



BEYOND  
TIME AND SPACE



# Beyond Time and Space

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## Beyond Time and Space

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## One

No-one has really understood what birth is, although we know what it means, because we have determined what the meaning shall be! Amongst the top-class astrologers in India for instance, there is an unending controversy as to what constitutes the moment of birth, because according to them, half an hour might make a tremendous difference in the horoscope. They have to decide whether the time of birth is when the head emerges - sirodayam, or when the body touches the ground - bhusparsam. Or it need not be based on these calculations, but on the time or the date when the foetus quickens. Or, is there a moment at which the so-called soul enters the foetus? If so, who determines it? This was not so serious a controversy until the abortion debate set in. Now it is important to know at what stage the foetus becomes a living entity, which means birth. The date and time of what used to be called 'birth' is no longer so important.

In one of the Upanishads, it is said that the cycle of birth commences when the soul floating around in the atmosphere descends with a rain drop - so that with each incarnation you have the whole Darwinian evolution. As the soul descends to earth, it gets absorbed into the minerals - the elements called earth, and as the mineral, it gets into the plant and begins to grow. This is the second state of evolution. Then, as vegetable, it gets into man and becomes his energy, and then it is transferred to the woman. Here again you find the whole story of evolution taking place. Within the uterus, it's a fish - a little swimming animal, and when it is delivered, it's a sort of fourlegged creature for some time. Slowly it tries to get up, to evolve.

What is birth? We do not know, but we have evolved theories, dogmas, and doctrines, to suit our convenience. If you examine these theories without prejudice, you will discover that they have all been tailored to suit what you and I call our 'culture'. In what is known as western culture especially, form-filling plays a vital part. It is then turned into a rule or law. The date of birth is extremely important for filling informs - e.g. the birth certificate. To the oriental, the time of birth is more important for casting the horoscope.

The international date-line cuts through the Fiji islands, but if you look at a world map, you will see that the date-line is deflected in a curve to avoid the islands, thus saving the inhabitants the embarrassment of perhaps even having their house span the date-line, with two separate dates under one roof. If the date-line is seen as a very convenient convention, then we are able to see our other conventions for what they are. When all our doctrines are unmasked, we are in a position to see the truth. As long as you are committed to a thing called a date-line, as if it is the eternal truth, you are not even ready to investigate the truth. In the same way we are manipulating this thing called 'birth' without understanding that it is a convention which the human intelligence has invented without any reference whatsoever to the truth concerning it.

At the other end of the spectrum is the thing called death. The yogis state that

even in a dead body there is life, because activity is not possible where there is no life, no movement of energy. In order to build up this body, energy is necessary, and in order to decompose it energy is necessary too. Decomposition takes place because of movement of energy - dhananjaya. Without the presence of that vital force, the decomposition would not take place. If there is movement of energy in the dead body, how can it be dead? This goes right back to the theory that there is absolutely no dead matter in the whole universe. All matter is vibrant with energy. Then, what is death? At what stages can it be said that the person is dead? From one point of view, this body is dying all the time, and being born all the time. From the time we came into the room until now, a few billion cells have died, and a few billion more have been created. So, what is death, and when does it actually take place; or, is there a thing called death? Have birth and death merely been invented by the clever human mind in order to make life and form-filling easy?

In the Bhagavad Gita, Krishna says: "Just as in the life of an embodied being, there is infancy, adolescence, manhood, middle age, and old age, even so there is a thing called death." There is a change from one stage to another. None of us look exactly as we did about twenty years ago - gradually, unbeknown to ourselves, we are changing. We are not aware of the tremendous changes that have taken place in our own bodies between twenty years ago and now, and that which lives in the body may or may not undergo the same change. In other words, you may or may not get older and older psychologically to the same degree as you are getting older and older physiologically. It is not necessary to say that this change is growth or decay.

Change in relation to the embodied being is what is known as time. If you could jump out of the earth's orbit for a little while, stand on a satellite thousands of miles away from the earth, and look at the whole phenomenon of the earth rotating on its own axis and revolving around the sun, it would be impossible for anyone to convince you that there is a thing called day and night. It would also be impossible for anyone to tell you that there is a span of time known as one year. You would have some idea of time perhaps, because you know when you are hungry. The food has been digested, so time must have elapsed - otherwise time has no significance whatsoever. Maybe some changes take place in the body - black hair becomes grey and then white, teeth start falling one by one - but there is absolutely no suggestion to the embodied being that there is a growth or a decay, except to the extent that the embodied being chooses to get involved in the body and takes on what happens to the body as if it is happening to him.

I am reminded of a story about a funny character called Mulla Nasrudin. He was living in a two-storeyed building with his wife. She was working in the kitchen on the ground floor when she heard a noise above her and ran up the stairs. She asked her husband what had happened. "Nothing," he replied. "But I heard a big noise, as if you fell down." "That was nothing," said the Mulla. "My tunic fell down." "But when a tunic falls down, it doesn't make such a noise, said his wife. "I happened to be inside it then," said Mulla. So, all the changes that take place -

conception, birth, childhood, adolescence, adulthood, middle age, old age, and what is called death - are relevant to the embodied being only to the extent that being feels involved in this body-mind complex.

When a person does not feel so involved, you can sense two possibilities: either he is in a state of total hallucination, or he is enlightened. From the point of view of normal folk, both possibilities appear to be abnormal. A very clever argument, invented by a clever human mind, is that anyone who doesn't think like you and me is a fool! From the point of view of our discussion, it means that there is disorientation of this body-mind complex, in that the mind does not feel that it is totally involved in the changes of the body. The intelligence in the body feels freed from the limitations imposed upon it by the body. Or, it does not even feel that the body imposes any limitations upon it!

We have accepted that the body imposes its limitations upon this intelligence, we have accepted that that is the norm, and that when this does not prevail, there is abnormality. The yogi however does not accept that, but sees that in the majority of cases there is confusion between the intelligence that dwells in the body and the body-mind complex - so that we think that what happens to the body, happens to me. The person who does not experience this, is thought to be disoriented or hallucinating, or he is thought to be a dunce. The yogis say that maybe he is enlightened.

## Two

When we observe a thing called 'birth' and a thing called 'death', there seems to be some sort of interplay of consciousness and matter. Is consciousness or intelligence involved or bound up with the materiality called the body? Do the pains and pleasures of the body necessarily impinge upon the consciousness dwelling in it? Do the limitations that the body and mind are subject to, necessarily influence or affect the intelligence that is embodied? If so, to what extent, and if not, what are the consequences? Do the limitations of the faculties of the body necessarily limit or condition this inner intelligence, or are they two independent entities? If they are related, in what manner are they related? These are the questions. If they can be satisfactorily answered, we are enlightened.

There is matter in the body, and matter in between us, matter of various density and composition, and matter in various states of de-composition. There is matter being composed - as in this body after breakfast - and matter being decomposed, so that in what are called 'material states' there is this constant churning going on. All the things that we pushed into the mouth half an hour ago are being churned within the stomach. Your stomach and your brain look very much like the earth, and strangely enough what is happening to this earth is happening in these two parts of the body. Whatever is thrown on this earth is immediately pulled into the bowels of the earth and churned. There it is called manure. All that garbage is then cycled and thrown up as vegetables. You eat the vegetables, so that recycled garbage becomes your food. Then it goes back again to be churned by the earth - and pushed up maybe, as beautiful and luscious fruits. What happens in the bowels of the earth is happening in your bowels right now.

This change goes on in infinite points of this universe; not only in your abdomen, but in the entrails of even those tiny little germs that inhabit the human body, and in the bowels of the little worms that fertilise the earth. If you bestow a thought upon it, you will realise that it is a fantastic thing. First there are the bowels of the earth, then these little human bowels, and within those human bowels there are millions of cells. This churning goes on within the bowels of those cells. Within those cells also, I believe, there are micro-organisms which eat whatever prevails around them, each one digesting the other. So, a chain reaction is going on. This process continues with what appears to be matter, and it goes on ad-infinitum.

The difference between intelligence and materiality seems to be that, whereas there is apparent division in materiality, intelligence seems to be indivisible. A girl doesn't look like a man, and a tape recorder is completely dissimilar to both, yet all three are material. Materiality is of various densities - in some places it is very dense, in others not so dense. Even in what is called the space between us, there is matter, but it is not as dense as those two points which we indicate as 'your' body and 'my' body.

All these distinctions seem to be possible at the level of matter, but it does not

seem to be possible for intelligence to be so divided. You don't see boundaries for it, or how it can be cut up. Intelligence seems to be indivisible, even as material space is indivisible. Even though one thinks of space as enclosed within walls and a roof, space is not really enclosed, it only appears so. This space in which we are seated, existed before the roof, was put up, and the walls were built. The building of the walls and roof have not changed the character of this space in which we sit, and the space will continue to be when the walls and roof have been pulled down. When even this material space cannot be divided, the intelligence, which is subtler than this, cannot be divided. There can be no division of any sort within that intelligence, not even a distinction in density.

Firstly, we have material space, which contains and holds matter. That matter is being churned all the time, like food being churned in your abdomen. Can you for a moment visualise an enormous genie? His abdomen is the earth, and every time he breathes in and out, we are given birth to and destroyed, just as the cells in your abdomen are given birth to and destroyed. If you can expand it further, you can visualise the whole solar system being churned similarly. There is a beautiful simile given to us in the Katho Upanishad. It says, "You human beings are like a pot of rice being boiled." As the water boils, the grains that are down below, come up, and the grains that are up, go down - it is completely chaotic, things are being thrown up, and things are being pushed down. That is what is happening to us.

Secondly, there is an indwelling consciousness or intelligence that is unchanging, like space. Like space, it is indivisible and indestructible. What is the relationship between this intelligence and that churning matter? Is there a relationship at all, and if there is, what is it? Matter is changing places all the time chaotically, being churned and boiled, but while this is going on, why is it that there is the feeling 'I am sitting here and talking', or 'You are sitting there and listening'? How is it that, in this chaotic churning, there is a sense of identity, this 'I am'? What is that? On what is it based? If it is based on truth, if it is also real, we will have a triple reality - the reality of matter, the reality of intelligence, and the reality called 'ego' - or whatever it is. There is a cosmic indivisible intelligence, in which there is absolutely no division at all. There is matter, which is concentrated in places, and not so concentrated in others. Then there is which is regarded as 'me'. Did I become aware of myself because it was a fact already, and I merely woke up to that fact? Or is it because I began to think of this as me, that it has become me? And, since I have continued to think of it as me, the idea that it is me is being re-inforced each day, so that eventually I have absolutely no doubt that this is me.

Thus, there is intelligence which is indivisible, and materiality which is cosmic, but in varying degrees of density. At some point or the other this intelligence reflects momentarily the changing face of matter, and there and then it becomes what is known as the personality. That which is reflected seems to be both inside and outside. Is that possible? If you hold a mirror in front of you, you are both inside it and outside it. A whole mountain can be reflected in a small mirror. It is in the mirror, and it is out there. It is quite an astounding optical illusion, if you

want to call it so. So, a thing is reflected in that bit of consciousness, and the reflection is so realistic that there is no reason not to believe that it is real.

Three categories are beautifully described in the 'Yoga Vasistha'. One is called cid akasa, which is pure, indivisible, cosmic consciousness - or intelligence. The word akasa - or space - is used in each description, merely because this intelligence shares with known space the characteristic of indivisibility. But in fact it is impossible to put this cosmic intelligence into words - all words are inadequate.

Then you have citta akasa. Citta akasa is space or psychological consciousness, which is the intermediary between pure consciousness and matter. Matter is reflected in a segment of pure consciousness, in such a way that the reflection seems to be at least as real as consciousness or matter. It is very much like the mirror. When you see a girl walking in the mirror, it takes some time before you come to the conclusion it is only a reflection. This reflected consciousness is citta akasa - or psychological consciousness. It is different from this pure consciousness, only in one very important respect: it is not as indivisible or as absolute as pure consciousness, because it is fragmented consciousness, in which matter is reflected. It is circumscribed and limited, and because of its limitation, it picks up a limited area of matter reflected in a limited way, and thinks it is limited.

We will pursue that thought one more step. The mirror is a very funny phenomenon. I may hold the mirror in front of you because I want to see your face reflected in it. When I change my mind, I just have to turn it, and it reflects her face, and your face is not there - there is no trace of it. It is as if your face was never in it. There is a second factor which is even more intriguing. You have never seen a mirror, you have only seen reflections - because, the moment you look at it, you see something reflected in it. You have seen a black board or a piece of glass, but not a mirror. The 'mirror' does not have a reality of its own, it does not really exist. Now you have understood all the Yoga Vasistha! Even so, this consciousness, which reflects matter, is fragmented consciousness, which does not have a reality of its own.

When you enquire into the true nature of this fragmented consciousness - citta akasa or psychological consciousness, it is like wiping the mirror clean on both sides. You see glass which is absolutely transparent. The beauty of absolutely transparent glass is that you may not even be aware of its existence. Similarly, when the truth concerning the psychological consciousness is enquired into, it is seen not to exist. What exists is intelligence, consciousness. When that happens, you are in ecstasy. You think you have seen God. That which you saw before in the reflected consciousness - or psychological usness - has suddenly gone, leaving the reality undisturbed.

These three categories must be remembered. There is cosmic intelligence in which what appears to be matter is floating chaotically - denser in one place, not

so dense in other. As these changes go on, they are reflected fragmentarily in the mirror of this cosmic intelligence. That reflection assumes to itself an independent reality called psychological consciousness - or what you call the individual, the personality, the mind, or ego. All that is needed for a dramatic change to take place is for this fragmentary consciousness to turn and reflect something else, and immediately something else happens - which you call birth and death. Nothing really happens. The intelligence is still there, and the matter also is still there.

## Three

Some of the theories we have been discussing these past few days are 'way-out', because we have been brought up on a different diet. Just as the body is largely the processed food that we have eaten, our minds are almost entirely moulded by the intellectual diet we have had right from childhood. Therefore, in order to bring these theories closer to our comprehension, the master weaves some stories around them. As you listen to these stories that illustrate the truth or the theory, you have to remember that no example, analogy, or illustration, is totally applicable. When you say "He looks like somebody else," you are only pointing out certain features, not others. Only in those features is there a resemblance. Obviously there are other features in which there is no resemblance at all.

As we go on listening to the stories, we must allow the established viewpoint to move out, and a new viewpoint to arise, exactly like the mirror. When you move the mirror, suddenly you find the reflection of your face disappearing, and something else appearing. In exactly the same way, the viewpoint you have been accustomed to seeing has gone, and something else takes its place. Is that the truth or is this the truth? Neither. That is one point of view, this is another point of view. You can't see from all points of view, nor can you 'step another's shoes and understand the problem'. You are you and I am I, for as long as that ego exists and this ego exists. It is impossible for you to understand me totally, and it is possible for you to drop your point of view and put on my point of view. What is possible, however, is that you can understand that this is one point of view, and the other fellow has got another point of view. If you can understand that what you have clung to as the only truth, is not the truth, but a point of view, you have solved your problem, my problem, everybody's problem - by preventing a problem from arising. That is all you can and need do. We can certainly understand the other person in this limited fashion.

When we are listening to these stories, the Master merely endeavours to awaken the understanding in us that there are other points of view. It is perhaps possible for you, while clearly perceiving one point of view, to have a vague idea of the peripheral points of view. So, although I don't understand exactly what you are talking about, I sort of understand. The purpose of narrating and listening to stories illustrating these theories or truths, is to knock out established notions - or prejudices, if you want to call them by their proper name - and generate a feeling within oneself that there are other facets of the truth which need to be investigated.

The following story is from the 'Yoga Vasistha':

Once upon a time there was a wonderful king called Padma, who had a beautiful wife called Lila. They lived in an ideal state of domestic harmony and love. They were like one soul living in two bodies. If a thought arose in him, she reflected it. If he was happy, she was blossoming; but if he was angry, she didn't become angry also and retaliate, but pretended to be afraid. So, in every way they were

complementary to each other. In all activities they were one, and they shared all the pleasures and delights of life.

One day, Lila noticed a couple of grey hairs in her husband's beard and began to wonder: "After all this bliss we are going to die. How terrible, why shouldn't we live forever?" So she asked a few wise men: "Tell me of a mantra or ritual which can bestow immortality upon the two of us, so that we can live forever in our blissful state." Now comes the first shock of the story. The mystics told her that physical immortality was one of those things which could not be achieved.

What I am about to say now is not part of the story, but part of the scripture. Who determines that a rock shall be solid, and that water shall be liquid? Who determines that a tree would grow up, and the roots would grow down? In other words, who or what determines what element is going to be what? Some of these natural and physical laws seem to be inviolable. To what extent are they fixed, and to what extent are they changeable? These questions are answered elsewhere in the Yoga Vasistha, where the Master says: "Someone, whose imaginary and dream creation the whole universe is, conceived of it so." So there are certain features in the universe, as you and I know it to be, which are beyond our control, and which we have no power to alter. When we understand this, we understand what is attainable and what is not attainable. When you know that this body cannot be preserved for ever, but can be kept in good health for some time, you examine the laws concerning health and long life, and you try to promote those laws. But, there is no physical immortality. It is very important to remember this before we get into the story, because it seems to suggest that you can do everything up to a point.

Queen Lila then reconsidered the position and said: "Alright, if my husband and I cannot live for ever in these physical bodies, I can still worship Goddess Saraswati and propitiate her." Saraswati was highly pleased and, appearing in front of the queen, asked her what she wanted. The queen, who was very clever and very much in love, said: "When my husband dies, if he dies before me, his soul must not leave this room."

This was the first boon. The second boon the queen asked was this: "Whenever I think of you, you must come and visit me." Saraswati granted Lila the two boons and disappeared.

In the course of time, the king died, and Lila was shocked. Such is the nature of grief that she completely forgot the boons that she had received from Saraswati. Then she heard a voice: "I promised that his soul would not leave this room. Cover his body with flowers and it won't rot." Lila obeyed. Now we are getting into a mystic region. A little later the queen said: "Saraswati, I want to see you." Saraswati said: "I am here, what do you want?" Looking around her, the queen said: "Where is my husband?"

The goddess said: "I can show him to you, if you want to see him." The queen

said she would like to. The goddess said: "You know, my dear, it is possible for you to see - or to become aware of - something on a different plane of consciousness, only after you have abandoned the present ego."

A beautiful statement. In other words, you can understand another only after you have completely abandoned your ego. I may be contradicting what I said earlier. It is only possible for one to understand another when, in a state of total love, when, for a few moments, the ego is suspended. You may even experience the other person's pain or pleasure for a few moments, as long as the ego remains suspended.

So Saraswati said: "Normally you can experience the truth, or another plane, only after abandoning your present ego, but since you have asked for it, I will grant this experience to you."

This reminds us that the transcendental or spiritual experience is a gift of God, not the achievement of the ego. You cannot see God. The vision of God is a gift of God. So, meditation is transcendental, but transcendental meditation is not something which you can achieve. It is God's own gift, which has to happen.

One of the reasons why psycho-analysis, psycho-therapy, or even hypnosis, do not really work, is because whatever is true on one plane of consciousness, is true only there and then, not on another plane. So, if you are dreaming, that dream obviously has a significance, but it is meaningful only to the dreamer, then. Six hours later, you wake up, and wonder what it means. It means nothing. The waking ego is completely different from the sleeping ego - in a manner of speaking, so that, what the sleeping ego was able to do, the waking ego would not even attempt. So, the laws and symbolisms governing dream life are totally different from the laws and symbolisms governing waking life, and the waking person has no clue whatsoever as to the symbolism of the dreamer's dream. You waste your time disturbing your sleep and noting down your dreams.

In the same way, it is possible that, as a child, something might have happened which has left an impression on your psyche. All deeds and all experiences leave impressions on the psyche - that is eventually what makes up the psyche! Just as a single cell, dividing and multiplying, has grown into this huge body, even so a single thought - I-thought - or experience has divided and multiplied, added on and subtracted, to become the psyche. The process is exactly the same. The body started off with a single cell, and that has divided and multiplied, but no single cell can still be identified and isolated. None of these things remains in isolation. An experience leaves an impression and is blended with whatever is there already, and the next experience comes along, and that again is blended. Nothing remains static, it is constantly churning, so that you cannot possibly identify an isolated cause, and relate it to whatever happens now.

There is the argument that there are some shattering events or experiences in your life, which stand out in your memory even after thirty or forty years. These

memories or impressions remain in isolation, sitting encapsuled, throwing out waves of psychological problems or neuroses. Even if this is accepted, I would suggest that it is impossible for me now, in my fifty-ninth year, to recall an experience undergone fifty years ago with the same emotional impact experienced by that experiencer. I cannot be a nine year old boy now. I can remember the outstanding experience, but it is not possible to resurrect that experiencer. Even if a hypnotist takes me back in time, and resurrects that nine year old boy who experienced that experience - so that the whole thing is revived - once the hypnotic state is over, I come back to being fifty-nine, and that effect is left there. You cannot, through hypnosis, bring that experience over to here, because that is on a different level altogether. What I am now is the result of the sum total of all those experiences, including the shattering experience. What I am now 'is', and that is the only reality.

The human being continues to be a human being. Why is it that none of these treatments work for long? Why is it that they work for a while in the first place? Vasistha is very fond of the expression 'accidental coincidence' - kakataliya. The fruit from a coconut palm is a very heavy nut, which is secured to the tree very firmly, so that it doesn't drop accidentally on someone's head. A man was sitting under a tree and looking at a bunch of coconuts. Just then a crow flew into the tree and sat on the bunch, and one fruit fell. The man said: "That crow has very strong claws. It needs a chopper to cut that fruit loose, and yet the crow was able to do it!" The truth was that the fruit was about to fall, and the crow happened to come and alight on it at that moment - that is what is called accidental coincidence.

Vasistha says that everything that happens in this world is accidental coincidence. There is no real cause-and-effect relationship at all. If you take some cigarette ash - not sacred ash, go to a hospital, dab a little on about fifty patients, telling them they will be alright, you can depend upon it that three days later ten of them will be alright, and you can take the credit for it. But they would have got better in any case! That is how the miracles of these cures are reported. Later on, the cure doesn't seem to work, because the sickness is on one level and the treatment is administered on a completely different level. The entity that is suffering is untouched by the entity that is being treated. If I had a nightmare, the entity which suffered that nightmare has to be treated, not me now. I'm alright.

There is only one way of dealing with the problem, and that is to find the ego, and see how it relates itself to different situations. It is the ego-consciousness in which the thought is firmly planted and well established that I am a man, an Indian, a Swami, and I am fifty-nine years old. All these constitute what is called the ego. The ego is perhaps exactly like the foetal development, where there is a single cell which divides and multiplies and becomes a big body. There is a single thought "I am the body" - other thoughts are subsequently added to it: "I am a male body", "I am an Indian", "I am a Brahmin" - which keeps growing and assimilating more and more garbage as it grows, exactly as the body grows. The first cell in the foetal development corresponds to the first thought, which is "I

am a body." This keeps growing into a personality. It is completely saturated with the thought "I am somehow related to this body, I am this body, I am bound up with this body." Until the consciousness is freed from that bondage, no other experience is possible.

## Four

Goddess Saraswati narrated the following story to the queen. Once upon a time, there was a holy couple, Vasistha and Arundhati. They were living on a hill top, a solitary but resplendent place with a blue dome. They lived a very happy and holy life, and they had a few children. One day, as this holy man was sitting on top of the hill just outside his hermitage preparing for meditation, he saw a king with his royal entourage - elephants, horses, and palanquins - march past at the foot of the hill. He looked at this procession and thought: "It must be nice to be a king, to have somebody hold an umbrella over your head, to be carried in a palanquin like that. I hope one day I will be a king." Then he entered into meditation. He used to think about it now and then, and wish he were a king instead of a hermit, until eventually he became old and died.

The components constituting that physical body decomposed, but what happened to him? Who was he? What was he? Body? Consciousness? Mind or personality? The body and the indriyas - or senses - limit the comprehension of this intelligence, like a lens or a filter, and that limitation takes the form of time and space. Thought creates time and space, becomes these, and functions in their framework. I suggest that the 'me' is nothing but the first two letters of the word 'memory'. There is nothing called me. Where is memory and what is it? How does it function? We don't know. The memory is there, and when the body decomposes, what remains is memory. That is what you call 'me' or the personality.

When the body of the sage fell apart, the memory was still sitting there, in a manner of speaking. What is sitting, what is standing? What is there, what is here? What is then and what is now? All these words have suddenly lost their significance once the measuring tape - your mind, senses and the body - has gone. But with our measuring tape now, we are measuring the sage, and so we talk of him as still being seated on top of the hill with the blue dome. And since the 'him' is memory now, the content of that memory is "Oh, it would be nice to be a king with all his regalia." Because of this, the sage reincarnated as a king. The wish became the germinating seed. Just as one single fertilised ovum begins to multiply and becomes this huge body, even so a single thought-seed multiplies and becomes a personality. This happened in the case of the sage, and he became a king. His wife also died in the meantime, and she became the queen.

The goddess suddenly revealed that that holy man was Lila's husband, the king, and that the holy man's wife was Lila, the queen.

The queen asked again: "Can I see the holy man's place?" The goddess said: "Yes, of course you can. Normally you cannot, because as long as you are bound by the ego, you cannot experience two states together."

If you are able to acquire the faculty of being able to see on a certain dimension, you can see all those things which exist on that dimension. Now that your vision

is conditioned by human limitations, you can only see physical bodies. If you can get out of this human framework and allow the consciousness or awareness to function on a certain different plane or dimension, you can see the other one. And so the queen, by the grace of this goddess, was able to see the cottage on the hill where she and her husband had lived.

The ego is the filter. Everything in our case is limited by the ego, and therefore we don't even know how to wish so strongly, so purely and powerfully that the wish might become fact, as in the case of this holy man. Why is it that you and I cannot so revolutionise our lives? Why is it so difficult for us, in spite of all those mighty doctrines called 'positive thinking'? If positive thinking is supposed to produce results - and I accept that it is quite possible, then the corollary, according to me, is that we don't even know how to think! A thought which doesn't materialise, therefore, is not a thought, otherwise positive thinking must positively produce results.

An image has no power to act, and what is called the personality is nothing but an image - the reality is elsewhere, beyond the ego. The ego is nothing but a reflection, an image. And therefore, however much this ego struggles, it is unable to produce any result. When the ego is able to surrender itself, or when the ego becomes so intensely curious, so intensely inquisitive that it begins to seek the truth with all its heart and soul, then it hears this message: "Knock and it shall be opened; seek and ye shall find." That is all. Don't pry open the door, but knock until your knuckles are worn off, and it will be opened. The key is on the other side, someone else has got it. By God's grace, when the door opens, that on which a reflection was cast - which was taken to be your personality for the time being - is wiped so perfectly clean that it becomes transparent. Suddenly you see the truth, no longer the reflection. Someone compared the ego with the silver coating on a piece of glass. When that silver coating is there, you see only your own face. You see the 'me', the personality, the ego. When that silver is wiped clean, you see everything else. You knock, and grace wipes that glass absolutely clean - so that it becomes transparent. Instantly you see everything else. It is then that there is freedom, freedom from that which was 'me' - even to become what I wanted to become.

The queen was tempted. "Can we see where this holy couple lived?" The goddess said: "They lived exactly here, but in order to reach it, we have to traverse a long way."

This sounds confusing, because you are still using your own measuring tape, put together by your ego and senses, your training and prejudices. Abandon that. Abandonment of conditioning appears to be traversing psychologically a tremendous distance, a long period of time. We often ask ourselves and others how long it will take for us to attain self-realisation: "How many more thousands of births will I have to take before I reach perfection?" All this is here and now. But this intelligence, even when it starts to move, moves only along its own predetermined direction. However much you struggle, you are unable to break

that. If you are quite convinced that you have led a vicious life, and you are going to hell, "Whatever you do you'll go to hell," says Vasistha - which means that when the body decomposes, the memory or the 'me' wakes up and says: "My god, I've been a terrible sinner, I must be in hell." And so it creates its own hell and passes through that hell.

Is it possible for me to say: "All this is nonsense, I'm going to heaven"? The psychological imprisonment is so strong that you cannot. Once you have bound yourself with this cocoon, you are unable to break through. Even when the mind thinks that it can get out of this, it goes through only its own predetermined paths. That is what is called reincarnation. Reincarnation is not a factual thing - getting out of there and slipping into something else - but this 'me' going from one dream to the other. "From one dream to the other an incarnation arises," says Vasistha. And yet, while this dream lasts, the wretched thing is absolutely true. Part of the night you are dreaming you are a king, but after some time that dream comes to an end, and you dream you are a beggar. Not until you wake up do you realise that both these were only dreams. As long as you were dreaming, you were a beggar, you did not say: "Never mind, it is all a dream". While the dream lasts, you suffer.

Until by God's Grace - these words are supremely important, the door to the truth beyond the ego is opened, there is absolutely no way out. We can sit here and talk for another 25,000 years about cosmic consciousness or the infinite being. The mind makes images of even these, and those images are powerless to act. When you are discussing the power of positive thinking, there is no positive thinking there. It is only an image created by the mind of something called 'positive thinking', and therefore it is totally useless. Similarly, when we talk of self-realisation, it is an image of self-realisation, and therefore useless. Can we realise that we are utterly trapped in the image-building game of the mind?

In the 'Yoga Vasistha', you might discover a disconcerting feature. In one chapter the author seems to believe in a thing called 'soul' and 'jiva', and even gives a fantastic description of how the jiva came into being. In another chapter, he seems to believe in the conscious mind and the subconscious, as well as the ego. Suddenly he ridicules the whole thing and says that none of these is true. Maybe there is a thing called subconscious mind, but as we go on reading and talking about this, what is written or discussed is nothing but an image put together by thought. It has no power or validity whatsoever, it contains no truth whatsoever, except that it is a thought. We can sit and talk about God for the rest of our lives, but that God will be nothing but talk. It is not God. So, we first have to become familiar with this measuring tape that we use, become aware that it is a measuring tape, recognise that it is thought that has put it together, and thus abandon it as reality.

Can you abandon this? When you abandon it, another measuring tape appears, equally bad, equally dangerous - also it is new, so it is probably clean and scented. Can you recognise that and refuse to pick it up? What happens to you then?

Probably people will think that you are crazy, or maybe something else will arise - something pure, a gift from God. Until then the measuring tape keeps unwinding. The memory builds a new personality, a new toy, and thinks it is new. It is not new. The king was not a new phenomenon, he was there already. The sage saw the king and his retinue, and that is what created an impression in his mind. That impression became memory, and when the body dropped away, it became a king. This is how reincarnation takes place.

When the goddess explained all this, the queen asked her: "Can we visit the place where this holy man lived?" Saraswati said, "Yes. Normally it is necessary for you to abandon your ego, but I'll take you."

Then there is a fantastic description. They go further and further; leaving this universe behind, they go to another universe. Suddenly they appear in the holy man's hermitage, and when the queen asks, "Where are we now?" Saraswati replies, "In the same place, in your own room."

That is, for a moment I was a king in Europe, then that dream came to an end, and the dream that I am a beggar in a village in south India arose. Where is this village, and where was the palace in Europe? It is all in exactly the same place, under my blanket!

## Five

The holy man, wishing to be a king, became a king when the body was discarded. That germ of an idea, "I wish I were a king", formed the seed which began to sprout. Then, by repeatedly entertaining the same idea, it assumed the strength and stature of reality. Why shouldn't we do it now and say, for instance, "I am Buddha"? Alright, you have planted the seed; that is one seed. From now on it has got to germinate; so, be careful that you don't disturb it. If you ask any medical scientist or gynaecologist, he will tell you that, once the first cell splits and starts multiplying, the attention - or whatever it is that builds this foetus - is undeflected. All the nine months, that which was building the foetus was at it twenty-four hours a day. It didn't have a coffee break or take time off to go to the movies. Even so, can you sit down here and say: "I am the Buddha"? If you know how to plant the seed at the right spot, it must begin to germinate. From now until you are delivered as the Buddha, you should be Buddha twenty-four hours of the day. Then I'm sure you will become Buddha!

This is what we don't readily concede - we think that what we think is thought, but it is not so. The mind is not what we think it is, the mind is what thinks - so the disgusting, shameful truth is that we don't even know how to think, otherwise our thoughts would materialise.

One can see this happening, but unfortunately even in our own life we don't have persistence or concentrated attention. We do something, and it doesn't seem to work; so, we try something else for three months and that doesn't work either. This way you will do nothing at all. If we had voluntary control over forming the foetus, the result would be most haphazard! That germ of a thought must keep on and on, until it becomes what it is.

How was the first man made? The 'Yoga Vasistha' provides a non-sensical answer - the only answer that is possible, and that is: "It just happened to be so, accidentally." Why did I become I? It just happened to be so. In this chaotic churning of matter, consciousness entered, and here a thought arose, 'I am a human being', and there a thought arose, 'I am a cow'. Here a thought arose 'I am a building', and there a thought arose 'I am water'. That's all. Don't ask why, it was accidental coincidence. So, the first creation - if one could visualise a thing called first creation - just happened.

That holy man on top of the hill, if he was the first creation, just happened. The infinite consciousness, at that point in physical space, thought "I am a holy man sitting on top of the hill"; so he became a holy man sitting on top of the hill. Later he was attracted by the sight of the king and his regalia; this thought 'I wish I were a king' began to germinate within him, and when the body dropped, he became the king. By persistently holding onto that thought, he experienced it as reality. This is an extraordinary, beautiful and simple truth.

There are two ways of phrasing a statement. One way it is difficult to grasp, the

other way it is easy. I'll give it to you both ways. One is: "As you think, so you become". If you persistently think you're a man, you become a human being. But there is a sneaking suspicion or doubt: "Can I become something else by thinking otherwise?" So, leave that phraseology alone. The other is: "When you are a human being, you persistently think you are a human being." Watch carefully now. I'm saying the same thing in different words. Is it possible for you to think you are a dog? No! And therefore you don't become a dog. Where does this thought or germ 'I am a human being' arise and persist? It is perhaps as difficult to discover this as it is to discover at the age of 59 - with several hundred billion cells in the body - which was the original cell that was fertilised 59 years, eight and a half months ago. One of these several billion cells is that one. If you can find that, twist it and make it feel: "No, I'm not a human being, I'm a cow", instantly you'll become a cow! That cell is converted, and it slowly germinates into a cow.

So, let us not use these phrases such as "As you think, so you become" as if they are commonplace. You sit and think "I am Buddha. But what about my coffee break?" It doesn't work that way. But it does work another way. In the case of an enlightened person, a thought immediately materialises, but most people must work hard at it. You must keep at it, with unwinking vigilance, without letting it go out of focus even for a moment. Then it will happen.

When the queen asked to visit the holy man's abode, the goddess said: "Yes, of course, but it is on a different dimension. In order to visit that hermitage, you will have to raise your consciousness to that dimension. Then you can go, not otherwise. The holy man entertained the wish 'I would like to become king,' and became your husband the king, not the other way around. So it is, as it were, that the holy man went to sleep, and dreamt a dream in which he saw himself as a king, so that you and your husband are the dream creations or the dream creatures of this sleeping holy man. You cannot enter into his consciousness - you are the product of his consciousness."

To put it more simply: if I am looking at the ceiling and day-dreaming about you, you cannot enter into my day-dream, into my imagination. You are there, but still it is impossible for you to get into that dream.

It is so simple, and yet it is so intriguing. When you try to express it or clarify your own ideas, you nearly go out of your mind, because we are functioning within the framework of the ego sense. I am firmly committed to the idea that I am Swami Venkatesananda, and you are firmly committed to the idea that you are Angela. We are firmly committed to the idea that we are both completely separate human beings, so that my dream is my dream, and your dream is your dream. Even though I may find a part in your dream, and you may find a part in my dream, we are still separate, and neither of us can enter into the other's dream. In effect, I am saying that I am your guest, but I have no place in your house. Why is it so? Because we are convinced that we are totally independent beings, unrelated to each other - and this barrier cannot be broken.

This barrier cannot be broken because it is not there! This is what the Oriental philosopher calls avidya - ignorance - or maya - illusion. It is not as though 'this' is an illusion. It is not there, and yet I am thoroughly convinced it is there, and therefore I can't get rid of it. The difficulty is that the more I struggle to get rid of it, the firmer it becomes established. Therefore we return to a very beautiful expression found both in the 'Yoga Vasistha' and the 'Bhagavad Gita': "Only grace can help you, nothing else." The more you struggle, the worse the problem becomes. And yet grace compels you to struggle. It's a strange phenomenon. You struggle and struggle, and if you don't struggle, then it means you haven't experienced grace. Grace makes you restless, and restlessly struggling against this non-existent obstacle, you despair. You realise that struggle does not get you anywhere, and you realise that you can't help struggling. It's a whole mess. Then suddenly grace reveals, "This is what it is!"

The goddess and the queen went to the holy man's abode. Everyone there was miserable. The queen - who changed her appearance - asked the son of the holy man, "What happened?" And he said: "Our parents passed away eight days ago, and we are inconsolable." The queen blessed the young man and he got over his grief. She was intrigued: "Eight days ago? This goddess said that the holy man became my husband, the king, and we lived as king and queen for eighty years, yet I was this boy's mother. What do you mean 'eight days ago'?" Saraswati smiled and said: "What is time?"

There are innumerable theories of time, and a number of them are mentioned in the 'Yoga Vasistha'. But let us look at it from the same point of view that we have adopted so far, i.e. the 'me' or ego sense being memory. If we examine this thing called memory, we realise something fantastic. Time in relation to memory is a much deeper enigma than all this relativity theory or fourth dimension. If you observe the relation between memory and time, you are puzzled. Time has its own tricks - or, the mind has its own tricks when it deals with time. An unpleasant incident which you want to forget seems to have happened a long time ago, and something which you cherish might have happened ten or fifteen years ago, but it seems as though it happened yesterday.

What is time? Did it happen? When? How? Except the manner in which the mind regards it - as a sort of sequential series of events - what applies to space applies to time also. The brain or the mind has been trained to look upon this as a series - one, two, three - and computes time on the basis of this. So, time is a convenient measure for paying wages, that's all!

That holy man sitting on top of the hill entertained the thought "I'm a king", and he became the king, and as he functioned as a king he became more and more addicted to the idea that he was a king. It occurs to all of us. We may not be kings and queens, but we are addicted to the idea that we are human beings - Belgians or Indians, etc.

The queen wanted to know: "Where is the king now?" Saraswati said: "I'll show you. He is in the same room. All this happened in the same room. The holy man lived in the same room, your husband lived in the same room. He is dead, and he is still in the same room."

Space or distance has no sense at all apart from what you think it is. So, if you can enter into this imagination or dream called 'you', and the other imagination or dream called 'me', and find the core of this dream, there you might discover that the stuff is the same. The dream entity is different, but the stuff of the dream is the same, and therefore the entity is the same.

## Six

As we go a bit further in this Lila story, the plot thickens. The whole thing becomes very intriguing if you are curious, and terribly confusing if you are looking for clarity.

After visiting the house on top of the hill, which she had occupied in what you and I would call previous incarnations - to them there was no previous or further incarnation, everything was the same, Lila said to the goddess: "It is funny. It is here that I was the holy man's wife, it is here that I was the queen and my husband was king Padma, and it is here again that my king, having died, continues to rule the kingdom. It is here and it is now."

Suddenly she was inwardly spiritually awakened, and Saraswati blessed her. Then Lila said, "I remember everything. Since the time I arose as a concept in this infinite consciousness, I have been all sorts of things - a dog, an elephant, a celestial, a mountain, a snake, a mosquito, and a human being. I have been a vicious creature, and I have been very good."

What is tremendously interesting in this catalogue that is given us, is that there is absolutely no rhyme or reason, no order in it. If you are looking for order, you are shocked. Until you get reconciled to this, the truth does not emerge.

When we are looking for some sort of an orderly evolution in this phenomena called life - which includes what we call birth and death, we are looking at it from the librarian's point of view. A librarian wants all these books to be neatly stacked according to their subject - but life may not be like that, and the truth may not be like that. The truth may have its own standards.

This so-called queen, who has passed through so many incarnations, is just a thought. That which thinks "I am a mosquito", and that which thinks "I am an elephant", is fundamentally just a thought. The thought identifies itself with some concept 'I am this'. This 'I am this' concept has neither a dimension, weight, nor form. So, the moment this concept 'I am a human being' is formed, this human form emerges from it. As long as that form lasts, this consciousness is somehow unable to think of anything other than that. From the cid akasa - this ocean of cosmic consciousness or intelligence, on account of the arising of this thought form, the citta akasa - or the mind - is formed; and the mind builds around itself - in the physical space - a physical body. Utterly convinced that 'I am this body, I am this mind', it begins to think in terms of that body and that mind, so that the perceptions are limited temporarily to the limitations of the body, and the conceptions are limited to the limitations of the mind. That is assumed for the time being to be real.

You are free, then suddenly you become a husband, and then a father, and the mind cannot think in any other way. You seem to have lost the freedom to be otherwise. It is then that the mind starts all sorts of funny notions: "I have to do

this, it is my duty, my dharma." "Why can't you give up this family and run away?" "But you know, to run away from duty is not right, it is cowardice." All this arises on account of this persistent re-affirmation of 'I am this', and it becomes impossible to see in any other way. That is what is called incarnation. So long as this 'I am this' concept is firmly rooted, it is impossible not to be tied down or limited by that concept until that body disintegrates, or a confusion takes place within and another concept begins to form.

Having been given the opportunity of incarnating as a celestial, did this queen want to become a tiger? Why would she do so? We are all human beings. I am a swami, and according to this catalogue, it is quite possible that in the next birth I will be a grasshopper. If my consciousness or 'I am this' concept is totally saturated with the qualities and characteristics of a grasshopper, what else can I become? So, if I hop from country to country like this, and keep on thinking all the time, "Now there are two more hours and I go to Las Vegas, and then I must fly to Minnesota", and I am getting used to this sort of living, it is quite possible that I'll become a grasshopper in the next birth! Because these characteristics determine what the nature of the mind - the citta akasa - is going to be once the body disintegrates.

It is the citta akasa that determines what the germ is going to be for the next germination. It may be because of a very strong and intense aspiration, in which case the citta akasa is saturated with that concept or feeling, desire or craving. Or, the citta akasa is saturated with a certain characteristic, which again determines what it is going to be in the next birth. That makes it a bit more complicated and a bit more interesting. The possibilities and probabilities are almost infinite. You needn't be terribly worried about it, and personally I am totally unconcerned with it. For instance, I look at Baba's dog - it could have been a swami in a previous birth, and therefore it is enjoying special privileges now! I suppose, when I think of the possibility of my becoming a dog in the next birth, it is a bit discomforting. But a dog doesn't remember that it was a swami, that it did something naughty, and therefore it became a dog. It is completely and totally reconciled to its doginess. Incidentally, as long as you don't compare your present state with your own previous state or with the state of somebody else, you are quite happy. It is only comparison which makes you unhappy.

In the same way, another beautiful truth emerges from this catalogue which is given to us: "I was a dog, an elephant, a celestial, a mosquito." Again we realize the illusoriness of time. A dog has exactly the same number of hours in his day as you and I have. Yet, it is said that one year of a dog's life is equal to seven years of our life. A dog matures faster, ages and dies sooner. That which says, "I am a dog", has a different idea of time, a different rate of growth. The sun rises, and sets on a dog at exactly the same time as on us, yet within this the dog's own time scale is completely different. What does it mean? You can invent any number of words, phrases or mathematical formulae for that, but you can never visualise or understand it, because the mind is absolutely and totally conditioned by the notions 'I am this human body' and 'I am this human being'.

Lila then suggested to the goddess: "Let us go to where my husband is ruling at present." Once again, they traversed billions of miles - within the same room - and they descended on the palace. But there was impending tragedy. The palace had been surrounded by enemy forces. The king was in the palace, and he had been ruling for forty years already! The queen said: "This is crazy. The holy man died only eight days ago, and in the meantime my husband and I have been ruling this kingdom for seventy years. The king died yesterday, and here we come and find that this king has been ruling for forty years."

By now all time computation has gone completely berserk, so we abandon it. Now there are other problems.

The queen and the goddess went into the palace, and there they found the king; and the king had a queen who looked exactly the image of the other queen accompanying the goddess. That is Lila number one, and this is Lila number two.

Is it possible for you, without even abandoning your present name, form and appearance, to incarnate somewhere else? It seems to be difficult for us to understand this phenomenon, only because - I suggest - we have a confirmed conviction in a thing called a soul. Because you think you are a soul, encapsuled in a mind, and overgrown with a body, you find it impossible to believe that this 'a soul' could be here and there at the same time. When this 'a soul' is seen to be non-existent, the problem also disappears and is non-existent.

If you are a total materialist who believes only in the physical body and its reproduction, it is not difficult for you to believe this. It is something that is happening right in front of you. This young man produced this child out of his body, it is a part of him. While he is sitting and listening, that child is sleeping nicely; the same body, flesh of his flesh. If that is possible for a physical organism, why is it difficult for us to understand that it is even more possible for the spirit? If you believe that the cid akasa is full of intelligence, full of consciousness, full of infinite potentialities, why is it difficult for this cid akasa to reproduce itself as many times as necessary? It is happening even now, whether you accept it or not!

There's a special expression in Mahayana Buddhism: "The sons of the Buddha." The implication is that, when a person is enlightened, it is as if he is the enlightened son of the Buddha. Instead of transmitting a gross, physical seed, a spiritual seed is transmitted and reproduced. Therefore, a proper disciple of the guru can also be a son. Putraya priya sisya - a beloved disciple is the same as a son, a spiritual son.

So, there were two Lilas. The husband of the second Lila - who was the same as the first Lila's dead husband who had been kept embalmed - waged a war against the enemy, and eventually he was killed. The first Lila asked the goddess: "How is it that, in spite of the fact that my husband has your blessings, he was defeated and killed in battle?" Saraswati gave a very beautiful answer - which is of

tremendous importance to us in consolation. She said: "I am the deity or the divinity that confers blessings and boons, and which answers devotees' prayers. But, I do nothing at all. This man prays to me, and goes away convinced that I have heard his prayer. And, since he is convinced that his boon has been granted, he thinks his boon has been granted, and lives as though it has. That is all. I do nothing at all."

In the same way, one can see that, if you do something vicious, you think that God is going to punish you. It is your own conscience, the feeling that you have done something wrong, and are going to be punished for it, that itself matures as the punishment. Why do you think that you're so important that God wants to curse you? To me, even that is a sign of profound and tremendous arrogance. Are you so important that God should take such notice of you?

Saraswati explained it very beautifully: "All these things become apparent realities, because cosmic consciousness has infinite sakti latent in it. Cosmic consciousness - or cit - is also sakti, and therefore the totality is cit sakti."

There is consciousness everywhere and sakti everywhere. In other words, God is omnipresent and omnipotent at the same time. A thought that arises in consciousness at that level becomes the truth, the reality, because that consciousness which conceives of this idea is reality at that level, not at the superficial level of your mind. Therefore, we cannot easily cancel this incarnation or this idea that I am a human being, because 'I am a human being' is an idea that arose in a previous dream-body. You must be able to go beyond the ego-sense in order to get into that dimension, that depth of consciousness where the 'I am this human being' thought has arisen.

For example, this whole body-mind complex thinks 'I am a human being', so the ego-sense at this point implies 'I am this body-mind complex.' But there are billions of little cells in this body, and it is possible that each one of those cells is also endowed with some consciousness and some power. It is possible that that cell also entertains the idea "I am a vital cell, interested in the job of maintaining the heart." That is its ego-sense. In order to alter that status, it has to transcend its ego-sense, but not my ego-sense. My ego-sense covers the whole thing, overall, but within that there are smaller, minor ego-senses, millions of them. It is possible, similarly, that this earth has its own ego-sense, so that if it decides to disintegrate now, we are finished. We don't have to die separately.

In order to alter our status, we have to overcome this 'ourselves', the little ego-sense in which we are trapped individually. Once you have overcome that, you are able to become one with the dreamer of the dream whose dream objects we are. It is a dream within a dream within a dream within a dream. We have to wake up from this dream, and realise that we are the dream objects of this dreamer. That is all. We can't get any further, because that person has to wake up. That is our difficulty again.

Thus, this one person conceives of herself as being here and there at the same time. "I'm the Lila here, I'm the Lila there. My husband is lying dead in the palace and now he is ruling the kingdom here, and he is about to die again."

Now it is more romance than philosophy.

As the battle raged, and the king was about to be killed, the second Lila also pleaded with Saraswati: "Please let me be with my husband, let me not be separated from him." Saraswati granted this. The king was killed in a dreadful battle, and Saraswati escorted him back to the original body which lay embalmed under a heap of flowers. He got up and saw two wives, both of them looking identical. Then all three of them lived happily ever after.

Such is the story of life, such is the story of birth, and such is the story of death. Even after all this gruesome battle and colossal destruction, Vasistha says: "All this is as real as your dream. Whatever happens in this world, happens in somebody's dream." What is the message here? The message is that most of our problems are self-created, created by taking life too seriously. When we realise this, life becomes extremely simple and blissful.

A study of the 'Yoga Vasistha' does destroy all your values. It makes life look ludicrous - which it is. Once the entire value-structure is smashed, there is nothing worth aspiring for! You don't want to run after anything. If it comes, it comes; if it doesn't come, that is also good. First desire and craving drop away. Nothing is worth craving for - not because craving is something which is going to lead you to hell - hell or heaven are not important either - but the whole thing is made unimportant, valueless. Why will you crave for something which is valueless? That is perhaps what Jesus meant when he said: "Unless you are like little children, you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven." A baby has absolutely no special value for anything. It picks up the microphone, licks it, turns away and picks up something else, plays with it - it's gone. It is not attracted to anything by value.

Are you not attracted to something? Yes, naturally, you are attracted to something in strict accordance with nature and nothing more. When you are hungry, you are attracted to food. When you are tired, you are attracted to bed. When it is very cold you lie under the blanket. These are determined by nature. When you are of the proper age and some children are to be born, you are attracted to each other. Don't call this love. That is the simple lesson that emerges from the 'Yoga Vasistha'. When everything has been devalued, the one valueless - in the sense of beyond all valuation - feature remains, and that is consciousness. That consciousness is steady because it is undeflected by craving, desire or pursuit of pleasure. It is not veiled by hate, by vanity, by ego-sense, by self. It stands as clear as daylight, forever and ever and ever.

What is called the memory - or the 'me' or the ego - has this awareness as its core. Consciousness is the very substance of memory, of all concepts. There is no

concept, whether of good or evil, which is other than consciousness. There is nothing other than consciousness, whether you call it craving, desire, hate, or selfishness - whatever be the labels you stick upon it. You peel that label off and see that the stuff is consciousness. Consciousness is - all else appears to be.

Then just one more lesson becomes abundantly clear. If this lesson is not clearly grasped, we can be led astray, even by the study of the 'Yoga Vasistha'. When you are undeflected by pursuit of pleasure, hate or selfishness, and the mind is calm, even the citta akasa is calm and the cid akasa is brilliant. Life flows with all its ups and downs. Sometimes you are miserable, and then you begin to wonder why you are miserable. It is not important - what is wrong with being unhappy sometimes? So, you are not trying to get rid of it, you are merely looking at it, "What is this new phenomenon?" Suddenly you realise that that unhappiness is directly related to a craving that arose. There was a craving, and that craving couldn't be fulfilled, therefore there was this frustration. Without thinking "I am miserable", you see the unhappiness or frustration related to the craving - not to 'me', because the 'me' doesn't exist. There was a craving - a hope. It arose - you don't know why - and when it wasn't fulfilled, there was frustration, unhappiness.

A clear awareness of the simple truth that, where there is pursuit of pleasure, there is bound to be frustration, prevents the hope from being linked to the self. That is all. I am not saying you will go to hell if you pursue pleasure - there is no such value in the pleasure or in its avoidance - but this is seen as cause-and-effect at their own level, not at the level of the infinite consciousness. If you pick up a piece of cloth, and drop it in the swimming pool, it becomes wet. This is a pure and simple cause-and-effect phenomenon which you can observe.

At the mental and psychological level, the citta akasa level, this cause-and-effect phenomenon applies too. That is, where there is pursuit of pleasure, there is a possibility of frustration.

Let this truth 'Where there is hope, fear is possible' soak into you. Don't do anything more, nothing more is necessary. That awareness itself will take care of life's ups and downs and keep the citta akasa - or the mind - tremendously alert, so that, even by mistake, it does not bestow a positive value upon anything in this world. Then you are instantly freed from what we call the self, from birth and death, and therefore from any unhappiness in life.