suffering from unlimited sorrows were to die. It is better that an excessively greedy person or a person of excessive lust and anger dies. What for should you end your life?”

“What is death after all? If one leaves the body, it is termed as death. Actions do not exist for Self, which is ever existent (*sadrupi*). Leaving body is also an action. How can an action of leaving the body be attributed to Self?”

“If Self has to disconnect itself from the body, it implies that there was a prior connection with the body. Self is always unattached. Further, body is non-existent. How can there be a linkage for an existent ‘you’ with a non-existent body? If there is no connection for the ‘existent you’ to start with, how can you break the non-existing connection to leave the body? Hence it is impossible for you to die.

“Prahlada! It is, therefore, venerable that a wise person firmly established in truth and whose mind does not stray away from the Supreme lives on. It is, therefore, reputable that an egoless person with equanimity towards all and whose intellect is not swayed by anything lives on. It is, therefore, auspicious that a person, whose presence or name or even thinking about whom brings joy to the neighborhood, lives on!

“But what does it mean to be alive? One is said to be alive if you continue to see his existing body. If he leaves the present body to acquire a new one, we call it death. Do you possess this body? Do you have a desire to get another body? The answer is no for both questions. In such a case how can you live or die? You have neither death nor living.

“A mirror reflects the objects that come in front of it. If the object moves away, the mirror loses the reflected image. The mirror is attached to neither the object nor the reflection. It has no likes and dislikes. Liberated persons who have understood Truth function similarly without love or hatred. They are awake in the knowledge of Self; they are asleep in worldly affairs.

jāgrati svātmani svasthāḥ
suptāssaṁsāra saṁsthitāḥ || (sarga 40 - śloka 24)

“So, Prahlada, you should enjoy in a similar way ruling over the kingdom in nether world till the end of the present Kalpa. After that, experience the everlasting salvation without a body.”

“Being happy listening to the lengthy harangue of Lord Vishnu, the corporeal body called Prahlada responded as follows:

“My Lord! I was tired of analyzing what is good and what is bad. I just have had a wink out of fatigue. With your compassion, I have reached calmness in or out of deep meditation (*Samadhi*). I see you in my meditation. I see you outside my meditation. I did not meditate because of sorrow or for fulfillment of desires. Renunciation, a wish to leave the body or a fear of the world is not the reason for my meditation. Surely I have some problems in my kingdom. But they are external issues. I am alone. I do not possess a body. There is no bondage for me. There is no annihilation for me either. I have no fears and at the same time I am not fearless. Hence none of them are the reason for my meditation. A desire for rest grew in me out of my introspection. Hence I went into meditation.

“Esteemed Sir, some people want to leave the world because they are disgusted. It speaks poorly of their intelligence because such a thought does give them a bit of happiness and a little sadness and produces some transformation in them. Only foolish persons are troubled by the pathetic thought that difficulties come with the body and in the absence of a body there would be no difficulties. ‘I am happy with this, I am unhappy with that, I have this, I do not have that and similar thoughts torment only the fickle minded unwise people but not learned persons.

“Revered Sir! I did not take up *Samadhi* out of any such fears. I rested within my Self for a short time while making a natural enquiry into who was the seer and what was it that was seen. I did not entertain in that state any inner feelings (*bhava*). It was not that I was without any inner feeling. There was nothing I had to get or give up. Coming out of *Samadhi* too I feel the same way.

“Lord, I shall do what is dear to you.

“You are beautiful with eyes like petals of a lotus. You are venerated in the three worlds. By nature, I am a devotee. Therefore, I wish to worship you. Please do accept my worship (*puja*).”

“With the permission of Lord Vishnu, Prahlada performed an elaborate ritual of worship to the Lord. On completion of the worship, Lord Vishnu addressed Prahlada as follows:

Vishnu: “Prahlada, King of Demons! Come on over and occupy the throne. I shall myself coronate you. All the angels and gods accompanying me will also participate in the celebrations.”

“Hosts of gods from all nooks and corners came along to participate in the coronation ceremony. At the end of the function, Lord Vishnu blessed Prahlada, with these words:

iṣṭāniṣṭaphalaṁ tyaktvā
samadarśanayā dhiyā |

vītarāga bhayakroodhoo
rājyaṁ samanupālaya || (sarga 42 - śloka 32)

“Rule the kingdom without fear or favor and without love or hatred, with equanimity towards all. Perform your duties as per the needs of the time. When you execute your job, keep your mind free of likes and dislikes or any ill feelings. May the demon citizenry be free of troubles in your reign! May your rule be free of wars between the gods and demons! May you enjoy ruling the country for a long time!!”

“After granting several boons and receiving farewell from Prahlada, Lord Vishnu left for His abode along with his retinue. Indra, Lord of gods in the Heaven and Prahlada in the netherworld lived happily from then on.”

Sage Vasishtha closed the story of Prahlada with the following remarks:

Vasishta: “Rama, you also emulate Prahlada and rule the kingdom after attaining liberation through Self introspection. Undoubtedly men who recite this event of Prahlada’s union with the Supreme Self will be redeemed of their sins of past seven births.”

This statement provoked Rama to raise a question.

13. Residual Impressions of Jivanmuktas:

Rama: “Revered Teacher! You said earlier that there was no difference in the blissful happiness of a person liberated while alive and the one who obtained salvation without the body. If that is the case, it is impossible for a liberated individual to come out of his *Samadhi*. After all, no body wishes to forego the eternal bliss and move away from the Cosmic Consciousness. Further you said that Lord Vishnu sounded his conch when Prahlada deserted all his sensory organs having merged in the Supreme. How is it possible for Prahlada who lost contact with his senses to hear the sound of the conch and come out of *Samadhi*?”

Vasishta: “Liberation is of two types. One is with the body and the other is without the body. Liberation with the body and Liberation while alive mean the same. They are free of the three “*desires (of wife, children and wealth)*.” Life still throbs in them. If the person dies in that state, it is called liberation without the body. Those who obtain liberation without body will not appear again in the world.

“But persons who are liberated in this life, though free of the three ‘desires’ and rebirth, are still left with a few meritorious impressions. They are undoubtedly left with specifically the pure and pious impressions of contemplation on the Supreme Self. Hence just as a sleeping man wakes up some time or other, those that achieve liberation while living do come back into worldly affairs, maybe after a thousand years. When they thus come back, they come along with the residual impressions. Prahlada too woke up with the residual impressions. That is how liberation while alive works.

“Your next question was how a person could hear the sound of a conch even though he was free of sensory perception. That could happen because of the thought power of Lord

Vishnu. Who do you think Lord Vishnu to be? He is nothing but the Supreme Brahman, the Cosmic Consciousness.

ātmanyakāraṇenaiva
bhūtānām kāraṇena ca |
sṛṣṭyartham vapurāttam hi
vāsudeeva mayātmanā || (sarga 42 - śloka 20)

“There is only one thing in the universe that is neither caused by anything nor causes anything. That is the Supreme Self. The causal force for all the creatures is only one. That is called the Undifferentiated (*Avyākṛutam*). When reasons like desire, action etc. mix with the Undifferentiated, Pure Consciousness creates a body within itself all by itself. It does like that for the sake of creating the world. Lord Vishnu is the form assumed by Pure Self (Consciousness) within itself for the sake of creation. Therefore, Lord Vishnu appears before him whoever seeks the Pure Self through a philosophical inquiry. Whoever gets the audition of Lord Vishnu will be able to see his Pure Self automatically. That was the reason why Prahlada had the benefit of seeing Lord Vishnu in the form of Narasimha. He could realize the Self because of that. He could see again Lord Vishnu later. With the thought wave of Lord Vishnu, Prahlada’s sensory systems started to work again and were able to hear the sound of Vishnu’s conch.

“The moral of the story is that you should also cultivate a similar attitude and achieve Self-realization.”

Rama: “I have one more doubt. Some time back you said in another context that Self-realization is possible only with human effort. If that is true, how could Prahlada obtain Self-realization without any of his effort but merely by the grace of Lord Vishnu?”

Vasishta: “You cannot say that Prahlada did not make any effort. He did make an effort through austerity (*tapas*). His effort fructified. The appearance of Lord Vishnu served as a doorway. So there is no violation of the principle that liberation is not obtained without human effort.

“You may question the possibility of attaining Self-realization through worship of Lord Vishnu. It’s all the same whether we refer to Self, Lord Vishnu or Sri Hari. Gingelly seed or gingelly oil is same. Whether you refer to whiteness or a white cloth, it is all the same. Fragrance and the flower are the same. Whoever is Vishnu, He is Self. To put it straight, like chicken and hen or cow and milch-cattle, Self and Vishnu are synonymous.

“Self in the form of Vishnu introduced Prahlada to devotion. Devotion led him to Self-introspection.

nāvicāravatoo jñānam
dātum śaknooti mādhaveḥ |
mukhyaḥ puruṣayatnootthoo
vicārassvātma darśane || (sarga 43 - śloka 10)

Lord Vishnu too cannot bestow a boon of liberation on some one who does not make Self-inquiry. The foremost way for Self-realization is through human effort of Self inquiry.

Boons and other benevolent things bestowed by Lord Vishnu are secondary. So concentrate on Self-inquiry, which is the main path for liberation. Make full effort towards that.

śāstrayatna vicāreebhyoo
mūrkhāṇām prapalāyinām |
kalpitā vaiṣṇavī bhaktiḥ
pravṛttyartham śubhasthitau || (sarga 43 - śloka 20)

“Fools give up performance of meritorious acts and rigorous Self-inquiry having failed in a proper study of scriptures. Devotion to God has been devised to bring such people back on to the auspicious track. The principal guidelines for liberation are study of scriptures, performance of good deeds and Self-inquiry. When such a strategy is found to be difficult, the lesser method of worshipping God etc. is recommended.

“Devotional approach is branded as inferior because it involves within it a stipulated ritualistic practice. The ritual has an underlying assumption that there is a superior God different from what we are and a ritualistic worship connects us to Him. Thus a triad (we, God and worshipping) gets introduced. Therefore, the devotional approach is considered inferior.

“Of what use is the worship if the worshipper is lost in his sensory experience? When a person is not overpowered by his sensory experiences, what does he gain by performing any worship? After all the main aim of worshipping is to conquer sensory desires.

For one who has conquered senses, there is no significant benefit from worship. Lord Vishnu cannot, in fact, be obtained without an enquiry into Self and subjugation of senses. When once you possess these two, you do not have to bother for the form of Vishnu with attributes. So Rama, achieve these two.

“It is also better that worshippers appreciate one important point. They pray as if Vishnu is somewhere out there. He is, strictly speaking, right within our hearts. People who leave Vishnu residing right within them and pray to a distant Vishnu are despicable. The truth is that Pure Consciousness existing inside the heart of creatures is Vishnu’s prime form. The embodied form with four hands holding a conch, mace, wheel and a lotus flower is secondary. A person worshipping the secondary form leaving the primary form is equal to a man who goes to plough a field to grow grain forsaking the immortal nectar poured into his own palm.

“The sum and substance of all this is that a person incapable of linking directly with the Self may go for worshipping the Supreme Lord. He may also perform very demanding austerities or follow other rigorous methods. A methodical convergence of them all leads his mind to stability. A stable mind will help him achieve liberation.

“I mentioned earlier that Prahlada fulfilled the obligatory responsibilities expected out of a human being through performance of austerities. As a result of this, Lord Vishnu bestowed a boon to him. Because of this boon, he could obtain necessary strength for Self-introspection. Self-introspection led him to the pristine state of the Supreme. Hence there is no flaw in what I said. Truth is reached only through an effort by human beings.

“Rama! Control of mind alone leads to success whether one follows a spiritual approach or observes physical practices. There is no other short cut for success. Leave the

external form of god perceived by senses; leave the internal effulgence experienced by mind; contemplate only on the formless Consciousness. This is the way to obliterate future births.

“The root cause for the misconception of man is illusion. Control of mind is the sole means to demolish illusion. I shall narrate an interesting story to show how beguiling is illusion for creatures in the world.”

With these introductory words, Sage Vasishtha embarked on relating the story of Gadhi Brahmana.

The story of Gadhi Brahmana, as already remarked, constitutes the central theme of the entire Chapter of The Calm Down. A few short stories have been narrated already. There is only nominal storyline in them. Sage Vasishtha’s commentary, however, extended each time to hundreds of verses.

The material covered so far constitutes the backdrop for the main story of Gadhi Brahmana. Several methods to attain Self- realization have been described from the beginning of the chapter till now. Devotion towards an entity with and without attributes were discussed at the end. Finally in order to explain Maya (the essence of illusion) which is the biggest obstacle to attaining wisdom, Sage Vasishtha narrated the story of Gadhi Brahmana in the following words. We shall take up now this exciting and most meaningful story.

14. The story of Sage Gadhi:

“Rama! A noble person by name Gadhi lived in a country called Kosala. I am not referring to Sage Viswamitra’s father. He was a different Gadhi. Gadhi of our story was a Brahmin and an orthodox one at that. He had had no interest in worldly things right from his childhood. He renounced everything in his prime age and escaped to a forest for meditation. He came across a beautiful lake in the forest. Because of the effect of meritorious deeds done by him during his past lives, he was propelled to observe austerities in this life. He meditated standing in neck deep waters of the lake continuously for eight months.

“Pleased with his austerities, Lord Vishnu appeared before him. Sage Gadhi was overjoyed and respectfully worshipped Him. Lord Vishnu asked Gadhi to express what he wished for. Gadhi stated his desire in the following words:

māyāmimāṁ tvadracitāṁ
bhagavan pāramātmakīm |
draṣṭu miccāmi saṁsāra
nāmnī māndhyaika kāriṇīm || (sarga 44 - śloka 13)

“Lord! I want to understand illusion. Illusion is created by you, is dependent on you and appears as this world of life and death. It blindfolds everybody. It has been an enigma! I am unable to understand it howsoever I may think about it. I want to witness what illusion is. Please grant me this wish.”

“Lord Vishnu was very happy at this request. He assured Gadhi, “You shall witness the illusion created by me! No sooner you comprehend it you shall transcend it! Amen!” So saying the Lord disappeared.

“Gadhi was quite pleased. He concluded his meditation and climbed ashore. He built a cottage in the forest and lived in it. He was anxiously looking forward for the day of fulfillment of the Lord’s words. He was constantly thinking about illusion. His whole focus was on witnessing illusion. Days went by. Years had gone by. But his wish was not fulfilled.

“One fine morning as he proceeded for his bath in the lake, he was besieged by intense thoughts on illusion. He was very desperate to witness it. Somehow, he could compose himself and commenced the ritualistic ablutions in the pond. As ordained in the scriptures, he held Cogon grass (*Darbha*, Botanical name: *Imperata cylindrical*) in his hand. He was making circles with it in the waters uttering mantras along with the sound of Aum as per the custom.

“The movement of Cogon grass in the water looked like the circling of a big whirlpool. The sounds of Aum produced a twister in the atmosphere. In the ensuing melee, somehow, Gadhi mispronounced the mantras. He went blank. His body became frigid. The body froze like a pillar in the lake. But surprisingly, his mind continued to experience strange phenomena.

“He felt that he was not in the lake but was in his cottage. He appeared to be terribly sick. His face developed black patches. Eyeballs were not moving. He was unable to breathe. He was fainting. Suddenly all his childhood friends and relatives appeared from somewhere and gathered around him. They were crying. His wife was weeping uncontrollably. She fell down on his feet. His mother was inconsolably crying. She was trying to move his head holding his chin.

“In the midst of all this commotion, Gadhi felt that his limbs turned limp. His body felt cold. His mouth gaped open. His life was coming to an end. Nay, his life ended! His body was a mere corpse.

“Some of his relatives were still crying while others made arrangements for the funeral. They carried the body to the graveyard. Kites, crows and foxes were ready to devour the corpse. His relatives drove away the birds and animals. They put the body on the funeral pyre and lit it.

“That was it. Everything ended. His body was in ashes. But strangely his experiencing continued.

“All the relatives who participated in the funeral bathed to cleanse themselves. With difficulty they controlled their sorrow and left for their homes. After the body was burnt away, the *Jiva* (individual in the body) of Gadhi suddenly appeared in the womb of a lady of hunter community living in a godforsaken village. He could not understand how he could witness himself. He felt he was like a dung beetle in a dump of refuse. He appeared to be fidgety and fussing around and anxious to come out of the lady’s womb.

“After the due gestation period, he did come out. The baby was charcoal dark. He grew up to be a teenager. He attained sixteen years. He went to the forest with hunting dogs.

He killed thousands of beasts. He found a suitable young bride and married her. He was enjoying life with her without a care.

“He became famous as a courageous person in his community. He begot children and they too had grown up and were respected in his tribe. He became old. He became infirm. For some reason, he left his wife and children. He started living alone in a small hut in the outskirts of the village. After a few days, he was unable to bear his solitude. He felt that he would die soon. He was scared of the thought of death and began crying. He could not live alone any more. Full of sorrow, he wandered around different places.

“Presently he entered a big city of wealthy people in the country known as Keera. Ugly and cruel looking Gadhi was roaming around the main avenue of the city without any aim or purpose.

“He noticed that many people were crowding the streets in a celebratory way. But strangely none was looking happy. There appeared to be a lot of confusion. He could not discern what sort of celebration it was. A huge elephant was freely moving on the main avenue. It held a garland of flowers in its trunk. It moved in all directions and tried to approach the crowds. People were giving way to the elephant but were not running away from it. Nor the pachyderm was harming any person. The whole thing looked very surprising indeed.

“The elephant slowly came towards hunter Gadhi. As it came close to him, the old and frail Gadhi shuddered. While he was scared and trembling with fear, the elephant drew closer to him and put the garland on his neck. It lifted him gently with its trunk and seated him on its back.

“There was a sudden uproar. The Royal drums sounded and bugles were played. The entire crowd clapped. The place resounded with cries of victory.

“The fact is that the pachyderm was from the Royal court. The king of the country had died. He did not have any children or heirs for the throne. Therefore, as per their tradition, the ministers let the Royal elephant out on to the streets with a garland of flowers in its trunk. It is the local custom that whoever would be decorated with the garland by the elephant would be crowned their king. That was the function that was being held at the time Gadhi visited the city.

“The elephant’s action transformed hunter Gadhi to a King. Royal servants and lady aides came running to him. They brought him down gently from the back of the elephant with great respect. They decorated him fittingly and dressed him in royal clothes.

“Ministers, Pundits and other nobles of the court took him to the palace most respectfully and seated him on the throne. Coronation was done. He was crowned the King. In no time, the frail hunter Gadhi became a great brave King. He ruled over the land with an iron hand. He won wars over other countries. He was known as King Gavala, the Great. He enjoyed the life thoroughly. Eight years went by.

15. A Disrupted Dream:

“Whatever it was, after all a hunter’s temperament would be that of a hunter! He felt uncomfortable with all the flashy garments and pompous ceremonies. He was weary of the synthetic dignity and stiff palace routines. The artificial behavior was totally unbearable to

him. One fine day he threw away all the ornamentations and Royal insignia. He removed even his shirt. He came out onto the street doing cat-stretches.

“As he was enjoying himself thus, to his misfortune, he met with a group of hunters. The people in the group were fully inebriated. They were singing intoxicatedly. King Gadhi felt as if he found his long last cousins. He heartily joined them in the singing.

“An old person in the group recognized Gadhi. The person was unable to contain himself. Boisterously he shouted in his native tone,

“Aye, Katanja! Haw come ye are heer!”

“Katanja had been his name a long long time ago. The hunter King, now a respected His Highness, did not like the old man addressing him with that long forgotten name. Unconcerned the old man, however, continued with his prattle.

“Aye Katanja! Has our King employed ye ‘cause he liked yuur singing? Does he treat ya well? Does they give ya what ya want?”

“King Gadhi was totally annoyed with the unwanted conversation. He fretted and fumed. When he looked around he discovered that they were in the street where the Minister’s bungalows were located. Huge mansions stood on either side of the street. Many of the officials and Ministers were watching the scene on the road from their windows on the upper floors. They could make out that King Gavala, the Great was after all a hunter and belonged to an unworthy low class. They felt ashamed.

“King Gavala assumed a serious face and walked quickly back to the palace. Everybody in the palace looked at him as if he were an untouchable corpse. They did not respond to his calls. They did not even come near him.

“The word spread around the kingdom like fire. People were disgusted that an undeserving person from the lower class of society was crowned king. They regretted that they paid obeisance to and were in the service of such a king. They felt that their entire lineage was defiled and tarnished by their acts of supplication. They desired to initiate some remedial measures. Some of the more emotional lot including a few ministers were unable to bear the insult and committed suicide by jumping into burning pyres. The entire kingdom was turbulent, uncertain and confused.

“Though he had been a mere hunter, he spent the past eight years as King Gavala in the association of cultured persons and nobility of the court. As a result of this association, a new line of thinking took root in him. He felt that he was responsible for the disorder and death of so many noble persons. He decided to end his own life rather than continue living hearing the abuses heaped on him. He proceeded straight to a burning pyre in front of his palace and jumped into it.

“Just as the King jumped into the fire with a thud, Maharshi Gadhi who was standing like a rigid post in the lake tottered with a jolt. He was jerked out of his stupor. He shook his head. Rubbed his eyes. Soon he was his normal self. He felt as if he had just woken up from a deep slumber, conscious and alert back again. He mused within himself, “I am Gadhi. I am a Seeker (*sadhak*). I am a well-read person duly observing the ritualistic ablutions and other

prescribed actions. Being a hunter king or ruler of the country Keera is definitely not my cup of tea.”

“Sadhak Gadhi finished his bath and dragged himself out of the lake. However, a stream of thoughts continued to haunt him and trouble him.

koohaṁ kimiva paśyāmi
kimakārṣamaharṁ kila |
eevaṁ vicārayaṁścitraṁ
sabhrūbhaṅgamabhūt kṣaṇam|| (sarga 47 - śloka 7)

“Who am I? What is it that I see? What is it that I am doing?” He was thus totally lost in deep thoughts with knotted brows.

“How is it possible? When did I see my parents? I cannot even remember seeing them. They passed away much earlier than I was of the age to register things in my mind. How could my parents appear to me now?

“Further, how could my wife weep for me? I was never married nor did I accost any lady at any time. I cannot recollect any of my relatives. I never cared for any of them when I stayed in my village. How then can my parents, my wife and kids and relatives gather around my deathbed? How was it possible that I die in the midst of all of them? What is all this but a phantasmagoria? The entire thing is a creation, an aberration of my mind. It is an illusion, a hallucination. There is no truth at all in this. Just like a tiger in passion roams around in the jungle, the mind of an individual (*Jiva*) lives in illusion. One need not be concerned by such illusions or delusions.” Having decided thus, he proceeded to his abode.

16. Dream Proved to be True:

“A few days rolled by. One day a sage visited him in his cottage. It was rare to have visitors in a forest. So Sadhak Gadhi invited him with due respect and treated him as a revered guest observing the prescribed formalities in honoring a guest. Both of them observed religiously the daily routines of worship etc. They ate a limited supper consisting of some fruits and roots. They retired to sleep early stretching themselves on floor mats. As both of them were busy with their own respective protocols of worship, they did not have much of a chance to chitchat during the day. Moreover, great sages are usually very reticent. So just for the sake of courtesy, Sadhak Gadhi, while formally bidding goodnight, enquired of his guest:

“Great Sage! How come you look so tired and debilitated?”

“The guest responded letting out a huge sigh, “Yes. It is true. I shall speak the truth as you were kind to ask me. While wandering on a pilgrimage, I reached the country Keera. The people of that country looked after me with a lot of respect. Tempted by their hospitality, I stayed at a Brahmin’s place for over a month. One morning my host looked very sad. I queried him for the reason of his sadness. The Brahmin narrated the story as follows:

“My Guest! Please do not misunderstand me. Recently a hunter, a butcher, feigning to be a Brahmin ruled over us as our King for eight years. We worshipped and served him

falling at his feet. Finally his true colors showed up. About a hundred of the rigorous Vedic Brahmins could not take it and gave up their lives by jumping into burning fires. I couldn't commit suicide. So I am very desolate and depressed.”

“I was quite upset by the shocking words of my host. I deeply regretted having partaken food for a whole month from such a despicable house in such a corrupted country. Immediately I left the place for Prayag (where the three sacred Rivers Ganges, Jamuna and Saraswati were supposed to meet) and had a holy dip at the confluence of the three rivers to wash away my sin. Still not satisfied with it, I performed the special worship of “*Krichra Chandrayana*” three times. As you may be aware, the worship requires the performer to observe very strict fasting. Upon the completion of the three rounds of fasting, I wished to complete the balance of my worship at a pious location. So I came to your place today. I am sanctified by eating the modest offering of fruits and roots by you. So you can understand why I look so weak. It was because of the strict fasting.”

“Sadhak Gadhi was taken aback by these words. He made searching enquiries from the guest through elaborate questioning. The responses of the guest matched every one of his experiences to the dot. Undoubtedly, the guest was speaking of the same kingdom Keera that he felt he ruled. There was no scope for any misgiving.

“Sadhak Gadhi was terribly worried. He could not sleep at all though his guest was fast asleep. Soon it was daybreak. The guest took leave and left. But Gadhi was in deep anguish.

“How is it possible? My Brahmin guest was establishing what I thought had been a hallucination of mine, an illusion, nothing but magic, to be true. Was my experience really a sheer phantasm of mine? Or was it an imagination on the part of my Brahmin guest? Could it be that I really died? But experiencing my own death can't be true; I need not doubt this. Still I have a feeling that I witnessed my own death. I have also a feeling that I am alive. What is the truth?

“I have got a feeling of having been the King of Keera. I cannot deny this fact of experiential feeling in me. Was the feeling merely an imagination on my part? Did it not truly happen? How am I to decide? I should go personally and verify the ground truth. It is no good relying on mere words of the Brahmin guest.”

Having thus decided, Sage Gadhi took the road to Keera as per the directions provided by the guest. After a long and strenuous journey, he reached the country, Bhutamandala. He went to the hamlet where he was supposed to have lived as a hunter. He was nonplussed. True, it was the land and it was the hamlet and he could find the very hut where he had lived. He had a sense of *déjà vu* looking at all the things. He could not decipher what was real and what was imaginary. He was swinging between belief and disbelief. His mind was in a denial mode.

tenaiva sanniveeśeena
prāgdr̥ṣṭam śvapacāspadam |
tasya kāmapi vairāgya
padavī manayanmanaḥ || (sarga 46 - śloka 44)

“Sadhak Gadhi looked at things in a detached manner in a state of ambivalence.

“Incessant rains washed away the mud plaster on the walls of the hut (where he lived) giving a patchy look. A few walls had weeds growing on them. The roof of the hut collapsed. He could see pieces of his old torn mat scattered around. The skeletal remains of various animals all over inside as well as outside the hut betrayed who lived there - undoubtedly a hunter who devoured raw meat. He did not find any people living there. So he left that place and went to a neighboring hamlet. He found a few people there. He enquired from them about Katanja, whether Katanja became the King and other relevant particulars. They answered his queries in detail. They substantiated everything of what he thought he had experienced. The names were the same; the faces were the same; the places were the same; the events were the same; even the dates and days were the same. Whatever he experienced in his imagination tallied exactly with what they said.

“Gadhi conducted his investigations for a whole month. He questioned the villagers from different angles, compared the descriptions of one with that of another. There were no differences in the story. As he probed deeper, more unfailing evidence came up. He was out of his wits.

“Gadhi then proceeded to Keera kingdom. He resumed his detailed enquiries here also. His research continued for twelve years in that land. He questioned several people, persons of different backgrounds and so on. Nobody spoke anything contrary to what he experienced. Clear artifacts of everything he experienced - people, places and things - were there.

“Gadhi was deeply agonized by what he found. He was mad that he was unable to make any sense of it. His thoughts ran somewhat as below:

“What is the state I am in? It looks as though I am witnessing one of my past lives. It is as though the dream of previous night appeared as reality the next morning. What is this magic? Who is the magician? What for does one play this trick on me? What a pity! Like a bird trapped in a hunter’s net, I am helplessly being swept away in the flow of continuous mental imagination losing my freedom and independence.

“Gosh! My mind is being driven by the impressions of past births. May be because of the influence of the impressions from past births, I am weaving up these scenarios within me like a little child.

“Aha, I can now recollect!

eṣā hi māyā mahatī
teena mee cakradhāriṇā |
darśiteetyadhunā sādhu
mayā smṛtamakhaṇḍitam || (sarga 47 - śloka 34)

“This entire thing is the magic of Lord Vishnu. He created all this to show me what illusion is. I shall sit right now in a cave and focus my mind in understanding how the illusion was generated and how it is sustained.”

17. Which Part was Reality and Which Part was Fancy?

“Sadhak Gadhi entered a cave in the nearby mountains, deeply meditated on Lord Vishnu for a year and half. He survived the entire period of 18 months taking nothing but for

a single sip of cow milk each day. Lord Vishnu was pleased with his determination and devotion. Lord Vishnu appeared before him and addressed him as follows:

“Oh Gadhi! You desired to witness my illusion. So you noticed it. By now you must have deduced that the entire visible universe is nothing more than an apparition. It is not a real and substantive thing. Why do you perform deep meditation even after the fulfillment of your wish? What is it that you seek now?”

“Sadhak Gadhi was overwhelmed looking at the pleasantly smiling face of Lord Vishnu. As per his wont (because of the inexorable impressions of his past deeds), he went on adoring Lord Vishnu in different ways without giving Him a chance to speak. He took up ambulatory gyrations around Him staring at Him with full contentment. At last he said:

deva yaiṣā tvayā māyā
darśitāti tamoomayī |
mahīm prātarivāditya
stām mee prakāṭitām naya || (sarga 48 - śloka 44)

“Lord! Yes, you did show me your Maya (illusion). I could understand to some extent that it was all your play. But it was too dense to comprehend. I could not distinguish between black colored earth and white colored space in that impenetrable darkness. Nor could I decipher the veil covering up both the earth and space. I am unable to figure out anything unless you rise up and point to me clearly and distinctly the illusion, just as the sun shatters the darkness of night. Please do show me the illusion plainly.

“Lord! You may wonder what’s all the fuss about. True, it is a fuss. Chains of unknown past impressions tangle my mind. My mind saw many bizarre scenes. What I saw did look like a dream. There was no possibility for any truth to exist in my dreamy experience. But then, I witness those very scenes back again while I am wide awake. How is it possible, My Lord?

“It would not have been more than a few seconds of a dream I experienced while I was bathing in the lake. My mind had gone into some trance. But within that short interval of time, I spent almost eighty years of life as a hunter. Where are a few seconds of dream and where a lifetime of eighty years!

“You may say that it was entirely some hallucination in my mind. You may question my presumption concerning rationality about the length of time in a fantasy.

“True. In such a case the time duration, my birth in the hunter community, my death and ashes of my cremated body should have been confined only to the domain of my mind, if they were my hallucinations. How could they get reflected into this physical world and my wakeful state crossing the realms of mind? How do they happen to appear here directly?”

“Listening to the doubts expressed by Sadhak Gadhi, Lord Vishnu replied as follows:
gādhee ! svādhi vidhūtasya
svarūpastyaitadātmakam |
ceetasoo’ dr̥ṣṭatattvasya
yatpaśyatyuru vibhramam || (sarga 48 - śloka 48)

“Gadhi! As you yourself said, your mind is filled with the impressions of your past lives. That is the reason why your mind is unable to comprehend the essence of Truth. That is why you get these fantasies. The root cause for the illusion is your mind itself.

“Gadhi! You say that what should have been confined within the mind appeared outside the mind. You speak as if there is one world in your mind and a different one outside it!

bahirna kim cidapyasti (sarga 48 - śloka 49)

“There is not an iota of matter outside you mind. The boundless sky up above, the solid earth below and the mighty oceans around are all within your mind. It is like the foliage of a large tree being coded within the seed that is the cause for them. Just as trunk, bough, branches, leaves, flowers and fruits appear to have emerged out of the seed and appear to be separate from one another, the five elements (*panchabhutas* – fundamental constituents of all matter) seem to have emerged out of your mind.

“As a matter of fact, the trunk, stem, branches, leaves and so on did not emerge out of the seed. The seed has transformed itself into all of them.

rūpālooka manaskāra
tattākālakriyātmakam
kumbhakāroo ghaṭamiva
ceetoo hanti karooti ca || (sarga 48 - śloka 52)

“What is present **now** is perceived by the senses. What will be in the **future** is anticipated by the mind by its projection. What was **past** is remembered by the mind by identifying itself with the past things/events. Therefore, it can also be said as:

“Present Time	<i>Rupaaloka kaala</i> (Perception)	Period of Direct Observation
Future Time	<i>Manaskaara kaala</i> (Anticipation)	Period of Mental Projection
Past Time	<i>Tattaa kaala</i>	Period of Mental Identification (Remembrance).”

“Thus the three times viz., Present, Future and Past are nothing but what the mind makes up like a potter churns out pottery. It is again the mind that makes them disappear.

“All of this is a fact of everyone’s experience. It is common knowledge that mind plays a profound role in our dreams and fantasies, or when we get inebriated with intoxicants, or when we are depressed as a result of excessive desire, or in our diseases of psychosomatic kind.

“As long as a tree has its roots firmly embedded in the soil, it grows flowers and fruits. Similarly, as long as the mind stays rooted in impressions of past births, literally hundreds of thousands of events will flourish in it. If a tree is pulled out of the soil with its roots, it cannot any more bear fruits or flowers. Likewise if the mind is freed of the impressions, the individual (*jiva*) will not be reborn.

“Is it any surprise if you were shown to be a hunter by the great illusory phenomenon (*maya*) that contains the entire unending web of universe within itself? Under its influence,

you had the illusory experience of being a hunter. Arrival of a guest, his dining with you, staying with you and narrating stories of his experience to you, are all modifications of your own mind in the form of your imagination.

“Not only that. The confusion in your head after listening to the story of your guest, your departure from your hut, your arrival in the country of Bhutamandala, the people giving you evidence, your visit to Keera, the citizens of Keera telling you that a hunter had been their King and all other experiences that you had had were totally your imagination! It was entirely a magical maze that you were caught in. It is also a characteristic of this illusion that you think a part of it to be true and another part as imaginary.

evam sarvaṁ tvayā dṛṣṭam
moohajālam dvijōttama |
yatsatyamiti jānāsi
yaccāsatyamavaiṣi ca || (sarga 48 - śloka 62)

“Dear Gadhi! Is there anything that a mind tangled in impressions cannot sculpt? What is it that shows you within a few minutes in your dreams events that take several years? Is it not your mind?

“Gadhi, Oh Intelligent One! I am explaining once again. There was no guest. There was no forestland known as Bhutamandala. There was no Keera kingdom. Nor were there any people as witnesses. You did not directly perceive the places. None of them were True. Therefore, raise, Oh Great Sadhak. Calm your mind. Proceed with your daily ablutions.

na svakarma vinā śreyaḥ
prāpnuvantīha mānavāḥ || (sarga 48 - śloka 69)

“Howsoever learned may be a human being, everyone should perform the obligatory functions for his/her welfare.”

“Lord Vishnu disappeared suddenly after speaking those words. The Lord appeared, preached to him and disappeared. Gadhi was quite happy at this. Nonetheless a nagging doubt still remained in his mind. His agony did not cease. He continued to be anguished.

“The Lord said that everything that was witnessed was nothing but an illusion. How does it jell? Would the Lord speak untruth? But then, if what He spoke is Truth, why am I still in a state of ambivalence - feeling that a part of my experiences was real and another part was unreal?” His mind went in circles with many thoughts coming to him like the changing shapes of a drifting cloud. Gadhi was unable to resolve the dilemma. So he decided to have a recheck.

“I shall go over and revisit all the places which appeared real to me at that time. If I find those places again, my experience of being a hunter King should be taken as real as the mountains and rivers around here or the stars above.”

“Losing no moment, Gadhi set out on his journey. He went to Bhutamandala, the hunter hamlet, Keera kingdom etc. He made enquiries all over again. He compared with the places, people and events of his experience. There was no doubt. The places were the same. The people were the same. And so were the evidences. Gadhi could not make out. His head reeled.

“When I notice everything so crystal clearly, so solidly, how is it that the Lord dispenses it as mere imagination? How am I to convince myself that it was only my imagination? Lord Vishnu is not a person that would lie. There is no need for him to speak untruth. Not a word of falsehood comes out of His mouth. Should I trust my own eyes or should I believe His word? Gadhi could not any more stand the impasse. He returned to his cave and meditated vigorously for Lord Vishnu.

18. Was not my Dream Exclusively Mine?

“Soon Lord Vishnu appeared before him. Gadhi was a bit calm this time around. He was happy that the Lord appeared before him. The Lord too appeared to be compassionate.

“The Lord asked curtly, “Why are you meditating again? Why do you want me once more? What do you expect from me further?”

“Gadhi replied, “Lord! It looks as though my hallucinations are on the rise. You said that my entire experience was an illusion. I revisited the lands of Bhutamandala, Keera kingdom and other places for about six months. I gathered again evidences from many more. The entire evidence is leading to the same thing. If my experiences were only an imagination of mine, I alone should have been the witness to it. But everybody in those places experienced the very same things. All of them speak of the same events. I investigated for twelve years in the past. Now during my second visit too, I find the same picture. Can so many of the direct perceptions of so many persons be termed a mere fantasy? How is it possible to consider your word not to be true? How am I to say that my experience was not true?”

moohanāśāya mahatām
vaco noo mooha vṛddhayee || (sarga 49- śloka 6)

“Lord! The words of Great Persons like you should clarify rather than confuse people like me”, Gadhi appealed in desperation to the Lord.

“The Supreme Lord, God Vishnu explained then in the following words:

“Gadhi! Your question was how it could be unreal if a thing had been experienced by many persons. You think that it couldn’t be an imagination. Well, one has to first of all understand what illusion is.

keenacit śvapaceenāntee
grāmasya racitaṁ grham |
tattvayā dṛṣṭa māviṣṭa
miṣṭakā khaṇḍatām gatam || (sarga 49 - śloka 9)

“A hunter had put up a hut in the outskirts of a village hamlet. You happened to notice it by chance. For some reason it made a permanent mark on you. The mark was so indelibly engraved, so strongly impressed that that hut of long lost time appeared right in front of you now. How are you able to perceive it so directly now? Where from the bricks and other material of the hut have come? You yourself have become the brick there, “*Tvaya ishtakaa khandataam gatam!*” You have become the rafters, the thatch and other parts or in short the total hutment. The force of the impression in your mind did not end there. Staring

at the hut appearing in front of you, you claimed ownership to it, “*Tat tvaya drishtam aavishtam.*” You became the owner, the hunter. You even entered it.

“That’s how your fantasy began. When once a fantasy commences, it will not end until and unless nescience which is the root cause of illusion gets exterminated by some other specific reason.

pratibhāsoo hi nāyāti
puna rapratibhāsatām || (sarga 49 -śloka 8)

“Until nescience ends, your illusion looks as real to you.

“You experience daily such a fantasy. You call it a dream. Your dream is personal to you. Simply because the fantasy experienced by you in a dream has been your private affair, you assume that your illusion cannot be seen by another. Consider it a bit further.

“Say four friends had gone to a beach on an evening. They saw a nugget of silver at some distance. All the four approach it eagerly. A close examination revealed that it was just a shell of oyster. Had not the same fantasy occurred to all the four of them simultaneously?

kadācit pratibhaikaiva
bahūnāmapī jāyatee |
kākoola tāla sthitivat
vicitrā hi manoogatiḥ || (sarga 49 - śloka 10)

“Your mind literally jaywalks in a disorderly way, obeying the Doctrine of Spurious Correlations (*Kaka taaleeya nyaaya*). Hence you cannot argue that your fantasy is yours alone.

“The Doctrine of Spurious Correlations can be illustrated as follows: There was a palm tree with a very well ripened fruit that was about to fall off. A crow happened to chance upon the fruit and approached it. Just as the crow was alighting on the fruit, it (the fruit) got detached from the tree and began its descent. Without knowing this fact, the crow thought that the fruit dropped down because of its own (crow’s) weight. It was crow’s imagination. But several people watching from below also thought the same way. Thus they also suffered the same illusory perception. Therefore, sometimes several people can experience the very same illusion simultaneously. We cannot rule this out.

“You think that your dream is your own private affair. This is a presumption on your part and a very shaky one at that. It is quite possible for several people to have the same type of dream. Suppose a group of people gather at a place and get drunk fully. They will feel drowsy at the same time and in that drowsiness may feel that the hills surrounding them are going round in circles. Is it not a type of dream occurring to all of them at the same time?

“Many children play in the sand building castles and temples. They play boisterously games labeling their constructions as the palace of the King, abode of God etc. Is not the pleasure out of the play an imagination? Is it not the same fantasy taking place at the same time in the minds of all the children?

“Fawns (young ones of deer) prance around happily in a grass meadow. Though what they actually eat may not be much, they are smug looking at the large grassland thinking that

they have so much of good food available for them. Is this not one common illusion for all of them?

“Gadhi! Strange and identical illusions may arise to a number of people at one time. Because of the commonality of the illusion, all of them run after the same end result. For example, thousands of soldiers fight a war with the same fervor. What is it other than a common illusion to all of them?”

“Gadhi seeking a clarification at this point interrupted the harangue of Lord Vishnu.

“**Gadhi:** “Pardon me, My Lord! You insist that every event, every thing in the world is a phantasm, a creation of the mind. It is quite puzzling to me. Certain things take place in the world as per the Law of Nature regularly on time. For example, paddy crop gets affected if the season is too cold; but that may suit certain wild cereal crops better. It is well known that what prevents good yields of paddy or what help the wild grains are the seasonal variations. If it is taken that the entire world is nothing but a figment of imagination, how can there be a rule or rhyme to it? How can any Law of Nature be valid? Any crop can be grown or destroyed at any time just by imagination. But it doesn’t happen that way. The world does certainly seem to revolve around a time frame. How is it possible to attribute it to some fancy?”

Lord Vishnu:

vipra saṅkalpa mātrosau
kāloohyātmani tiṣṭati |
amūrto bhagavān kāloo
brahmaiva tamajaṁ viduḥ || (sarga 49 - śloka 15)

“You talk of time. What is after all time? There is a force that is detrimental to paddy but congenial to the wild grains. Do you think it is time? Even such a force is a figment of your imagination. Let me explain. Your mind is the one which conceived the four directions. Based on the directions, your mind calculates the motion of the sun. The motion is calibrated into daytime, nighttime, 24-hours, weeks, months, years and so on. Then you build up formulae based on these labels. Don’t you see that the whole system is nothing but a creation of your mind?”

Gadhi: “Not really, My Lord! Time is an experience. A true experience at that! I have been able to measure and classify it in terms of days, months and years because ‘Time’ exists. The measure could be my invention. Speaking in technical jargon, splicing time scales into finite intervals can be my mental work. But behind these divisions is an infinite indivisible Time. This Time is not my creation. It cannot be a construct of my mind.”

Lord Vishnu: “Where does such an infinite Time exist? On what platform does it reside? Because you said that it was not conceived by your mind, your mind cannot be the substratum for it. Because the Time exists prior to finite time divisions, it cannot be a function of the movement of sun and moon and hence should precede the sun and the moon. If none of these is its cause, what is left? Only the Supreme Consciousness superseding everything! Therefore, it has to be agreed that Time is embedded in the Supreme. That is the reason why I said that “Time resides in my Self”, “*Kaalohyatmani tishtati.*”

“But there is no scope for having segments within the Supreme. Hence that Time which you are referring to must exist as the Supreme within the Supreme. In other words, it amounts to saying that Time is the Supreme Consciousness or Time is another name for the Supreme. If Time is Supreme Consciousness, it will not be an impediment to paddy or any other thing. Nor will it favor wild grains or some other thing. We will have no quarrel with such a Time.

“The time scales dependent on the motions of sun and moon are the creation of mind, sun, moon and other related issues. Gathering further strength, the seasonal times create the paddy or other crops. The entire format is based on your mind. It is a creation of your mind. Hence it is a mistake to attribute Reality to the world based on such units of time scale.

“Coming to the point under discussion, it is quite possible that identical fantasy may occur coincidentally to a number of people in this world. That’s what had happened to you, to the residents of Bhutamandala and Keera kingdom. Hence, all of you had experienced the same events. The coincidence gives strength to envisage them to be real.

“Gadhi! I explained to you in detail what all I could. Now you decide for yourself what to do. Mull it over again and again in your mind. Get rid of the illusion that you are caught in by yourself. Bye for now.”

“So saying, Lord Vishnu vanished abruptly.

“Gadhi’s head reeled. The problem continued to torment him. He pursued his analysis like a mad cap. Unable to come to a logical conclusion, he took recourse to performing austerities once again towards Vishnu. Soon Lord Vishnu reappeared. Gadhi duly worshipped Him.

“The Lord did not speak. So Gadhi himself initiated the discussion imploringly.

19. Was it a Dream or Magic?

Gadhi: “I am getting mad thinking and thinking about my life as a hunter and the magic (of illusion) spun by you. Therefore, Lord, do please clearly tell me the final thing. Please do not disappear just like that. Do stay over until I am clear in my head and the illusion gets lifted. Kindly depart only after setting me on proper path.”

Lord Vishnu: “Great Sage! Please follow this carefully. The entire world is no more than a panorama of illusory magic. There is only one single reason for illusion. That is your forgetfulness. Forgetting the essence of your Self! Amnesia about Self-knowledge is the root cause – the reason for the experiences of you, the people of Bhutamandala and the Keera kingdom. Let me reveal the secret.

“Once upon a time in a small village in Bhutamandala, a hunter by name Katanja was born. He did become the King of Keera. He did die by jumping into burning coals. His life history struck your mind as you were bathing in the lake.

dr̥ṣṭānubhūta mapyartham

kadācidvismaratyalam |

kadācidapyadr̥ṣṭam tu

ceetaḥ paśyati dr̥ṣṭavat || (sarga 49 - śloka 31)

“The mind forgets completely sometimes things that were seen, heard or experienced by itself. Strangely mind shows things that were never seen or experienced previously as if they had been actually seen or experienced earlier giving a feeling of déjà vu.

“Suppose a Yogi sees a stream of future events with his power of clairvoyance. At the time of looking at any succeeding event, each preceding individual event appears as past. Though the entire stream is in the future, a preceding event does appear to him as past at that point of time. In a similar way, future events can seem to be a current occurrence for a person with an illusory outlook.

“Same thing happened to you with respect to the story of Katanja. There would have been no problem if you had witnessed the story just as a story. But you got immersed in it, got involved in it. The main reason for the involvement is that you are not aware of your True Self. A person with Self-knowledge does not identify himself with anything. He does not entertain the feelings of “me and mine.” One who lacks Self-knowledge identifies himself with his inert body (the gross body, *deha*). He develops a quality of possessiveness for inert things like residence, lands, property etc. Who can set any rules for an ignorant person stipulating that he could identify himself with certain things and not with certain others when he indiscreetly claims identity with any thing and every thing? A stone in the hand of a lunatic can land anywhere; likewise his claims of identity are random without a rule or rhyme. Sometimes, he may identify himself with his current body and some other time he may identify with the body of another.

“In your case too it happened the same way. Your mind thought of the life story of Katanja. It is your mind that attributed identity to you with the body of Katanja. It gave to you the possessive quality of claiming Katanja’s wife, children, property, kingdom and so on as your own! Remembrance of the life story of Katanja and the possessive feelings of “Me and Mine” occurred simultaneously. Being enmeshed in both, you failed to witness the story of Katanja as an outsider. On the top of it, you began to own it!

“The main reason for the entire episode of forgetfulness is lack of knowledge of who you truly are.”

Gadhi: “Lord! Does a Self-knowing person not go through such an illusory experience?”

Lord Vishnu:

sarvameevāhameeveti tattvajño nāvasīdati |
na gṛhṇāti padārtheṣu vibhāgānārtha bhāvanam ||
teenāsau bhramayoogeeṣu sukha duḥkha vilāsiṣu |
na nimajjati magnoopi tumbī pātramivāmbhasi ||
(sarga 49 - śloka 35,36)

“Who is a Self-knowledgeable person? Whoever has an experiential understanding that every substance in this world in essence is himself/herself is such a person. Possessed of this knowledge, he/she will not fragment the world into one part as “Me and mine” and other parts as “Not me and not mine.” He knows that fragmentation leads to corruption and causes turbulent fluctuations in happiness. Who knows this, will not go through the cycles of birth and death.

“A person who identifies himself with a tiny little part of the world like the body or mind is called “Compartmentalized I-ness.” Compartmentalized I-ness is detrimental to a man.

“The thinking that “everything in this world is me” also connotes I-ness. It is called “Holistic I-ness or Infinite I-ness or Uncompartmentalized I-ness.” A person with this holistic I-ness is not overcome by the illusory world, though he may apparently look like to have been affected. Suppose a boy is seated on a large calabash in a pond. The gourd shell might look like it had gone down in water; but it will not let the boy drown.

“A person who transcends the state of “Holistic I-ness” and achieves merger with the transcendental Supreme Self, does not even appear to have been affected by the worldly illusion. One who knows the essence of Truth will be in such a state.”

Gadhi: “Sir, What is my state?”

Lord Vishnu: “You are neither fully a worldly man nor fully a knowledgeable person. You are vacillating in-between. Impressions from past births dwell in your mind. The good news is that you have not surrendered to them. Your condition is like that of a convalescent recovering after very serious illness shades of which are still present. You have some knowledge. But it is not perfect. Hence you are unable to resist the onslaught of fantasies. Your position is like that of a person who is unable to escape rain, as he could not get the roof of his house repaired.

“If a very tall person takes shelter under a short bush to escape from summer heat, the shadow of the bush can hardly save him. On the contrary, his shadow falls over the bush. Similarly, your mind has been too big for you. Its thoughts are engulfing you.

“Gadhi! Maya (illusion) is like a wheel. It is spinning all the time. It rotates around its central point. The center of the wheel of Maya is your mind. If you hold the center tight, the turning of the wheel stops. Likewise if you firmly steady your mind, the illusion disappears.”

Gadhi: “What is the technique to do that, Sir?”

Lord Vishnu: “Observance of austerities is the way. Do not feel discouraged. Be brave. Continue deep meditation (austerities) for ten years in this cave. You will obtain infinite Knowledge.”

“Lord Vishnu vanished uttering those words.

“At the onset of Fall season plants lose sap. Similarly with the grace of the Lord shining, the flux of thoughts diminished in Gadhi. With a spirit of renunciation, he entered the cave, arrested his mind, rejected all thought movement and meditated for ten years without a break. At the end he obtained perfect Self-knowledge. He had the experiential understanding of the essence of Truth. He was liberated right in that life (*Jivanmukta*) and spent the balance of the life-period peacefully.”

Vasishta: “Rama! You have heard the life story of Sage Gadhi. You can appreciate how unimaginable, how confusing and how widespread is the illusion that manifests itself based on the Supreme Consciousness! That is why I stress again and again that this illusion is very

detrimental. However, it can do no harm to those who are focused. It imperils those who cannot concentrate their minds and pushes them into constant problems.”

Rama: “How can one halt the spinning wheel of Maya (illusion), My Teacher?” I am aware Sage Gadhi too raised this question. Lord Vishnu’s advice was to observe austerities. But how does one arrest it when Maya spins around so fast shattering every limb that comes in contact with it?”

20. Gadhi’s Story Revisited:

It is evident from the above query that Rama had no questions on the story *per se* of Gadhi’s life. He, therefore, was more specifically enquiring about the ways and means of ridding oneself of the illusory perceptions. Before we enter into this dialog, let us review the salient issues discussed in the long story of Gadhi.

In Lilopakhyaana, (the story of Leela), an individual (*jiva*) witnessed dual worlds of objects and their reflected images (vide Yogavaasishta, Part II of this Series, Utpatti Prakarana (Chapter on Creation), Avadhoota Datta Peetham, Mysore, India, 2005, p: 98).

In Lavanopakhyaana (the story of Lavana), King Lavana witnessed the same scenes that he had seen in his dream later on after he woke up (ibid, p: 215).

In Bhargavopakhyaana (the story of Bhragava), we noticed that the great Teacher, Sukra cremated his own body (vide Yogavaasishta, Part III of this Series, Sustenance, Avadhoota Datta Peetham, Mysore, 2006, p: 23).

The above three stories combined together constitute Gadhi’s life history.

Why did Sage Vasishtha resort to repeating what was already narrated by concocting a new story from an admixture of three earlier stories? A careful look reveals a well-thought out purpose behind this plan.

Sage Vasishtha opened the Chapter on The Calm down (Upasama) with a discussion on the obligatory daily ritualistic routines. He defined the purpose of the current chapter to be an exposition on calming down mind. He followed it up narrating the stories of King Janaka, Emperor Bali and Prahlada in order to illustrate the fact that Self-knowledge could be attained through many different ways. Later he himself raised the issue of Maya, Illusion which is the root cause for the cycle of births and deaths. Why did he raise the issue of Maya?

A seeker’s quest culminates in the attainment of Knowledge of Truth. But what is it like in the beginning stage of a seeker (*sadhak*)? What techniques are to be followed in the initial stages? Sage Vasishtha planned to expound on these issues. It is necessary to have clarity about the goal to be reached before getting into a detailed discourse on the methods to be followed. So he intended to bring together at one place various tidbits of discussions on Maya covered thus far. Adept storyteller that he was, he crafted a new story like a new hand dealt by an expert card-dealer reshuffling the same old cards. The new story is Gadhi’s life.

In the story of Lavana, a magician dispatched by Indra hypnotized the king. Lavana became unconscious, missed his way, got lost in jungles and lived the life of a hunter-tribesman. Regaining his consciousness, he went back in search of the places where he

roamed as a hunter. To his surprise, he found all those places to really exist. Explaining how this could be possible, Sage Vasishtha said in that Chapter:

vismaratyapi vistirṇāṁ
kṛtām ceetaḥ kriyām yathā |
tathā kṛtā mapyakṛtā
miti smarati niścitam ||

(utpatti prakaraṇam sarga 121- śloka 23)

“Our mind forgets the very actions done by it. This is a common experience to all. In the same token, it is quite possible for the mind to evoke actions it never did as if it had actually done them.”

It was clarified there that some prince really was lost in a forest, lived with a woman of the hunter tribe and had children from her and that memory got transplanted into that of King Lavana through the hypnosis of the magician. A similar explanation is being provided here in the story of Gadhi too.

bhavataḥ kevalam citte
jalāntarvāsina stadā |
pratibhātā yathābhūtā
kaṭaṅjācāra samsthitih ||

(upaśama prakaraṇam - sarga 50 - śloka 30)

“A long time ago a hunter tribesman by name Katanja became the king of the country, Keera. His entire history got reflected in your mind.”

Is there any difference between the two stories? Not in the detail but, yes, in narration.

In the story of King Lavana, the magician was instrumental in the transfer of memory from one to the other. What was responsible for the exchange of memory from Katanja to Gadhi?

Can we say that Lord Vishnu caused the memory transfer through His magic? No, we cannot attribute it to the magic of Lord Vishnu. The magic or illusion that is created by Lord Vishnu, the Supreme, permeates the whole world. That is the fundamental cause for the illusory world. Therefore, we cannot invoke it as a reason uniquely for Gadhi’s malady.

The experience was sudden and unexpected (in Gadhi’s case) while he had been bathing in the pond as part of the ritual of daily worship. Within a short span of a few minutes of unconsciousness, he experienced eighty years of life as a hunter tribesman. Every one of us too is familiar with this sort of experience during our dreams. We reject such experience as untrue and consider it as mere fantasy. At the same time, we fail to easily accept when Vedantins tell us that the visible world is nothing more than a phantasmagoria, a dream. There are two reasons why we do so:

1. Incongruity of Time and Place:

The duration of my dream may not extend beyond ten minutes. The duration of my dream life within that time may, however, extend to several years. I am resident in

my own house and have not left my bed during the period of dreaming. But the events in the dream may be anywhere in or outside my house.

Thus, looked at from the point of space or time, the dream-life could not have taken place and therefore cannot be true.

2. Non-Commonality of Experience:

I am the only witness to the story of my dream. There is no second person who can attest to my dream. If the story of my dream is real, whoever enjoyed happiness or misery along with me in my dream should also have had the same experience. They must be able to attest to the veracity of my dream.

But no other person can stand up to give evidence. Therefore, my dream experiences cannot be true.

Because of the above two reasons, we hold that our dreams are not real. The events of our wakeful state satisfy the above two tests. We do not have any events that are unrelated to time and space during our wakeful experience. There is commonality of experience for all people in the wakeful state and hence they can stand to attest an event. Hence our wakeful state cannot be unreal.

Whether it is dream or any other experience, we employ the above criteria to test the authenticity of its reality. We do not have a third criterion. Judged according to these two criteria, we have to rule that the experiences of Gadhi were not real.

However, we are up against another problem. There is no scope for any person to witness the cremation of one's own body and experience its burning to ashes. Maybe some specially gifted advanced Yogis could have such powers, we do not know. But for sure Mr. Gadhi cannot be called a yogi of such a high caliber. He saw his non-existing wife, non-existing children and his long lost mother whom he hardly remembered. He witnessed his body going to ashes. Even then he continued to feel that he existed. He was not clear how he reached the womb of a tribal hunter woman, but he felt that he himself existed in her womb.

In the Bhargava story, Sukra obtained a new body by the strength of his imagination. After a long time, he went back to his old body, re-entered the old body using his yogic powers. He used his old body to set fire to the new body on a funeral pyre. This sounds like some hocus-pocus magic. Rama also expressed a doubt on the genuineness of the story. Sage Vasishtha explained it away saying that some of the very noble persons of a past Kalpa (4.32 billion earth years), being born at the beginning of a new Kalpa would have supernormal lives and they would not conform to the usual Laws of Nature.

We cannot invoke any such supernatural reasons to explain the case of Mr. Gadhi. Gadhi was an ordinary *sadhak* (seeker). He experienced the burning down of himself to ashes. Though he did not possess a body, he felt that he existed. He also had the experience of existing as an embryo in the womb of a lady somewhere in a remote village. It was not entirely like a dream. Nor could it be called a reality. How do we classify this experience that falls between reality and falsehood?

Gadhi was lost in confusion for sometime. He decided that his experience in the lake was a ramification of what he heard or read in some books. He considered it as untrue, a dream and settled down. But then a saintly guest arrived, provided physical evidence for

what he thought was a dream experience. This completely disturbed Gadhi's mind. A witness was now available for an experience which he thought was a dream. Consequently one of the two criteria we had for assessing an experience as real or otherwise had floundered. The other criterion about Incongruity of Time and Space (a few minutes of standing stiff in the lake being equivalent to 80 years of dream life) was the only one available to establish that his experience was not real.

If one of the criteria validated and the other invalidated, should we consider an experience to be real or unreal? This was the struggle Mr. Gadhi had faced. And here lies the difference in the stories of Lavana and Bhargava on one hand and that of Gadhi on the other.

Lord Vishnu assured Gadhi when He appeared first that Gadhi would witness His illusory phenomenon and when once he witnessed it, Gadhi would be free from it. Gadhi lost his balance of mind after gathering evidence for six months from the forest area and for another twelve years from the Keera kingdom. He decided at one point that it could all perhaps be Lord Vishnu's doing (illusion). We are not sure if this amounted to say that Gadhi witnessed illusion. But one thing was certain. He was not freed from illusion. So he observed austerities and meditated again. Lord Vishnu appeared again. He Himself told him that it was His illusory phenomenon. Still Gadhi was not free of illusion!

Gadhi went back to collect ground truth. He was pained to conclude that what Lord Vishnu said was not true. So he meditated again. Lord Vishnu confused him further with a new twist. The Lord said that Gadhi's illusion was not confined to merely his visions in the lake while bathing, but also extended to his subsequent assumption that he was freed of illusion, his thinking that a guest saint visited him, his thinking that he visited different places to gather evidence on the ground and so on. The Lord added that the entire thing was part of the illusion that he experienced in the lake.

Gadhi was speechless. Momentarily he concurred that it had to be the Truth. But illusion won over him. His mind was disturbed. He agonized. He resumed his analysis. He meditated once more and sought Lord Vishnu's help. This time the Lord came up with a different explanation. He said that the story of Katanja did really take place. The Lord added that the memory of that tale reflected in Gadhi's mind, it was a meme! (Meme is a replicator to propagate thoughts, concepts, and belief structures like a gene does for genetic traits). Hence, it was a dream-like vision as far as Gadhi was concerned. But it was real as far as Katanja was concerned.

The Lord clarified, "What you were able to verify was a part of the truth of what happened to Katanja. This is not equivalent to saying that you verified the truth from the people who were associated with you in your experience. Please understand this. Katanja's story took place recently. But it's water that had gone down the bridge. It has no existence now. But it occurred as a memory, a meme in you. Therefore, the people whom you saw in your memory were not the actual people of Keera kingdom. What you saw in your vision were their representations, reflections. After you came out of your hallucination, you visited Keera Kingdom and conducted your enquiries. You saw the people there and mistook them to be those whom you met in your lake vision. Whom you saw in your vision were images. Whom you met in Keera kingdom were real people. You were unable to differentiate the two. The evidence you gathered was from real objects. What they narrated was the local objective story. They matched with the stories of your imagination. You think that they are

identical. You are unable to understand that they belong to two parallel worlds of objects and their reflected images. This is the reason for your anguish.”

It may sound to us that Lord Vishnu had changed His stance! But Mr. Gadhi did not have such a doubt. After all, he was a better seeker than what most of us are! Lord Vishnu explained the root cause for the totality of Gadhi’s visions in the lake and the sum total experiences up to collecting evidence. He explained the hidden reason for Gadhi’s experiences to be the strength of past impressions. Therefore, we may not interpret it as a shift in His stand.

Gadhi seemed to have been convinced. But the Lord felt it was enough of explanations. The Lord said that though it might sound logical for the moment, fresh doubts could arise as the Illusory phenomenon was so very sticky. Therefore, He disappeared asking Gadhi to meditate for another ten years and purify his mind.

Sage Vasishtha introduced us to the ‘object – image’ world in the second Chapter on Creation (Utpatti) while discussing the story of Leela. He talked there of two worlds – Padmaraja kingdom and Viduratha kingdom. He showed us the illusions of Padmaraja and Viduratha. The same set of ministers and nobles appeared to be present in both Padmaraja kingdom and Viduratha kingdom. Padmaleela could reach Viduratha world with the help of Goddess Saraswati. There she saw her entire retinue. She suspected that her entire staff died in her world and reached Viduratha kingdom. So she returned to her own world for verification. She got her ministers other nobles and staff assembled in her court. She found that they were all alive. Padmaleela concluded that the kingdoms of Padmaraja and Viduratha were two parallel worlds like mirror reflections.

Gadhi was too in a similar situation. In the story of Leela, Leela had to travel beyond her own world to another world in her subtle body and had to take the helping hand of Goddess Saraswati in order to get this experience. However, Gadhi did not have these advantages. He was in his ordinary gross physical body. He continued to be in the familiar everyday world of his. He wandered around and witnessed two parallel worlds all by himself. He thought they were identical and constituted one world. He was unable to realize that he witnessed two worlds and there was a difference between them.

Sage Vasishtha intended to convey that realization about the truth of parallel worlds could not possibly be obtained through divine gift of a boon. Hence he invoked Lord Vishnu three times over and finally made him to say that, “The essence of this Truth cannot be understood until one performs austerities and purifies one’s own mind.” But Gadhi had been performing austerities and deep meditation. Were the austerity and meditation performed by Gadhi improper then? No, the austerity and meditation were quite proper. But he performed them with a specific objective, to obtain a specific boon. Such meditation purifies the mind only to a point. Therefore, observance of austerity and meditation specifically aimed at purification of the mind are essential. This is the implication of the last statement of Lord Vishnu.

It is to convey this significantly profound message that the descriptions of parallel worlds in Leela’s story, cremation of one’s own body in Bhargava’s story and magical hypnotism in Lavana’s story were knitted together by Sage Vasishtha into one single story of the life of an ordinary human being, Gadhi. This is the essence of Gadhi’s story. It provides a cue for us about the nature of the everyday wakeful world of ours!

The two criteria that we invoke to establish the reality of our wakeful world - viz. (i) Proper relationship in time and space and (ii) Availability of multiple witnesses for an event – stumble in the light of the current discussion. We also face the inescapable possibility that the so-called fellow witnesses of ours, our fellow beings in our world, may be actually participants living in a parallel imaginary world!

Gadhi had experienced an awareness of continued existence even after his body was reduced to ashes. What we perceive through our senses when we have the body is described by us as the wakeful world. What shall we call the world when our body does not exist but awareness continues? This is the second question that stares us in our face.

The above questions may be inadequate to convince us that the so-called wakeful world of ours is a fiction like a dream world. But they definitely raise a doubt on the reality of the wakeful world. The crux of Gadhi's story is that the final realization on the unreality of the world dawns on us only after the mind is purified through ardent observation of austerities and meditation.

Finally let us have a look at the way the characters of the story were christened. The hero of the story was Gadhi. *Gadha* in Sanskrit stands for 'shallow land'. It is symbolical of a shallow mind. The name Gadhi indicates a person with a shallow mind. That is the reason Lord Vishnu had to preach him so many times. Gadhi's meditation was also quite shallow like a small pond. Thus the name was quite appropriate to the story.

The hunter tribesman was called Katanja. *Kata* in Sanskrit means a corpse and also a graveyard. Katanja is derived from "*Katam anjati iti*" meaning one who is connected to a graveyard or corpse. This name too was quite appropriate because Gadhi saw his form in the womb of the tribal woman immediately after his body was burnt in a graveyard.

The place where Katanja lived was Bhutamandala. Bhutamandala in Sanskrit means synthesis of the five fundamental elements (fire, earth, water, wind and space). The central question in this story was whether Katanja's body was made up of the five elements or was it purely imaginary? He was made a king in the Keera Kingdom. *Keeram* in Sanskrit means parrot. A parrot mouths words without understanding their meaning. The people of Keera selected a king following an illogical procedure. When Gadhi was the king of Keera, he was called Gavala. *Gavala* in Sanskrit means a he-buffalo. A wild he-buffalo. From his form and level of intellect, the name suited him.

Thus we find that the characters have names that are very contextual and have an implied inner meaning.

Rama could very well infer the entire inner meaning of the story. Hence he did not raise any questions on the story. He focused his discussion on "meditation" advised by Lord Vishnu towards the end of the story. In order to clarify these issues with a critical re-appraisal of Gadhi's story, we digressed slightly from the main narration.

21. Control of Mind is True Meditation:

Let us join now Sage Vasishtha's discourse from where we left it. Recalling the important question raised by Rama:

Rama: "How can one halt the spinning wheel of Maya (illusion), My Teacher?" I am aware Sage Gadhi too raised this question. Lord Vishnu's advice was to observe austerities. But how does one arrest Maya when it spins around so fast shattering every limb that comes in contact with it?"

Vasishtha: "Yes, the question was raised by Gadhi. Lord Vishnu answered it too. The Lord advised rigorous meditation. He himself explained what comprises rigorous meditation. Do you remember the response of the Lord?"

cittam nābhiḥ kilāsyeeha
māyā cakrasya sarvataḥ |
sthīyatee ceettadākramya
tanna kiñcitprabādhate || (sarga 49 - śloka 40)

"If the Illusion is a great wheel, its center of rotation is your mind. The spokes radiating from the center join together at their ends to form the circular rim of the wheel. Touching wheel anywhere with a finger will break the finger. If you slowly bring the finger from the circumference to the center, the finger is unharmed. If you hold the center tight, the rotation of the wheel itself stops!

"You are an adept at fighting in wars using wheel shaped weaponry. When the enemy throws such a weapon at you, do you try to stop it holding its rim? Do you try to hold the spokes? No. You try to catch it straight at its center. Then the wheel stops. So is the case with the wheel of Illusion.

"What does the center of the wheel do? It turns. It rotates the spokes and the rim of the wheel. Your mind too spins and rotates you also. So in order to arrest the speed of the wheel of Illusion, you have to observe meditation that helps stop the mind. That was the advice of Lord Vishnu. What does it actually mean?"

tasmādrāghava santyajya
tīrthadāna tapaḥ kriyāḥ
śreeyase paramāyānta
ścittameva vaśam kuru || (sarga 50 - śloka 13)

"You desired to arrest Illusion. Lord Vishnu clearly expressed the path for it. Therefore, stop all the austerities like pilgrimages, alms-giving, worships, fasting and so on and meditate on controlling your mind. That is the only way to attain the Supreme state. I emphasize this because, according to Lord Vishnu:

cittāntareeva saṁsāraḥ
kumbhāntaḥ kumbhakham yathā |
cittanāśe na saṁsāraḥ
kumbhanāśe na kumbhakham || (sarga 50- śloka 14)

“Just as a pot contains a limited amount of ‘potful of space’, the entire world is contained within the confines of the mind. If the pot is broken, the ‘potful of space’ does not exist anymore. Likewise, if the mind is annihilated, the world itself does not exist.

“When the pot breaks, the form of pot does not survive. That is to say the space bound within the limits of the walls of the pot does not survive. What remains is the totality of space. Similarly, when the mind disintegrates, the world and its form do not exist any longer; what remains will only be Supreme Consciousness.

“You may think that by holding the center called mind firmly, the mind might stop spinning but the mind may not disappear totally. There is no scope for such a doubt because what moves only is mind. If it is stable and unmoving, it is not mind at all!”

Rama: “Does that amount to say that learned persons knowledgeable of the essence of truth have no mind at all?”

Vasishta: “There will be a mind. But the impressions of past lives carried over in it get destroyed by the knowledge of Truth, like seeds burnt out by application of heat. As a result of this, they do not experience desires, happiness and sorrow, attachment and fear and other pairs of opposites. Study of scriptures, association with noble people and following the path of yoga are necessary to obtain this state. So Rama, please secure these three and control the movement of your mind by yourself.”

Sage Vasishta’s preaching went on this way for about 85 verses in the 50th Sarga. From the 64th verse, the meter of the verses was changed. Written with lyrical beauty, Sage Vasishta described the mind as a snake, an eagle, a monkey, a lasso and even as a sharp sword. He called it derogatively by many other names. Finally, he said:

cittena ceta śśamamāśu nītvā
śuddheena ghoorāstra mivāstrayuktyā |
cirāya sādho tyaja cañcalatvaṁ
vimarkaṭoo vṛkṣa ivākṣataśrī || (sarga 50 - śloka 84)

“Just as a Mighty Weapon (*Brahmastra*) of Rajasic type launched by the enemy is repelled with the Brhmastra of Satvic type, the mind corrupted by worldly illusion should be crushed with the help of pure mind. It is a slow process. You should not stop in-between under the mistaken impression that you reached the end. After a prolonged continuous effort, you will obtain stability in Knowledge-based deep meditation (*jnana smadhi*). As a result, mind would be free of its vacillating quality. You would become quiescent like a tree from which the monkey has just exited. You would be calm without any perturbations.”

Sage Vasishta taught in that way for a specific reason. His advice thus far to Rama had been to observe yogic practices in order to obtain a steady mind or to dissolve the mind. However, he had not spelt out clearly what the yogic methods were. Sage Vasishta intended now to begin instruction on specific yogic methods of achieving perfect control of mind. So he opened up the 51st Sarga with the story of Sage Uddalaka.

22. Story of Uddalaka:

Vasishta: “Rama! Conquer your mind through practice, wiping out the five fundamental elements emulating Sage Uddalaka. I shall tell you his story.

“Once upon a time there lived a saintly boy by name Uddalaka. He performed austerities and meditation beneath an Indian Mulberry tree (Botanical name: *Morinda sp.*) on the Gandhamadana mountain range. He developed detachment at a very early age. He had some scriptural knowledge too. With the wisdom gained thus, he left the forest hamlet where he lived and embarked upon meditation all alone.

“Uddalaka had not by then yet achieved complete Knowledge of Self. He had grit and determination and possessed a blemishless mind. He was quite intelligent and logical. So he progressed quite fast in his pursuit of Self-knowledge. With increasing knowledge, however, he paid more attention to logical analysis than to meditation. He used to compare and contrast scriptural statements using logical principles and contemplate on the essence of Self all by himself anxious to get beyond the cycle of births and deaths and to attain *Nirvikalpa Samadhi*. His mind used to resist his attempts. Still he did not give up and pursued his goal with full determination towards deep meditation (*Nirvikalpa Samadhi*).

“In course of time, the influence of external objects on him waned. His craving for worldly things reduced and desire for transcendental life took root. Rejecting that desire too with discretion, he continued his practice. He was able to focus his mind on the final objective without wavering. With constant meditation, he had visions of brilliant reddish light like that of rising sun. Texts on Yoga declare that visions of fog, shades of sunlight, twinkling lights, lightning, crystals, shining moons etc. are indicative of imminent Self-realization. Soon enough, Uddalaka too began to experience an occasional taste of the essence of Supreme Consciousness.

“Unfortunately, his mind suddenly rebelled. Just like a bird running away when the net of a hunter was about to catch it, his mind escaped hither and thither frightened by the impending lights of Self-illumination. Uddalaka used to pull it back to concentration. But his mind struggled to sneak out at opportune moments. Under these conflicting conditions of pull and push, his mind could not either be fully spiritual or be totally materialistic and used to be caught up in mid-ground. Sleep is the stage that lies between the resplendent and illuminating spiritual world and the avaricious and ignorant illusory world. So Uddalaka’s mind used to be lost in sleep for a long time. He had to struggle a lot in bringing the mind back into meditative state from sleep.

“Oscillating in between meditation and sleep, his mind became vulnerable to the impressions from previous births. It developed a desire for worldly objects remembering long last things. As a result, he could not meditate any more and began wandering around the forest like a lunatic. Eventually his mind settled down a bit. He found a mountain cave and established himself there. He seated facing north and commenced contemplation on the essence of Self on the pretext of re-training his mind.”

Beginning with the 8th verse of the 52nd Sarga, Sage Valmiki dealt with the issue of training the mind in 72 verses and closed the Sarga. Not satisfied with it, he extended the teaching on this topic to the entire 53rd Sarga of 82 verses. Both these chapters are a golden treasure for those who want to review again and again the essence of Knowledge of Self. We shall, however, cover them here only briefly.

The first part of the 52nd Sarga was devoted to the development of detachment. Next was a discussion on the factors that help attainment of detachment. It was established here that contemplation on the essence of Truth was the best way for achieving detachment. This was followed up by a description of the method of inquiry into Self adopted by Uddalaka. Uddalaka's contemplation was based on the dictum, "I am unmodified." It was pointed out that 'impressions' could become blocks on the way to Self-realization. A detailed examination of 'impressions' was made and it was concluded that 'I-consciousness' was at the root of 'impressions'. Further analysis revealed that there was no scope for Self to possess either 'impressions' or 'I-consciousness'.

Both 'I-consciousness' and 'impressions' are attributes of the mind. Body provides the scaffolding to the mind. In a way body and mind are opposites. If mind is hurt, it affects the body and *vice versa*. Thus one becomes the Affector and the other the Affected. They also identify with one another, i.e. mind in its working feels it is itself the body and body feels it is itself the mind. Thus they have a relationship of the sustainer and the sustained. It is stated here that if a seeker delinks himself with any one of them (i.e. stops identifying himself with any one), he will automatically be free of attachment with the other. Uddalaka, after a prolonged and exhaustive inquiry, concluded as follows:

vigatamoohatayā vīmanastayā
gata vikalpana cittatayā sphuṭam |
uparamāmyaha mātmani śītale
ghanalava śśaraḍiva nabhastale || (sarga53- śloka82)

"I am free of fantasy. I do not have a mind at all. That is, even if the mind is not totally dissolved, all modifications in it are gone. My self is now calm without perturbations. I do not fall under the category 'the seen'. Therefore, I am pure like a white cloud in the dark sky of Fall season."

23. The Yoga of Aum:

Having decided thus, Uddalaka took up Yoga. Sage Valmiki devoted the 54th Sarga to a detailed description of the Yoga pursued by Uddalaka. This write up is very dear to spiritual aspirants. Commentator, Shri Anandabhadendra Swami (ABS), also provided at this juncture a lucid account of the methods of reciting AUM. Given below is a short summary of both the original text and the commentary of Shri ABS:

Uddalaka adopted lotus posture. His eyes were half closed. He commenced recitation of AUM. He began in a high pitch. As a result, his mind was filled with the modification in the form of AUM. The consciousness confined within that modification gradually came close to the infinite Supreme Consciousness. With continued recitation of AUM without cessation, he could vividly understand the four quarters of AUM.

AUM comprises four syllables – A, U, M and a half-syllable. With Sage Uddalaka concentrating on the first 'A' sound, the high-pitched recitation excited the air related to the fundamental life-force which began to emerge out of the body. (Excitement here means bringing about a type of movement). This process is called "Rechaka" or Exhalation. During Rechaka, the wind gets heated up because of some frictional forces. Sage Uddalaka's contemplation of Brahman heated it up further. With rising heat, flares developed during his contemplation and burnt his body completely.

Sage Vasishtha commented here that the above result was due to the recitation of the first syllable A of AUM. He underlined that it was just the initial effect of reciting AUM and not a stage in the practice of Hatha Yoga (Steadfast Pranica Exercise).

yāvadittha mavasthaisā
praṇava prathama krame |
babhūva na haṭhā deva
haṭhayogo hi duḥkhadaḥ || (sarga 54 - śloka 9)

“The state experienced by Sage Uddalaka was entirely an outcome of the initial stage of AUM recitation. The experiencing was gradual. It did not suddenly land on him. It was not due to Steadfast Pranica Exercises. The Path of Steadfast Pranica Exercises is painful!” emphasized Sage Vasishtha. Commentator Shri ABS cautioned that this practice had to be observed with great care, as there was a chance that sudden exhalation of life-breath (air related to the fundamental life-force) could result in fainting or sometimes in death.

Sage Uddalaka then took up the second step of reciting ‘U’ in a medium pitch. The life-breath became steady like deep-sea waters. The state of life-breath staying steady for a long time is called “Kumbhaka” or “Retention.” With Uddalaka continuing ‘Retention’, the white colored ashes of his burnt out body lying on the ground were blown up in to the air by the winds of earlier Rechaka (exhalation), and looked like a white cloud of post-monsoon times. Sage Vasishtha once again emphasized that the second step was also due to the recitation of ‘U’ and not owing to the practice of Steadfast Pranica Exercise.

With Sage Uddalaka embarking upon the third stage of reciting ‘M’ of AUM, the process of “Puraka” or “Inhalation” commenced. The life-breath was submerged in the beatitude of Self. Slowly the life-breath turned into rays of nectar. The nectar rays rained downwards. There was a little of his ash still lying on the ground. When the nectar rays fell on it, his body rose from it. But his body had four hands like Lord Vishnu and was, therefore, more suitable for completing the remaining part of Yoga.

Uddalaka once again assumed the lotus posture, controlled his senses, steadied his mind and made effort for Thoughtless form of Meditation (*Nirvikalpa Samadhi*). He augmented it with Breathing Exercises (*Pranayama*). But his mind revolted again. Like a rogue ox tearing himself off the stake to which he was tethered and running away into cultivated fields, his mind ran away under the influence of the memories of past births. It used to ruminate on its past joys and comforts.

Still Uddalaka did not lose heart. He restarted an inquiry into Truth. He controlled his mind with discretion. He stayed focused on his aim. He took up “Raja Yoga” (The Royal Path) with half-closed eyes. As a part of Raja Yoga, he restrained both *Prana* and *Apana* (different states of life-force) wind. He withdrew his senses from objects (i.e. stopped cognition of objects). He was left with only the residual impressions in his mind. Contemplating intensely on the essence of Supreme Consciousness, the substratum for everything, he dissolved them in Brahman.

Uddalaka then changed his posture. He pressed hard his anal region with one foot. He pulled the winds from the nine openings of the body (i.e. two eyes, two ears, two nostrils, mouth and the two excretory organs) towards his heart and locked them there. He adopted

vigorous Sense Withdrawal and practiced Concentration of Mind (*Dharana Yoga*). As a result his thoughts and counter thoughts vanished like small insects blown away by a forceful wind. His mind became serene.

But once again negative thoughts came to him. These were the type of thoughts that disturb continuous contemplation of Brahman. He resisted them too with determination.

All of a sudden, Uddalaka felt that he was staring at some darkness. He understood it to be the effect of *tamasic* quality in his heart space (*hridaya akaasa*). He deciphered that the resplendent sun of discretion was veiled by this *tamasic* quality. Immediately he meditated on *satvic* quality. Consequently he witnessed brilliant red light of a rising sun. After sometime, it disappeared and his mind slipped into sleep.

The Commentator, Shri ABS, observed here that the visions and experiences of Uddalaka were nothing but an effect of his cogitations on the three *gunas* and hence whatever he experienced would come under the realm of illusory world.

Onset of Sleep is generally considered to be a symptom of failure in Yoga (spiritual path). Fortunately, Uddalaka could escape from sleep within a short time. Nevertheless, some other impressions of past births continued to engulf his mind. Under their influence, he began to contemplate on the origin of the universe. During such contemplation, he had visions of space (*akasa*). He rejected those visions. But then his mind became blunt.

Uddalaka was in a state that was neither sleep nor wakefulness. Nor was it death. There were no thoughts in him. His mind was inert. Numbness of mind was a strange state indeed. It was also an impediment for spiritual progress. Uddalaka was able to come out of it after some time. Thus he went from visions of brightness to darkness to a state of numbness and then finally achieved “Thoughtless Meditation of Oneness (*Nirvikalpa Samadhi*).”

Uddalaka’s mind like a backflow tended to go back to the illusory world and assumed the form of the world. Because his mind tasted the ‘Bliss in Meditation’, it sought to get back to meditation by force of habit. It reached the state of “Concentration under *triputi* conditons (*Savikalpa Samadhi* : a state of concentration in which the distinction between the knower, knowledge and known is not yet lost).” After spending considerable amount of time in *Savikalpa Samadhi*, he achieved *Nirvikalpa Samadhi*. But then he slipped back to *Savikalpa Samadhi*. He pulled himself once again into *Nirvikalpa Samadhi*. He spent a very long time alternating between these two states or occasionally overtaken by the illusory world. A major portion of his time was spent in *Savikalpa Samadhi*. After the impressions of past lives slowly desiccated from his mind, he was able to attain *Nirvikalpa Samadhi* easily. Eventually his mind stabilized in *Nirvikalpa Samadhi*. He attained soon the state of “Common Beingness” (*Satta samanya* : the ‘existence’ principle in everything in the world). It is equivalent to the state of “Consciousness as Mere Witness (*sakshi chaitanya*)”. He remained like a statue. It is the sixth step in Yoga. Normally any one who reaches this state never comes out of it unless some external agency lugs him out. For some reason, Uddalaka came out of it and opened his eyes. He found himself surrounded by celestial damsels! Every one of them was a beauty. Some of them were playing musical instruments and a few others were singing. Some others were dancing. Some were holding umbrellas. Yet others were bowing down at his feet. He saw an airplane too parked at a distance.

Uddalaka observed them all with total detachment. He could see them singing and dancing. He noticed that they were quite beautiful too. Beyond that there was no other

arousal in his mind. He felt neither happy nor unhappy. Finding that the sage was watching them with open eyes but with no reaction, the Vidhyadhara (a type of Fairies) girls approached him. They praised him in flowing words and said finally:

“Sir! We are the quintessence of heavenly enjoyment. We are here to take you to Heaven. Behold, there is a plane waiting for you. Come on over, Dear Sir, let’s get going!”

Uddalaka just heard them. He merely smiled at their enticing and romantic maneuvers. He did not respond to their entreaties. They begged him repeatedly and implored him to go with them. He excused himself and went back into his meditation. The fairy girls continued singing and dancing around him for several days. But Uddalaka was deeply immersed in his meditation. The girls were tired. They returned to Heaven. Uddalaka remained in meditation for many more months.

24. The State of “Common Beingness”:

Uddalaka used to come out of meditation once in a while – might be once in a month or a year or two or sometimes after a few days. As he persisted in this process, he attained the next step in Yoga.

citsāmānya cirābhyāsāt
sattā sāmānyametya saḥ |
dṛśyesmiñcitra ravivat
nāstamāyā nna codayam || (sarga 54 - śloka 92)

“He (Uddalaka) attained “Common Beingness” (*Satta samanya*) state as he meditated for a long time contemplating that he himself was the Supreme Consciousness, the substratum for all. He glowed virtually like a sun that never sets. He was the same whether he was in meditation or out of it. This was the Seventh step in Yoga. Uddalaka was steady in that stage.”

[Note: Attainment of “*Satta samanya*” state while in *Samadhi* is the Sixth step in Yoga. Attainment of *Satta samanya* even when the seeker is out of *Samadhi* is the Seventh step in Yoga].

Rama interrupted Sage Vasishtha’s narration with the following question:

Rama: “My Teacher! You referred to the state of Uddalaka as ‘*Satta samanya*’. What does that exactly mean?”

Vasishtha: “Well Rama! There are four interpretations for this word.

- “1. Supreme Consciousness is reflected in every modification of the mind. Because of that, individuals are able to cognize what is seen. Suppose that all the seen objects are contradicted through a logical enquiry. (Contradiction here means that their existence is negated along with nescience that is the root cause for their very existence). What would happen to the Supreme Consciousness that is reflected in the mind of an individual who enquired thus? Mental modifications or objects being absent now, the reflected Consciousness merges with the original Supreme Consciousness. Original Consciousness is nothing but the original form of the individual. Therefore, the form of

the consciousness of the individual in such a state as referred to above is called “Common Beingness” (*Satta samanya*).

- “2. “Common Beingness” (*Satta samanya*) is explained in another way also. Suppose that a mind discretely examines the Truth in every object in the world and rejects each one as not True. What would be left finally? Only the infinite Consciousness will remain. What would then happen to the mind that had been examining the Truth? It would have to have the form of Infinite Consciousness. There is no other way. That state is called “Common Beingness” (*Satta samanya*).
- “3. There is a third explanation. We know that the root cause of the visible world are the five elements (*pancha bhutas*). They appear as five elements to everybody in this world but their appearance is like seeing silver nuggets on seashore. That is to say that they do not really appear in their true form. They are illusory visions, their true form being pearl oyster shells. Instead of that, if one is able to see the five elements for what they are (like seeing nacre and not silver nugget), that state is described as *Satta samanya*.
- “4. Yet there is a fourth way of expressing this. All creatures in the world perceive objects. When a seeker pursuing Truth with determination contemplates on them, all objects appear as a form of Self. “Common Beingness” (*Satta samanya*) is the state when all the things seen merge with the Self of the Seer and appear as a form of Supreme Self naturally and effortlessly.

“*Satta samanya* state is obtained by a seeker in the fifth and sixth steps of yoga during meditation. This state is obtained at all times, whether one is in meditation or out of it for a seeker who is in the seventh step of Yoga. One need not have a doubt about the existence of such a state. Great Sages like Narada, Gods like Brahma, Vishnu, Eswara are in that state. Many of us too are in this state.

“Uddalaka obtained the state of *Satta Samanya*. He remained in that state until current sufferage (effects of past actions), *Prarabdha*, for his body was exhausted.

“Now I shall narrate how Sage Uddalaka attained liberation leaving the body after current sufferage was exhausted.

“Sage Uddalaka stayed in the seventh step of Yoga for a long time. When the current sufferage (*prarabdha*) of the body was exhausted, the thought that “The body should finally emancipate (*kaivalya*)” occurred to him. Because his mind was quite familiar with the processes of yoga, an exercise suitable for renouncing the body commenced immediately.

“Uddalaka assumed the lotus pose. He closed his eyes. He constrained the anal opening and pulled up the Apana wind upwards. He tightened the eight remaining openings of life-force (*prana*). He converged the sensory actions and brought them near to the heart. He straightened the spine, neck and head into a vertical line and he started to visualize the sensory actions not as deeds but as a form of the infinite Brahman. He lifted his head up slightly, rolled his tongue backwards and took it up to uvula (*lambikaa sthana*). All the time he kept his mind focused on Ultra pure Consciousness.

“Uddalaka’s mind which had been so far slightly scared of the pain in the Lambikaa Yoga, was excited to experience the joy obtained through this yoga. Because his mind was already contemplating on the Supreme Consciousness by that time, it attained the state of the Supreme Consciousness. Floating in that joy, he moved effortlessly into the state of “Common Beingness” (*Satta samanya*).

“Rama! Please make a note here. There is a secret in the practice of this yoga. Even for an adept seeker, reining in the mind is a painful affair. Hence it keeps escaping from control on the most trivial of excuses. But if it obtains the joy of the end result of yoga, it will not return to its wayward ways. This is because the bliss of yoga is so many times greater than any other happiness. A mind which tasted that joy would be like an ant which tasted sweet. The ant resists even if pushed by a finger. This is called the Doctrine of Adherence (*Gudapipeelika nyaya*) like the ant sticking to jaggery. A mind that reaches this state loses its individual identity completely. It attains initially the form of ‘Common Consciousness (*chit samanya*)’. It will have only a shade of awareness of its own existence. If this state prevails robustly for sometime, that awareness too gets dissolved. This final state is *Satta samanya*.

“This explains fully what is meant by my statement that Uddalaka reached “Common Beingness” (*Satta samanya*) state from *chit samanya* state. I shall tell you now the changes that take place in the body concurrent with these developments.

“When Uddalaka’s mind tasted the bliss of yoga, he had goose bumps and his hairs stood on end. As he moved from the *chit samanya* state to that of “Common Beingness” (*Satta samanya*) state, his ‘awareness’ of joy too reduced and his body became normal. The residual nescience that is the root cause for experiencing *prarabdha* began to dissolve. The reason for the continued existence of his body was *prarabdha*.

The life-force (*prana*) in him slowly calmed down like hot water losing temperature on its own. When the residual ignorance totally evaporated, the life-principle calmed down fully and was absorbed in eternal Bliss. His body stayed as it was. After about six months, the body dried up completely with no flesh and blood left. Only his skeleton remained. The body lying on the hill looked as if the God of the Mountain saved a stringed musical instrument.

“One day Goddess Parvati along with her seven feminine forms – *sapta matrikas* - came to the mountain range for a stroll. They saw the skeleton resembling a musical instrument. Mother Chamundi was particularly happy to see the skeleton. She took it up and put it as a decoration on her crown. Notice this, Rama! The appalling skeletal bones that were no more than mere scaffolding to the body prior to the attainment of Self-knowledge, could reach such an admirable status (fit to decorate the head of Goddess Chamundi)! Who can say how magnificent the state of Supreme Self is!”

We come to the end of Uddalaka’s story here. Uddalaka is the only person in the story except for a brief appearance of the fairy girls. Uddalaka’s character was used to illustrate different stages and experiences that a seeker goes through as he reaches his final goal.

The first Canto, Adiparva, of the epic Mahabharata contains a reference to one Uddalaka. The story goes that a disciple buried himself at the command of his Guru in the

soil beside a pond and came out of it after his Guru called him back. For this reason he was known as Uddalaka meaning one who appeared after ripping apart soil. One does not know if the two Uddalakas were one and the same person. However, the name sounds appropriate in the sense that Uddalaka of Vasishtha's story ripped apart the soil of ignorance surrounding him on his way to obtaining Self-Knowledge. There are no other symbolical representations in this story. Therefore, further analysis on nomenclature may not serve any purpose.

25. Meditation-centered and Transaction-centered Knowledge:

Rama too did not raise any question with respect to Uddalaka's story. He, however, sought clarification regarding one of Sage Vasishtha's casual observations. So he asked him the following question:

Rama: "Sir, while describing the liberated state of Uddalaka, you remarked that you were also in the same state. I get a doubt here. Suppose there are two Self-knowing persons. One is always in deep meditation. He wouldn't come out of it. But the other person, though knowledgeable of Self, does not take up deep meditation. He involves himself in worldly affairs. Who is better between the two?"

Sage Vasishtha gave an elaborate reply to this apparently simple question. He devoted the entire 56th Sarga for his reply and extended a discussion on it into the 57th Sarga. Then he went on to narrate the story of Suraghu in the 58th Sarga. We shall have a brief look at his explanation.

The central theme of Vasishtha's reply to Rama's question is contained in the following verse:

vyavahāri prabuddho yaḥ
prabuddho yo vane sthitaḥ |
dvāvetau susamau nūna
masandehaṁ padaṁ gatau || (sarga 56 - śloka 12)

"When once knowledge of Self is obtained, the one who deals with worldly affairs and the one who is in deep meditation in a forest are both perfectly equal. Both have undoubtedly attained the Supreme."

To provide further proof, Sage Vasishtha explained the meaning of deep meditation as follows:

cetaso yadakarṭṛtvaṁ
tatsamādhāna muttamam |
taṁ viddhi kevalībhāvaṁ
sā śubhā nirvṛtiḥ parā || (sarga 56 - śloka 15)

"It is Deep Meditation when the mind loses 'doership'. Not only that, it is the final Aloneness. That is the Supreme Blissful state."

Sage Vasishtha provided additional proof as follows:

When does the mind get ‘doership’? It gets ‘doership’ when impressions are still left within it. The mind does not have ‘doership’ any more when all the remnant impressions are totally decimated, even though the body may continue to exist and function.

An example for this is a person who auditions a story but with his attention somewhere else. Suppose a good story is being told. One of the listeners becomes inattentive. Though he sits right in front of the speaker, though the speaker has been shouting at the top of his voice, he (the listener) is not really listening to. Hence he is not a listener.

Let us take another example. A person is in sound sleep. His body is not moving. He dreams that he fell down into a ditch and shouts for help. What could be the reason for this? Obviously some impressions stored in his mind. Therefore, if there are impressions left in the mind, it gets ‘doership’ even if there is no apparent movement externally.

What is *Samadhi* (deep meditation)? It is not sleep. It is not deep sleep (*sushupti*). *Samadhi* stands for a steady, unwavering mind! It is **not** a mind which merely *appears* to be stable. It has to be truly balanced, composed, and steady. Such a steady state is unobtainable as long as impressions exist in mind. Hence *Samadhi* is a state when impressions are annihilated. It is the same state as “Non-doership.” Even if the body acts in this state, the mind does not get ‘doership.’ In other words, the mind in such a state does not have ‘doership’ whether the body is moving, or not moving, gets involved in worldly affairs or in deep meditation. A mind lacking ‘doership’ is the mind of a Self-realized person. Hence the mind of a Self-realized person is forever in the state of ‘non-doership’, in a state of perpetual *Samadhi*. It can be easily concluded from this that it makes no difference at all whether a Self-realized person is in deep meditation or immersed in worldly affairs. A question on the relative greatness of such persons is irrelevant.

After completing his line of argument as above, Sage Vasishtha provided another definition for *Samadhi*.

praśānta jagadāsthomtar
vīta śooka bhayaiṣaṇaḥ |
svasthoo bhavati yenātmā
sa samādhiriti smṛtaḥ || (sarga 56 - śloka 20)

“*Samadhi* is that state when one does not consider world as real and therefore loses desires, has no fears and sorrows and has the mind in its own place (*swastha*).”

Sage Vasishtha offers a couple of examples for clarity.

Suppose a person is seated alone on a high mountain in a thick forest. His mind is fully occupied with the phenomenal world. Can anyone say that he is in meditation? Another person though stays in a house, does not concern himself with any of what is going on in his house. Can we call him a householder?

Here is yet one more example. A person was told that a snake entered his room in which the iron safe was kept. He ran away leaving all his money, valuable, jewelry and gold. Can we describe his act as detachment for wealth? It does not amount to renouncement at all if a person leaves the worldly things out of fear, anger or excessive attachment for something else. True sacrifice is rejecting the worldly things without fear, anger or attachment to something else. Is that possible in the world? Does such a sacrifice exist?

A person saw a few silver nodules lying at a distance on the seashore. He ran towards them. As he approached them, he found them to be no more than pearl oyster shells. He laughed at himself when he understood that he was fooled because of his mistaken impression. Now shall we say that the person left the silver nodules because of fear or because of hatred towards them or with a hope of getting still bigger nuggets of silver? Definitely no. Then why did he leave them? He left them because of his certitude that silver did not exist. If silver did not exist, where is the question of leaving it? So neither holding on to silver nor leaving it does arise. When once he understood that the silver nuggets did not exist, he transcended both actions of holding on to and rejecting them. He is not aroused. He is quietened. He has calmed down

Similarly there is no scope for sorrow, fear or other desires to cling to a mind that understands that the world does not really exist. It is calmed down going beyond such deeds like hoarding or giving up. Where does such a mind go to? It cannot go anywhere. It stays within itself. Sage Vasishta described this state as “*Swatho bhavet yenatma*”. Such a mind cannot be described to be immersed in worldly affairs. Physical transfers involving give and take exist in worldly affairs. We cannot just because of that say that a mind is involved in worldly affairs. We cannot also describe that person to be in meditation, because meditative state involves withdrawal of senses from external objects and continued experience of a distinction between the meditator and the thing meditated upon. We cannot describe the state of such a mind by any name other than *Samadhi*. Only in a state of *Samadhi* does the mind lose its movement; will be free of acceptance or rejection; and has no sense of differentiation. Therefore, we have to call the state of mind obtained after realizing the falsity of the world as *Samadhi* only. There is no other way of describing it.

Let us say that the body of a person whose mind understood Truth is involved in worldly affairs because of some residual current sufferage (*prarabdha*). Does his mind act thinking that the affairs it is involved in are Real? The answer is no. The wisdom of the mind stays ‘steadfast’ even while conducting the affairs of the world. So it continues to be in a state of *Samadhi*. It attained the state of being within itself. The question whether his body is acting or not becomes invalid. So any talk on the relative superiority of a Self-realized person involved in worldly affairs or a Self-realized person in deep meditation is meaningless. Whatever he may do, a Self-realized person is a Self realized person.

26. Black Pepper Seed:

After thus offering definitions and detailed explanations for *Samadhi*, Sage Vasishta made very profound remarks advising Rama as follows:

Vasishta: “If the mind is filled with impressions, it becomes vulnerable to likes and dislikes and hence will be unstable. Sometimes it may fall into deep sleep (*sushupti*) for a little while in-between its oscillations. It will not have movement or desire during *sushupti*. But then we cannot call it as *Samadhi* because literally thousands of triggers for throwing you back into wakeful state are hidden in seed form in *sushupti*. The practices aimed at liberation of many of the ordinary people are like *sushupti*.

“Instead of that, if the impressions in the mind are totally destroyed, if likes and dislikes are completely eliminated, you will obtain a blissful state. And that state is liberation. So please choose a path as per your preference.”

Sage Vasishtha expanded the above advice to over 50 verses. He talked briefly about the practices one need to adopt in order to get rid of impressions. He also indicated how a person free of impressions would be. The 49th verse in the 56th Sarga is truly a gem:

ātmavat sarvabhūtāni
paradravyāṇi looṣṭhavat |
svabhāvādeva na bhayāt
yaḥ paśyati sa paśyati || (sarga 56 - śloka 49)

“Only he, who naturally and not for fame or out of fear or with a hope of getting a better status, sees all creatures as equal to himself and considers other’s possessions as no more than mere lumps of earth is a true Seer.”

Sage Vasishtha persuaded Rama to strive for such a state. He remarked that a person of that state would be free of the effects of actions like sin and merit. Pairs of opposites such as likes-dislikes etc. would not touch him.

So far Sage Vasishtha had stressed on the falsity of the visible world. However, he changed the tactic in the 57th Sarga while discussing the methods of contemplation to be observed in achieving *Samadhi*. He proffered help to the seeker in perceiving the world, which, though visible, does not really exist.

Vasishtha: “Rama! Suppose there is a seed of black pepper. You chew it. Your tongue will be on fire (feels hot). Now tell me what is black pepper? Is it the black seed that you saw or is it the hotness on your tongue? Let’s say that there is a lump of salt. You taste it. Your tongue feels it to be salty. Now what is salt? Is it the white lump or the salty taste?”

“Whatever one may argue, it is the saltiness that has the lumpy form. It is the hotness that is in the form of black pepper. It cannot be any other way. An intelligent chef looks at black pepper or a lump of salt, recognizes the hotness or saltiness and uses just the right amounts of pepper or salt in cooking. In a similar way, an aspirant should learn to notice the intrinsic, unlimited quality of Consciousness present in all worldly objects.

“Because everything in the visible world is an illusory appearance of the Supreme Self, every substance in the world has got to have the Supreme Self as its substratum and support. Therefore, the seeker has to learn identifying the Self which forms the substratum for everything in the way the chef recognized the taste by merely looking at the seeds of pepper or lump of salt. Believe that Brahman permeates everything. The phrase that Brahman permeates everything appears to imply that there is a distinct substance ‘Brahman’ permeating another substance ‘everything.’ This is due to the deficiency in the usage of words or expression in a language. In fact there are no two things. What is, is One only. One must be able to understand this.

“Reciting AUM helps in the attainment of such an understanding.

“I shall describe to you the path adopted by Suraghu, a hunter King, so that you may fully appreciate the significance.”

Prior to narrating the story of Gadhi, Sage Vasishtha talked about different paths as well as processes that would lead to Self-realization. He cited the stories of King Janaka,

Emperor Bali and Devotee Prahlada to illustrate his point. He portrayed in detail, through Gadhi's story, how the illusory phenomenon (Maya) works as an overwhelming impediment in obtaining Self Knowledge. He later described a series of techniques of Yoga for achieving the knowledge of Self. The story of Uddalaka formed a part of this narration. It was a story just for name's sake. It was more of an exhaustive account of the processes involved in liberation. The hero of the story was fortunate to attain a state of detachment even before he reached adolescence.

Sage Vasishtha proposes here to introduce us to the travails and tribulations in the pursuit of liberation faced by middle-aged persons having family life and social responsibilities and had gone through various conflicts in life. The case study taken for this purpose is the story of Suraghu. The story contains a few additional tips appropriate to middle aged persons on achieving Self-realization.

27. Story of Suraghu:

“Once upon a time there lived a hunter tribe known as Hemajatas near the Kailash Mountain Range in the Himalayas. Suraghu was their king. He was an intelligent person and gained expertise in many fields. He had good control over his people. He was a capable administrator. He was a poet, a lover of art and also a brave warrior. In addition, he was a devotional type of person. Because of his multifarious talents, his kingdom expanded. In course of time, his hair grayed and he felt he was on the descending limb of his life. He mused within himself on these lines:

“I have been ruling over the kingdom for quite sometime. I had to treat some people harshly during my governance. I had to punish a few, order around others and protect the people in general. These things are inevitable in public administration. People will not stay within their limits without such measures. I had the role of a ruler in this drama of life. Does any sin accrue to me in my actions of governing people? How can I be sure that the punishments imposed by me were justified? It is said that one will certainly go to hell at the end of a reign (*rajyante narakam dhruvam*). Howsoever great a king may be, the maxim operates inexorably. What would be my fate?”

“Suraghu continuously churned the problem in his mind. He could not arrive at a conclusive answer.

“One day Sage Mandavya happened to visit Suraghu. The King felicitated and paid his respects to him and posed to Mandavya the question that was bugging him. He begged him, “Sir! Is there no way at all to escape from this cycle of sin and merit?”

“Sage Manadavya replied him with a smile, “My dear King! If an effort is made, there is no problem that does not have a solution. Accrual of sin and merit are inescapable for any person involved in worldly affairs. There is only one way out of it. Begin a new way of thinking,

kohaṁ kathamidam kiṁ vā
kathaṁ maraṇa janmanī |
vicārayāntarevaṁ tvaṁ
mahattāmalameṣyasi || (sarga 58 - śloka32)

“Who am I? How did the world come about? What is the meaning of this world? How do I die? How am I born?” Think over on these questions. Churn them over in your mind. You feel inadequate, inferior because you lacked contemplation on these questions. You felt that you were merely the six-foot body. You felt limited to the extent of your kingdom. Deep thinking will lead you to transcend those limitations. You will be a great man. You will become a noble man. You will be permeating everywhere. Neither sin nor merit will stick to you when once you reach that state.

“Until you reach that state, you will have to develop detachment with the world. You should study spiritual texts. You should renounce everything that you find to be untrue. As you go on rejecting everything, you will be finally left with something that you cannot get rid off. And That is the Supreme state. You do not have to be concerned at all about sin or merit in the Supreme state. So make an effort to obtain that state,” thus speaking Sage Mandavya took leave of him.

“Accordingly, King Suraghu embarked up on a course of inquiry. “Who am I? Am I the visible world? Am I the kingdom? Am I this hill? Am I the earth? Am I the city?” He negated all these.

“Am I this body?” he paused here. He felt he could be the body. His search continued. “Am I the body? I am not the skin. I am not the flesh in the body. I am not blood. I am not the bones. If none of these is I, how could I be the body?”

“Is it that I am in the body? In such a case, am I the senses? Am I the mind? Both of them are inert. How could I be inert? I am conscious? Though I am none of these, I get the sensation that I exist. Therefore, there has to be a witness inside. I cannot presume that that witness is distinct from me. Is the witness an associate of mine? If there is an entity other than myself inside me, how could it be that I am unaware? Hence, I have myself to be that witness. Yes! I am that Pure Witness! If that is so, how did the world originate? How did the pairs of opposites like sorrow and happiness come about? They are nothing but a phantasm, my fantasy. They appear ‘to be’; but do not exist truly. Every incident that takes place in this illusory world is likewise non-existing. There are neither kingdoms nor kings.

“The effects of action (sins and merits) that arise because of the non-existing senses and mind are also untrue. They can only affect senses and mind, which are equally untrue. They cannot harm me who am Supreme True Consciousness. I am Supreme Truth. Infinite bliss is my nature.

namoo mahya manantāya

samyak jñānodayāya ca || (sarga 59 - śloka 37)

“I salute the Knowledge that dawned on me. I bow down to myself, the Supreme Infinite Form.”

“Suraghu was a transformed personality after these thoughts. He was like Sage Viswamitra who realized Brahman. He never fell out of the enlightened feeling. He ruled the kingdom in a Self-realized state for several hundred years.”

Sage Vasishtha concluded the story of Suraghu with an advice to Rama. He said, “Rama! You asked me about the difference between a liberated person active in the worldly

affairs and another staying in *Samadhi*. Now you tell me if there is a difference between Sage Uddalaka and Royal sage Suraghu. Imbibe this and explore your own True nature.”

28. Could Knowledge be Permanent?:

Rama listened carefully to everything that was said. He finally asked Sage Vasishta a question.

Rama: “Revered Teacher! Mind has a quality of never being steady. Is it possible that the mind will stay firm with the deduction arrived at after a one-time analysis?”

Vasishta: “I shall tell you of an incident that took place in the life of Suraghu after he attained the state of stable mind. This should relieve you of your doubt.

“Parigha was the King of Persia and a contemporary of Suraghu. Parigha and Suraghu were good friends. Parigha was also a great person as can be understood from the following story.

“Once there was a great famine in Persia due to drought. Parigha adopted many famine-relief measures. But they proved inadequate. A number of people died because of scarcities. Parigha was desperate and hated himself at his inability to control the situation. He deserted the kingdom. He set off to forests for meditation. He stopped eating food because his people were starving. He survived on dry leaves. He observed austerities and meditated. His sons took care of the kingdom during his absence. Slowly things got settled in his kingdom. However, Parigha continued his meditation for a thousand years.

“Lord Shiva appeared before him after thousand years. As the kingdom was free of problems by then Parigha wondered what he should request Shiva as a boon. Being a wise man, he requested Shiva for purity of mind. Shiva blessed him accordingly. When once his consciousness was purified, he obtained Self-knowledge automatically. Thus he was liberated right in his life-time (*jivanmukta*). He spent the rest of his life wandering freely along with other saints and sages.

“At about the same time, Suraghu attained Self realization through the grace of Sage Mandavya. He was also liberated right in his life; but continued to rule the kingdom. Parigha happened to visit Hemajatas kingdom during his wanderings. He called on Suraghu. Thus the two old friends met without a preplan. One was a King and the other was a Royal sage who renounced his kingdom. These differences, however, did not reflect on their old friendship. They hugged each other, talked to each other with mutual affection and shared their experiences.

“When Suraghu said that he obtained Knowledge of the Supreme through the grace of Sage Mandavya, Parigha remarked that he got liberated directly through the appearance of Shiva. Though Parigha had been conversing in a friendly way, he had a doubt in his heart of hearts about the state of liberation of Suraghu because of the fact that Suraghu was still ruling the kingdom involving himself in worldly affairs in spite of claiming Self-realization. So he wanted to ask Suraghu a question in way of confirmation. He addressed Suraghu as follows: “Dear Friend! King Suraghu! You have realized the essence of the Supreme Truth. On one hand you are in a constant state of *Samadhi*. On the other hand you are taking care of the

governance of your kingdom. When you are in *Samadhi*, are you able to be in a thoughtless state or do you face any problems?”

“Suraghu responded with a question, “What is the state of thoughtless *Samadhi*?” As Sage Parigha did not reply, Suraghu continued.

tattvāvabodhoo bhagavan
sarvāśātr̥ṇa pāvakaḥ |
prooktaḥ samādhi śabdeena
na tu tūṣṇī mavasthitiḥ || (sarga 62- śloka 8)

“*Samadhi* is not sitting in one position with eyes closed and without budging. It is also not that the senses stay fixed. *Samadhi* is a state when the stored impressions in the mind are totally annihilated. Knowledge of Truth is essential for this to happen. Only then does the mind stay established in the Supreme. That is one-pointed attention. That is true *Samadhi*.”

“It is not possible that such an individual could be in any other state than that of *Samadhi*. Is there any need to make an effort to be in that state? It is all the same whether he continues in worldly affairs because of his previous habit or in yogic meditation of *Samadhi*. It cannot be *Samadhi* if an individual forcefully controls his senses and sits frozen without realization of the Supreme Truth.

“My Friend! You have been enquiring whether I could obtain a thoughtless state in *Samadhi*. When do I have any thoughts? One goes into a thoughtless state intermittently only in case thoughts continue to be present. If thoughtless state defines *Samadhi*, I am always in *Samadhi*.

“What I said thus far sounds as if there is a distinct mind of mine which goes to merge with the Supreme Self and that state is *Samadhi*. Let me hasten to add this. That is not correct representation. Mind does not exist at all. Looked at from this angle, there is no *Samadhi* for me. ‘What is’ is only the non-dual Oneness! The whole visible world is Me! When that is the Truth, where is the question of *Samadhi* or non-*Samadhi* state?”

“Listening to this astute exposition, Royal Sage Parigha was immensely pleased. He understood the high level of Suraghu’s wisdom. He extolled him cheerfully with these words, “You are truly a Self-knowing person! You reached the Supreme state that has to be attained.” Later they spent considerable time together discussing the essence of Truth, and happily went away on their respective errands.

“Therefore, Rama, inquire into Self like them. If you get rid of the mind once through an inquiry into Self, it will not originate again. If you want to know what a “cow” is, the best way for you is to go and see it. Similarly, if you would want to know about Self, you have to experience it. There is no short cut.”

Preaching thus, Sage Vasishta devoted the whole of Sargas 63 and 64 to lead Rama on a course of Self-inquiry. He portrayed the essence of Self from many angles. He elaborated on the Seven Steps of Attaining Self Knowledge. Finally, he addressed Rama in these words:

“Mind has to be cut by mind itself. Then only you will be free of the illusory world and witness the Supreme Self. Be warned, it is not an easy path. You will have to face many hurdles. But you should not give up. Let me give you a good example in order to make things more clear.”

Thus Sage Vasishtha introduced the Story of Bhaasa and Vilaasa. This also is a story just in name.

29. Story of Bhaasa and Vilaasa:

“A long time ago, two great sages lived on the northern slopes of Sahya Mountains. They were good friends. Both of them had a son each. The name of one boy was Bhaasa and the other Vilaasa. Bhaasa and Vilaasa grew up as friends in that forest where there were no other people. By the time the boys reached adolescence, their parents passed away almost at about the same time. The sons carried out devotedly the prescribed funeral rites. They were unable to continue living at the same place, as they were mentally very much upset. So they left the forest and went away in different directions. However, they could not get peace of mind anywhere. They moved around for a number of days. They fortuitously met at a place during their wandering. They were surprised to see each other. They felt very happy to meet again. They enquired about each other’s welfare, state of their meditation and Self-realization.

“The casual conversation of Bhaasa and Vilaasa actually turned out to be a discussion on Self inquiry. Finding out about the welfare of each other itself became an exercise in understanding Truth. They educated one another on the essence of Truth during their discussions. They both attained Self-realization. They were liberated.

“Rama! What do you think made them to wander around like mad caps without understanding Truth? It was nothing but the feeling of attachment inside their ‘self(s)’. Enlightening each other through their discussions, they could get rid of attachment and were liberated. Therefore, any person desirous of liberation should free himself from attachment within.”

Sage Vasishtha covered the story of Bhaasa and Vilaasa in three Sargas from 65 to 67.

30. Attachment Within:

The 68th Sarga starts off with a question by Rama.

Rama: “Revered Teacher! You say that attachment within should be wiped out. What is ‘Attachment within (*Antassanga*)’? How does it bind individuals? What is the way to get rid of it?”

Sage Vasishtha’s reply to the questions was very elaborate and was extended to the end of the 81st Sarga. Finally he said at the beginning of the 82nd Sarga, “What I talked to you so far was the method adopted by Samvarta, brother of Brihaspati, in his Self-inquiry. Samvarta himself once narrated it to me. So I taught you his *modus operandi*.”

Sage Vasishtha planned to blend this discussion with a discussion on the method adopted by Sage Veetahavya. We shall bear this in mind and look into the import of the 14 Sargas from 68 to 81 (inclusive of both).

Sage Vasishtha's response to Rama's question on Attachment was on the following lines:

Vasishtha:

anantasyātma tattvasya
saparyantatva niścayee |
yatsukhārthitva mantassa
saṅgoo bandhārha ucyate || (sarga 68 - śloka 3)

“It is attachment when you decide that Self is divisible into space, time and substance forgetting that it is an indivisible infinite whole. It is attachment when you long for happiness enjoying worldly objects forgetting that you yourself represent the infinite bliss. It is attachment that shackles us.

“It is also attachment to think that the body is self (*jīva*) and self is body forgetting that self is sentient and the body is insentient and the two are totally distinct.

“Rama! You can understand the meaning of self from the above definitions. To know that the body etc. is not you is non-attachment. To recognize that there is no fragmentation is non-attachment. To know that your true nature is infinite bliss is non-attachment.

“Not only human beings but also birds and animals have attachment. When cattle are pulled by the ring attached to their nose, sometimes they get scared and resist the pull though it may rip their nose. Why do you think they do that? It is because of the ‘Attachment within.’ Trees though dehydrated in summer and drenched in rain, still struggle to survive. This is also because of ‘attachment within.’

“Attachment engenders bondage.

saṁsaktirdvividhā prooktā
vandhyā vandyā ca rāghava |
vandhyā sarvatra mūḍhānām
vandyā tattvavidām nijā || (sarga 68 - śloka 21)

“Attachment within is of two types. One is to be adored (*vandya samsakti*). This is present in persons knowledgeable of Self. The other is to be avoided (*vandhya samsakti*). This is present in ignoramus.

“The ‘adorable attachment’ is the reason for actions like Trinity performing their function of creation, sustenance and dissolution and rulers and great sages offering their guidance and preaching to the public. One hardly needs to look for examples for the actions of the avoidable attachment. Indra and hosts of gods are also subjected to it. Strictly speaking, the image of this world had formed in consciousness-space because of avoidable attachment. Enjoyments and manifestations are expanding by leaps and bounds under its influence.

“You were curious to know what has to be done to wipe it out. A man with discretion should never let his mind stick to any thing, whatever may be his actions. You have to take care to see that the mind does not cling to any object, any event, any region, any relation, any sense organ, any quality, any theory, any enjoyment, any spiritual attainment (occult power or *siddhi*) and so on. One should learn to perform action without a desire for the result so that the mind does not get attached. This is called ‘Practicing Non-attachment’.

“A person ‘Practicing Non-attachment’ does participate in all worldly affairs. Yet he will be free of sorrow and fear. There will be a special glow in the person who adopts fully this practice. When actions take place in this fashion, it may be described as a state of deep sleep in wakefulness. His body functions just like a machine in such a state. When this condition matures and ripens, elders call the state ‘Turiya’. One who has reached this state is described as liberated right in this birth (*Jivanmukta*). When he crosses this state and the body falls down, he is described as ‘*Turiyatita*’ (Beyond the Fourth state or Self) or ‘*Videhamukta*’ (Liberated without the body).

“We need not discuss now the state beyond the fourth state (*Turiyatita*). It cannot be explained even using Vedic statements. Make a determined effort to attain the Fourth state using the technique of Non-attachment. The biggest block for such an effort is none other than your mind. As a matter of fact, it is ignorance (nescience) of the individual in the guise of his mind, memory, consciousness, ego or I-consciousness that creates the sprawling phantasmagoria (*samsara*).

31. Various Names of Mind:

Rama: “Sir! How come mind has got so many names? Kindly enlighten me.”

Vasishta: “Rama! All substances are forms of the essence of Self. Every thing is born out of Cosmic mind. A part of ocean water is in the form of waves. Waves keep moving. Water stays steady and unmoving in another part of the ocean. In the same way the essence of Self too vibrates in some places and stays steady at others.

“Living beings are the vibrating form of Self. Inert substances are the non-vibrating form. The essence of Self residing in the forms of living beings appears to be separate with distinct bodies because of the nescience it has created within itself. Because nescience is the cause for bringing about the differentiation as individuals, we may say that nescience itself is the “individual” (*jiva*). It is like saying mud is the pot (an earthen pot).

“The essence of Self gets the characteristic of segregation because of acquiring life-principle (*prana dharana*). Looked at from this angle, one can say that an individual is the same as the essence of Self which had acquired life-principle because of nescience. (There is a derivation that says, “*Jiva pranadharane*”, meaning : the part of the essence of Self that forms the substratum for life-principle, is named as *jiva*.) The same nescience grows and creates a feeling of ‘I’, ‘I’. The part of the essence of Self is then referred to as “I-consciousness” (*ahmakara*).

“The same nescience generates decision making capabilities. Then that part of the essence of Self is termed “intellect” (*buddhi*). The same nescience gives the feeling that the five elements have accumulated like a dump at one place. From this the very same essence of Self gets the name of “body” (*deha*). There is a derivation as, “*Diha upachaye*.” It means accumulation, solidification and condensation.

“Thus the one essence of Self gets several names depending on the quality It acquires and the derivatives available in the language. Nobody can invoke all qualities at one time. Each time a name is given depending on the predominant quality. If we consider the quality of consciousness as primary in the essence of Self, it becomes sentient. If nescience is primarily considered, it is insentient. Pure essence of Self is not tied up by the phenomenal world. Nor do the inert get tied down by the world. Only consciousness of living beings lying in-between is vulnerable of being tied down to the world.

“Rama! The crux of the whole thing is mind engenders the phantasmagoria. What can destroy it is Knowledge of Self.

“You were not born when the body was born. You will not die with the body. What sort of relationship do you entertain with the body? When there is no relationship to the body, where is the question of sexual attraction? What is the difference between the male and female bodies? The ignorant ones speak of delicateness of the female body and strength of male body. Knowledgeable ones see both as lumps of five elements. Not merely the dissimilarity between man and woman, every division that is a cause for your happiness or misery is also like that. We discussed this issue in depth in the past. Can you truly attribute your happiness or misery to any Real substance? Is it due to some unreal thing? Or is it because of some real-unreal thing? Remember, we classified the causes into three categories as above and debated in great detail. You may recollect that we finally concluded that there was really nothing that served as a base for happiness or misery.

“Therefore, Rama, be sure of one thing. The entire world is Self. It is mere illusion to see any other thing! Sharpen your capacity of inquiry into Truth to achieve this viewpoint.

aham kha maha māḍityoo
 diśooḥa mahamapyadhaḥ |
 aham daityā aham deevā
 lokāścāḥa maham mahah || (sarga 73 - śloka 3)

“I am space. I am the sun. I am the four quarters. It is me up above and down below. I am the gods. I am the demons. I am the worlds. I am light as well as darkness.

“Practice contemplation on a non-dual Oneness of Self in the above manner. There are three ways of doing it.

1. Self transcends the world:

Viewed from this angle, Self contradicts the isness (beingness/existence) of the world. Contradiction here means establishing the non-existence of effect along with its cause.

2. Self is merely the substratum:

After contradicting the existence of the world as per (1) above, i.e. after establishing that the world does not exist, whatever remains as second to none is the substratum.

3. Self is omnipresent, assumes all forms and illuminates everything:

All the terms mean the same thing. The substratum for every thing in the world, which, though non-existing, appears as existing, is the Supreme Self. Hence, Self manifests in the form of every thing. In fact, it is Self that is in all those forms.

“You can practice union with Self following any one of the above given viewpoints. Or you can use them sequentially one after other.

“Practicing thus, you have to get the experiential understanding of the Self by yourself. You should not wait or depend on Vedic aphorisms, scriptural statements or sermons of a Guru.

“Rama! Liberation and bondage are just a fiction. There is no meat in those words. You are liberation. Experience it!”

The 73rd Sarga was closed with those profound words. He recapitulated the reasons for the origination of the illusory world in the 74th Sarga. He established once more that an inappropriate inquiry into Self was the main reason for illusion and an apposite inquiry would lead to necessary wisdom resulting in perfect knowledge. The qualities of a person Liberated right in this birth (*Jivanmukta*) were spelt out all over again.

Sage Vasishtha listed the names of a number of *Jivanmuktas* in the 75th Sarga. The list covers a wide variety of persons coming from different backgrounds. Examples are:

Royalty	Emperor Janaka	(Rama s’ Father- in-law)
	Emperor Dilip	(Rama’s grand father)
	Emperor Mandhata	(Of Rama’s lineage)
	Emperor Bali	(Belongs to Netherworld)
	Emperor Nahusha	(Belongs to Bhuloka)
Demons	Vritrasura	
	Prahlada	
	Sambarasura	
	Kusala	
Gods	God of Fire, Agni	
	Brihaspati	
	Sukra	
	Brahma	
	Vishnu	
	Shiva	
	Parvati	
	Adishesha	
	Yama	
	Sivaganas	Bringhi
Kumaraswami		
Sages	Narada	
	Viswamitra	

Sage Vasishtha briefly described how they functioned and conducted themselves without attachment to worldly affairs. At the end, he repeated his advice to Rama that he

should also have discretion and detachment and perform his actions without attachment as a *Jivanmukta*.

Sage Vasishtha then explained the two terms ‘liberation with body right in this life’ and ‘liberation without the body’. He referred to the concepts of Buddhism and Samkhya in the last Sloka of this Sarga and remarked that the followers of those schools of thought were totally mistaken in spite of their in-depth studies. According to him, the noble followers of Vedic path could achieve a clear understanding of Truth.

In the 76th Sarga, Sage Vasishtha became poetic and compared the phenomenal world to an ocean. He discussed the methods of safely crossing it. He commended Rama for his commitment towards inquiring into Truth at a tender age.

Besought by Rama, he was immensely pleased to portray once again the characteristics of a *Jivanmukta* in lilting melody in the 77th Sarga. These 44 verses are good for daily recitation by seekers. Finally, he said,

Vasishtha: “Because of a vibration in the mind, there appears to be a movement called world.”
The above statement provoked Rama to pose a question immediately.

Rama: “Sir! How does the mind generate a vibration? How does the vibration get attenuated?”

Sage Vasishtha’s reply indeed was quite queer.

Vasishtha: “We talk of ‘vibration in mind’ as if a separate entity as mind exists and an external vibration impinges on it. But there are no two entities. There is one only. Mind itself is vibration and vibration is mind! We say that there is heat in fire. Does it mean that heat is distinct from fire? No. In the same way, mind and vibration are not separate. As long as mind exists, vibration will not end. Elders speak of two ways to annihilate mind.

dvau kramau cittanāśasya
yoogoo jñānaṃ ca rāghava |
yoogastadvṛttiroodhoo hi
jñānaṃ samyagaveekṣaṇam || (sarga 78 - śloka 8)

“There are two ways to destroy mind. One is by Yoga; and another is through Knowledge. Yoga refers to control of modifications in the mind. Knowledge is the ability to see Truth as is!”

32. Ending Mind through Yoga:

Rama: “Revered Teacher! Let us consider the first path of Yoga to start with. Breathing exercises etc. are called Yoga. Are you referring to the same? Will the movements in the mind stop permanently with Yoga? Does one get infinite bliss?”

Sage Vasishtha wanted to give a clear answer to this question. He desired to convey that movement in the mind was dependent on the movement of life-principle (*prana*). So to begin with, he talked about what was life-principle. He said that it was the essence of all

bodily organs and it was identified by different names as *prana*, *apana* etc. as it flowed through different celestial nerves in the body. He added,

antaḥ prāṇa parisandāt

saṅkalpa kalanoonmukhī |

sarṁvitsañjāyatee yaiṣā

taccittam viddhi rāghava || (sarga 78 - śloka 13)

“Please know this, Rama! Life-principle moves inside the body. With that movement, a surge takes place in the consciousness that is within the body. That change is called ‘thought’. Mind is the name of the consciousness which is in the process of changing into ‘thought’.”

Therefore, if the life-principle is controlled, mind also gets controlled. With the vibration in the mind ceasing, bondage with the world ends. Explaining the methods of controlling life-principle, Sage Vasishtha taught some of the techniques of Royal Path. He wanted to talk on Saalamba Yoga (methods using seed letters and deities), Niraalamba Yoga (methods of concentration directly on Self) and Raja Yoga (methods of Ashtanga Yoga) though he used a different terminology.

The techniques recommended by him were as follows:

1. Study of Scriptures, Association with Noble Persons and Cultivation of Detachment will help in losing interest on worldly affairs. With increasing disinterest, the movement of life-principle reduces by itself.
 2. Adopt any entity – anything that you prefer to. It could be a mountain peak; it could be the disc of moon; it could be some form of a god or any of your favorite things. Learn to focus your mind on it. This is called “*Ekatatva Ghana Dhyana*, Meditation by focusing on a Single Entity. Movement of Life-principle stops when once it gets stabilized.
 3. Both the above techniques require a strong determination. In case it is not possible, follow breathing exercises of Inhalation, Retention and Exhalation along with Meditation in solitude. With this also the movement of life-principle gets arrested.
 4. Learn the method of reciting AUM. Practice it regularly and proceed from A to M and learn to focus the mind on the fourth part of AUM viz. the half-syllable. Then also movement of life-principle reduces. (Half-syllable refers to a state when only a drone, a nominal sound, is audible, after a reduction in the clear utterance of the syllables A, U and M).
 5. Exhale the breath completely. Do not inhale immediately. Stop the movement of air in the body organs. If this is practiced for a long time, the movement of life-principle is stopped.
 6. The other method is to inhale a large amount of air and fill the body with it. When no more air can be taken in, retain the air inside for a long time. Then the movement of life-principle will be reduced.
 7. Alternately, after inhalation, at the stage of Retention, if the life-principle is also held for a long time along with the breath inside, the movement of life-principle will be reduced.
- [**Note:** This indicates to us that breath is different from life-principle. Life-principle is inside the body and is the essence of the strength of the body organs, whereas breath is its external manifestation.]
8. Open the mouth. Fold back the tongue and touch uvula with the tongue. Extend the tongue a bit more and press the uvula. Keep pressing uvula with the tongue and let air

enter the Brahma randhra. Hold the air there. Then movement of life-principle will stop.

9. Without any of those breathing exercises, if the perturbations in the heart-space can be dissolved purely by meditation, *Nirvikalpa Samadhi* will be attained. Movement of life-principle will be reduced by this method also.
10. Focus your sight on a spot in space twelve inches away from the nostrils. Hold your sight and mind firmly fixed there. By this way also the movement of life-principle will be reduced.
11. Instead of the Lambika yoga described in (8) above, one can let the air enter into the Brahma Randhra through breathing exercises. Having done that, hold it stable without movement 12 inches away from the Brahma Randhra. Then the movement of life breath will recede.
12. Bring both the eyeballs together near to the center of the brows and hold the light from them (i.e. the sensory organ of vision inside) firmly at the center of brows. The movement of life-principle will be reduced.
13. Take the mind into heart-space and perform a meditation that is free of impressions. Movement of life-principle will be reduced.
14. By the grace of God or a Guru, sometimes unexpectedly Self-realization takes place. The movement of life-principle will then reduce automatically.

Interrupting Sage Vasishtha's enumeration of methods for the arrest of the movement of life-principle, Rama sought some clarification.

Rama: "Sir! You mentioned about heart-space. What is heart? In some places, the fleshy body part resembling a lotus bud is referred to as heart. At some other places, mind itself is being called as heart. Yet in some other places heart is used to indicate the Supreme Self. What is heart according to you?"

Vasishtha: "Individual's 'Heart' is of two types – 1) Acceptable and 2) Rejectable.

"The lotus bud like fleshy heart in the chest of human beings is a Rejectable. Human mind is of limited dimensions like any other body tissue. Therefore, it is also Rejectable.

"The word heart also connotes Supreme Self based on the derivation, "*Hridi ayam iti hridaya*" meaning One who is within the heart. This heart is Acceptable. This heart is inside as well as outside. Hence in my opinion, if you fix your mind on Acceptable heart, having freed yourself from the impressions of past lives, the movement of life-principle will be reduced.

"Rama! A number of learned people wrote about many more methods and techniques. Texts on Yoga also contain plenty of procedures. What is important is regularity of practice. You will be a *Jivanmukta* if the above methods are implemented observing due precautions. If you practice without developing detachment, you will be caught up in the swirl of enjoyments. Hurried implementation will lead to ill-health."

33. Ending Mind through Knowledge:

Rama: "Revered Teacher! You talked of two methods for the attainment of ending of mind. You have just described the first one, viz. the Path of Yoga. You said that 'Proper Vision' is the other one. 'Proper Vision' means knowledge. Please elucidate this approach."

Vasishtha: "Rama!

imā ghaṭa paṭākārāḥ
padārtha śata pañktayaḥ |
ātmaiva nānyadastīti
niscayassamyagīkṣaṇam || (sarga 79- śloka 3)

“Proper Vision is the resolve that the millions and millions of things in the visible world are Self only and that nothing else exists.

“This is the correct way to cognize the world. If this is cultivated, the movement of life-principle will automatically reduce.”

Sage Vasishtha expounded the above concept in 20 verses and closed the 79th Sarga. He seemed to be immersed in a high feeling of being in the essence of Truth as he commenced the next Sarga, the 80th. He went on addressing each sensory organ individually. He stressed that none of them perceived Truth. He pronounced that what they revealed was unreal. Skillfully substantiating the above statements, he highlighted that the knowledge obtained through the sensory organs did not provide a ‘Proper Vision’.

Sage Vasishtha once again established through several arguments in the 81st Sarga that there was nothing like a mind. Though it was all old wine being repeated, we, however notice a refreshing fragrance in his presentation.

Though he preached the essence of Truth with so much of his own involvement, he closed his discourse with a muted remark as follows:

“All of this was the process adopted by the great Sage Samvarta, the elder brother of Brihaspati. He told me himself and I repeated it for your benefit.”

Driven by the unsatiated love for Knowledge within him, he added:

“In times past, Sage Vitahavya too similarly educated the sensory organs on cognition of Truth. I shall describe his method also.”

The description took him through 82nd and 83rd Sargas. Sage Vasishtha exhibited an extra-ordinary dexterity here in his narration. He spelt out the method of Self-inquiry adopted by Sage Samvarta. He followed it up immediately with that of Sage Vitahavya. Both are based on educating the sensory system. The stories run almost parallel. There is no difference in the content. But the reader never gets bored, never feels any redundancy!

34. Similarity of Time and Space:

After a very detailed exposition of the approach of Vitahavya, Sage Vasishtha described the way of his (Vitahavya’s) Self realization in the 84th Sarga as follows:

Vasishtha: “Rama! Sage Vitahavya lived in the caves of the Vindhya Mountain Range. He inquired into Self by understanding the misleading nature of sensory inputs as we already discussed. After that, he took up uninterrupted deep meditation (*Samadhi*) for three hundred years. There were rains, thunders, storms and floods during that time. Kings on their hunting trips, wild animals like lions and elephants visited the place. He was submerged by silt and clay after floods. He was compacted in the dried up mud following hot season. Even then he did not stir from his meditation.

After about 300 years thus, the residual current sufferage (*prarabdha*) began to act. Under its influence, he arose from his *Samadhi*. A mind sprouted in him again. He began to fancy various things in his mind. His fantasizing went on for 300 years. He fancied himself to be on Mount Kailasa for hundred years. He thought he was a Vidhyadhara in the land of Vidhyadharas for the next hundred years. Next he thought he was the Lord of gods, Devendra for five yugas.

(**Note:** A yuga is a variable length division of a Mahayuga. A set of four 1000 Mahayugas constitute a Kalpa which is equivalent to 4.32 billion earth years).

Rama: “How could that be, Teacher? When the total duration of the fantasy was for only about 300 years, how could he be the Lord of gods, Devendra for five yugas? How is it possible?”

Vasishta: “What sort of rules can you apply for an imaginative world? I have already told you that mind was the name of the consciousness, which is in the process of changing into a modification, called ‘thought’. The strength of consciousness formulates its own space-time rules and regulations as per the emerging thought forms.

“First of all, it was by itself a fantasy on Vitahavya’s part that he thought he woke up from meditation. The period of 300 years was based on the measurement of time in that fantasy. If he thought that he visited some other worlds, it was simply one more fantasy within a fantasy. The rules of physics and dynamics for the modifications of consciousness in the second fantasy were different. It was five yugas as per the reference frame of the second fantasy. To confound it further, he imagined during that fantasy that he served Shiva for another yuga as one of the Ganapathis in Shivaloka (abode of Shiva). But surprise of surprises, he remained a *Jivanmukta* in spite of so many fantasies in fantasies! There was no change in his state!!”

Rama: “Sir, if it is said that a *Jivanmukta* fantasizes, implicitly it amounts to say that he is vulnerable to bondage and liberation. How will he be a *Jivanmukta* if he is still subject to bondage and liberation?”

Vasishta: “It is wrong to assume that the world is not visible to *Jivanmuktas*. The entire world appears as pure Brahman (Pure Consciousness). The *Jivanmuktas* also experience sorrows and happiness in a similar way as they did in the past. The difference is that these experiences will be like burnt out seeds. Their actions do not create new impressions.

“Sage Vitahavya visited various worlds in that fashion. He had gone through sorrows and happiness. Not only that, the same individual (*jiva*) that was the Lord of gods for five yugas later became a king in a small kingdom. He is now about to go on a campaign (war). The swan that was Ganadhipati’s pet during the time he was in Shivaloka, happens now to be the king of a country called Nishadha.”

Rama: “Oh, oh! Hold it Sir! You said a while ago that various worlds as well as the space-time rules and regulations in them were sheer imagination of Vitahavya. How can the imaginary beings from the fictional creation of an individual become embodied beings in this world?”

Vasishta: “Rama, I have told you a number of times that this visible world is also a fictional creation of a mind! I also said that the very mind, which had been the first cause of this

creation, too was itself a fiction. When that is a fact, how can you consider this world as solid and firm? The world appears solid to you because of the fact that your mind has not yet been firm in its understanding that the visible world is also a fantasy of the mind. The world will continue to appear concrete to you as long as it is so. You think that individuals belonging to other worlds cannot penetrate into it. This is also a fantasy. When once you determine that the entire thing is a fiction, none of these questions arise.”

Rama: “Revered Teacher, I could follow what you say! What you said would be perfectly valid if we understand that the framework of rules as applicable to ‘time’ is also applicable to ‘space.’ So far so good. But what did Vitahavya do with all his fantasies?”

Vasishta: “When Vitahavya was a Pramatha Ganapathi in the land of Shivaloka, he wished to see all his past lives. He began to visualize the past. In the stream of his visualizations, he saw his body buried in mud with some bush covering it. On seeing the buried body, his thoughts were arrested. He wanted to reenter that body. But he found the body to be totally disintegrated. He did not consider it fit for reentry. A desire for attaining liberation without body (*videhamukti*) sprouted in him. But at the same time the remaining current sufferage (*prarabdha*) was preventing it. He thought of a way to resolve the conflict. He noticed God Sun and Pingala (a person in the service of Sun) above in the sky.

“Vitahavya felt that Sun and Pingala could help him to pull out the body buried in the mud. Vitahavya assumed a subtle body and entered the Sun. Sun observed what was going on and understood the intentions of the sage. So he signaled Pingala, his Aide to help the sage. Immediately Vitahavya left Sun and entered Pingala’s body. Pingala’s gross body now consisted of two subtle bodies. Pingala came down to the earth, reached the place where Vitahavya’s body was buried on the Vindhya Mountain Range, dug it out with his fingers and nails and restored it to its previous health by his power of Yoga.

“The subtle body of Vitahavya separated out of Pingala and entered the restored body. The restored body stood up as Vitahavya. Vitahavya and Pingala bowed to each other. Pingala flew back into the sky. Vitahavya took off for a bath. He spent rest of the day wandering around the hills. He strongly desired to get back into meditation by evening because his past impressions acted on him! He looked around for a suitable cave in the hills, settled down there in a lotus posture and meditated. His deep meditation comprised a thorough probing into Truth. It went on for six days. He was so focused that he was unaware of his body too.

“Vitahavya awoke from his meditation at the end of six days. But he found himself in a strange state. It was not like being awake. It was more like sleep. The state was more like a siesta taken under the shade of a tree after walking for a long distance on a hot summer day by a traveler. He used to get into Knowledge-based-*Samadhi* (*Jnana Samadhi*) and come out of it occasionally. He spent part of his time in *Samadhi* and part of the time just wandering around. Whatever he might have been doing, he never desired anything in his mind. He never blamed anything. He was not happy nor was he sad. He lived thus as a *Jivanmukta* for 30,000 years. He enjoyed talking to his senses. He educated his senses about the bliss he enjoyed. At times, he appeared to argue with his senses. His current sufferage (*prarabdha*) was exhausted in this way. At the end of it, he decided to give up the body and merge in Aloneness (*videhamukti*).

“Soon Vitahavya assumed the lotus posture, called each of his senses, taught them Knowledge (about their real nature) and commanded each to merge with their cause. He ordered, “Oh, Organ of Vision! Go and merge in Sun. Oh, Olfactory sense! Join the Earth.

Oh, Life-breath! Combine with the mighty winds. Oh, Auditory sense! Unite with space. Oh, Sense of Gustation! Dissolve in water. ‘I’, who has been a mirror reflection so far, is going to amalgamate with the main Object, the Supreme Consciousness.”

“Gradually he gave up directing his sensory organs. He began reciting AUM slowly to start with, then in loud voice and finally in lengthening sounds. While reciting AUM, he freed himself from the veil of illusion using the technique of Superimposition and its reversal (*Adhyaropapavada vidhana*) and he almost reached Self-realization. He firmed up his position in that state. The sound of AUM also receded.”

[**Note:** *Adhyaropa* refers to the process of contemplation on the way Self gets superimposed by the Unmanifested (*avyakta*), Intellectual Principle (*mahat*, the source of I-consciousness), I-consciousness, Five Elements etc. in tandem one over other. *Apavada* refers to the process of eliminating each layer in the reverse order (from gross to the subtle) determining that Truth is not that particular layer (*na iti or neti*)].

“As he proceeded contemplating in that fashion, he had a sudden feel of a brilliant luminescence. He had an experiential feeling that he crossed both light and darkness. That is the point of transcending mind. One may compare that state to an unmoving stable mass of wind. This is the state of Mere Witness (*Sakshibhuta*).

“The states attained by Sage Vitahavya so far were the Sixth and Seventh of the Seven Steps of Knowledge-based Yoga. With increasing stability in them, he progressed on to the *Turiya* state. In the state of *Turiya*, there is only the bliss of the Supreme Self.. It is not the kind of happiness derived from worldly objects. One will be in Supreme Existence (*Sadrupa*), without anything existing separate from him. It is the state of Supreme Consciousness; there’s nothing, which is non-Consciousness.

“That state of Perfection is the final state. That is the Void (*Sunyatva*) of the *Sunyavadins* (Void school of thought). That is the Brahman of the Vedantins. That is the Wisdom of the logicians (*Vijnana vadins*). That is the *Purusha* of *Sankhyavadins*. That is the *Eswara* of Yogis. The Shiva of *Shaivaites*. That is Time of the *Kalavadins*. That is the Self of Knowers of Self. That is the *Nairaatmya* of *Sautantrika vaibhashikas*. That is the Void betwixt Consciousness and non-Consciousness of the Middle grounders (*Madhyamikas*). That is the Substance *par excellence* of the liberated Oneness believers (*Sarva Samata vadins*).”

(**Note:** *Nairaatmya* refers to a flow of momentary flashes of wisdom. The *Sautantrika vaibhashikas* hold that the Supreme state does not last forever).

We find here that Sage Valmiki alluded by name to each of the then prevailing schools of thought on Self in order to describe the state of Liberation without body (*Videhamukti*) of Sage Vitahavya. We also notice that he arranged them in a specific order. His description started with the Void of *Sunyavadins* and culminated finally with the State of Perfection of the *Jivanmuktas*. The poet, thereby, sagaciously indicated to us that those are the two extreme viewpoints of argument and all others are of varying shades in-between.

Let us now resume the story of Vitahavya.

As he reached the state beyond *Turiya*, the life-principle (*prana*) from all his nerves converged at the heart. The life-principle united with the five elements. The gross body remained just as it was. Completing the description of Sage Vitahavya’s liberation without body, Sage Vasishtha remarked as follows:

Vasishta: “Rama! I told you in detail the way Vitahavya attained liberation following the Path of Knowledge. Therefore, you should also take up knowledge-path.”

35. A Dream within a Dream – Fancy within a Fancy:

Rama: “Sir! Vitahavya built an imaginary world in his mind. Based on the power of Yoga that he practiced in the imaginary world, he could enter God Sun. With the help of Pingala, the Aide of Sun, he got his old body lying in the Vindhya Ranges extracted. He got it repaired and re-entered it. This amounts to say that the practices observed in an imaginary world yield benefits in our world. Is this possible?”

Vasishta: “Rama! You still seem to be under the impression that the mental construct of the imaginative world of Vitahavya and the world we live in are different. That is not correct. Putting it in proper perspective, this Vitahavya whom we feel we perceive is in fact a part of our own mental construct. Hence we may say that that Vitahavya was your mind! The truth is that it is your mind that appears as yourself, me and this entire visible world. We cannot really say that differences exist or do not exist between various entities. Differences can be spoken of with respect to True substances; but not with respect to unreal things. So we have to consider that the imaginary world of Vitahavya is no more than a part of the world of our own mental construct, the world we conceive of and perceive. Vitahavya’s world was not different from ours. Therefore, your question is not valid!”

[**Note:** We saw that two imaginary kingdoms conceived by two different individuals merged into one another in the story of Sage Gadhi. It was, however, not emphasized there that the mental construct of others was also a part of our conception. We may infer that Sage Vasishta explicates this specific standpoint through the present story.)

Rama: “Revered Teacher! I have one more question. How is it that we do not see occult powers (*divya shakti*) like ability of space travel in many of the *Jivanmuktas* who gained full knowledge of the Self?”

Vasishta: “Occult powers accrue through a variety of means. They are inborn to the divine class. The powers will be coterminous with their continuance in the divine body. The occult powers are not an automatic outcome for Self-knowing persons. They can obtain them if they desire so. Gemstones, charms, herbs etc. aid in obtaining the occult powers. There is no rule that a person has to be a *Jivanmukta* to attain them. You needn’t even be a human being to attain some of the powers. For example, don’t the mosquitoes fly in air?”

“A spiritual aspirant seeking Knowledge of the Self does not bother himself with these powers. He knows that such powers are part of nescience. He considers them ‘unreal’. ‘Unreal’ here means that they do not have true existence; they are like ‘the horn of a hare’. He does not waste time on acquiring such powers as he is focused on wiping out nescience totally. If at all a Self-knowing person does wish to possess these powers because of some residual current sufferage (*prarabdha*), he can surely acquire them with the aid of gemstones, charms, herbs etc.

“But a *Jivanmukta* hardly desires any thing. Nor does he refuse any thing. The occult powers do not facilitate liberation. Hence many of the *Jivanmuktas* do not run after them. In our story of Vitahavya, he did not acquire occult powers because he did not desire such powers. He wanted liberation. Hence he achieved liberation.”

Rama: “Revered Teacher! Why was not the body of Vitahavya buried in mud devoured by some wild animals or cannibals? Why did it not even rot? How could it be repaired so easily

after Pingala extracted it? He could not obtain liberation though he had practiced for billions of years in his past lives. But he achieved liberation within a short time after entering the repaired body. How did this happen?

Vasishta: “Let me answer your first question first as to why germs, wild animals or cannibals did not consume Vitahavya’s body buried in earth. Suppose you are on your way to a neighboring village. On the way you encounter a person whom you do not like. Your mind would boil with anger. After proceeding further, say, you meet with a friend of yours. Your mind would dance with delight. After traveling some more distance you see a mountain peak. Do you feel in your mind either anger or delight seeing the mountain peak? Neither. What is the reason?

“Your enemy had hatred for you. As your mind approached his feeling (*bhavana*) of hatred, it too was filled with hatred. Your friend had a feeling of amity towards you. As your mind approached this feeling, it was filled with camaraderie. The mountain peak had neither friendship nor enmity. So there was no scope for any modification in your mind as it neared the mountain peak. Therefore, when your mind viewed the mountain peak, it was free of both attachment and hatred.

“When you see an apple, you are attracted by it. That was because you had already got an idea in you that it was an eatable. If you see a fruit of soapnut (Botanical name: *Sapindus emarginatus*), you do not like to eat it because you know that it would be bitter. If you come across an unknown fruit, you would be neither attracted towards it nor repelled by it because you do not have *a priori* information on it. That is how the mind works.

“Advanced Yogis who are well established in Yoga reach a state transcending both attachment and aversion. If a new mind joins them, neither attachment nor repulsion enters their mind. Neither desire nor disgust will enter. Texts on Yoga too confirm this.

“*Tat sannidhau vaira tyagah*” is a Yogic aphorism. It means that even wild animals lose their enmity in the presence of yogis. What happened in the case of Vitahavya’s body too was the same. Because he reached a stage beyond love-hate relationships, worms, animals or cannibals never thought of eating the body. Therefore, the body stayed as it was.

“Your second question was why the body did not rot. Vitahavya followed *Samadhi* yoga and attained *Saamyavastha*. Then he left that body and assumed some other bodies. So the question is why did not the gross body rot after the subtle body had left it.

“Well, let us first understand what rotting is. Rot is a movement. Movement is a vibration. Vibration is of two types – (i) Internal Vibration and (ii) External Vibration. Internal vibration comprises the movement of mind. Movements like that of the life-breath and other winds caused by mind also form Internal vibrations. External vibration is the movement of the gross body caused by the life-breath and other winds. Any body having both the vibrations will gradually wither away. In the absence of both of these vibrations, any body stays like a rock even after a thousand years. This fact is also established by the texts of Yoga.

“Vitahavya’s subtle body leaving the gross body, assumption of newer bodies, re-entering the old body etc. were all part of the experiential play of his mind. But because his mind had already by then transcended both types of movement, his body stayed like a rock without undergoing any change.

“Your third question was how Vitahavya achieved liberation soon after he entered the old body. The concept of obtaining sooner or later is irrelevant in respect of liberation without body. A mind lost in the cycle of births and deaths (*samsara*) unexpectedly lands on Truth as it strives on in its quest. It happened so with Vitahavya. Elders often say,

tuṣeṇa baddho vrīhissyāt
tuṣābhāveetu taṇḍulaḥ |
pāśabaddhassadā jīvaḥ
pāśamukta ssadā śivaḥ ||

(sarga 89 – śloka 37 and commentary there on.)

“It is paddy if the husk is there. If the husk is removed, it is rice. Similarly, if bondage exists, he is an individual (*jiva*); if the bondage is gone, he is everlasting Shiva.

“An individual free of bondage is equivalent to Shiva. The following statement from Vedas also affirms the same fact:

“*Tasya ha va devascha na bhutya isate
Atmahyesham sa bhavati*”

“Even gods cannot reach the greatness of a *Jivanmukta*. He is the Self in them.”

“Therefore, a *Jivanmukta* who is Shiva himself can obtain liberation without the body whenever he wishes so. Nobody can predict when he would desire to do so. It happens effortlessly. Hence nobody can forecast the time of liberation without the body (*videhamukti*).

“When Vitahavya’s mind in the form of bondage was annihilated, his inquiry into Self intensified. It resulted in noble qualities like universal affection (*maitri*) described in Yogic texts.”

36. Ending Mind with and without Retention of Form:

Rama: “Just a second Sir! On one hand you say that the mind was annihilated. On the other hand you say that noble qualities like universal affection have arisen. When mind itself was gone where could these noble qualities reside?”

Vasishta: “Annihilation of mind is of two types. One is ‘Annulment of Mind With Retention of Form’. The other is ‘Annulment of Mind Without Retention of Form’. The annihilation of mind of the *Jivanmuktas* is of the first type. *Videhamuktas* achieve the other type of annihilation. Vitahavya obtained annihilation with retention of form at that time. Hence universal affection and other good qualities were generated in it.”

Rama: “Sorry, Sir! I am unable to follow. What is it meant by Annulment of mind? How could there be a form for a mind that is destroyed? How can a mind that is destroyed function again? Please do explain a bit more.”

Vasishta: “Rama!

sukha duḥkha daśā dhīraṁ
sāmyāna prooddharanti yam |
niśśvāsā iva śaileन्द्राṁ
cittaṁ tasya mṛtaṁ viduḥ || (sarga 90- śloka 12)

“An annulled or annihilated or ‘Calmed Down Mind’ is the mind of a steadfast person whose equipoise is not disturbed by external conditions of sorrow or happiness just like a mountain does not get affected by the inhalation and exhalation of a man.

“His is a ‘Calmed Down Mind’ whose expansiveness is not reduced by delimiting concepts of ‘we-they’.

“His mind is a ‘Calmed Down Mind’, if his face does not alter in expression under conditions of pleasure or peril, treasure or threat; incentives or impediments.

“I trust it is now clear to you, Rama! This explains the state of things with respect to ‘Annulment of Mind With Retention of Form’. This is the condition of the mind of a *Jivanmukta*. In this state he gets rid of the idea that the world is True. His mind shines forth in its Pure, Pristine and True form. Living in this condition with the Mind annulled but retaining its form is described by some as Mind-Form Beingness (*chitta satta*). Virtues like universal affection take root in such a mind.

“It is termed as an annihilated or ‘Calmed down mind’ because the impressions of past births are almost extinguished in it. A few impressions may still be present, but they are not strong enough to cause re-birth. These residual impressions find expression during the non-meditative (*vyutthana*) state of the *Jivanmukta*. Therefore, it amounts to say that his mind has some form, though negligible. Hence the name “Annulment of Mind with Retention of Form.” Only such a mind has the capacity for action in the world. The qualities like universal affection etc. will come handy in the performance of actions.

“As far as “Annulment of Mind Without Retention of Form” is concerned, it is a state obtained only in liberation without the body. There is no question of any impressions being residual in this state. Hence neither virtuous qualities like universal affection nor performance of actions related to them exist.

“I take it that you understand clearly now about annihilation of the mind.”

37. Seeds of the Tree of Phantasmagoria:

Rama: “Sir, I understood about annihilation of mind. But I still have a lingering doubt about mind itself. If we consider the cycle of births and deaths (*samsara*) as a tree, what is the seed for it? If we suppose that a seed exists, there has to be another seed preceding it and so on. It becomes an infinite regress! So what is the origin?”

Vasishta: “Rama! You are able to see the gross body. The cause for the gross body is the subtle body (*linga sarira*) inside carrying the impressions of past lives. The subtle body keeps producing newer and newer bodies under the influence of past impressions.

“A mind having desires is the cause for the subtle body. You may question as to how a mind having desires can cause a body. Does not the mind produce a variety of bodies during a dream? In a similar way, mind is the seed for the subtle body.

“There are two seeds for the mind, not one! The first one is ‘Vibrations of Life-principle’ or in other words the movement of life-breath. The second is ‘Intense Intent’ or in other words impressions of past lives.

“Mind manifests when life-breath passes through the 72,000 celestial nerves (the Yogic celestial nerves are invisible to the naked eye and are different from the physiological nervous system). Thoughts do not occur if the breath does not move around. We recognize the movement of life-principle only through mind. Thoughts in the mind are indicative of the vibrations in life-principle.

“It holds true in respect of Hiranyagarbha also. Collective Vibrations of everybody’s life-principle cause the mind of Hiranyagarbha to give raise to world. (Hiranyagarbha was the first individual (*jīva*)). The world will Dissolve when the vibrations of everybody’s life-principles cease operating for a short interval. It is liberation when once the vibrations are permanently eliminated. Elders say that one can obtain liberation by arresting the vibration of the life-principle. That is the reason why Yogis undertake breath control and other related exercises.

“I have already said that the second source for the genesis of mind is ‘Intense Intent’. ‘Intense Intent’ is nothing but the impressions from past lives acting.

dṛḍha bhāvanayā tyakta
pūrvāpara vicāraṇam |
yadādānaṃ padārthasya
vāsanā sā prakīrtitā || (sarga 91 - śloka 29)

“You will not find any thing in this world to be True if you do a diligent analysis. An individual believes in sensory organs and accepts that what is perceived through them as real without any further inquiry. He talks in terms of ‘Me’ and ‘not Me’; ‘Mine’ and ‘not Mine’. The reason for such unquestioning acceptance is grounded on Intent, which is carried forward from past births. Conceptions brought forward from past lives govern our current perception with added new flavors. The new imprinted flavors are ‘Me’, ‘Mine’, ‘Useful’, ‘Useless’ and so on. Therefore, they are known as “Impressions (*vasana*).” *Vasana* is derived from ‘*vaasayati iti vasana*’ or that which gives a flavor.

“An individual may have a body and other worldly possessions like a house. He may not be possessed by the feeling of ‘Me – Mine’ through a detailed inquiry into what is seen and what really exists beyond the apparently visible things. Such an individual is considered to be devoid of any impressions. A man will certainly be what he intensely intends to be. It is the Law of the world!

asamyagdarśanaṃ yasmāt
anātmanyātma bhāvanam |
yadavastuni vastutvaṃ
taccittaṃ viddhi rāghava || (sarga 91 - śloka 34)

“Mind is the one that causes a loss in obtaining a proper perspective. Mind is the one that makes him think that he is what he really is not; mind is the reason for conceiving what is untrue to be true! I repeat once again. The feeling that the objects of the world are real is mind. That is the reason why I said that Intent was the second source for mind.

“Both the seeds of mind have a strange interconnection. If one is destroyed, the other automatically gets destroyed. Both seeds are necessary for the genesis of mind. Either of them alone is not adequate. If you have to store water in a pot, after all you need space in the pot and a source of water! So also for the genesis of mind, you need the vibration of life-force and Intense Intention. Hence with the destruction of one, the other necessarily goes. Expressed differently, each acts as the seed for the other. It is called as “The Doctrine of Seed and Shoot.”

“The objective world of sound, touch etc. is the seed for both of them. By renouncing the objects of the world, vibration of the life-force as well as Intense intention are lost. Do you now appreciate what renouncing the world is? It is to contemplate that all the perceived objects are nothing but a form of Consciousness and they are not different from Consciousness. It is referred to by the name “*Samvedya tyaga* (Renouncing what is known).”

“You may think that mind being sentient and objects being insentient, how could mind and objects be same? Let us say that a person witnessed his own death in his dream. Or he visualized a rope as a snake. How does it happen like this? There is sentience in your mind. An image gets generated because of sentience. You get an experiential feeling of witnessing an object. There is no other ground for the image to take place. Hence it is not wrong to consider them as modifications of the sentience in your mind. Now extend this logic to the visible world. This whole web of universe is also a phantasmagoria. Hence it is a modification of the sentience in the mind of Hiranyagarbha. Now, is it incorrect to say that mind and objects are indistinguishable?

“Develop the faculty (*anusandhana*) of convergence that whatever may be the object (*samvedya*) perceived, it is no more than a modification of sentience in mind (*samvit*). As this faculty grows, you will perceive less and less of *samvedya*. Ability to cognize sentience (*samvedana*, *chaitanya*) also improves. It is finally liberation when the visible world (phantasmagoria) totally gets obliterated through non-perception.

asamvitti rajadyasthā
sukhāyājananātmane |
ajaḍoo galitānandaḥ
tyaktasamvedanoo bhava || (sarga 91 - śloka 77)

“If non-perception of objects gets firmly established in the essence of consciousness, that is to say if the essence of insentience-free *chaitanya* gets stabilized, then you will attain eternal bliss. Hence, Rama, get rid of insentience (*jadatva*). Leave out sentience (*samvedana*) too. Thus be a perfectly blissful being!”

[**Note:** The poet used the word ‘*Galitaanandah*’ in the above verse. The normal meaning of the term is ‘one who does not have happiness.’ If we attribute this meaning, we have to

understand it to imply as one who does not have happiness derived through senses. The commentator (Shri ABS) opines that it is better to interpret the term to mean as one who attained perfection by the application of figure of speech, synecdoche (*lakshana vritti*) for the word '*galita*' to represent perfection.]

Rama: “Sir! By your advice '*Ajado galitaanandah, tyakta samvedano bhava*', you are rejecting both sentience and insentience! A given substance can either be inert or sentient. How is it possible to be neither?”

Vasishta: “You do not seem to interpret the word '*samvedana*' correctly when I say '*tyakta samvedano bhava*.' *Samvedana* is to consider the external objects as real. *Samvedana* does not here mean pure Consciousness, as you seem to imply. A *Jivanmukta* who understood Truth would not consider external objects as True. Therefore, a *Jivanmukta* is '*Tyakta samvedana*' – one who is free of *samvedana*. What remains after leaving *samvedana* is only Pure Consciousness. Therefore, he is not inert.”

Rama: “Such *Jivanmuktas*'s mind perceives Brahman only and hence their mind has a modification in the form of Brahman. This would imply that they have '*samvedana*'. How can we attribute '*tyakta samvedana*' to them?”

Vasishta: “The modification of their mind in the form of Brahman gradually merges in Brahman. So even that modification disappears along with its cause. Hence they will not have even that type of *Samvedana*. You should obtain that state!

“We have been talking about a chain of seeds. I said in that context that the combined source of vibration of life-breath and Intense Intention was the seed of worldly objects. Another name for the objects is *samvedya*, as I told you. We established that the seed for *samvedya* was *samvit*, the sentience in the mind.

“The seed for *samvit* is *sanmatra*. *Sanmatra* stands for 'just beingness' i.e. Pure Existence. Existence is of two types. One is multi-form and the other is single-form.

“Multi-form existence is beingness in the form of say, a pot, a stone, a tree, a heap, or any other shape. The single-form existence is beingness without any differences within it. The whole Existence is a single block. “The multi-form existence is not True. Single-form existence is the Real One. It is Eternal Beingness.

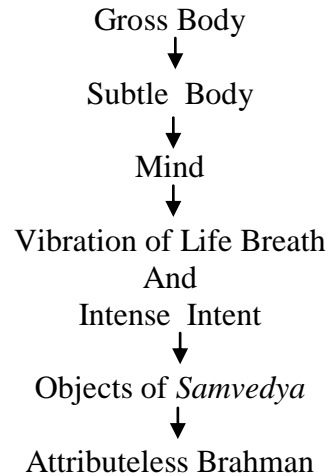
Viewing from a different angle, we may notionally divide True beingness into '*Kaalasatta* (time dependent beingness)' and '*vastusatta* (object dependent beingness)'. If the division is based on time (past, present and future), it is called as '*Kaalasatta*'. In this classification, True beingness is only the Present Beingness. Past beingness and future beingness are untrue.

Vastusatta is beingness dependent on things. In this classification, only *Atmasatta* (beingness dependent on Self) is True.

“There are many other ways of classifying beingness. You have to appreciate that you should cognize the 'commonality of beingness (*satta samanya*)' in all varieties of beingness irrespective of any classification. You should concentrate on the commonality. Perfect beatitude is obtained from such concentration only. The primary cause for the

‘commonality of beingness’ is the Supreme Self (Brahman). In fact it is not different from the Supreme Self. There is nothing more fundamental than that.

“I hope you have understood everything. Your question was about the causative factors for the visible world. We arrived at the following sequence of causes in our discussion:



“We also concluded that the origination of the Supreme Brahman is acausal, and Brahman is the root, the prime cause for all causes.

38. Getting Rid of the Seed of Phantasmagoria:

Rama: “Revered Teacher! Which is the most important cause of this causal chain? By removing which cause can we be easily free of the cycle of births and deaths?”

Vasishtha: “In the causal chain, each succeeding cause is more powerful than the preceding one. Each time, hold on to the higher cause and get rid of the lower one. We already said that Ultra Pure Supreme Brahman was the final cause. Keep your mind focused on It if you can. Keep focused till you have the experiential understanding of Truth.

“If you are unable to do so, hold onto the cause one below that, i.e. *satta samanya* (commonality of beingness). Meditate on it. If you are incapable of it, then meditate on *Samvedya* (objects). But there is a little problem here. You can never hold on to *samvedya* which is free of dependence on *samvit*. Hence it is not possible to meditate on pure *samvedya*. What you have to do is to inquire into the reasons of *samvedya* and focus the mind on the causal factor of the world. It means that you have to determine what is the “**thisness**” in statements like ‘**this** is pot’, ‘**this** is cot’ etc. Focus then your mind on ‘**thisness**’ and meditate.

“Otherwise, find out what is meant by ‘thou’ in the Vedic statement “thou art that” (*tat tvam asi*). Focus your mind on your finding and meditate.

“If that is also not possible, you may meditate on the pair of vibration of life-principle and Intense Intention. This involves stopping the vibration of life-breath and getting rid of impressions. In order to achieve any one of these, it will be necessary to control the mind which is the preceding seed in the causal chain. For the purpose of adopting as a practice, the tripartite combination of arresting the vibration of life-breath, getting rid of impressions and control of mind constitutes one single step. Out of the three, getting rid of impressions is the most arduous task. It is like uprooting the Himalayas. The problem is one cannot get rid of

impressions unless the mind is annihilated; and mind cannot be annihilated until the impressions are nulled. It is like saying that a person cannot be cured of his lunacy till he is married and he cannot get married unless he is cured of lunacy. A catch-22 situation.

“What can resolve the difficulty is the Knowledge of Truth. In order to obtain Knowledge of Truth, one may initially begin with a study of scriptural texts. Such a study calms down the mind to some extent. With increasing quietening of the mind, one progresses in getting rid of impressions. That will in turn firm up the Knowledge gained.

“Therefore, Rama, practice all the three together! A condition to be observed upfront is to leave desire for comforts and enjoyment.

tattvajñānaṁ manoonāśoo
vāsanākṣaya eva ca |
mithaḥ kāraṇatām gatvā
dussādhyāni sthitānyataḥ ||
tasmādrāghava yatneena
pauruṣeṇa viveekinā |
bhoogecchām dūrataḥ kṛtvā
trayameetatsamāśrayeet || (sarga 92 - śloka 14 15)

“Let me stress once again.

vāsanākṣaya vijñāna
manoonāśā mahāmatee |
samakālam cirābhyastā
bhavanti phaladā mune || (sarga 92 - śloka 17)

“You will achieve Reduction of impressions, Knowledge of Truth and Annihilation of mind only if the three are simultaneously practiced equally. If they are practiced separately, the effect will be like a single soldier going each time to seize an enemy fort. It is not advisable to do so. So practice non-stop all the three together at all times – whether eating, walking, sitting, standing, sleeping or working – irrespective of what you are doing.

“Rama! We talked of the way to meditate on the pair of vibration of life-breath and Intense Intention. We said that the combination of arresting vibrations of life-breath, getting rid of impressions and control of mind forms one single step. We also said that in order to be free of impressions, one has to practice reduction of impressions, obtaining knowledge of Truth and annihilation of the mind simultaneously.

“Now we have to discuss the way of arresting the vibration of life-breath. It is equivalent to getting rid of impressions.

vāsanā samparityāgāt
cittaṁ gacchatyacittatām |
prāṇaspanḍa nirodhācca
yatheecchasi tathā kuru || (sarga 92 - śloka 26)

“There are two ways to null the mind. One is giving up impressions and the other is arresting vibrations of life-breath. Follow the way you prefer.

“You have to practice breath control etc. to arrest the vibration of life-breath. But those techniques will be inadequate by themselves. You may have to learn many other procedures from knowledgeable Gurus. You have to follow very rigorous dietary restrictions.

“The methods available to get rid of impressions are:

1. Learn to cognize behind every thing that Pure Existence (*sanmatra swarupa*) which remains unchanged at the beginning, in the middle and at the end.
2. nissaṅga vyavahāratvāt
bhava bhāvana varjanāt
śarīra nāśa darśitvāt
vāsanā na pravartate || (sarga 92 śloka 30)

There are three steps in this method.

- a) Be detached in your actions. It means do not develop cordiality with worldly people. Do not entertain any intentions.
- b) Do not keep on musing over on what had already happened. You should not regurgitate the very same old issues. Do not run after your desires.
- c) Never forget that the body is perishable.
Impression will not be able to cling on to you if you follow the above steps.
It is not possible to control the mind without skillful use of these techniques.

na śakyate manoo jeetum
vinā yukti maninditām (sarga 92 - śloka 34)

“The skill lies in the following foursome:

adhyātmavidyādhigamaḥ
sādhu saṅgama eva ca |
vāsanā samparityāgaḥ
prāṇaspanda niroodhanam ||
eetāstā yuktayaḥ puṣṭāḥ
santi cittajayee kila || (sarga 92 -śloka 36)

- (i) Study of Scriptures and Upanishads.
- (ii) Association with Noble Persons.
- (iii) Abandonment of Impressions.
- (iv) Arrest of the Vibrations of Life-breath.

The above four mutually strengthen each other. All of them together help in the annihilation of the mind. Skill lies in practicing all the four together. There is no other way. Steadfast Pranamic Exercises (Hatha Yoga) are of no use.

“Hence Rama, Please do follow the four methods diligently. The trick in successfully practicing them lies in getting rid of attachment. Therefore, get rid of attachment first.”

Rama: “What is ‘Attachment’, Sir?”

Vasishta: “Rama! Attachment is also an impression!

bhāvābhāvee padārthānām

harṣāmarṣa vikāradā |

malinā vāsanā yaiṣā

sā saṅga iti kathyatee || (sarga 93 -śloka 84)

“If there is some sort of a blemish in the mind, it produces happiness in combination with some substances and sorrow in combination with some others. The tainted impression that is causal in bringing about such changes is called ‘attachment’.

“Acts performed with that blemish bind the doer.

“There is a different type of impression in the mind of *Jivanmuktas*. Because of that, they do not distinguish between happiness and sorrow. Such a pure unstained impression is called Non-attachment. Acts performed with Non-attachment do not bind the doer.

“Hence Rama, be free of the tainted impression of attachment. Perform your action with non-attachment. Strive to be a *Jivanmukta*. Practice Self-Inquiry, Meditation and Reduction of Impressions simultaneously so that you may become a *Jivanmukta*. You will have an experiential understanding of Self by this method. You will attain permanent blissful state of Brahman.”

Blessing thus, Sage Vasishtha closed the Chapter on Upasama – The Calm Down.

Before we take up the next Chapter Nirvana, let us review the content of the current Chapter.

39. Brief Review of The Chapter: The Calm Down (Upasama) of Yogavaasishta

The arrangement of Chapters in Yogavaasishta corresponds to the Vedic dictum,

“*Yatovaa imani bhutani jaayante*

Yena jaataani jeevanti”

After an initial Introductory comes the Chapter on Creation. Next comes the Chapter on Sustenance. The Chapter on Creation deals with the origination of the Universe. The Chapter on Sustenance deals with how the Universe is sustained.

The above quoted Vedic statement goes on to say:

“*Yat prayantyaabhi samvisanti.*”

(meaning that into which the Universe merges).

Therefore, the Chapter coming after Sustenance has to discuss dissolution of the Universe. But the world will not disappear as long as mind exists. This was stated at the beginning of this Chapter itself. Therefore, it is necessary to end mind first in order to end the universe. Accordingly, Sage Vasishtha’s teaching in this Chapter comprises an elaborate exposition on the ways and means of ending the mind.

An explanation of the theoretical underpinning of the subject matter, Philosophical Wisdom, was completed with the Chapter on Sustenance. What remained to be covered was

a discussion on the methods of nulling the mind. Hence, Sage Vasishtha began the current Chapter saying that “What originated and what grew up was nothing but mind.”

Sage Vasishtha later discussed the issue of “Non-doership.” He followed it by spelling out suitable techniques for the liberation of individuals with *Satvic* and *Rajasic* qualities. He narrated in this context the story of Janaka and the Saintly Songs to illustrate how a person might get liberated even without a Guru. Liberation could come about like a bolt from the blue suddenly triggered by strange unexpected events owing to the meritorious deeds in past lives. As per this story, Janaka, King of Videha, heard some songs sung by a few holy saints while he was on a casual stroll. The songs kick-started several thoughts in him and finally led him to liberation.

Sage Vasista then explained what was mind. He said that there were two methods of getting rid of past impressions. They were “Contemplation-based Eradication of Impressions”, and “Wisdom-based Eradication of Impressions.” He added that the former was applicable to a Jivanmukta and the latter to the person who was liberated without the body.

The sage said that every individual was related to every other in this world in some birth or the other. He added that it was unwise to limit our relationships only to a few people known to us in this birth. He told the story of “Punya and Paavana” as an example. Strictly speaking, there was not much of a story in it. Sage Vasishtha depicted the philosophical and contemplative dialogue of two holy and austere brothers who all of a sudden lost their parents. He established through this story that an ability to think beyond, transcending the immediate relationships, constituted a valid tool for achieving liberation.

It is also possible for an individual to achieve Self-realization spurred unexpectedly by one’s own introspective thoughts on Self duly strengthened by timely instructions of a Guru. In support of this, Sage Vasishtha described in detail how Emperor Bali went about in his thinking and how his Guru, Sukracharya helped him.

Worship of a beloved deity too could help in achieving Self-realization. This point was illustrated through the phase of Prahlada’s life subsequent to the appearance of Lord Nrisimha.

Sage Vasishtha dealt principally with philosophical issues in the story of Emperor Bali. He expounded on the subtle relationship between devotional and philosophical approaches in the story of Prahlada. He described at this point the procedures to be followed by idol worshippers. He advised that they should perform their prayer with the concept of “I am He.” He propounded that the existence of wicked creatures was necessary for the betterment of human beings who would have to achieve liberation.

Sage Vasishtha later described how worshipping a form with attributes would lead to the worship of an entity without attributes, which in turn would lead to pure Knowledge. Pure Knowledge would help one to experience the unchanging Self.

After an elegant narration through several tasteful stories about the methods a seeker could adopt, Sage Vasishtha finally took up a discussion of the phenomenal world, an illusion (*Maya*) that every seeker would like to cross through the different methods of practice. The story of Sage Gadhi is central to this discussion and happens to be the primary focus of the current chapter.

Sage Gadhi went into a stupor for a brief while during his bath in a pond. During that swoon he dreamed that he was born as a tribal, became a king in the later part of his life and ruled over a vast empire, and finally committed suicide under unavoidable circumstances by jumping into funeral pyre. He saw 80 years of his life during that trance, though he might not have fainted for more than a handful of minutes in the pond! He was surprised how he could witness 80 years of dream life within those few minutes. However, he did not pay much attention to it, as it was merely a fantasy. He resumed his normal routine life.

But then, beyond all his expectations, Gadhi happened to notice his dream kingdom and country in the real world. Every one in that kingdom attested the fact that a tribal king ruled the land until recently and the king committed suicide. Gadhi could not make any sense of his dreamland appearing now in real life. Nor could he understand how real people were able to provide evidence of what he saw in his fantasy. He thought over the matter considerably. Unable to comprehend the meaning of it all, he prayed to Lord Vishnu.

Lord Vishnu appeared before Gadhi. The Lord explained the mental processes of perception (rupaaloka kaala), anticipation (manaskara kaala) and remembrance (tattaa kaala) in terms of Present, Future and Past Time Periods. Spicing up His talk with intricate logic, He established that everything that Gadhi had done was entirely imaginary – whether it was the dream of himself being the king or his personal visit to that kingdom in his so-called wakeful state.

Gadhi could not believe his ears. So he went back to that kingdom on a second visit. He was bewildered to see physically once again everything that he witnessed in his dream. Unable to understand how things could physically appear a second time if it was merely a dream, he prayed to Lord Vishnu again. Lord Vishnu said that it was possible for several people to witness the same dream together. The Lord told Gadhi that he and the people of Keera kingdom were experiencing the same hallucination simultaneously. Thus speaking, He disappeared.

Unable to grasp the issues, Sage Gadhi resumed deep meditation. Lord Vishnu appeared before him once again. Lord Vishnu indicated this time that past events could appear as current on-going events for a person suffering from hallucinations. He further told Gadhi that Gadhi's mind remembered the story of a tribal individual. It (his mind) did not stop there. It identified Gadhi's personality with the tribal. Even though Gadhi was intellectually convinced of this fact, an experiential understanding was missing. Lord Vishnu observed that it was the very nature of the deceitful mind. So the Lord exhorted Gadhi to perform austerities and purify his mind to be able to grasp the Truth. Accordingly, Sage Gadhi went into deep meditation, overcame the illusory phenomena and realized Self.

Thus ended the life-story of Gadhi in brief. We may recall that two worlds –one real and the other virtual – appeared to an individual in one of the stories (The Story of Leela) in the Chapter on Creation. In that chapter, there was also the story of King Lavana witnessing in real life the very same world he saw in dream. In the next Chapter on Sustenance, we were told in the story of Bhargava that Sukra burnt his own body. Gadhi's story is an amalgamation of these three stories.

Sage Vasishtha attributed the ability of Queen Leela to see a real and a reflected imaginary world to the power of a boon granted by Goddess Saraswati. He called it a trick of the magician dispatched by Indra when King Lavana happened to witness in a dream an actual event that had taken place in a forest. The events described in the story of Bhargava

were credited to the austerities performed by himself. Yet, Lord Vishnu appeared three times in Gadhi's story and gave three different reasons for what happened to Gadhi. The Lord initially emphasized that not only Gadhi becoming a king as a tribal, but his actual visits later on to the kingdom were also parts of the same dream. Second time around, Lord Vishnu said that Gadhi and the people of Keera kingdom had the identical fanciful visions simultaneously. During His third appearance, the Lord indicated that a past event that had occurred elsewhere had infected Gadhi's mind as a meme due to the deceitful nature of mind. He advised him to perform strict austerities to purify his mind.

Gadhi being a pious and austere person did not doubt Lord Vishnu nor did he feel that the Lord was shifting His stand each time. Gadhi tried his best to understand the message given by Vishnu. Gadhi was not aided by any special powers due to Saraswati or Indra as was the case in the earlier stories. Gadhi was an ordinary seeker like any one of us. A seeker has to understand what illusion (*maya*) is. Sage Vasishtha wanted to convey that intelligence necessary in comprehending illusory phenomena could not be obtained by any boons. Therefore, he invoked Lord Vishnu repeatedly in the story and made him to say that deep meditation should be practiced not for attainment of special boons but for purification of the mind, in order to disinfect mind of all memes.

Gadhi could see the purport of Lord Vishnu's responses due to his austerities and meditation. Normally we believe that wakeful part of our life as reality and the part that goes in dreams as untrue. We are unable to experience Truth because such a belief is unfounded. That is why Sage Vasishtha made Lord Vishnu to explain to Gadhi in these words: "The entire lot of your experiences, including your visit to the kingdom of the tribal king is a mere phantasm." But Gadhi could not immediately grasp the significance of this statement. So Lord Vishnu conveyed the same message in different words a second time: "You as well as the people of the tribal kingdom are conceiving the world as reality. This is a fantasy everybody has been collectively experiencing. Please understand that every experience in the world is imaginary!"

Still, Gadhi could not make any sense of it. The Lord explained for the third time around with the words: "The root cause for illusion lies in the fact that you think that your body is yourself, though you are different from your body. Because of this you considered yourself as the tribal king, though you were not." Gadhi felt he could understand intellectually but not experientially. He was in a confused state. The Lord suggested that Gadhi should purify his mind to come out of the befuddled state.

Though Gadhi's story is thus seemingly a bit of a repetition, Sage Vasishtha skillfully presented an amalgamation of the message from the earlier three stories – Leela, Lavana and Bhargava Upakhyanas. Sage Vasishtha establishes through the story that our so-called daily world is such a phantasm. Using an ordinary person devoid of any special powers viz. Gadhi as the lead character, he conveys that it is applicable to every normal human being like us. He named the characters in these stories too befittingly as was in the main part of the text.

The focus of the Chapter on The Calm Down is Gadhi's story from which it emerges that performance of austerities and deep meditation are the only cure for the disease of illusion. Sage Vasishtha indicated further that dissolving the mind was true meditation. He described exhaustively the method of meditation on AUM through Uddalka's story as a means to achieving this. He clarified what was meant by the state of "Common Beingness (*Satta samanya*)."

Later it was debated whether a person attained the state of Common Beingness would be action-centered or meditation-centered. It was resolved that it was immaterial whether they were action- oriented or meditation-oriented as established through the story of the kings, Suraghu and Parighu.

The story of Bhaasa and Vilaasa was narrated to prove that it was necessary to have a high degree of determination to conquer mind through mind. Sage Vsishta provided an exhaustive account of mind, its nature and quality. He talked of the Paths of Knowledge and Yoga for conquering the mind. He described fourteen methods under Yoga approach in order to arrest the mind by controlling breath.

The story of Vitahavya was told to illustrate the Path of Knowledge. The unreal nature of time and space were discussed and he established that the phenomenal world was a dream within a dream, an imagination within an imagination and therefore could not be true. He also clarified that the Annulment of mind was of two types –Annulment With Retention of Form and Annulment Without Retention of Form. *Jivanmuktas* are of the first type and *Videhamuktas* are of the second type.

Next Sage Vasishta took up an explanation of the seeding of the phenomenal world. Self analysis, breath control and ridding oneself of past impressions were the steps to be followed for attaining complete quiescence of the mind, as taught by Vasishta.

Here ends the Chapter on The Calm Down.

[It is clear from the above brief presentation that the first two Chapters of Yogavaasishta were of an introductory nature. They discuss Renunciation and the Attitude of a Seeker respectively. The third and fourth Chapters, viz. on Creation and Sustenance deal with the theoretical underpinning of the subject matter, Philosophical wisdom. The current Chapter on The Calm Down detailed the practical methods of nulling the mind. These five chapters constitute nearly 17,000 verses in the book. It gives the feel that what all has to be taught, has already been completed. But there is one more Chapter of a size almost equivalent to all the five preceding chapters lying ahead. What is still left out to be discussed in the remaining 15,000 odd verses? What is taught by the venerable sage in the final Chapter on Nirvana? Let us now take up the next chapter to find out.]

40. WORD GLOSSARY

WORD	MEANING AS USED IN THE TEXT
Adhistana	Substratum.
Adhyaropa	Superimposition.
Aham	The sense of I, Embodied self,
Ahamkara	I-sense, I-consciousness, ego.
Aniyata	Unregulated
Antahkarana	It is a combination of four types of intellectual activities called <i>Manas, Buddhi, Chitta,</i> and <i>Ahamkara</i> .
Antassanga (Sanga)	Forgetting the 'self' is actually Infinite Self and craving for worldly pleasures. The word sanga is defined in several other approaches too.
Atma	Individual self. The word atma without any prefix denotes a Jiva or Jivatma.
Avidya	Nescience; Ignorance about the Ultimate truth of Self of an individual. <i>Maya</i> and <i>Avidya</i> are sometimes used synonymously.
Bija	Seed, generally implies root cause. Sometimes it is used to indicate tiny things. Bija askhara (seed letter) refers to a letter that represents a very deep and elaborate meaning and spiritual significance.
Brahma	The personification of the Creator.
Brahma randhra	The vertex of the skull. It is said that there is a fine hole at the vertex and the Sushumna nadi passes up through this hole to connect the individual to the Brahma loka through Solar rays. Brahma randhra is the center of the seventh chakra (Sahasraara) which corresponds with the Pineal plexus.
Brahman	<i>Brih</i> means to expand, spread all over. It stands for the primordial undifferentiated changeless, limitless and everlasting, nameless substance that forms the substratum for the world. The Advaitic view is that Brahman is the Universal Self, the Absolute that appears as the world. Parabrahman is also used sometimes. The word Brahman ending with 'n' is used to mean the Universal Self while the word Brahma ending with 'a' is used to mean the creator. Braahmana etymologically means one who is knowledgeable of Brahman. In common usage Braahman denotes a social class/caste.
Buddhi	A part of <i>antahkarana</i> which is associated with decision-making faculty. In general literature this word sometimes indicates intellect.

Chaitanya	Consciousness.
Chit	Same as <i>Chaitanya</i>
Chitta	A part of <i>antahkarana</i> associated with recapitulative faculty. In literature the words <i>manas</i> , <i>buddhi</i> and <i>chitta</i> are used to denote mind in general.
Chitta satta (Sarupa manonasa)	Annulment of mind is of two types. When the mind is annulled with its form retained, it is called sarupa manonasa or chitta satta. When the form also is eliminated, then it is arupa manonasa which is none other than videhamukti.
Drik	The name of the Seer when there is nothing to be seen; Used for the Brahman state.
Drisyā	The object seen, perceived.
Gunās	Refers to <i>sattva</i> , <i>rajas</i> and <i>tamas</i> - These three are the fundamental qualities or tendencies that underlie all manifestations.
Hiranyagarbha	Literally means "One with a Golden Womb." Represents the unmanifested cosmic mind and the creator.
Jiva or Jivatma	Individual self, embodied person.
Jivanmukta	One who realized that his self and the Supreme Self are One when he is still living.
Jnana samadhi	Knowledge-based Deep Meditation
Jnani	One who realized Self
Kalpa	Period equivalent to 4.32 billion earth years.
Kalpa	A span of 4.32 million years forms a set of Four Yugas. A thousand of such sets of Four Yugas make one day time of Brahman. Brahman has an equally long night time. A day time of Brahma is called a Kalpa.
Karma	Action. Also refers loosely to the effects of action. Karma is of three types viz. agami, sanchita and prarabdha. The accumulation of the effects of all actions of the countless past births is called sanchita karma. Out of the sanchita karma, a small portion is segregated to be enjoyed to during the present life. This specific portion is called prarabdha. The part of sanchita which is going to give us future births is agami karma.
Kartritva	Doership, owning the responsibility for doing an action.
Linga sarira (Sukshma sarira)	Subtle body which consists of five sense organs, the five action organs, the subtle five elements, antahkarana and prana.

Lambika Yoga	A process of Hatha Yoga wherein the nerve under the tongue is cut so that the tongue can be folded back to press up the uvula and receive the drops of nectar from sahasrara.
Mahat	Intellectual principle as source of <i>ahamkara</i> (I-consciousness).
Manas	A part of <i>antahkarana</i> that is associated with thoughts and counter thoughts. Sometimes the word <i>manas</i> is used loosely to denote <i>antahkarana</i> .
Manvantara	Equivalent to 71 sets of Four Yugas.
Maya	Illusion. The veiling and projecting power of Brahman. It is like an operator “+”. It does not associate with operands. Nor does it itself undergo any change. But it brings out an illusory change. E.g. Brahman + Thought is Hiranyagarba. For a detailed explanation refer to p: 5 of Part II of our Series on Yogavaasishta.
Mithya	One which is neither existent nor non-existent (apparition).
Nirguna	Devoid of the three Gunas
Niyata	Regulated
Niyati	Law of Nature. In this text this word is used to denote the natural principles of the universe which are guided and determined by the thought process of the supreme creator, Hiranyagarbha.
Pancha Bhutas	The existence of an object in creation can be established only by experience. An object can be experienced only through the sense organs which are five in number. Each of the sense organ can detect only one attribute of the object and hence what constitute the creation can be correspondingly five fundamental properties. Accordingly there are five fundamental elements. These are earth, water, fire, wind and space.
Para or Parama	Higher, Supreme, Other, not belonging to this world.
Parabrahman	See Brahman.
Paramarthika	Paramartha means the Ultimate or the Supreme. That which is related to Pramatha is paramarthika.
Paramatma	Supreme Self, Universal Brahman.
Prarabdha	See Karma.

Prakriti	Nature. Primal substance from which all things are created. According to Sankhya System there are two ultimate fundamentals of truth in the universe. They <i>Purusha</i> and <i>Prakriti</i> . <i>Purusha</i> is the one with consciousness but actionless. <i>Prakriti</i> also known as <i>Pradhana</i> is inert but it the creator of the universe. <i>Prakriti</i> has three intrinsic parts called <i>trigunas</i> i.e. <i>sattva</i> , <i>rajas</i> and <i>tamas</i> .
Pralaya	Complete merging, dissolution.
Pralaya	Dissolution (with capital "D") that comes at the end of one cycle of creation. End of Kalpa.
Pratyabhijna	Re-cognition after a lapse.
Rajas	The second of the three gunas. It signifies activity, energy, motion, desire, anger etc.
Sadhak	Seeker on a spiritual path.
Sadhana chatustaya sampatti	(i) Nitya anitya vastu viveka, (Discrimination of the permanent and impermanent objects of the world). (ii) Iha amutra phala bhoga viraga (Renunciation of the worldly desires or desires pertaining to heaven). (iii) Samaadi shatka sampatti (the six qualities like control of internal organs, external organs etc.) (iv) Mmukshstva (Incessant desire for Liberation)
Sadrupi	In the form of <i>sat</i> , Pure Existence.
Saguna	Associated with the three gunas, attributes.
Sama	Control of internal organs.
Samadhi	Thoughtless state of meditation. It is divide into many subtypes such as: (i) <i>Sabija samadhi</i> - a Samadhi wherein the sacred sounds of hymns like om are concentrated upon. (ii) <i>Nirbija samadhi</i> – a Samadhi where no sounds or thoughts are allowed to remain. (iii) <i>Savikalpa samadhi</i> – a samadhi where contemplation on the Supreme Self continues like an unbroken stream of oil. (iv) <i>Nirvikalpa samadhi</i> – a samadhi where the aspirant's consciousness stays dissolved in the Supreme Self with an experience of total Oneness.
Samsara	State of Bondage. Also refers to the cycle of births and deaths, the visible world and the universe, which is

	considered to be a phantasmagoria.
Sankalpa	Thoughts. Also sometimes intentions.
Sankalpa vikalpa	Thoughts and counter thoughts.
Sanskaras	Innate tendencies. Impressions of past actions carried in the mind.
Sat	Pure existence; beingness
Sarga	A sub-chapter.
Satta samanya	Common beingness. For details see subheading at p:119(also please see 118)
Sattva (satva)	The first of the three gunas. It signifies qualities like goodness, softness, wisdom and the like.
Sloka	A verse or stanza
Sphurana	A flash.
Sthiti	Sustenance is the process of sustaining something (i.e. providing support physically or mentally). Some texts translate <i>sthiti</i> to mean maintenance (to cause something to continue in the same state or level). Other translations for <i>sthiti</i> are: being; existing; subsistence (to maintain oneself at the minimum level); and state. The word 'state' is commonly used for states of matter (e.g. : water, ice and steam). Existence or beingness is more appropriately used to represent the word 'sat.' Hence we preferred here the word "sustenance" for <i>Sthiti</i> as more proximal to the connotation in Yogavaasishta.
Svasvarupa	One's own original form – refers to the Supreme Self.
Tamas	The third of the three gunas. It signifies lethargy, inertia, lust, cruelty and the like.
Tapas	Austerity, meditation
Tapasvi	Ascetic; one who practices austerities.
Triputi	Triad of the observer-observed-observing and the like.
Turiya	The fourth state which is distinct from wakeful, dream and deep sleep states and exists pervading all the states.
Turiyatita	The state beyond Turiya, generally corresponds to videhakaivalya.
Upadhi	Limiting adjunct. Also body.
Upasama	The calming down, annulment, quietitude or annihilation

Utpatti	Creation, origination.
Vasanas	Impressions. Represent the influences from actions of past births.
Videhamukti	Liberation without body.
Vritti	Thought-wave, a modification in the mind.
Vyavahara	Mundane, worldly, transactional
Yuga	See Kalpa.

The definitions of the words in this Glossary are compiled from several sources. We are grateful to all the original sources.