

The Supreme Yoga
a new translation of
Yoga Vasistha

2 . Mumuksu Vyavahara Prakaranam

The Behavior of a Seeker

Swami Venkatesananda



THE SUPREME YOGA

A new translation of the Yoga Vasistha
(IN TWO VOLUMES)

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2 - Mumukshu Vyavahara Prakaranam

Section dealing with The Behavior of the Seeker

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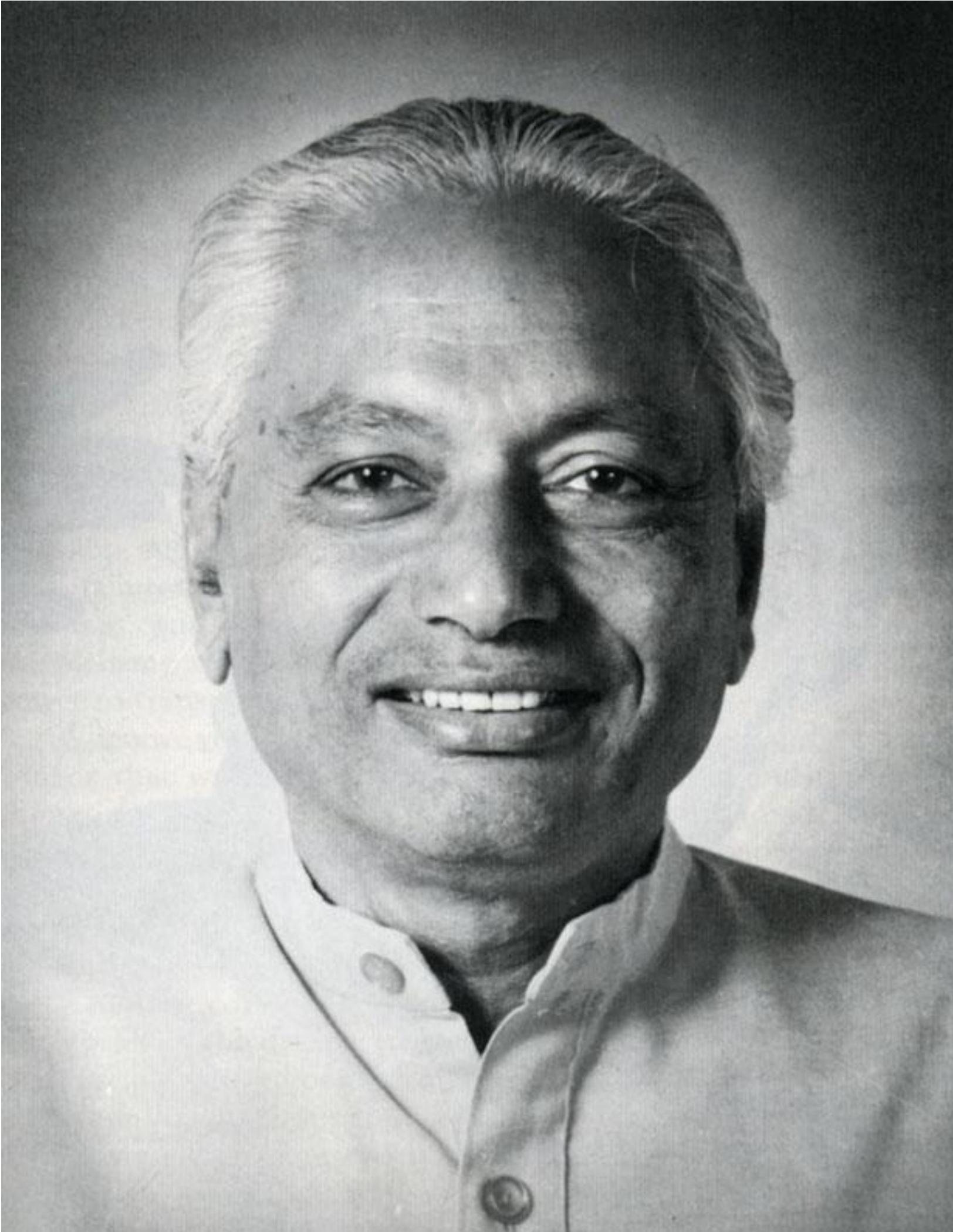
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This publication is dedicated to my Gurudev Swami Sivananda. His life was a symphony whose constant refrain was: "In all conditions I am Knowledge - Bliss Absolute." Sage Vasistha incarnated as Swami Sivananda to embody the Supreme Yoga. In Gurudev Yoga Vāsistha was alive.

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On top of each page you have:

Section of the Book (there are 6 sections) and the number of the Chapter(s) in that section

example: section I chapter 1

One verse from the relevant chapter is given in transliteration. This verse is 'freely' translated and is in **brown** in the body of the story on the same page.

On each page is given a faithful summary of the Chapter. Every effort has been made not to ignore any important teaching. Only non-essential repetition has been omitted.

Preface

The Yoga Vasishtha has always been considered as perhaps the most elaborate exposition of Philosophy and Religion ever written under the sun. The work, which is voluminous in its nature, has been abridged by several scholars subsequently to make the treatise accessible to people who would not have the time and patience to wade through this large literature.

Sri Swami Venkatesananda, a direct disciple of His Holiness Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj, has, however, excelled the earlier precis writers on this subject in His brilliant two volume presentation of this Scripture under the title 'The Supreme Yoga'.

The first edition 1976 was published under the auspices of The Chiltern Yoga Trust, Cape Province, South Africa, in two excellently printed volumes.

Now, this second edition 1991 of this veritably standard work is being published by The Divine Life Society for the benefit of all seekers of Truth and the general readers of

Introduction

Scholars speculate about the author of this monumental scripture and such other academic matters. May God bless them with success.

The Yoga-Vasistha is the greatest help to the spiritual awakening, and the direct experience of the Truth. This is certain. If this is what you want, you are welcome to Yoga-Vasistha.

The text abounds in repetitions which are, however, not repetitious. If you do not like (or need) repetition, then read just this one verse:

This world-appearance is a confusion: even as the blueness of the sky is an optical illusion. I think it is better not to let the mind dwell on it, but to ignore it. (I.3.2)

This verse occurs several times in the scripture and it seems to be the very essence of the teaching.

If that is not quite clear to you now, read the scripture. The numerous ways in which this truth is revealed will help open your mind.

It is wise to read just one page a day. The teaching is revolutionary. The biased mind does not readily accept it. After the daily reading, meditate. Let the message soak through.

An oft-recurring expression in this scripture is 'kakataliya' - a crow alights on the cocoanut palm tree, and that very moment a ripe cocoanut falls. The two unrelated events thus seem to be related in time and space, though there is no causal relationship.

Such is life. Such is 'creation'. But the mind caught up in its own trap of logic questions 'why', invents a 'why', and a 'wherefore', to satisfy itself, conveniently ignoring the inconvenient questions that still haunt an intelligent mind.

Vasistha demands direct observation of the mind, its motion, its notions, its reasoning, the assumed cause and the projected result, and even the observed and the observation - and the realisation of their indivisible unity as the infinite consciousness.

That is the uniqueness of this scripture which hence declares itself to be supreme:

Except through this scripture, one cannot gain what is good, now or at any time. Therefore, for perfect realisation of the supreme truth, one should fervently investigate this scripture alone. (VI.2.103)

It is, however the teaching that is supreme, not a book or a sage. Hence, Vasistha is bold enough to say:

If, however, one thinks it is not authoritative because it is of human origin, one can resort to the study of any other scripture dealing with self-knowledge and final liberation. (VI.2.175)

Whichever be the scripture taught, by whomever, and whichever be the path you choose, stop not till the psychological conditioning ceases entirely. Hence, Vasistha exhorts the seeker:

One should study at least a small part of this scripture daily. The beauty in this scripture is that its student is not abandoned to his despair; if something is not clear in the first instance, a further study of the scripture makes it clear. (VI.2.175)

Dust of Gurudev's Feet
Swami Venkatesananda

Prayer before the daily reading

OM TAT SAT
OM NAMA SIVANANDAYA
OM NAMA NARANAYANA
OM NAMO VENKATESAYA

yatah sarvani bhutani pratibhanti sthitani ca
yatrayo pasamam yanti tasmai satyatmane namah (1)
jnata jnanam tatha jneyam drasta darsana drsyabhuh
karta hetuh kriya yasmad tasmai jnaptyatmane namah (2)
sphuranti sikara yasmad anandasya mbare vanau
sarvesam jivanam tasmai brahmanandatmane namah (3)

Salutations to that reality in which all the elements, and all the animate and inanimate beings shine as if they have an independent existence, and in which they exist for a time and into which they merge.

Salutations to that consciousness which is the source of the apparently distinct threefold divisions of knower, knowledge and known, seer, sight and seen, doer, doing and deed.

Salutations to that bliss absolute (the ocean of bliss) which is the life of all beings whose happiness and unfoldment is derived from the shower of spray from that ocean of bliss.

OM TAT SAT
OM NAMA SIVANANDAYA
OM NAMA NARANAYANA
OM NAMA SHIVAYA
OM NAMO VENKATESAYA

section II - chapter 1

yatha yam svavikalpottha svavikalpa pariksayat ksiyate dagdha samsaro nihsara
iti niscayah (33)

Visvamitra said:

O Rama, you are indeed the foremost among the wise, and there is really nothing further for you to know. However, your knowledge needs confirmation, even as the self-knowledge of Suka needed confirmation from Janaka before Suka could find the peace that passeth understanding.

Rama asked:

Holy one! Pray tell me how it was that Suka did not find peace in spite of his knowledge, and how he found it later.

Visvamitra said:

Listen, O Rama. I shall duly narrate to you this soul-uplifting story of the born-sage Suka, the son of Vedavyasa who is now seated next to your father.

Just like you, Suka also arrived at the truth concerning existence after deep contemplation of the evanescence of this world. Yet, because it was self-acquired knowledge, he could not positively affirm to himself "this is the truth". He had of course arrived at the state of extreme and supreme dispassion.

One day, this Suka approached his father Vedavyasa and asked him: "Sir, how did this diversity of world-creation come into being; and how will it come to an end?" Vedavyasa gave a detailed answer to this question, but Suka thought 'All this I knew already; what is new in this?' and was not impressed. Vedavyasa also sensed this, and hence he said to Suka: "My son, I do not know anything more than this; but there is the royal sage Janaka on earth who knows more than this. Kindly approach him."

Suka thereupon came to Janaka's palace. Informed by the palace guards of the young Suka's arrival, Janaka ignored him for a week while Suka patiently waited outside. The next week Janaka had Suka brought into the palace and waited upon by dancers and musicians. Suka was unmoved by this, too. After this, Suka was ushered into the royal presence, and Janaka said: "You know the truth: what else shall I tell you now." Suka repeated the question he had asked his father, and Janaka too gave him the answer his father had given. Suka said: "I knew this, my father told me this, the scriptures also affirm this, and now you declare the truth, and that is - **this diversity arises on account of mental modifications and it will cease when they cease.**" Thus when his self-knowledge had been confirmed, Suka attained peace and remained in nirvikalpa samadhi.

section II - chapter 2 3

yasah prabhrtina yasmai hetunai va vina punah bhuvi bhoga na rocante sa
jivanmukta ucyate (2/8)

Visvamitra said to the assembled sages:

Like Suka, Rama, too, has gained the highest wisdom. The surest sign of a man of the highest wisdom is that he is unattracted by the pleasures of the world, for in him even the subtle tendencies have ceased. When these tendencies are strong, there is bondage; when they have ceased, there is liberation. **He is truly a liberated sage who by nature is not swayed by sense pleasure, without the motivation of fame or other incentives.** And, I pray that the sage Vasistha should so instruct Rama that he will be confirmed in his wisdom and we, too, may be inspired. That instruction will surely become the greatest wisdom, the best of all scriptures - for it is imparted by an enlightened sage to the qualified, dispassionate student.

Vasistha said:

I shall surely accede to your request. And, O Rama, I shall now impart to you the wisdom which was revealed to me by the divine creator Brahma, himself.

Rama said:

Holy sir, kindly tell me first: why was Vedavyasa considered not liberated, while his son Suka was considered a liberated sage.

Vasistha said:

O Rama, countless have been the universes that have come into being and that have been dissolved. In fact, even the countless universes that exist at this moment are impossible to conceive of. All this can immediately be realised in one's own heart, for these universes are the creation of the desires that arise in the heart, like castles built in the air. The living being conjures up this world in his heart and while he is alive he strengthens this illusion; when he passes away he conjures up the world beyond and experiences it - thus there arise worlds within worlds just as there are layers within layers in a plantain stem. Neither the world of matter nor the modes of creation are truly real; yet the living and the dead think and feel they are real. Ignorance of this truth keeps up the appearance.

O Rama, in this cosmic ocean of existence, beings arise here and there who are equal to others, and others who are different from yet others. This Vedavyasa is the twenty-third in this stream of creation. He and other sages will attain embodiment and disembodiment again and again. In some they will be equal to others and in others unequal. In this embodiment Vedavyasa is indeed a liberated sage. Such liberated sages also are embodied countless times and they assume relations with others - and sometimes they are equal to others and sometimes unequal in their learning, behaviour, etc.

section II - chapter 4 5

param paurusam asritya dantair dantan vicurnayan subhena subham udyuktam
prakttanam paurusam jayet (5/9)

Vasistha continued:

O Rama, even as, whether there are waves or no waves, water remains water, even so whatever be the external appearance of the liberated sage, his wisdom remains unchanged. The difference is only in the eyes of the ignorant spectator.

Therefore, O Rama, listen to what I am about to say; this instruction is sure to remove the darkness of ignorance.

In this world whatever is gained is gained only by self-effort; where failure is encountered it is seen that there has been slackness in the effort. This is obvious; but what is called fate is fictitious and is not seen.

Self-effort, Rama, is that mental, verbal and physical action which is in accordance with the instructions of a holy person well versed in the scriptures. It is only by such effort that Indra became king of heaven, that Brahma became the creator, and the other deities earned their place.

Self-effort is of two categories: that of past births and that of this birth. The latter effectively counteracts the former. Fate is none other than self-effort of a past incarnation. There is constant conflict between these two in this incarnation; and that which is more powerful triumphs.

Self-effort which is not in accord with the scriptures is motivated by delusion. When there is obstruction in the fruition of self-effort one should examine it to see if there is such deluded action, and if there is, it should be immediately corrected. There is no power greater than right action in the present. Hence, **one should take recourse to self-effort, grinding one's teeth, and one should overcome evil by good and fate by present effort.**

The lazy man is worse than a donkey. One should never yield to laziness but strive to attain liberation, seeing that life is ebbing away every moment. One should not revel in the filth known as sense-pleasures as a worm revels in pus.

One who says "Fate is directing me to do this" is brainless and the goddess of fortune abandons him. Hence, by self-effort acquire wisdom and then realise that this self-effort is not without its own end, in the direct realisation of the truth.

If this dreadful source of evil named laziness is not found on earth, who will ever be illiterate and poor? It is because laziness is found on earth that people live the life of animals, miserable and poverty-stricken.

Valmiki said:

At this stage, it was time for evening prayers and the assembly broke up for the day.

section II - chapter 6

sastraih sadacara vijrmbhita desadharmair yatkalpitam phalam ativa cira
prarudham tasmin hrdis sphurati copanam eti cittam angavali tad anu paurusam etad
ahuh (40)

Vasistha began the second day's discourse:

As is the effort, so is the fruit, O Rama. This is the meaning of self-effort, and it is also known as fate (divine). When afflicted by suffering people cry "Alas, what tragedy" or "Alas, look at my fate", both of which mean the same thing. What is called fate or divine will is nothing other than the action or self-effort of the past. The present is infinitely more potent than the past. They indeed are fools who are satisfied with the fruits of their past effort (which they regard as divine will), and do not engage themselves in self-effort now.

If you see that the present self-effort is sometimes thwarted by fate (or divine will), you should understand that the present self-effort is weak. A weak and dull-witted man sees the hand of providence when he is confronted by a strong and powerful adversary and succumbs to him.

Sometimes it happens that without effort someone makes a great gain. For example, the state elephant chooses (in accordance with an ancient practice) a mendicant as the ruler of a country whose king suddenly died without leaving an heir. This is certainly neither an accident nor some kind of divine act, but the fruit of the mendicant's self-effort in the past birth.

Sometimes it happens that a farmer's efforts are made fruitless by a hailstorm. Surely, the hailstorm's own power was greater than the farmer's effort, and the farmer should put forth greater effort now. He should not grieve over the inevitable loss. If such grief is justified, why should he not weep daily over the inevitability of death? The wise man should of course know what is capable of attainment by self-effort, and what is not. It is, however, ignorance to attribute all this to an outside agency, and to say that "God sends me to heaven or to hell", or that "an outside agency makes me do this or that" - such an ignorant person should be shunned.

One should free oneself from likes and dislikes, and engage oneself in righteous self-effort, and reach the supreme truth, knowing that self-effort alone is another name for divine will. We only ridicule the fatalist. **That alone is self-effort which springs from right understanding, which manifests in one's heart, which has been exposed to the teachings of the scriptures, and the conduct of holy ones.**

section II - chapter 7 8

asubhesu samavistam subhesv eva vatarayet ptayaynac cittam ity esa sarva
sastra rtha samgrahah (7/12)

Vasistha continued:

O Rama, one should, with a body free from illness and mind free from distress, pursue self-knowledge, so that he is not born again here. Such self-effort has a threefold root, and therefore threefold fruit - an inner awakening in the intelligence, a decision in the mind, and the physical action.

Self-effort is based on these three - knowledge of scriptures, instructions of the preceptor, and one's own effort. Fate (or divine dispensation) does not enter here. Hence, he who desires salvation **should divert the impure mind to pure endeavour by persistent effort - this is the very essence of all scriptures**. The Holy ones emphasise: persistently tread the path that leads to the eternal good. And the wise seeker knows: the fruit of my endeavours will be commensurate with the intensity of my self-effort, and neither fate nor a god can ordain it otherwise. Indeed, such self-effort alone is responsible for whatever man gets here. When he is sunk in unhappiness, to console him, people suggest that it is his fate. This is obvious: one goes abroad, one appeases one's hunger, by undertaking a journey and by eating food - not on account of a fate. No one has seen such a fate or a god, but everyone has experienced how an action (good or evil) leads to a result (good or evil). Hence, right from one's childhood one should endeavour to promote one's true good (salvation), by a keen intelligent study of the scriptures, by having the company of the holy ones, and by right self-effort.

Fate or divine dispensation is merely a convention, which has come to be regarded as truth by being repeatedly declared to be true. If this god or fate is truly the ordainer of everything in this world, of what meaning is any action (even like bathing, speaking or giving), and whom should one teach at all? No. In this world, except a corpse, everything is active, and such activity yields its appropriate result. No one has ever realised the existence of a fate or divine dispensation. People use such expressions as "I am impelled by fate or divine dispensation to do this" for self-satisfaction - but this is not true. For example, if an astrologer predicts that a young man would become a great scholar, does that young man become a scholar without study? No. Then, why do we believe in divine dispensation? Rama, this sage Visvamitra became a Brahma-Rsi by self-effort. All of us have attained self-knowledge by self-effort alone. Hence, renounce fatalism and apply yourself to self-effort.

section II - chapter 9

evam karmasthakarmani karma praudha svavasana vasana manaso na nya mano hi purusah smrtah (17)

Rama asked:

Lord, you are indeed the knower of truth. Pray, tell me what do people really call god, fate or daivam.

Vasistha replied:

The fruition of self-effort, by which one experiences the good and evil results of past action, is called fate or daivam by people. People also regard that as fate or daivam which characterises the good and evil nature of such results. When you see that 'this plant grows out of this seed', it is regarded as an act of this daivam. But I feel that fate is nothing but the culmination of one's own action.

In the mind of man are numerous latent tendencies, and these tendencies give rise to various actions - physical, verbal and mental. Surely, one's actions are in strict accordance with these tendencies, it cannot be otherwise. **Such is the course of action: action is non-different from the most potent among latent tendencies, and these tendencies are non-different from the mind, and the man is non-different from the mind!** One cannot definitely determine whether categories like mind, latent tendencies, action and fate (daivam) are real or unreal. Hence, the men of wisdom have alluded to them, symbolically.

Rama asked again:

Holy sir, if the latent tendencies brought forward from the previous birth impel me to act in the present, where is freedom of action?

Vasistha said:

Rama, the tendencies brought forward from past incarnations are of two kinds - pure and impure. The pure ones lead you towards liberation, and the impure ones invite trouble. You are indeed consciousness itself, not inert physical matter. You are not impelled to action by anything other than yourself. Hence you are free to strengthen the pure latent tendencies in preference to the impure ones. The impure ones have to be abandoned gradually, and the mind turned away from them little by little, lest there should be violent reaction. By encouraging the good tendencies to act repeatedly, strengthen them. The impure ones will weaken by disuse. You will soon become absorbed in the expression of the good tendencies, in good actions. When thus you have overcome the force of the evil tendencies, then you will have to abandon even the good ones. You will then experience the supreme truth with the intelligence that rises from the good tendencies.

section II - chapter 10

imam moksa katham srutva saha sarvair vivekibhih param yasyasi nirduhkham
nago yatra na vidyate (8)

Vasistha continued:

The cosmic order that people refer to as fate, daivam or niyati, and which ensures that every effort is blessed with appropriate fruition, is based on omnipresent and omnipotent omniscience (known as Brahman). By self-effort therefore restrain the senses and the mind and, with a mind that is onepointed, calmly listen to what I am going to say.

This narrative deals with liberation. Listening to it with other wise seekers who are assembled here, you will realise that supreme being were there is no sorrow nor destruction. This was revealed to me by the creator Brahma himself in a previous age.

Rama, the omnipresent omniscience or the cosmic being shines eternally in all beings. When a vibration arises in that cosmic being, lord Visnu is born, even as a wave arises when the surface of the ocean is agitated. From that Visnu, Brahma the creator was born. Brahma began to create the countless varieties of animate and inanimate, sentient and insentient beings in the universe. And the universe was as it was before the cosmic dissolution.

The Creator saw that all living beings in the universe were subject to disease and death, to pain and suffering. In his heart there arose compassion, and he sought to lay down a path that might lead living beings away from all this. He thereupon instituted centres of pilgrimage and noble virtues like austerity, charity, truthfulness, and righteous conduct. But these were inadequate. They could bestow only temporary relief from suffering on people, and not final liberation from sorrow.

Reflecting thus, the Creator brought me into being. He drew me to himself, and drew the veil of ignorance over my heart. Instantly I forgot my identity and my self-nature. I was miserable. I begged of Brahma the creator, my own father, to show me the way out of this misery. Sunk in my misery, I was unable and unwilling to do anything, and I remained lazy and inactive.

In response to my prayer, my father revealed to me the true knowledge, which instantly dispelled the veil of ignorance that he himself had spread over me. The Creator then said to me: "My son, I veiled the knowledge, and revealed it to you so that you may experience its glory. For only then will you be able to understand the travail of ignorant beings and to help them." Rama, equipped with this knowledge, I am here, and I will continue to be here till the end of creation.

section II - chapter 11

moksadvare dvarapalas catvarah parikirtitah samo vicarah santosas caturthah sadhusangamah (59)

Vasistha continued:

Even so in every age, the Creator wills into being several sages, and myself, for the spiritual enlightenment of all. And, in order to ensure the due performance of the secular duties by all, Brahma also creates kings who rule justly and wisely over parts of the earth. These kings, however, are soon corrupted by lust for power and pleasure. Conflict of interests leads to wars among them, which in turn give rise to remorse. To remove their ignorance, the sages used to impart spiritual wisdom to them. In days of yore, O Rama, kings used to receive this wisdom and cherish it. Hence it was known as Raja-Vidya - Kingly Science.

The highest form of dispassion born of pure discrimination has arisen in your heart, O Rama, and it is superior to dispassion born of a circumstantial cause or an utter disgust. Such dispassion is surely due to the Grace of God. This Grace meets the maturity of discrimination at the exact moment when dispassion is generated in the heart.

As long as the highest wisdom does not dawn in the heart, the person revolves in this wheel of birth and death. Pray, listen to my exposition of this wisdom with a concentrated mind.

This wisdom destroys the forest of ignorance. Roaming in this forest, one undergoes confusion and seemingly interminable suffering. One should therefore approach an enlightened teacher and, by asking the right question with the right attitude, elicit the teaching. It then becomes an integral part of one's being. The fool asks irrelevant questions irreverently; and the greater fool is he who spurns the sage's wisdom. He is surely not a sage who responds to the vain questions of a foolish questioner.

O Rama, you are indeed the best among all seekers, for you have duly reflected over the truth, and you are inspired by the best form of dispassion. And I am sure that what I am going to say to you will find a firm seat in your heart. Indeed, one should positively strive to enthrone wisdom in one's heart, for the mind is unsteady like a monkey. And, one should then avoid unwise company.

Rama, there are four gate-keepers at the entrance to the Realm of Freedom (Moksa). They are self-control, spirit of enquiry, contentment, and good company. The wise seeker should diligently cultivate the friendship of these, or at least one of them.

section II - chapter 12 13

prasanne cittatve hr̥di samabhāve valgati pare sama bhogi bhūtasv akhila
kalāna dr̥stisu purah samam yati svantahkarana ghatanasvadita rasam dhiya dr̥ste
tattve ramanamatānam jagatam idam (12/21)

Vasistha continued:

With a pure heart and a receptive mind, and without the veil of doubt and the restlessness of the mind, listen to the exposition of the nature and the means of liberation, O Rama. For, not until the supreme being is realised, will the dreadful miseries of birth and death come to an end. If this deadly serpent known as ignorant life is not overcome here and now, it gives rise to interminable suffering, not only in this but, in countless lifetimes to come. One cannot ignore this suffering, but one should overcome it by means of the wisdom that I shall impart to you.

O Rama, if you thus overcome this sorrow of repetitive history (samsara), you will live here on earth itself like a god, like Brahma or Visnu! For, when delusion is gone, and the truth is realised by means of enquiry into self-nature, **when the mind is at peace and the heart leaps to the supreme truth, when all the disturbing thought-waves in the mind-stuff have subsided, and there is unbroken flow of peace, and the heart is filled with the bliss of the absolute, when thus the truth has been seen in the heart, then this very world becomes an abode of bliss.**

Such a person has nothing to acquire, nor anything to shun. He is untainted by the defects of life, untouched by its sorrow. He does not come into being nor go out, though he appears to come and go in the eyes of the beholder. Even religious duties are found to be unnecessary. He is not affected by the past tendencies, which have lost their momentum. His mind has given up its restlessness, and he rests in the bliss that is his essential nature. Such bliss is possible only by self-knowledge, not by any other means. Hence, one should apply oneself constantly to self-knowledge - this alone is one's duty.

He who disregards holy scriptures and holy men does not attain self-knowledge. Such foolishness is more harmful than all the illnesses that one is subject to in this world. Hence, one should devoutly listen to this scripture, which leads one to self-knowledge. He who obtains this scripture does not again fall into the blind well of ignorance. O Rama, if you want to free yourself from the sorrow of samsara (repetitive history), receive the wholesome instructions of sages like me, and be free.

section II - chapter 13

sthito pi na sthita iva na hrsyati na kupyati yah susuptasamah svasthah sa
santa iti kathyate (76)

Vasistha continued:

In order to cross this formidable ocean of samsara (repetitive history), one should resort to that which is eternal and unchanging. He alone is the best among men, O Rama, whose mind rests in the eternal, and is, therefore, fully self-controlled and at peace. He sees that pleasure and pain chase and cancel each other, and in that wisdom there is self-control and peace. He who does not see this, sleeps in a burning house.

He who gains the wisdom of the eternal here is freed from samsara, and he is not born again in ignorance. One may doubt that such unchanging truth may not exist! If it does not, one comes to no harm by enquiring into the nature of life, seeking the eternal will soften the pain caused by the changes in life. But, if it exists, then by knowing it one is freed.

The eternal is not attained by rites and rituals, by pilgrimages nor by wealth. It is to be attained only by the conquest of one's mind, by the cultivation of wisdom. Hence everyone - gods, demons, demi-gods or men - should constantly seek (whether one is walking, falling or sitting) the conquest of the mind and self-control, which are the fruits of wisdom.

When the mind is at peace, pure, tranquil, free from delusion or hallucination, untangled and free from cravings, it does not long for anything, nor does it reject anything. This is self-control or conquest of mind - one of the four gate-keepers to liberation, which I mentioned earlier.

All that is good and auspicious flows from self-control. All evil is dispelled by self-control. No gain, no pleasure in this world or in heaven is comparable to the delight of self-control. The delight one experiences in the presence of the self-controlled is incomparable. Everyone spontaneously trusts him. None (not even demons and goblins) hates him.

Self-control, O Rama, is the best remedy for all physical and mental ills. When there is self-control, even the food you eat tastes better - else it tastes bitter. He who wears the armour of self-control is not harmed by sorrow.

He who even while hearing, touching, seeing, smelling and tasting what is regarded as pleasant and unpleasant, is neither related nor depressed - he is self-controlled. He who looks upon all beings with equal vision, having brought under control the sensations of pleasure and pain, is self-controlled. **He who, though living amongst all is unaffected by them, neither feels elated nor hates, even as one is during sleep - he is self-controlled.**

section II - chapter 14

vicaraj jnayate tattvam tattvad visrantir atmani ato manasi santatvam sarva
duhkha pariksayah (53)

Vasistha continued:

Enquiry (the second gate-keeper to liberation) should be undertaken by an intelligence that has been purified by a close study of the scripture, and this enquiry should be unbroken. By such enquiry the intelligence becomes keen, and is able to realise the supreme. Hence enquiry alone is the best remedy for the long-lasting illness known as samsara.

The wise man regards strength, intellect, efficiency and timely action as the fruits of enquiry. Indeed, kingdom, prosperity, enjoyment, as well as final liberation, are all the fruits of enquiry. The spirit of enquiry protects one from the calamities that befall the unthinking fool. When the mind has been rendered dull by the absence of enquiry, even the cool rays of the moon turn into deadly weapons, and the childish imagination throws up a goblin in every dark spot. Hence, the non-enquiring fool is really a storehouse of sorrow. It is the absence of enquiry that gives rise to actions that are harmful to oneself and to others, and to numerous psychosomatic illnesses. Therefore, one should avoid the company of such unthinking people.

They in whom the spirit of enquiry is ever awake illumine the world, enlighten all who come into contact with them, dispel the ghosts created by an ignorant mind, and realise the falsity of sense-pleasures and their objects. O Rama, in the light of enquiry there is realisation of the eternal and unchanging reality; this is the supreme. With it one does not long for any other gain, nor does one spurn anything. He is free from delusion, attachment. He is not inactive, nor does he get drowned in action. He lives and functions in this world and, at the end of a natural life-span, he reaches the blissful state of total freedom.

The eye of spiritual enquiry does not lose its sight, even in the midst of all activities. He who does not have this eye is indeed to be pitied. It is better to be born as a frog in the mud, a worm in dung, a snake in a hole, but not be one without this eye. What is enquiry? To enquire thus: "Who am I? How has this evil of samsara (repetitive history) come into being?" is true enquiry. **Knowledge of truth arises from such enquiry. From such knowledge there follows tranquillity in oneself. And then there arises the supreme peace passeth understanding, and the ending of all sorrow.**

section II - chapter 15 16

santosah paramo labhah satsangah parama gatih vicarah paramam jnanam samo hi
paramam sukham (16/19)

Vasistha continued:

Contentment is another gate-keeper to liberation. He who has quaffed the nectar of contentment does not relish craving for sense-pleasures; no delight in this world is as sweet as contentment which destroys all sins.

What is contentment? To renounce all craving for what is not obtained unsought and to be satisfied with what comes unsought, without being elated or depressed even by them - this is contentment. As long as one is not satisfied in the self, he will be subjected to sorrow. With the rise of contentment the purity of one's heart blooms. The contented man who possesses nothing owns the world.

Satsanga (company of wise, holy and enlightened persons) is yet another gate-keeper to liberation. Satsanga enlarges one's intelligence, destroys one's ignorance and one's psychological distress. Whatever be the cost, however difficult it may be, whatever obstacles may stand in its way, satsanga should never be neglected. For, satsanga alone is one's light on the path of life. Satsanga is indeed superior to all other forms of religious practices like charity, austerity, pilgrimage and the performance of religious rites.

One should by every means in one's power adore and serve the holy men who have realised the truth and in whose heart the darkness of ignorance has been dispelled. They who, on the other hand, treat such holy men disrespectfully, surely invite great suffering.

These four - contentment, satsanga (company of wise men), the spirit of enquiry, and self-control - are the four surest means by which they who are drowning in this ocean of samsara (repetitive history) can be saved. **Contentment is the supreme gain. Satsanga is the best companion to the destination. The spirit of enquiry itself is the greatest wisdom. And self-control is supreme happiness.** If you are unable to resort to all these four, then practice one: by the diligent practice of one of these, the others will also be found in you. The highest wisdom will seek you of its own accord. Until you tame the wild elephant of your mind with the help of these noble qualities, you cannot have progress towards the supreme, even if you become a god, demi-god or a tree. Therefore, O Rama, strive by all means to cultivate these noble qualities.

section II - chapter 17

dipe yatha vinidrasya jvalite sampravartate aloko nicchato py evam nirvanam
anaya bhavet (7)

Vasistha said:

He who is endowed with the qualities that I have enumerated thus far is qualified to listen to what I am about to reveal. You are indeed such a qualified person, O Rama. Only he would wish to hear this who is ripe for liberation. But **this revelation is capable of leading one to liberation even if one does not desire it, as a light is capable of illumining the eyes of even the sleeping person.** As when the truth that a rope is a rope is seen and the fear generated by the misunderstanding that it is a snake disappears, the study of this scripture frees one from sorrow, born of samsara.

This scripture consists of 32,000 couplets. The first section known as Vairagya Prakaranam (chapter on dispassion) imparts to one knowledge of the true nature of life in this world. Its careful study purifies the heart. This section consists of 1,500 couplets.

The next section, known as Mumukshu Vyavahara Prakaranam (concerning the behaviour of a seeker of liberation) consists of 1,000 couplets. In this the qualifications of a seeker are described.

After that comes the Utpatti Prakaranam (section on creation) which consists of 7,000 couplets. In it are found many inspiring stories which help illustrate the great truth, which is: on account of the interplay of the false ideas of 'this' and 'I', the universe which has never truly been created, appears to be.

The next is the Sthiti Prakaranam (section on existence) and it consists of 3,000 couplets. With the help of stories again, the truth concerning the existence of this world and its substratum is revealed.

After that comes the Upasanti Prakaranam (section on cessation) which consists of 5,000 couplets. By listening to this, the deluded perception of the world comes to an end, leaving only a trace of ignorance.

Lastly, the Nirvana Prakaranam (section on liberation) which runs to 14,500 couplets. A study and understanding of this section destroys one's fundamental ignorance; and when all kinds of delusions and hallucinations are set at rest, there is total freedom. Though still wearing a physical body, he lives as if he is free from it, free of all cravings and desires, attachment and aversion. He is free from samsara (repetitive history). Here and now, he is free from the demon known as egotism. He is one with the infinite.

section II - chapter 18

yuktti yukttam upadeyam vacanam balakad api anyat trnam iva tyajyam apy
ukttam padmajanmana (3)

Vasistha continued:

One who sows the seed of the knowledge of this scripture soon obtains the fruit of the realisation of truth. Though human in origin, an exposition of truth is to be accepted; otherwise even what is regarded as divine revelation is to be rejected. **Even a young boy's words are to be accepted if they are words of wisdom; else, reject it like straw even if uttered by Brahma the creator.**

He who listens to and reflects upon the exposition of this scripture enjoys unfathomable wisdom, firm conviction and unperturbable coolness of spirit. Soon he becomes a liberated sage whose glory is indescribable.

The sage of infinite vision sees in the one undivided intelligence countless universes, for he has realised the magic of Maya or cosmic illusion. He sees the infinity in every atom, and therefore he is unattached to the rise and fall of the ideas of creation. Hence, he is ever contented with what comes unsought (which he does not reject) and he does not run after what has been taken away from him for which he does not grieve.

This scripture is easy of comprehension as it is richly embellished with a number of interesting stories. One who studies this scripture and contemplates its meaning has no need to undertake austerities, meditation or repetition of a mantra; for what is greater than liberation which is granted by a study of this scripture?

One who studies this scripture and comprehends its teaching is no longer deluded by world-appearance. When one sees that the yonder deadly snake is a life-like painting, one is no longer afraid of it. When the world-appearance is seen as an appearance it does not produce either elation or sorrow. It is indeed a great pity that even when such a scripture exists, people seek sense-pleasures which lead to great sorrow.

O Rama, when a truth that has not been personally experienced is expounded, one does not grasp it except with the help of an illustration. Such illustrations have been used in this scripture with a definite purpose and a limited intention. They are not to be taken literally, nor is their significance to be stretched beyond the intention. When the scripture is thus studied, the world appears to be a dream-vision. These indeed are the purpose and the purport of the illustrations. Let no one of perverted intellect misinterpret the illustrations given in this scripture.

section II - chapter 19 20

vicaraya caryaparamparanam matena satyena sitena tatvat yavad visuddham
svayam eva buddhya hy anantarupam param abhyupaisi (35)

Vasistha continued:

Parables have only one purpose: to enable the listener to arrive at the truth. The realisation of truth is so vital that any reasonable method used is justified, though the parables themselves may be fictitious. The parables themselves are only partly applicable to the truth thus illustrated, and only that part is to be grasped and the rest ignored. Study and understanding of the scriptures with the help of illustrations and of a qualified teacher are necessary only till one realises the truth.

Again, such study should continue till the truth is realised; one should not stop short of complete enlightenment. A little knowledge of the scripture results in confusion worse confounded. Non-recognition of the existence of supreme peace in the heart and assumption of the reality of imaginary factors are both born of imperfect knowledge and the consequent perverted logic.

Even as the ocean is the substratum of all the waves, direct experience alone is the basis for all proofs - the direct experience of truth as it is. That substratum is the experiencing intelligence which itself becomes the experiencer, the act of experiencing, and the experience. The experience alone is the fact; yet, in a state of non-understanding, this experience seems to have a subject (the experiencer) . Wisdom that is born of the spirit of enquiry dispels this non-understanding and the undivided intelligence shines in its own light. At that stage even the spirit of enquiry becomes superfluous and dissolves itself.

Even as movement is inherent in air, manifestation (as the subtle perceiving mind and as the gross objects it perceives) is inherent in this experiencing intelligence. And the perceiving mind, on account of ignorance, thinks "I am such and such an object" and thence becomes that. The object is experienced only in the subject, not elsewhere!

O Rama, till such time as this wisdom arises directly in you, take recourse to the knowledge transmitted by the great teachers. When you receive such knowledge from the great teachers, your behaviour will mirror theirs; and when thus you grow in their virtuous qualities, your wisdom will unfold within you. Wisdom and emulation of the noble behaviour of holy ones thrive on each other!