

The Supreme Yoga

a new translation of

Yoga Vasistha

4 . Sthiti Prakaranam

Section dealing with Existence

Swami Venkatesananda



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(IN TWO VOLUMES)

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Section dealing with Existence

Published By

THE DIVINE LIFE SOCIETY

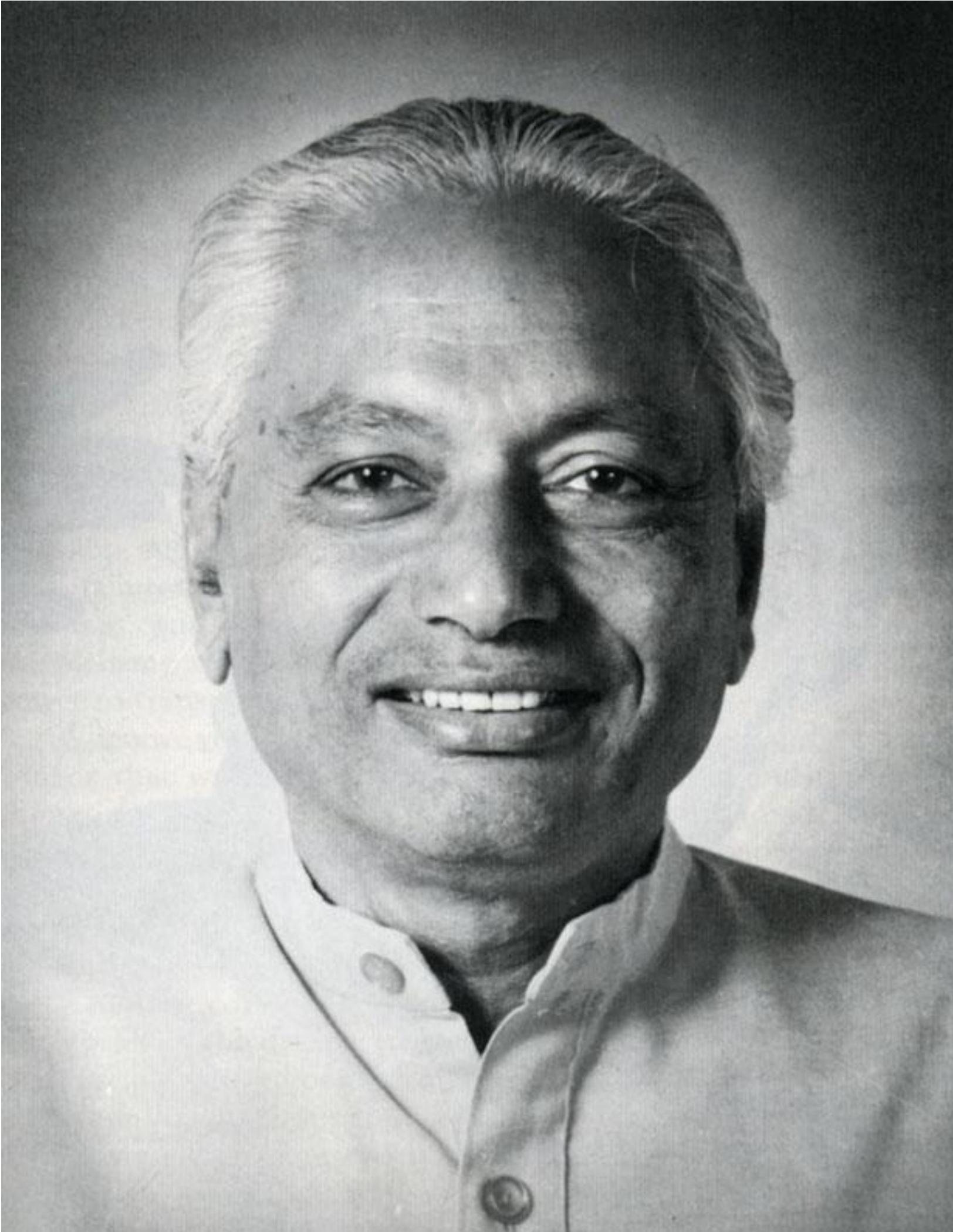
P.O. SHIVANANDANAGAR—249 192

Distt. Tehri-Garhwal, Uttaranchal, Himalayas, India

ISBN 81-7052-087-8

First Edition: 1976
The Chiltern Yoga Trust
P.O. Elgin 7180, South Africa

Second Edition: 1991
Thrid Edition: 1995
Fourth Edition: 2003
(3,000 Copies)



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.

Osho

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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 spiritual teachings.

We have a firm hope that this well-known, towering teaching will provide to everyone the requisite inspiration and solace.

The Divine Life Society

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 NAMAH SIVANANDAYA
OM NAMAH 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 jnaptatmane 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 NAMAH SIVANANDAYA
OM NAMAH NARANAYANA
OM NAMAH SHIVAYA
OM NAMO VENKATESAYA

section IV - chapter 1

sakara bata dhanadavankurah santi yukttimat nakare tanmahakaram jagadastity
ayukttikam (33)

Vasistha continued:

O Rama, after the exposition of the true nature of world-creation I shall deal with the exposition of the true nature of the sustenance of this world-appearance. Only as long as the delusion of this world-appearance lasts is there this existence of the world as an object of perception. In fact, it is as real as a dream-vision; for it is produced out of nothing by no one with no instruments on nothing.

This world-appearance is experienced only like a day-dream; it is essentially unreal. It is a painting on void like the colours of a rainbow. It is like a widespread fog; when you try to grasp it, it is nothing. Some philosophers treat this as inert substance or void or the aggregate of atoms.

Rama asked:

It has been said that this universe remains in a seed-state in the supreme being, to manifest again in the next epoch: how can this be and are they who hold this view to be regarded as enlightened or ignorant?

Vasistha continued:

They who say that this universe exists in a seed-state after the cosmic dissolution are those who have firm faith in the reality of this universe! This is pure ignorance, O Rama. It is a totally perverted view which deludes both the teacher and the hearer. The seed of a plant contains the future tree: this is because both the seed and the sprout are material objects which are capable of being apprehended by the senses and the mind. But, that which is beyond the reach of the mind and the senses - how can that be the seed for the worlds? In that which is subtler than space, how can there exist the seed of the universe? When that is so, how can the universe emerge from the supreme being?

How can something exist in nothing? And if there is something called the universe in it, how is it not seen? How can a tree spring out of the empty space in a jar? How can two contrary things (Brahman and the universe) co-exist: can darkness exist in the sun? **It is appropriate to say that the tree exists in the seed, because both these have appropriate forms. But in that which has no form (Brahman) it is inappropriate to say that this cosmic form of the world exists.** Hence, it is pure foolishness to assume that there exists a causal relationship between Brahman and the world: the truth is that Brahman alone exists and what appears to be the world is that alone.

section IV - chapter 2 3

ityastyanto na saddrster asaddrstes ca va kvacit asyastvabhyuditam buddham
nabuddham prati va nagha (3/15)

Vasistha continued:

Rama, if the universe existed in a seed-state in the absolute Brahman during the cosmic dissolution, then it would need a co-operative cause for its manifestation after the dissolution. To assume that the universe manifested without such co-operative causation is to assume the existence of a barren woman's daughter. Hence, the fundamental cause itself has to be seen as the very nature of the supreme being which continues to be so even during the period, after the dissolution, in what one regards as this creation. There is no cause and effect relation between the supreme being and the universe.

Millions of universes appear in the infinite consciousness (cid akasa) like specks of dust in a beam of light streaming into a room through a hole in the roof. But, even as such specks of dust are not to be seen in the outside sunlight itself, the world is not seen in the supreme non-dual consciousness. That is because these universes are non-different from the infinite consciousness, even as one's nature is not different from oneself.

At the conclusion of the cosmic dissolution, there arose the Creator of the universe who was nothing more than memory. The thoughts that arose from that memory constitute this world-appearance, which is no more real than a pie in the sky; for the memory from which the thoughts sprang has itself no valid basis, because all the deities of the previous world-cycle (like the creator Brahma, etc.) had surely attained liberation. When there is no one to remember, how can memory exist?

Thus, that memory which arose in consciousness (whether of previous experiences or otherwise) appears as the world. That spontaneous world-appearance in the infinite consciousness is known as spontaneous creation. This world-appearance assumed a certain ethereal form which is known as the cosmic person.

In one small atom all the three worlds appear to be, with all their components like space, time, action, substance, day and night. In that there are other atoms in which there are such world-appearances, just as there is a figure in an uncarved marble slab and that figure (which is marble) has a figure in its limbs and so on ad infinitum. **Hence, O Rama, in the eyes of both the enlightened and the ignorant, the vision does not vanish: to the enlightened this is Brahman at all times, and to the ignorant it is always the world!** In utter void, you see what is regarded as 'distance'; in the infinite consciousness, you see what is regarded as 'creation'. Creation is just a word, without corresponding substantial reality.

section IV - chapter 4 5 6

manah sarvam idam rama tasmin antas cikitsite cikitsito vai sakalo jagaj
jalamayo bhavet (4/5)

Vasistha continued:

O Rama, the only way to cross this formidable ocean of world-appearance is the successful mastery of the senses. No other effort is of any use. When one is equipped with the wisdom gained by study of the scriptures and the company of sages, and has his senses under his control, he realises the utter non-existence of all objects of perception.

Rama, mind alone is all this: and when that is healed, this jugglery of world-appearance is also healed. This mind alone by its thinking faculty conjures up what is known as the body: no body is seen where the mind does not function! Hence, the treatment of the psychological illness known as perception of objects is the best of all treatment in this world. The mind creates delusion, the mind produces ideas of birth and death; and, as a direct result of its own thoughts, it is bound and it is liberated.

Rama asked:

O Holy sage, kindly tell me: how does this enormous universe exist in the mind?

Vasistha replied:

O Rama, it is like the universes created by the brahmana boys. Again, it is like the hallucinations suffered by the king Lavana. There is another illustration. It is the story of the sage Sukra which I shall presently narrate to you.

A long time ago, the sage Bhrgu was performing intense penance on the peak of a mountain. His son Sukra was a young man at that time. While the father sat motionless in meditation, the young son attended to the father's needs. One day, this young man beheld in the sky a beautiful flying nymph. His mind was disturbed with desire for her; so was her own mind disturbed when she saw the radiant young Sukra.

Intensely overcome by desire for the nymph, Sukra closed his eyes and (mentally) pursued her. He reached heaven. There he saw the radiant celestial beings, gods and their consorts, the celestial elephant and horses. He saw the creator Brahma himself as also the other deities who govern this universe. He saw the siddhas (perfected beings). He listened to celestial music. He visited the celestial gardens in heaven. Finally, he saw the king of heaven, Indra himself, seated in all his majesty, waited upon by incomparably beautiful nymphs. He saluted Indra. Indra, too, got up from his throne and greeted the young sage Sukra and begged him to stay in heaven for a long time. Sukra also consented to do so.

section IV - chapter 7 8 9

vividha janmadasam vividhasayah samanubhuya sariraparamparah sukham atisthad
asau bhrgunandano varanadisutate drdhavrksavat (8/29)

Vasistha continued:

Sukra had completely forgotten his previous identity. After spending some time in the court of Indra, Sukra roamed the heaven and soon discovered the whereabouts of the nymph he had seen. When they looked at each other they were overcome by desire for each other, for wish-fulfilment is the characteristic of heaven.

Sukra wished for the darkness of night to envelop the pleasure-garden where he met the nymph. So it was dark. Sukra then entered the beautiful rest house in that garden: the nymph followed. She pleaded: "Great one, I am tormented by desire for you. Only the dull-witted deride love, not the wise ones. Even the lordship of the three worlds is nothing compared to the delight of the company of the loved one. Hence, pray, give me shelter in your heart." Saying so, she collapsed on his chest.

Sukra spent a very long time with that nymph, roaming at will in heaven. He lived with that nymph for a period equal to eight world-cycles.

After this length of time, as if his merit had been exhausted, Sukra fell from heaven, along with that nymph. When their subtle bodies fell on earth, they became dew-drops which entered food-grains which were eaten by a holy brahmana, from whom his wife received their essence. Sukra became their son. He grew up there. The nymph had become a female deer, and Sukra begot through her a human child. He became greatly attached to this son. Worries and anxieties caused by this child soon aged Sukra, and he died longing for pleasures.

On account of this Sukra became the ruler of a kingdom in the next birth and he died to that embodiment longing for a life of austerity and holiness. In the next birth he became a holy man. **Thus, after passing from one embodiment to another and enduring all manner of destinies Sukra practised intense austerity, standing firm on the bank of a river.**

Thus contemplating while seated in front of his father, Sukra spent a long time. His body had become extremely emaciated. In the meantime the restless mind created scene after scene of successive life-spans, birth and death, ascent to heaven and descent to earth and the peaceful life of a hermit. He was so immersed in these that he regarded them as the truth. The body had been reduced to skin and bone, for it had been assailed by the inclemencies of every type of weather. It appeared terribly frightening even to look at. Yet, it was not consumed by carnivorous beasts, as it stood right in front of the sage Bhrgu who was engaged in deep meditation, and as Sukra himself had endowed it with psychic strength through the practice of yogic discipline.

section IV - chapter 10

svayam urdhvam prayaty agnih svayam yanti payamsy adhah bhokttaram bhojanam
yati srstim ca py antakah svayam (29)

Vasistha continued:

After a hundred celestial years of contemplation, the sage Bhrgu got up from his seat. He did not see his son, Sukra, in front of him, but saw the dried up body. The body appeared hideous, an abode of worms which, dwelling in the eye-sockets, had multiplied very fast indeed. Deeply concerned with what he saw, and without really reflecting over the natural course of events, Bhrgu was filled with rage and resolved to curse Time for thus causing the untimely death of his son.

Time (or Death) instantly approached the sage in physical form. Time had a sword in one hand and a noose in the other. He had impenetrable armour. He had six arms and six faces. He was surrounded by a host of his servants and messengers. He was radiant with the flames of destruction that emanated from his body and from the weapons he held in his hands.

Calmly and in an unfaltering voice, Time thus addressed Bhrgu:

O sage, how is it that such a wise sage as you are contemplates such unworthy conduct? Wise men are not upset even when they are offended; yet, you have lost your balance of mind even though no one has offended you! You are indeed an adorable person, and I am one of those who strictly adhere to the appropriate mode of behaviour; hence I salute you - not with any other motive.

Do not waste your merit in useless exhibition of your power to curse! Know that I am unaffected even by the fires of cosmic dissolution; how childish of you to hope to destroy me with your curse!

I am Time: and I have destroyed countless beings, nay, even the gods who preside over this universe. Holy one, I am the consumer and you are our food: this indeed is ordained by nature. This relationship is not based on mutual likes or dislikes. **Fire by its very nature flames upward, and water naturally flows down: food seeks the consumer, and created objects seek their end.** This is how it has been ordained by the Lord: in the self of all, the self dwells as itself. To the purified vision there is neither a doer nor an enjoyer; but to the unpurified vision which sees division, such a division seems to exist.

You are indeed a knower of truth and you know that there is neither doership nor non-doership here. Creatures come and go like flowers on trees, their causation is naught else than conjecture. All these are attributed to time. This can be considered real or unreal. For, when the surface of the lake is agitated, the reflection of the moon seems to be agitated. This can be considered both true and false.

section IV - chapter 10

kartavyam eva niyatam kevalam karyakovidaih susuptivrttim asritya kadacittvam
na nasaya (39)

Time continued:

Do not give way to anger, O sage: that is surely the path to disaster. For, what will be will be. Realise this truth. We are not swayed by vanity; we are naturally inclined to the fulfilment of our natural functions. Such indeed is the nature of wise ones. **What has to be done has to be done by wise men here, remaining egoless and unselfish as if in deep sleep: do not let this be violated.**

Where is your wisdom, your greatness and your moral courage? O sage, though you know the path to blessedness, why do you act like a fool? Surely, you know that the ripe fruit falls to the ground; ignoring this, why do you think of cursing me?

Surely, you know that everyone has two bodies, the one physical and the other mental. The physical body is insentient and seeks its own destruction; the mind is finite but orderly - but that mind is disturbed in you! The mind makes the body dance to its tunes, bringing about successive changes in it, like the child playing with mud. Mental actions alone are actions; its thoughts cause bondage and its own pure state is liberation. It is the mind that creates the body with all its limbs. Mind itself is both the sentient and the insentient beings; all this endless diversity is nothing but mind. Mind itself in its function as determination is known as the intellect and in its function as identification is known as the ego-sense. The physical body is only physical matter; yet the mind deems it as its own. Yet, if the mind turns towards the truth, it abandons its identification with the body and attains the supreme.

O sage, while you were engaged in contemplation, your son went far, far away in his own fancy. He left here the body which was 'the son of Bhrgu' and rose up to the heaven. There in heaven he enjoyed the celestial nymphs. In course of time, when his merit had been exhausted by such enjoyment, he fell down on the earth like ripe fruit, along with the nymph. He had to leave his celestial body in heaven. He fell on earth to be born with a physical body. Here on earth he had to undergo a series of births. He was, successively, a brahmana boy, a king, a fisherman, a swan, again a king, a great yogi with psychic powers, a celestial demi-god, the son of a sage, a king again, and again the son of a sage, and on account of evil deeds he became a hunter, a king, and then as worms and plants, a donkey, a bamboo, a deer in China, a snake, a bird, and once again a demi-god, and now once again he has become the son of a brahmana known as Vasudeva. He is well read in the scriptures and is at present engaged in penance on the bank of the holy river Samanga.

section IV - chapter 11

nanu vijnata samsara gatayo vayam apadam sampadam caiva gacchamo harsamarsa
vasam vibho (13)

Vasistha continued:

Encouraged by Yama (Time), the sage Bhrgu thereupon entered into the eye of wisdom in order to behold the life of his son. In an instant, he saw in his own intelligence the entire story of his son's transmigration. Wonderstruck at what he saw, he re-entered his own body.

Completely devoid of all attachment to his son, Bhrgu said:

Lord, you are indeed the knower of the past, present and future, whereas we are of little understanding. This world-appearance which though unreal appears to be real, deludes even the heroic man of wisdom. Surely, all this is within you, and only you know the true form of this phantom created by the imaginations of the mind.

This son of mine is not dead: yet, taking him to be dead I became agitated. I thought that my son had been taken away from me before his time arrived. **Lord, though we understand the course of earthly events, we are moved to joy and sorrow by what we consider as good fortune and misfortune.**

In this world, anger impels man to do what should not be done, but tranquillity enables one to do what should be done. As long as there exists the delusion of world-existence, so long the distinction between appropriate and inappropriate action is valid. It is inappropriate that we should be agitated by your natural function, which is to cause the apparent death of beings here.

By your grace, I have seen my son again, and I realise that mind alone is the body and it is the mind that conjures up this world-vision.

Time said:

Well said, O sage; truly mind is the body; it is the mind that 'creates' the body by mere thoughts, just as the potter makes a pot. It creates new bodies and brings about the destruction of what exists, and all this by mere wish. It is surely obvious that within mind exist the faculties of delusion or hallucination, dreaming and irrational thought, which create a pie in the sky. Even so it creates the appearance of the body within itself; but the ignorant man with a gross physical vision sees the physical body as different from and independent of the mind.

The three worlds (of waking, dream and sleep) are nothing but the expression of the faculties of the mind: this expression can be considered neither real nor unreal. When the mind conditioned by the perception of diversity 'sees', it sees the diversity.

section IV - chapter 11

na sti bandho na mokso sti tanmayastviva laksyate grastam nityam anityena
mayamayam aho jagat (63)

Time continued:

The mind itself gets involved in this world-appearance by entertaining countless notions (like 'I am weak, unhappy, foolish, etc.'). When the understanding arises that all this is but the false creation of the mind, I am what I am - then the peace of the supreme arises in one's consciousness.

The mind is like the vast ocean with infinite variety of creatures within it, on the surface of which ripples and waves of different sizes rise and fall. The small wave thinks it is small; the big one that it is big. The one that is broken by the wind thinks it has been destroyed. One thinks it is cold, another that it is warm. But all the waves are but the water of the ocean. It is indeed true to say that there are no waves in the ocean; the ocean alone exists. Yet, it is also true that there are waves!

Even so, the absolute Brahman alone exists. Since it is omnipotent, the natural expression of its infinite faculties appears as the infinite diversity in this universe. Diversity has no real existence except in one's own imagination. 'All this is indeed the absolute Brahman' - remain established in this truth. Give up all other notions. Even as the waves, etc. are non-different from the ocean, all these things are non-different from Brahman. Even as in the seed is hidden the entire tree in potential, in Brahman there exists the entire universe for ever. Even as the multicoloured rainbow is produced by sunlight, all this diversity is seen in the one. Even as the inert web emanates from the living spider, this inert world-appearance has sprung from the infinite consciousness.

Even as the silk-worm weaves its cocoon and thus binds itself, the infinite being fancies this universe and gets caught in it. Even as an elephant effortlessly breaks loose from the post to which it is tied, the self liberates itself from its bondage. For, the self is what it considers itself to be. In fact, there is neither bondage nor liberation for the Lord. I do not know how these notions of bondage and liberation have come into being! **There is neither bondage nor liberation, only that infinite being is seen: yet the eternal is veiled by the transient, and this is indeed a great wonder (or a great illusion).**

The moment this mind manifested in the infinite consciousness, there also arose the notions of diversity, and these notions exist in the infinite consciousness. On account of this, there appear to exist in this universe the various deities and the innumerable species of creations - some long-lived, some short-lived, some big and some small, some happy and some unhappy. All these living entities are but notions in the infinite consciousness: some consider themselves ignorant and bound, others are free from ignorance and liberated.

section IV - chapter 12 13

svaya vasanaya loko yad yat karma karoti yah sa tathaiva tad apnoti
netarasyeha kartrta (13/11)

Time continued:

O sage, gods, demons and human beings are non-different from this cosmic ocean of consciousness known as Brahman: this is the truth, all other assertions are false. They (the gods, etc.) entertain false notions (like 'I am not the absolute') and thus superimpose upon themselves impurity and the feeling of downfall. Even they dwell forever in this cosmic ocean of consciousness; yet considering themselves separated from Brahman, they are deluded. Though they are for ever pure, they superimpose impurity on themselves and this is the seed of all their actions and their consequences, viz., happiness, unhappiness, ignorance and enlightenment.

Of these beings, some are pure like Siva and Visnu, some are slightly tainted like men and gods, some are in dense delusion like trees and shrubs, some are blinded by ignorance like worms, some wander far far from wisdom and some have reached the state of enlightenment and liberation, like Brahma, Visnu and Siva.

Though revolving thus in the wheel of ignorance and delusion, when one steps on to the wisdom concerning the supreme truth he is instantly redeemed.

Of these, neither they who are like the trees firmly rooted in delusion, nor they who have utterly destroyed their delusion need engage themselves in the enquiry into the scriptures. The scriptures themselves have been produced by enlightened beings for the guidance of those who have been awakened from the slumber of ignorance after their evil nature and its expressions have ceased to be, and whose intellect naturally seeks such scriptural guidance.

O sage, it is only the mind that experiences pleasures and pain in this world, not the physical body of beings. In fact, the physical body is nothing but the fruit of the fancy of the mind; the physical body is not an existential fact independent of the mind. Whatever your son willed in his own mind, that he experiences; we are not responsible for this. **All beings here in this world obtain only those actions which spring from the storehouse of their own potentialities and predispositions: no one else is responsible for those actions, no superhuman being or god.**

Come, let us go to where your son is engaged in penance, after momentarily enjoying the pleasures of the heaven.

Saying thus, Yama (Time) caught hold of Bhrgu and led him away... While the sage Vasistha said this the eighth day came to a close and the assembly dispersed.

section IV - chapter 14

yo na sastrena tapasa na jnanena pi vidyaya vinasto me manomohah ksino sau
darsanena vam (31)

Vasistha continued:

O Rama, the sage Bhrgu and the deity presiding over Time proceeded towards the bank of the river Samanga. As they were descending the Mandara mountain they saw beautiful forests inhabited by perfected and enlightened sages. They saw mighty elephants in rut. They saw other perfected sages who were being playfully pelted with flowers by celestial nymphs. They saw Buddhist (or enlightened) monks roaming the forest. Then they descended on the plains dotted with villages and cities. Very soon, they had reached the bank of the river Samanga.

There, the sage Bhrgu saw his son, who had another body and whose nature was different from what it was before, who was of a peaceful disposition and whose mind was established in the tranquillity of enlightenment, though he was deeply reflecting the destiny of living beings in the universe. This radiant young man appeared to have reached total quiescence of mind in which the play of thoughts and counter-thoughts had ceased. He was absolutely pure, like a crystal that was not interested even in reflecting what is around it! There was no thought in his mind of either 'this is to be obtained' or 'this is to be avoided'.

Time pointed out this young man and said to Bhrgu: "This is your son." Sukra heard the words "Get up" and gently opened his eyes. Seeing the two radiant beings standing in front of him, he greeted them appropriately and seated them on a rock. In soft and sweet words, he said: "O Divine beings, I am truly blessed to behold both of you! **By your very presence before me the delusions of my mind have been destroyed: delusions which are not destroyed either by the study of scriptures, or by austerities, or by wisdom or by knowledge.** Even a shower of nectar is not so blissful as the sight of holy ones. The very earth trodden by your feet is holy."

The sage Bhrgu said to him: "Recollect yourself, for you are not an ignorant person!" Sukra was instantly awakened to the memory of his previous existence, which he beheld with his eyes closed for a brief period.

Sukra said:

"Behold, I have passed through countless embodiments and through countless experiences of pain and pleasure, wisdom and delusion. I have been a cruel king, a greedy trader and a wandering ascetic. There is no pleasure that I have not enjoyed, no action I have not performed, no unhappiness or happiness I have not endured. Now I wish for nothing, nor do I wish to avoid anything: let nature take its course. Come, father, let us go to where the previous body stands, dried up."

section IV - chapter 15

jnasya jnasya ca dehasya yavad dehamayam kramah lokavad vyavaharo yam sakttya sakttya thava sada (35)

Vasistha continued:

Soon they arrived at the place where the body of Sukra, the son of Bhrgu, lay in an advanced condition of decay. Looking at this, Sukra wailed: "Ah, look at this body which was admired and adored by even celestial nymphs; it is now the abode of worms and vermin. The body which was smeared with sandal-paste is now covered with dust. O body! You are now known as a corpse and you are truly frightening me. Even wild beasts are afraid of your dreadful appearance. Totally devoid of sensations, this body remains in a state of utter freedom from thoughts and ideas. Freed from the goblin of the mind, it remains unaffected by even natural calamities. Rid of the frolics of the restless monkey known as the mind, this tree of the body has fallen uprooted. It is indeed good fortune that I am able to see this body, liberated from sorrow, in this dense forest."

Rama asked:

Holy sir, even though as you have just said Sukra had passed through countless embodiments, why is it that he bemoaned the fate of the body which was born of Bhrgu?

Vasistha replied:

Rama, it is because all the other bodies were the hallucinations of this original body, which was that of Sukra the son of sage Bhrgu. Soon after creation at the end of the previous dissolution, on account of the will of the infinite consciousness, the jiva or the living soul which became the food that entered the body of the sage Bhrgu, was later born as Sukra. It was in that embodiment that this soul had all the rites and rituals appropriate to the birth of a brahmana boy.

Why did Sukra (now known as Vasudeva) bemoan that body? **Whether one is wise or ignorant, as long as the body lasts its functions continue unaltered according to its nature. And the embodied person functions as it is appropriate in the world, either attached or unattached.** The difference between the two lies in their mental dispositions: in the case of the wise these are liberating and in the case of the ignorant these are binding. As long as there is the body, so long shall pain be painful and pleasure pleasant: but the wise are not attached to either. Rejoicing in joy and suffering in suffering, the great ones appear to behave like the ignorant, though in fact they are enlightened. He whose sense-organs are freed but whose organs of action are restrained is liberated; he whose sense-organs are bound but whose organs of action are free and unrestrained is in bondage. The wise behave appropriately in society though inwardly they are free of all need to conform. O Rama, renounce all cravings and longings and do what needs to be done, in the realisation that you are ever the pure infinite consciousness.

section IV - chapter 16

matputro yam iti sneho bhrgum apy aharat tada paramatmiyata dehe yavad
akrtibhavina (18)

Vasistha continued:

Hearing the young ascetic Vasudeva mourning the fate of his previous body, Time (or Death) intervened and said to Sukra:

Time (or Death) said:

O son of Bhrgu! Abandon this body of yours and re-enter your other body, even as a king re-enters his kingdom. With that other body of Sukra, once again engage yourself in penance and then become the spiritual preceptor of the demons. At the end of the epoch, you will give up that body, never to become embodied again.

Having said this, Time vanished at that very place.

Thereupon, Sukra abandoned the body of Vasudeva in which he had performed intense penance on the bank of the river Samanga and re-entered the decayed body of Sukra, the son of the sage Bhrgu. At that very moment, the body of Vasudeva fell down like an uprooted tree and became a corpse. The sage Bhrgu sprinkled the body of Sukra with the holy water from his own water-pot, uttering sacred hymns which had the power to revive that body, clothing it with flesh, etc. Instantly, that body became youthful and radiant as it was before.

Sukra got up from the meditative posture and seeing his father, the sage Bhrgu, standing in front of him, fell prostrate at his feet. Bhrgu was delighted to see his son thus resurrected from the dead and fondly embraced him, smiling happily all the while. **The feeling of affection at the thought "This is my son" overcame even the sage Bhrgu; this is natural as long as there is body-consciousness.** Both of them rejoiced at this happy re-union.

Both Bhrgu and Sukra then performed the funeral rites of the body of the brahmana boy Vasudeva; for thus do the men of wisdom honour social customs and traditions.

Both of them then shone with the radiance of the sun and the moon. They who were surely the spiritual preceptors of the whole universe roamed the world. Established firmly in the knowledge of the self, they remained unmoved by the changes that took place in the time and in the environment. In course of time, Sukra became the spiritual preceptor of the demons; and his father Bhrgu became one of the sages of highest wisdom.

Such is the story of the sage Sukra; who on account of his infatuation with a nymph, wandered in countless wombs.

section IV - chapter 17

pratibhasavasat asti na sti vastv avalokanat dirghasvapno jagajjalamanam
cittadantinah (18)

Rama asked:

Holy sir, why does not the wish of others materialise as the wish of Sukra materialised in his ascent to heaven, etc.?

Vasistha replied:

Sukra's mind was pure, since that was his first embodiment; that mind was not loaded with the impurities of other previous embodiments. That mind is pure in which all cravings are in a state of quiescence. Whatever that pure mind wishes, that materialises. What happened in this respect to Sukra is possible for everyone else.

The world exists in each jiva in a seed state and becomes manifest like the tree sprouting from the seed. The world is thus falsely fancied by each individual. The world neither arises nor sets; all this is nothing but the fancy of the deluded mind. Within each one there is a fancy world. Even as one's dreams are unknown to others, one's world is unknown to others. There are goblins and demi-gods and demons, all of which are embodiments of delusion. Even so have we come into being, O Rama, out of pure thought-force, and consider the false to be real. Such indeed is the origin of creation in the infinite consciousness. Materiality is not factual though it is perceived in emptiness. Everyone thus fancies one's own world; when this truth is realised, the world thus fancied comes to an end. **This world exists only in appearance or imagination and not because one sees the material substances. It is like a long dream or a juggler's trick. It is the post to which the mind-elephant is tied.**

The mind is the world, the world is the mind; when one is realised as not true, both of them vanish! When the mind is purified it reflects the truth, and the unreal world-appearance vanishes. The mind is purified by persistent contemplation of truth.

Rama asked:

How did the succession of births etc. arise in the mind of Sukra?

Vasistha replied:

Sukra had been taught by his father Bhrgu concerning the succession or births, and this teaching had conditioned Sukra's mind which conjured up the expansion of such conditioning. Only when the mind is totally purified of all conditioning does it regain its utter purity; that pure mind experiences liberation.

section IV - chapter 18

na karane karanadi pare vastvadi karane vicaraniyah saro hi kim asara
vicaranaih (23)

Vasistha continued:

The diversity that is seen in this creation, O Rama, is but an appearance of diversity. Evolution or involution has the one infinite consciousness as its source and as its goal. During evolution, there seems to be an apparent diversity in the one infinite consciousness, in accordance with the notions that appear in that consciousness. Some of these notions intermingle, thus producing infinite variety in this diversity. Some do not thus intermingle. But, in fact, all these notions appear in every atom of existence and these atoms exist independent of one another. The totality is known as the absolute Brahman.

Each individual sees only those objects which are rooted in his own mind. When the ideas in the mind do not bear fruits, there is a change in the mind; there follows a succession of births to suit these psychological changes. It is this psychological connection that creates the conviction in the reality of birth and death, and in the reality of the body. When this conviction is given up, there is the cessation of embodiment.

It is only because of forgetfulness of truth that the confusion arises that the unreal is real. By the purification of the life-force (prana) and by the knowledge of that which is beyond this prana or life-force, one gains knowledge of all that is to be known concerning the activities of the mind as well as the basis for the succession of births.

The self of all living beings passes through three states: waking, dreaming and deep sleep. They have nothing to do with the body. (Even this is based on the assumption of the existence of living beings in the one self, which is not the truth.) The wise man who goes beyond the deep sleep state (which is pure consciousness) returns to the source: but the fool who does not is caught up in the life-cycle.

Since the consciousness is infinite, one is led from one life-cycle to another, even beyond the world-cycle. Such creations are endless, one appearing within another like the barks of a plantain stem. Of course, it is unwise to compare Brahman the absolute with anything.

One should enquire into that which is truly the uncaused cause of all substances, which is yet beyond all such causation: this alone is worth enquiring into, for this alone is the essential. Why enquire into the non-essential?

section IV - chapter 18

drsyam pasyan svamatmanam na drasta samprapasyati prapancakranta samvitteh
kasyodeti nija sthitih (27)

Vasistha continued:

O Rama, the tree in a seed grows out of it after destroying the seed: but Brahman creates this world without destroying itself - the tree (world) appears even when the seed (Brahman) is as it is. Hence, it is impossible to compare the incomparable Brahman with anything whatsoever; whereas the tree, etc. are definable material substances, Brahman is nameless and formless being. It is Brahman alone that becomes what appears to be of a different nature; yet, from another point of view, it does not so become, for it is eternal and changeless. One cannot therefore posit anything concerning Brahman: it is not possible to say that it has not become all this, nor is it possible to say that it has become all this.

When the self is seen as an object, the seer is not seen (realised); as long as the objective universe is perceived one does not realise the self. When you see the mirage as water, you do not perceive the rising hot-air; but, when you perceive the hot-air, you do not see water in the mirage! When one is truth, the other is not.

The eyes which perceive all the objects of the world, do not see themselves. As long as one entertains the notion of objectivity, the self is not realized. Brahman is as subtle and pure as space. It cannot be realised by any effort whatsoever. As long as one sees what is seen with the inner feeling that they are objects of perception (himself being their separate seer or subject), the realisation of Brahman is far indeed.

It is only when the division between the seer and the seen is given up, only when the two are 'seen' as of one substance, that the truth is realised. There is no object which is totally of a different nature from the subject. Nor can the subject (self) be seen as if it were an object! In fact, the subject (self) alone appears to the sight as the seen (object): there is no other object of perception here. If again the subject or the self alone is all this, then surely it is not even the subject or the seer! There is no division in such a vision.

Just as sugar becomes diverse sweetmeats without ever losing its natural sweetness, this infinite consciousness or Brahman visualises itself as all this infinite diversity without ever divesting itself of its essential nature. There is no limit whatsoever to the manifestation of this infinite consciousness.

section IV - chapter 18

citramrtam namrtameva viddhi citranalam nanalameva viddhi citrangana
nunamananganeti vaca vivekastv aviveka eva (69)

Vasistha continued:

Each jiva experiences within itself whatever and however it has given rise to within itself with the help of its own life-force. O Rama, behold with the eye of your inner wisdom the truth that in every atom of existence there are countless world-appearances. In everyone's mind, in the very space, in every rock, in the flame of fire and in water there exist countless world-appearances; even as oil exists in sesame seed. It is when the mind becomes absolutely pure that it becomes pure consciousness, and therefore one with the infinite consciousness.

This world-appearance is but a long dream which manifests everywhere, being the imagination of Brahma the creator and all others. The objects thus born in the Creator's dream migrate from dream to dream, from embodiment to embodiment - thus generating the illusory solidity of this world-appearance. This dream-like appearance is yet true during the period of the dream itself.

Within every atom is the potential experience of every kind, even as a seed contains within itself the different aspects of the tree (flowers, leaves, fruits, etc.) Within every atom of existence, there is the infinite consciousness: hence, it is indivisible. Therefore, give up all your notions of diversity or unity. Time, space, action (or motion) and matter are all but different aspects of the one infinite consciousness: and consciousness experiences them within itself, whether it happens to be the body of the creator Brahma or that of a worm.

An atom of consciousness, when it attains to the fully grown state of a body, experiences its own faculties. Someone perceives the objects spread out as if outside because the infinite consciousness is omnipresent. Others behold everything within, evolving and devolving alternately. Some go from one dream-experience to another, wandering in this world-appearance.

The rare few realise that the world-appearance seen within themselves is illusory, except as the one infinite consciousness which alone is ever true. On account of this consciousness, the world appears in the jiva: and there are jivas within jivas, ad infinitum. It is when one thus experiences the truth, that he is freed from illusion. At the same time, one's craving for pleasure is thinned out. This is the only proof of wisdom. **A painted pot of nectar is not nectar, nor a painted flame fire and a painting of a woman is not a woman; wise words are mere words (ignorance), not wisdom, unless they are substantiated by the absence of desire and anger.**

Section IV - Chapter 19

devan devayajo yanti yaksa yaksan vrajanti hi brahma brahmayajo yanti yad
atuccham tad asrayet (5)

Vasistha continued:

The very seed for all jivas, which is the absolute Brahman, exists everywhere; and within the jivas there are countless other jivas. All this is because the entire universe is totally permeated with the infinite consciousness.

Upon their appearance as the jivas, whatever type of contemplation they adopt, they soon become of the same nature. **They who are devoted to the gods reach the gods; they who adore the demi-gods, attain the demigods. They who contemplate the absolute Brahman, become Brahman. Hence, one should resort to that which is not limited, conditioned or finite.** By contemplating the form of the nymph, Sukra was bound; and when he realised the purity of his self which is infinite consciousness, he was instantly liberated.

Rama asked:

Holy sir, pray tell me of the true nature of the waking and the dreaming states. What constitutes the waking state, and how does dream, or delusion in the waking state, arise?

Vasistha said:

That state which endures is known as the waking state; and that which is transient is the dream state. During the period of even the dream, it takes on the characteristic of the waking state; and when the waking state is realised to be of a fleeting nature, it gets the characteristic of dream. Otherwise, the two are the same. When the life-force in the body stirs, the various organs of thought, word and deed perform their functions. They flow towards their objects of perception in accordance with the deluded notions that prevail in the mind. This life-force perceives diverse forms within the self. Since this perception seems to be of an enduring nature, it is known as the waking state.

But, when the life-force (jiva-cetana) is not thus diverted by the mind and body, it remains rooted in peace within the heart. There is no movement of consciousness in the nerves of the body nor does the life-force activate the senses. However, that consciousness which is awake even in deep sleep and which is also the light that shines in waking and dreaming, is the transcendental consciousness, turiya.

When again the seeds of ignorance and delusion expand, there arises the first thought - which is the thought 'I am'. Then, one perceives thoughtforms within the mind in dreams. At this time the external sense-organs do not function, but the inner senses function and there is perception within oneself. This is the dream state. When the life-force again activates the sense-organs, once again there is wakefulness.

section IV - chapter 20 21

sunya eva kusule tu simho stiti bhayam yatha sunya eva sarire 'ntar baddho
'smiti bhayam tatha (21/49)

Vasistha continued:

I have described the states of the mind just to enable you to understand the nature of the mind: it has no other use. For, mind takes on the form of that which it intensely contemplates. Existence, non-existence, gaining and renouncing - all these are no more than moods of the mind.

Rama asked:

If mind is all this, Lord, how does it ever get tainted?

Vasistha replied:

It is a beautiful question, Rama, but not the proper time to ask: when you have listened to what I have to say, you will surely find the answer to this question with the utmost clarity.

That the mind is impure, is the experience of everyone who strives for liberation. Depending upon one's particular point of view, everyone describes it differently.

Just as air coming into contact with different flowers takes on their scent, so mind entertaining different notions takes on those moods, creates bodies suitable to them and, as the energy activating the senses, enjoys the fruition of its own notions. It is the mind, again, that provides the fuel for the functioning of the organs of action. Mind is action and action is mind - the two are like the flower and its scent. The conviction of the mind determines the action and the action strengthens the conviction.

Mind is everywhere devoted to dharma, wealth, pleasure and freedom: but everyone has a different definition of these and is convinced that that definition is the truth. Even so, the followers of the sage Kapila, the Vedantins, the Vijnanavadins, the Jainas and others assert that theirs is the only path to liberation. Their philosophies are the expressions of their experiences which are the fruit of their own practice, which is in accordance with the convictions in their mind.

Rama, bondage is none other than the notion of an object. This notion is Maya, ignorance, etc. It is the cataract that blinds one to the sun of truth. Ignorance raises a doubt; doubt perceives - that perception is perverted. **In darkness when one approaches even a lion's empty cage, he is afraid. Even so, one ignorantly believes he is imprisoned in this empty body.** The notions of 'I' and 'the world' are but shadows, not truth. Such notions alone create 'objects': these objects are neither true nor false. A mother who considers herself a housekeeper behaves like one; a wife who considers herself her husband's mother behaves like one for the time being. Therefore, Rama, abandon the notions of 'I' and 'this' and remain established in the truth.

section IV - chapter 22

vicarana pariijnata svabhavasyoditatmanah anukampya bhavantiha brahma visnv
indra sankarah

Vasistha continued:

He who acquires wisdom through self-enquiry and possesses the following qualifications enjoys clarity of self-knowledge even as water becomes clear when a piece of alum is thrown into it.

His mind is undisturbed by modifications. His being has been transmuted. Having attained what is worth attainment, viz., self-knowledge, he has abandoned the very notion of objectivity. Since the seer alone sees, he does not regard any other factor as the seer (subject). He is fully awake in the supreme truth; hence he is totally asleep, as it were, in the world-appearance. His dispassion being pervasive, he is disinterested in pleasure and its opposite. His cravings have ceased, even as the restlessness of rivers ceases on their entering the ocean. He has cut the net of world-appearance even as a mouse cuts the snare.

It is only when the mind has become devoid of all attachment, when it is not swayed by the pairs of opposites, when it is not attracted by objects and when it is totally independent of all supports, that it is freed from the cage of delusion. When all doubt comes to rest and when there is neither elation nor depression, then the mind shines like the full moon. When the impurities of the mind have ceased to be, there arise in the heart all the auspicious qualities, and there is equal vision everywhere. Even as darkness is dispelled by the rising sun, the world-illusion is dispelled when the sun of infinite consciousness arises in the heart. Such wisdom as is capable of gladdening the hearts of all beings in the universe manifests and expands. In short, he who has known that which alone is worth knowing transcends all coming and going, birth and death.

Even the gods Brahma, Visnu, Indra and Siva are sympathised with and assisted by the holy ones in whom self-knowledge has arisen through self-enquiry or direct observation.

When there is absence of egoism, there is no confusion in the mind when that mind functions naturally. Just as waves rise and fall in the ocean, the worlds arise and vanish: this deludes the ignorant, but not the wise. The space in a pot does not come into being when the pot is brought in, nor is it destroyed when the pot is broken: he who knows that such is the relationship between his body (pot) and the self (space) is not influenced by praise and censure.

This glamorous world-appearance haunts one only as long as one does not engage oneself in enquiry into the nature of the self. When wisdom arises, delusion sets.

section IV - chapter 22

mayi sarvam idam protam sutre manigana iva cittam tu na ham eveti yah pasyati
sa pasyati (31)

Vasistha continued:

O Rama, he sees the truth who sees the body as a product of deluded understanding and as the fountain-source of misfortune, and who knows that the body is not the self.

He sees the truth who sees that in this body pleasure and pain are experienced on account of the passage of time and the circumstances in which one is placed; and that they do not pertain to him.

He sees the truth who sees that he is the omnipresent infinite consciousness which encompasses within itself all that takes place everywhere at all times.

He sees the truth who knows that the self, which is as subtle as the millionth part of the tip of a hair divided a million times, pervades everything.

He sees the truth who sees that there is no division at all between the self and the other, and that the one infinite light of consciousness exists as the sole reality.

He sees the truth who sees that the non-dual consciousness which indwells all beings is omnipotent and omnipresent.

He sees the truth who is not deluded into thinking that he is the body which is subject to illness, fear, agitation, old age and death.

He sees the truth who sees that all things are strung in the self as beads are strung on a thread, and who knows 'I am not the mind'.

He sees the truth who sees that all this is Brahman, neither 'I' nor 'the other'.

He sees the truth who sees all beings in the three worlds as his own family, deserving of his sympathy and protection.

He sees the truth who knows that the self alone exists and that there is no substance in objectivity.

He is unaffected who knows that pleasure, pain, birth, death, etc., are all the self only.

He is firmly established in the truth who feels: "What should I acquire, what should I renounce, when all this is the one self?"

Salutations to that abode of auspiciousness, who is filled with the supreme realisation that the entire universe is truly Brahman alone, which remains unchanged during all the apparent creation, existence and dissolution of the universe.

section IV - chapter 23

ajnasyeeyam anantanam dukkhanam kosamalika jnasya tviyam anantanam sukhanam
kosamalika (18)

Vasistha continued:

Rama, he who treads the superior path, though he dwells in this body which functions as the potter's wheel does by past momentum, is untainted by the actions that might be performed. In his case, the body exists for his pleasure and for the liberation of his soul; he does not experience unhappiness in it.

To the ignorant, this body is the source of suffering; but to the enlightened man, this body is the source of infinite delight. While it exists the wise man derives from it great pleasure and the delight of enlightenment; and when its life-span comes to an end he does not regard it as a loss at all. Hence, to the enlightened person the body itself is a source of infinite delight. And, since it transports him in this world in which he roams freely and delightfully, the body is regarded as a vehicle of wisdom. Since it is through the body that the wise man derives the different sense-experiences and gains the friendship and affection of others, to him it is a source of gain. The enlightened man reigns happily while dwelling in the city known as the body, even as Indra the king of heaven dwells in his city.

The body does not subject the wise man to the temptations of lust and greed, nor does it allow ignorance or fear to invade him. The intelligence that governs the wise man's body is not drawn out by the excitement which the ignorant call pleasure, but it rests within in a state of contemplation.

The embodied being comes lightly into contact with the body while it lasts but is untouched by it once it is gone, even as air touches a pot which exists, but not one that does not exist.

Just as the most deadly poison which was drunk by lord Siva did not harm him but enhanced his charm, the varied actions and enjoyments of an enlightened person do not bind him to the cycle of birth and death. Just as if you know someone is a thief and deal with him with that knowledge, he becomes your friend, when you enjoy the objects knowing their true nature, they give you joy. The wise man who is rid of all doubts and in whom there is no image of self, reigns supreme in the body.

Therefore one should abandon all cravings for pleasure and attain wisdom. Only the mind that has been well disciplined really experiences happiness. The captive king, when freed, is delighted with a piece of bread; the king who has not been subjected to captivity does not enjoy as much, even should it be the annexation of another kingdom. Hence, the wise man grinds his teeth and strives to conquer his mind and senses: such conquest is far greater than conquest of external foes.

section IV - chapter 24 25

maha naraka samrajye matta duskrta varanah asa sara salakadhya durjaya
hindriyarah (24/1)

Vasistha continued:

O Rama, in the great empire known as dreadful hell, evil actions roam like mighty elephants in rut. The senses which are responsible for these actions are equipped with a formidable magazine of cravings. Hence, these senses are hard to conquer. These ungrateful senses destroy the body, their own abode and support.

However, one who is equipped with wisdom is able to restrain craving without injuring the being even as a noose restrains the elephant without harming its being. The bliss enjoyed by the wise man who has his senses under control is incomparably superior to the enjoyment of a king who rules over a city built with brick and mortar. The former's intelligence grows in clarity as his craving for sense-pleasure is worn out. However, the craving disappears completely only after the supreme truth has been seen.

To the wise, the mind is an obedient servant, good counsellor, able commander of the senses, pleasing wife, protecting father and trustworthy friend. It impels him in good actions.

Rama, be established in truth and live in freedom in a mindless state. Behave not like the demons Dama, Vyala and Kata, whose story I shall presently narrate to you.

In the netherworld there was a mighty demon known as Sambara. He was a pastmaster in the art of magic. He created a magic city with a hundred suns in the horizon, walking and talking beings made of gold, swans carved in precious stones, ice-cold fire and his own celestial bodies. He was a terror to the gods of heaven.

When he was asleep or away from his city, the gods took advantage of the situation and killed his army. Enraged, the demon invaded the heaven. The gods, afraid of his magic powers, hid themselves. He could not find them. But, they managed to kill his forces at opportune moments. In order to protect his forces, the demon created three other demons: Dama, Vyala and Kata.

These three had had no previous incarnation and hence they were free from every type of mental conditioning. They had no fear, doubt or other predisposition; they did not flee before the enemy, they were not afraid of death; they did not know the meaning of war, victory or defeat. In fact, they were not independent jivas at all; they were merely the robot-like working projections of the demon Sambara. Their behaviour was like that of one who had eradicated all latent tendencies or conditioning but had not attained enlightenment. The demon Sambara was delighted that his army had invincible protectors.

section IV - chapter 26 27

yasya ntar vasana rajjva grathibandhah saririnah mahanapi bahujno pi sa
balena pi jiyate (27/20)

Vasistha continued:

The demon Sambara despatched his invulnerable army, protected by the three new demons, to fight with the gods. The army of the gods, too, got ready to fight. The demons were unarmed and they were engaged in hand-to-hand combat with the gods. A fierce battle ensued. Later they fought with all kinds of terrible missiles, destroying all the cities, villages, caves, animals and others. Each side alternately enjoyed victory and suffered defeat.

The three principal demons looked for the principal gods, but they could not be found. The demons went back to Sambara to report to him. The gods prayed to the creator Brahma, who appeared before them at once, and begged him to find a way to destroy the three demons.

Brahma said:

O gods, Sambara cannot be killed now. He will be killed after a hundred years, by lord Visnu. It is wise for you to retreat from battle, as if defeated by the three demons. In due course, on account of their engagement in this war, the ego-sense will arise in them. Then they will be subjected to psychological conditioning and develop latent tendencies. Just now, these three demons are utterly devoid of the ego-sense and its adjuncts (conditioning and tendencies).

They in whom the ego-sense ('me') and its counterpart (the tendencies) do not exist, know neither desire nor anger. They are invincible. **He who is bound by the ego-sense ('me') and by the conditionin of the mind, even if he is regarded as a great man or a man of great learning, can be defeated even by a child.**

In fact, the notions of 'I' and 'mine' are the eager receptacles which receive sorrow and suffering. He who identifies the body with the self sinks in misery; he who even envisions the self as the omnipresent being overcomes sorrow. To the latter, there is nothing in the three worlds which is not the self and which is to be desired.

He whose mind is conditioned can be defeated: in the absence of such conditioning even a mosquito becomes immortal. The conditioned mind experiences suffering; when rid of the conditioning, it experiences delight. Conditioning or craving weakens a person. Hence, you need not feel anxious to fight these three demons. Do what you can to create in them the feelings of 'I' and 'mine'. Since they are ignorant creatures of the demon Sambara they will easily fall for this bait. Then they can be easily defeated by you all.

section IV - chapter 28 29 30

naikathyatisayad yad vad darpanam bimbavad bhavet abhyasatisayat tadvat te sahanaratam gatah (29/6)

Vasistha continued:

Having said thus, the creator Brahma vanished. The gods rested in their abodes for a while, in preparation for a fresh onslaught on the demons. The renewed fighting between the armies of the gods and the demons was even more fierce than the previous one. There was terrible destruction everywhere.

This continued involvement in fighting generated in the three demon-leaders the basic notion of 'I am'. **Even as a mirror reflects an object held close to it, one's behaviour reflects as the ego-sense in one's consciousness.** However, if this behaviour is 'held at a distance' from consciousness and there is no identification with such behaviour, the ego-sense does not arise.

Once this ego-sense arose, there quickly followed the desire for the prolongation of life in the body, acquisition of wealth, health, pleasure, etc. These desires greatly debilitated their personality. Then there arose confusion in their minds, which in turn gave rise to feelings of 'This is mine' and 'This is my body'. All these inevitably resulted in inefficiency and inability to do their own work. They were greatly attached to eating and drinking. Objects gave them feelings of pleasure and thus robbed them of their freedom. With the loss of freedom, their courage also went and they experienced fear. They were terribly worried at the very thought, "We shall die in this war".

The gods took advantage of this situation and began to attack these demons. The three demons who were possessed by fear of death fled.

When the demon-army saw that their invincible protectors had fled before the invading gods, they were thoroughly demoralised; the demons fell by the thousands.

When the demon Sambara heard that his army had been routed by the gods, he was furious. Referring to the three invincible demons, Dama, Vyala and Kata, he demanded: "Where have they gone?" Afraid of his wrath, these three demons took refuge in the nethermost world.

There, the servants of the god of death, Yama, gave them refuge and also three girls to marry. They lived in the netherworld for a long time. One day they were visited by Yama himself, without his paraphernalia. They failed to recognise and honour him. Angered, Yama despatched them to the most dreadful hells. After suffering there and after a number of incarnations in different subhuman species, they now live as fish in a lake in Kashmir.

section IV - chapter 31

ahancaram ato rama marjaya ntah prayatnatah aham na kincideveti bhavayitva
sukhi bhava (7)

Vasistha continued:

Thus you see the disastrous results that arise from non-wisdom. You see how the invincible demons were utterly defeated and disgraced on account of their ego-sense, which gave rise to fear in their hearts. The deadly creeper of worldliness sprouts from the seed of the ego-sense. Therefore, **O Rama, abandon this ego-sense with all the strength that lies within; and by being established in the conviction: "I is nothing", be happy.** The one infinite consciousness, which is of the nature of pure bliss, is eclipsed by the shadow of the ego-sense.

Though the demons Dama, Vyala and Kata were really free from the cycle of birth and death, on account of their ego-sense they had to be subjected to birth and death. They of whom even the gods were afraid are today miserable fish in a lake in Kashmir.

Rama asked:

Holy sir, Dama, Vyala and Kata were unreal, having been produced by the magic of Sambara. How was it that they became real entities like us?

Vasistha replied:

Rama, just as the demons Dama and others were unreal and the products of magic, even so are we and all the gods and others. All these notions of 'I' and 'you', O Rama, are unreal. That you and I are seen to be real entities does not alter the truth; even if a dead person appears before you now, he is still dead!

However, it is unwise to declare the truth ('Brahman alone is real') to the ignorant. For, the reality of the world-appearance, which has become deep-rooted in the heart of the ignorant, will not be dispelled except through intense enquiry into the purport of the scriptures. One who declares "This world is unreal, Brahman alone is real" to such ignorant people is laughed at. However well you explain to them that 'All this is Brahman', the ignorant cannot comprehend it any more than a corpse can walk. That truth can be experienced only by the wise.

O Rama, neither we nor these demons are real. The reality is the one infinite consciousness which does not undergo any change. In that infinite consciousness there arise the notions of yourself, myself, these demons etc., and they are invested with reality because the perceiving consciousness is real. Where this consciousness is 'awake' as it were, there such notions arise; and where it is 'asleep', there such notions are dissolved. Yet, in the infinite consciousness there are no such states as awake and asleep. It is but pure consciousness. Realise this and be free from sorrow and fear caused by division.

section IV - chapter 32

cidakaso ham ityeva rajasa ranjitaprabhah svarupam atyajanneva virupam api
buddhyate (31)

Rama asked:

O Holy sage, pray, tell me, when and how will the three demons attain liberation?

Vasistha replied:

Rama, when they listen to the narration of their story and are reminded of their own essential nature as pure consciousness, they will be liberated.

In course of time, there will arise a city named Adhithana in the middle of the country known as Kashmir. In the centre of that city there will be a hill whose peak will be known as Pradyumna. On top of that hill there will be a skyscraper. In a corner of that building the demon Vyala will be born as a sparrow.

In that building, a king known as Yasaskar will reside. The demon Dama will be born as a mosquito and reside in a hole in one of the pillars of that palace.

Elsewhere in that city there will be a palace known as Ratnavali-vihara which will be inhabited by the state minister known as Narasimha. The demon Kata will be born as a bird (myna) and live in that palace.

One day that minister, Narasimha, will recite the story of the three demons Dama, Vyala and Kata. Listening to it, the myna will be enlightened. It will recall that its original personality was but a magical creation of the demon Sambara; this recollection will free it from the magic of Sambara. The demon Kata will thus attain nirvana (liberation).

Other people will recount this story and the sparrow will also attain liberation after listening to it. Thus will the demon Vyala attain liberation.

In the same way, the mosquito-demon Dama will also listen to this story and will also attain liberation.

Such is the story, O Rama, of the three demons Dama, Vyala and Kata, who, on account of their ego-sense and their cravings, fell into hell. All this is nothing more than the play of ignorance and delusion.

In fact, it is the pure consciousness that entertains the impure notion of 'I am', playfully as it were, and without ever renouncing its essential nature as consciousness, experiences the distorted image of itself within itself. Even though this distorted image is truly unreal, the ego-sense ('I am') believes it to be real and gets deluded.

section IV - chapter 32

acaracarucaritasya vivikttavrtteh samsarasaukhyaphaladuhkhasasvagrhdnoh
ayuryasamsi ca gunas ca sahaiva laksmya phullanti madhavalata iva satphalaya
(60)

Vasistha continued:

O Rama, they who are established in the state of liberation, as pointed out by the scriptures, surely cross this ocean of world-appearance as their consciousness flows towards the self. But, they who are caught in the net of polemics, which are only productive of sorrow and confusion, forfeit their own highest good. Even in the case of the path shown by the scriptures, only one's direct experience leads one along the safest way to the supreme goal.

What else is left of a greedy man except a handful of ashes? But, he who looks upon the world as less valuable than a blade of grass never comes to grief. He who has fully realised the infinite is protected by the cosmic deities. Hence, one should not set foot on the wrong path even in times of great distress. He who has earned a good reputation through a virtuous life gains whatever has not been gained and is rid of misfortune. Only he can be considered a human being who is not complacent with his own virtue, who is devoted to the teaching he has heard and who strives to tread the path of truth: others are animals in human disguise. He who is filled with the milk of human kindness is surely the abode of the lord Hari (who is said to dwell in the ocean of milk).

Whatever has to be enjoyed has already been enjoyed, whatever has to be seen has been seen: what else is there new in this world which a wise man should seek? Hence, one should be devoted to one's duty as ordained by the scriptures, having given up all craving for pleasure. Adore the saints: this will save you from death.

Adhering to the injunctions of the scriptures one should patiently wait for perfection which comes in its own time. Arrest the downward trend by studying this holy scripture for liberation. Enquire constantly into the nature of truth, knowing that 'this is but a reflection'. Do not be led by others; only animals are led by others. Wake up from the slumber of ignorance. Wake up and strive to end old age and death.

Wealth is the mother of evil. Sense-pleasure is the source of pain. Misfortune is the best fortune. Rejection by all is victory. **Life, honour and noble qualities blossom and attain fruition in one whose conduct and behaviour are good and pleasant, who is devoted to seclusion and who does not crave for the pleasures of the world, which lead to suffering.**

section IV - chapter 33

sarvatisaya saphalyat sarvam sarvatra sarvada sambhavatyeva tasmāt tvam
subhodyogam na samtyaja (1)

Vasistha continued:

O Rama, every zealous effort is always crowned with fruition. Hence, do not abandon right effort. Surely, it is necessary to weigh the worthiness of the end-result before plunging into zealous effort of any sort. If you carefully investigate in this manner you will surely discover that self-knowledge alone is capable of utterly destroying all pain and pleasure by their very roots; hence zealous effort should be directed towards self-knowledge alone. Get rid of all notions of objectivity created by the pleasure-seeking desire within you. Is there any happiness which is untainted by unhappiness?

Both the absence of restraint and the practice of restraint are indeed one in the absolute Brahman and there is no real division between them; yet, the practice of restraint bestows great joy and auspiciousness upon you. Hence, resort to self-restraint and give up ego-sense. Enquire into the nature of truth and seek the company of the wise. They indeed are good and wise men who live in accordance with the scriptural injunctions and in whom greed, delusion and anger decrease day by day.

In the company of the wise, self-knowledge arises; and at the same time the notion of the reality of the objects of perception as such wanes and eventually vanishes. When the world as object of perception thus fades away, only the supreme truth exists and the jiva or the individual personality is absorbed in it, as it does not find any object worth clinging to. The world as an object was never created, nor does it exist as such now, nor will it ever be so: it is only the one supreme being that exists at all times as the sole reality.

Thus have I explained to you in a thousand ways the essential unreality of the world-as-an-object-of-perception. It is nothing but the pure space of consciousness: in it there is no division which could be referred to as 'This is the truth' and 'This is not real'. The wonderful manifestation of that infinite consciousness alone is regarded as the world, naught else. In it, the divisions like subject and object and substance and shadow are unwarranted arbitrary assumptions like the distinction made between the sun's rays and sunlight: in truth, only the indivisible and unmodified consciousness exists. When in accordance with its own nature it closes and opens its eyes, as it were, there is what is known as dissolution and creation of the universe.

section IV - chapter 33

aham artho pariijnatah paramarthambare malam pariijnato ham arthas tu
paramatmabaram bhavet (24)

Vasistha continued:

When it is not rightly understood, the 'I' appears to be an impure notion in the infinite consciousness; but, when the 'I' is rightly understood, its meaning is seen as the infinite consciousness. When its own reality is seen it does not appear as the ego-sense any more, but as the one infinite reality. In fact, there is no distinct entity as 'I'.

When this truth is revealed to one with a pure mind, his ignorance is at once dispelled; but others cling to their own false notion like a child clinging to the notion of the existence of a ghost.

When the 'I' as a separate entity is thus known to be false, how can one believe in the other notions (of heaven, hell etc.) that are related to it? Craving for heaven and even for liberation arises in one's heart only as long as the 'I' is seen as an entity. As long as the 'I' thus remains, there is only unhappiness in one's life. And, this notion of the 'I' cannot be got rid of except through self-knowledge. When one is possessed by this ghost of 'I-ness', no scriptures, no mantras, nothing enables one to get rid of it.

Only by the constant remembrance of the truth that the self is a pure reflection in the infinite consciousness does 'I-ness' cease to grow. The world-appearance is a juggler's trick; all subject-object relationship between it and me is foolish - when this understanding takes root, 'I-ness' is uprooted. When it is seen that it is the 'I' that gives rise to the notion of a 'world', both of them cease in peace.

However, the higher form of 'I-ness' which gives rise to the feeling 'I am one with the entire universe, there is nothing apart from me', is the understanding of the enlightened person. Another type of 'I-ness' is when one feels that the 'I' is extremely subtle and atomic in nature and therefore different from and independent of everything in this universe: this, too, is unobjectionable, being conducive to liberation. But the 'I-ness' that has been described earlier on is one which identifies the self with the body: this is to be abandoned firmly. By the persistent cultivation of the higher form of 'I-ness' the lower form is eradicated.

Having kept the lower 'I-ness' in check, one should resort to the higher form of 'I-ness', persistently generating in oneself the feeling: 'I am the All' or 'I am extremely subtle and independent'. In due course even this higher form of 'I-ness' should be completely abandoned. Then one may either engage oneself in all activity or remain in seclusion: there is no fear of downfall for him.

Section IV - Chapter 34

samyag alokanat satyad vasana praviliyate vasanavilaye cetah samam ayàti
dipavat (28)

Vasistha continued:

O Rama, after Sambara had been deserted by the three demons Dama, Vyala and Kata, he realised that they had foolishly entertained egoistic notions and had thus come to grief. Hence, he resolved to create more demons, but this time with self-knowledge and wisdom, so that they might not fall into the same trap of ego-sense.

Sambara thereupon created by his own magic power three more demons known as Bhima, Bhasa and Drdha. They were omniscient, they were endowed with self-knowledge, they were full of dispassion and sinless. They regarded the whole universe as of no more value than a blade of grass.

They began to fight with the army of the gods. In spite of fighting for a considerable time, the ego-sense did not arise in them. Whenever the ego-sense raised its head, they subdued it with self-enquiry ('Who am I'). They were therefore free from fear of death, devoted to appropriate action in the present, free from all attachment, devoid of the feeling 'I did this', intent on doing the work allotted to them by the master Sambara, free from desire and from aversion and endowed with equal vision. The army of the gods was quickly defeated by them. The gods fled to lord Visnu for refuge. At his command, they took up their abode in another region.

After this, lord Visnu himself had to fight with the demon Sambara: slain by the Lord the demon instantly reached the abode of Visnu. Lord Visnu also liberated the three demons Bhima, Bhasa and Drdha, who, when the body fell, became enlightened, as they had no ego-sense.

O Rama, the conditioned mind alone is bondage; and liberation is when the mind is unconditioned. **The conditioning of the mind drops away when the truth is clearly seen and realised; and when the conditioning has ceased one's consciousness is made supremely peaceful, as when the flame of a lamp is put out.** To realise that 'The self alone is all this, whatever one may think of anywhere' is clear perception. 'Conditioning' and 'mind' are but words without corresponding truth: when the truth is investigated they cease to be meaningful - this is clear perception. When this clear perception arises, there is liberation.

Dama, Vyala and Kata illustrate the mind that is conditioned by the ego-sense; Bhima, Bhasa and Drdha illustrate the mind that is free from conditioning or ego-sense. O Rama, do not be like the former, but be like the latter. That is the reason why I narrated this story to you, my dear and highly intelligent disciple.

section IV - chapter 35

sruyatam jnanasarvasvam srutva caiva vadharyatam bhogecchamatrako bandhas
tattyago moksa ucyate (3)

Vasistha continued:

O Rama, they are the true heroes who have brought under control the mind which is dominated by ignorance and delusion. Such control of the mind is the only way by which one can remedy the sufferings of this world-appearance (or the cycle of birth and death) and the endless chain of tragedy. **I shall declare to you the quintessence of all wisdom: listen and let it perfume your whole life. Bondage is the craving for pleasure; and its abandonment is liberation.** Hence, look upon all the pleasure-centres in this world as poison fumes.

Blind abandonment is undesirable: enquire deeply and seriously into the nature of sense-pleasures and abandon all craving for them. Then you can live happily.

By the cultivation of auspicious qualities, as all wrong knowledge gradually ceases, the mind becomes desireless, free from the pairs of opposites, restlessness, fear and delusion. Thereby the mind rests in a state of peace and bliss. It is then unpolluted by the ego-sense, evil thoughts and feelings, attachment and sorrow.

Then, the mind gets rid of its violent son known as doubt and its wife known as craving. Ironically, the awakened mind brings about the cessation of those very things (like thoughts and desires) which promoted its growth. Pursuing the enquiry into its real nature, the mind abandons its identification even with the body. The ignorant mind expands; but on the awakening of wisdom, the same mind ceases to be mind. Mind alone is this universe. Mind is the mountain-range. Mind is the space. Mind is god.

Mind alone is friend and foe. When the consciousness forgets itself, and undergoes modification and psychological conditioning, it is known as the mind which gives rise to birth and death. This is known as jiva, being that part of the infinite consciousness which has assumed the character of an object of this consciousness, just a little enveloped by the psychological conditioning. It is this jiva that moves away from the truth of the infinite consciousness and by sinking deeper and deeper into the conditioning becomes involved in the world-appearance.

Of course, the self is neither the jiva, nor the body, nor its components. The self is, like space, independent of all these.

section IV - chapter 35

vicaranasamadhighatatma dipako manasyalam parigalite vadharadhih, vilokayan
ksayabhavanirasa gatih gatajvaro vilasati dehapattane (69)

Vasistha continued:

O Rama, the mind itself is the jiva; the mind experiences what it itself has projected out of itself. By that it is bound. It is the state of the mind that determines the nature of the re-incarnation of the jiva.

One who wishes to be a king dreams that he has become king. What one intensely wishes for he obtains sooner or later. If the mind is impure, its effects are also impure; if it is pure, its products are pure too. The noble man engages himself in noble spiritual pursuits even in straitened circumstances.

There is neither bondage nor liberation in truth. The infinite thinks 'I am the body' and this thought acts as bondage. When one realises that all these are false, he shines as the infinite consciousness. When the mind has been purified by pure thoughts and actions, it takes on the nature of the infinite, even as a pure cloth takes on a colour easily.

When in a pure mind there arise concepts and notions of a body, scriptural knowledge and dispassion, etc., the world-appearance comes into being. When the mind gets involved in the external objective universe it moves away from the self. But, when the mind gives up the subject-object relationship it has with the world, it is instantly absorbed in the infinite.

The mind has no existence apart from the infinite consciousness: it did not exist in the beginning, it will not exist in the end and so it does not now! One who thinks that it does exist holds sorrow in his hand. He who knows that this world is the self in reality goes beyond that sorrow, and this world gives him both joy and liberation.

The mind is naught but ideas and notions: who will grieve when such a mind comes to an end! The reality is consciousness which is the middle, between the seer and the object; this reality is veiled by the mind and revealed when the mind ceases.

When the mind's conditioning ceases, then ignorance, craving, desires and aversions, delusion, stupidity, fear and ideations come to an end; purity, auspiciousness and goodness arise. One enjoys the delight of self-knowledge.

He who has an intelligence that has been rendered pure by the destruction of all inner impurities, has his heart illumined by the light of the self obtained through enquiry into the self; seeing the worthlessness of birth and death, he dwells without fear or anxiety in the city which is the body.

section IV - chapter 36

cic cinoti citam cetyam tenedam sthitam atmani ajne jne tv anyadayntam anyad
astiti kalpana (11)

Rama asked:

Lord, the infinite consciousness is transcendental; pray, tell me how this universe exists in it.

Vasistha replied:

O Rama, this universe exists in the infinite consciousness just as future waves exist in a calm sea; non-different in truth but with the potentiality of an apparent difference. The infinite consciousness is unmanifest, though omnipresent, even as space, though existing everywhere, is unmanifest. Just as the reflection of an object in crystal can be said to be neither real nor entirely unreal, one cannot say that this universe which is reflected in the infinite consciousness is real nor unreal. Again, just as space is unaffected by the clouds that float in it, this infinite consciousness is unaffected and untouched by the universe that appears in it. Just as light is not seen except through the refracting agent, even so the infinite consciousness is revealed through these various bodies. It is essentially nameless and formless, but names and forms are ascribed to its reflections.

Consciousness reflecting in consciousness shines as consciousness and exists as consciousness; yet to one who is ignorant (though considering oneself as wise and rational) there arises the notion that there has come into being and there exists something other than this consciousness. To the ignorant this consciousness appears as the terrible world-appearance; to the wise the same consciousness appears as the one self. This consciousness alone is known as pure experiencing; and it is thanks to it that the sun shines and all beings enjoy life here.

This consciousness is not created, nor does it perish; it is eternal and the world-appearance is superimposed on it, even as waves in relation to the ocean. In that consciousness, when it is reflected within itself, there arises the 'I am' notion which gives rise to diversity. As space, the same consciousness enables the seed to sprout; as air, it draws the sprout, as it were; as water, it nourishes it; as earth, it stabilises it; and as light, the consciousness itself reveals the new life. It is the consciousness in the seed that in due course manifests as the fruit.

This consciousness alone is the different seasons and their characteristics. It is on account of this consciousness that the entire universe exists as it does supporting an infinite number of beings, till the time of the cosmic dissolution.

section IV - chapter 37

yena sabdam rasam rupam gandham janasi raghava so yamatma param brahma sarvam
apurya samsthitah (7)

Vasistha continued:

Thus, this world-appearance comes and goes as the very nature of the infinite consciousness. Being non-different from the infinite consciousness this world-appearance has a mutual causal relationship with it - arises in it, exists in it and is absorbed in it. Though like the deep ocean it is not agitated, yet it is agitated like the waves appearing on the surface. Even as one who is intoxicated sees himself as another person, this consciousness, becoming conscious of itself, considers itself as another.

This universe is not real, nor is it unreal: it exists in consciousness, yet it does not exist (independently) in consciousness. Though appearing to be an addition to consciousness, it does not exceed consciousness. The relationship is like ornaments and gold.

This self, the supreme Brahman which permeates everything, is that which enables you to experience sound, taste, form and fragrance, O Rama. It is transcendental and omnipresent; it is non-dual and pure. In it there is not even a notion of another. All these diversities like existence and non-existence, good and evil, are vainly imagined by ignorant people. It matters not whether this imagination is said to be based on the not-self or the self itself.

Since there is nothing other than the self, how can there be desire for another? Hence, notions like 'This is desirable' and 'This is undesirable' do not touch the self. Since the self is desireless and because the doer (the instrument of action) and the action itself are also non-dual, it does not get involved in action. Since that which exists and that in which it exists are identical, one cannot even say it is. Since in it there is no desire whatsoever, there is no notion of inaction in it.

There is naught else, O Rama. You are the very existence of this absolute Brahman. Therefore, free yourself from all notions of duality and live an active life. What have you to gain by doing all kinds of actions again and again? And, what will you gain by desiring to be inactive? Or, by adhering to scriptures? O Rama, rest in peace and purity like the ocean when it is not agitated by wind. That self, by which everything is completely permeated, is not to be gained by travelling far and wide. Do not let your mind wander among the objects of the world. You yourself are the supreme self, the infinite consciousness; you are naught else!

section IV - chapter 38

na nandam na niranandam na calam na calam sthiram na sanna sanna caitesam
madhyam jnanimano viduh (10)

Vasistha continued:

O Rama, the sense of doership (the notion 'I do this') which gives rise to both happiness and unhappiness, or which gives rise to the state of yoga, is fictitious in the eyes of the wise; to the ignorant, however, it is real. For, what is the source of this notion? This notion arises when the mind, spurred by the predisposition, endeavours to gain something; the resultant action is then attributed to oneself. When the same action leads to the experience of its fruition, the notion 'I enjoy this' arises. The two notions are in truth the two faces (phases) of the same notion.

Whether one is engaged in action or not, whether one is in heaven or in hell, whatever may be the psychological conditioning, that itself is experienced by the mind. Hence, to the ignorant and conditioned person there is the notion 'I do this' whether he is doing something or doing nothing; but such a notion does not arise in the enlightened or unconditioned. When the truth concerning this is known the conditioning is weakened and thenceforth the wise man, even while acting in this world, is not interested in the fruits of those actions. He lets actions happen in his life, without attachment to those actions; and whatever be the results of those actions, he regards them as non-different from his own self. But such is not the attitude of one who is immersed in the mental states.

Whatever the mind does, that alone is action: hence, the mind alone is the doer of actions, not the body. The mind alone is this world-appearance; this world-appearance has arisen in it and it rests in the mind. When the objects as well as the experiencing mind have become tranquil, consciousness alone remains.

The wise declare that the mind of the enlightened is neither in a state of bliss nor devoid of bliss, neither in motion nor static, neither real nor unreal, but between these two propositions. His unconditioned consciousness blissfully plays its role in this world-appearance as if in a play. Since it is the mental conditioning (which exists in the ignorant) which determines the nature of the action and of the experience, and since it is absent in the enlightened, the latter is ever in bliss. His actions are non-actions. Hence he does not incur merit nor demerit. His behaviour is like that of a child; and even if he appears to be in pain, he is not. He is totally unattached to this world-appearance and to the actions of the mind and the senses. He does not even entertain the notion of liberation, nor that of bondage. He sees the self and self alone.

section IV - chapter 39

ajnasya rdhabuddhasya sarvam brahmeti yo vadet mahanarakajalesu sa tena
viniyojitah (24)

Vasistha continued:

Rama, the absolute Brahman being omnipotent, his infinite potencies appear as this visible universe. All the diverse categories like reality, unreality, unity, diversity, beginning and end exist in that Brahman. Like waves on the sea, the jiva also appears in Brahman self-limited by individualised consciousness: this jiva later undergoes progressively denser conditioning, functions in accordance with that conditioning and experiences the consequences of such action.

Rama asked:

Lord, Brahman is free from sorrow; and yet that which has emerged from it, as a lamp kindled from another lamp, is the universe which is full of sorrow. How is this possible?

Valmiki said:

Hearing this question, Vasistha contemplated thus for a while: Obviously, Rama's understanding is not efficient because there is impurity in his mind. Yet, if he is not enabled fully to understand the truth, his mind will not find rest. As long as the mind is swayed by thoughts of pleasure or happiness, so long is it unable to comprehend the truth. If the mind is pure, then it instantly comprehends the truth. Hence, it is declared that **he who declares 'All this is Brahman' to one who is ignorant or half-awakened goes to hell.** Hence, a wise teacher should encourage his students first to be established in self-control and tranquillity. Then the student should be properly examined before the knowledge of the truth is imparted to him.

Then, Vasistha said:

You will discover the truth for yourself whether Brahman is free from sorrow or not. Or, I shall help you understand this in course of time. For the present, understand this:

Brahman is omnipotent, omnipresent and the indwelling presence in all. This Brahman, through the indescribable power known as Maya, has brought this creation into being. This Maya is capable of making the unreal appear as the real, and vice versa, even as the empty void of space appears to be blue in colour.

Behold Rama: you see such infinite diversity of creatures in this world itself. That is the manifestation of the infinite potencies of the Lord. Embrace tranquillity; he who is at peace within himself beholds the truth. When the mind is not at peace, the world appears to be a confusion of diversity. But in fact, this universe is an apparent manifestation of the infinite potencies of the Lord. Just as where there is light there is natural visibility, even so on account of the omnipotence of the Lord, this world-appearance has arisen as his very nature. However, simultaneously with this world-appearance, ignorance has also come into being, on account of which there is sorrow. Give up this ignorance and be free.

section IV - chapter 40

brahma cid brahma ca mano brahma vijnavastu ca brahmartho brahma sabdas ca
brahma cid brahma dhatavah (29)

Vasistha continued:

O Rama, this entire creation of world-appearance is but an accidental manifestation of the intention of the omnipotent conscious-energy (cit-sakti) of the infinite consciousness or Brahman. The intention itself condenses and thus gives rise in the mind to the substance thus intended. Immediately the mind reproduces the substance as if in the objective field. At this stage, there is a notion of this creation having factually abandoned its fundamental and true nature as the infinite consciousness.

This infinite consciousness apparently sees within itself a pure void: and the conscious-energy (cit-sakti) thereupon brings space into existence. In that conscious-energy there arises an intention to diversify: this intention itself is then regarded as the creator Brahma, with his retinue of other living creatures. Thus have all the fourteen worlds appeared in the space of infinite consciousness, with their endless variety of beings - some immersed in dense darkness, some very close to enlightenment and others fully enlightened.

In this world, O Rama, among the many species of living beings only the human beings are fit to be instructed into the nature of truth. Even among these human beings many are obsessed by sorrow and delusion, hate and fear. All this I shall presently deal with in great detail.

But all this talk about who created this world and how it was created is intended only for the purpose of composing scriptures and expounding them: it is not based on truth. Modifications arising in the infinite consciousness or organisation of the cosmic being, do not really take place in the Lord, though they appear to do so. There is naught but the infinite consciousness, even in imagination! To think of that being the creator and the universe as the created, is absurd: when one lamp is kindled from another, there is no creator-creature relationship between them - fire is one. Creation is just a word, it has no corresponding substantial reality.

Consciousness is Brahman, the mind is Brahman, the intellect is Brahman, Brahman alone is the substance. Sound or word is Brahman and Brahman alone is the component of all substances. All indeed is Brahman; there is no world in reality.

Just as when the dirt is removed the real substance is made manifest, just as when the darkness of the night is dispelled the objects that were shrouded by the darkness are clearly seen, even so when ignorance is dispelled truth is realised.

section IV - chapter 41

kuto jateyam iti te rama ma stu vicarana imam katham aham hanmityesa te stu vicarana (32)

Rama asked:

Lord, how could there be even an intention to diversify in the infinite consciousness?

Vasistha said:

O Rama, there is no contradiction in my statements. You will see the beauty of the truth in my statements when you attain the vision of truth. Descriptions of creation etc. are given in the scriptures for the purpose of instructing disciples: do not let your mind be coloured by them. When you realise that which is indicated by the words, then naturally you will abandon the jugglery of words.

In the infinite consciousness itself there is neither an intention nor the veil of delusion. But, that itself is before you as the world.

This can be realised only when ignorance comes to an end. Ignorance will not cease except with the help of instruction which rests in the use of these words and descriptions. This ignorance seeks to destroy itself and hence seeks the light of true knowledge. Weapons are destroyed by other weapons, dirt cleans dirt, poison cures poison and enemies are destroyed by other enemies: even so this Maya rejoices when it is destroyed! The moment you become aware of this Maya, it vanishes.

This ignorance or Maya veils the truth and creates this diversity; but it does not know its own nature, and that is strange. As long as one does not enquire into its nature, it rules; the moment there is enquiry into its nature, it ceases.

This Maya does not exist in truth. So long as this truth is not directly experienced by you, you will have to accept my word for it. He who knows that Brahman alone is the truth, he is liberated. All other points of view are intended to bind a person to ignorance.

This ignorance will not go away without self-knowledge. And, self-knowledge arises only when the scriptures are studied deeply. Whatever may be the origin of this ignorance, surely, even that exists in the self. Hence, **O Rama, do not enquire into 'How has this ignorance arisen'; but enquire into 'How shall I get rid of it'**. When this ignorance or Maya has ceased to be, then you shall know how it arose. You will realise that this ignorance is not a real entity. It arises only in a state of unwisdom. Not a single person, whether he is a great scholar or a hero, has been spared by this ignorance! This ignorance is the source of all sorrow: uproot and destroy it.

section IV - chapter 42

subhasubha prasara parahatakrttau jvalaj jaramarana visadamurchite vyatheha
yasya manasi bho na jayate narakrtir jagati sa rama raksasah (52)

Vasistha continued:

I shall again declare to you the way in which the one infinite consciousness has come to appear as the jiva and all the rest of it. You see in the ocean that it is tranquil in places, and agitated in other places. Even so, the infinite consciousness seems to embrace diversity in some places, though it in itself is non-dual. It is natural for the omnipotent infinite consciousness to manifest in all its infinite glory.

This manifestation of the omnipotence of infinite consciousness enters into an alliance with time, space and causation which are indispensable to the manifestation. Thence arose the infinite names and forms. But all these apparent manifestations are in reality non-different from the infinite consciousness. That aspect of this infinite consciousness which relates itself to the manifestation of the names and forms and thus to time, space and causation is known as the 'knower of the field', or the witness consciousness. The body is the field; that which knows this field inside out and in all its aspects is the knower of the field or witness consciousness.

This witness consciousness becomes involved in the latent predispositions and develops the ego-sense. When this ego-sense generates notions and intentions within itself, it is known as the intellect. As the thinking instrument, it is known as the mind. When the intelligence gets further modified or perverted, it becomes the senses. All of these constitute the body. Just as a fruit undergoes various changes in size, colour, etc., as it matures, the same consciousness undergoes these apparent changes as the ignorance grows deeper and denser.

The foolish person then abandons all right thinking or enquiry into the truth and voluntarily embraces ignorance as bliss. Caught in its own trap of various activities, and of identification of oneself as their doer, he undergoes endless suffering which is self-imposed and self-willed. O Rama, in this world the cause of all misfortunes is only the mind which is full of sorrow and grief, desire and delusion. Forgetful of self-knowledge, it generates desire and anger, evil thoughts and cravings which throw the person into the fire of sense-objects. O Rama, rescue this mind from the mire of ignorance.

O Rama, he indeed is a demon in human form who is not distressed by the impure state of the mind caused by alternating good and evil thoughts, and who is subjected to old age, death and despair.

section IV - chapter 43

viharanti jagat kecin nipatanty utpatanti ca kanduka iva hastena mrtyuna
viratam hatah (25)

Vasistha continued:

This incidental manifestation of the power of the infinite consciousness appears as the millions of species of beings in this universe. These countless beings are caught up in their own mental conditioning. They are found in every country and in every place in the universe, and they are in every conceivable kind of situation.

Some of them are part of the new creation in this epoch, others are more ancient. Some have incarnated just a couple of times, others have had countless incarnations. Some are liberated. Others are sunk in dreadful suffering. Some are celestials, some are demi-gods, and others are the deities presiding over this manifest universe. Some others are demons, others are goblins. Some are members of the four castes of human beings, and others are members of primitive uncivilised tribes. Some of them are in the form of herbs and grass; others appear as roots, fruits and leaves.

Some are in the form of creepers, and some are living as flowers. Some are the kings and their ministers, clad in royal robes; others are clad in rags and bark of trees, either because they are anchorites or they are beggars.

Some are snakes and others are insects; others are animals like lions, tigers, etc. Some are birds, others are elephants and donkeys.

Some are prosperous; others are in adverse circumstances. Some are in heaven, others are in hell. Some are in the region of the stars, others are in holes of dying trees. Some live amongst liberated sages; others are already liberated sages who have risen above body-consciousness. Some are endowed with enlightened intelligence; some are extremely dull.

O Rama, just as in this universe there are countless beings of various species, in other universes, too, there are similar beings, with different bodies suited to those universes.

But, all of them are bound by their own mental conditioning. **These beings roam this universe sometimes uplifted, sometimes degraded and death plays with them as with a ball.** Bound to their own countless desires and attachments and limited by their own mental conditioning, they migrate from one body to another. They will continue to do so, till they perceive the truth concerning their own self which is infinite consciousness. After attaining this self-knowledge, they are liberated from delusion and they do not return to this plane of birth and death any more.

section IV - chapter 44

svabhava kalpito rama jivanam sarvadaiva hi amoksapada samprapti samsaro
styatmano ntare (6)

Vasistha continued:

However, all this creation takes place only as in a dream. This creation is not real; it merely appears to be so. He who has eradicated ignorance totally and in whom every form of conditioning has ceased is a liberated sage: though he seems to be aware of this dream known as world-appearance, in reality he does not see it as the world. **This world-appearance is naturally conceived of in all the jivas at all times, till the jiva attains liberation.** In every jiva, therefore, the body exists potentially - not in all its physical substantiality, but as a thought and as an intention.

I shall describe to you once again how the creator Brahma arose in the infinite consciousness and you will see from that account how the infinite beings arose similarly in that consciousness. The infinite consciousness which is devoid of time, space and causation playfully assumes these. Thus the cosmic person comes into being; this cosmic person is also the cosmic mind and cosmic life.

This cosmic person intends to experience sound; and space is brought into being, with the transmission of sound as its character. It intends to experience touch; air is created. These are unseen and subtle. Wishing to see, this cosmic person brings fire into being, and this fire expands into the numerous sources of light. It intends to experience taste as well as coolness to counteract fire; water comes into being. And, lastly, by its mere wish to smell, earth with its faculty of smell comes into being.

This cosmic person with all its faculties is still extremely subtle and undivided. It apparently abandons that and perceives itself as infinite sparks in space. It thinks of itself as each one of these sparks; the ego-sense arises. This ego-sense also has intelligence inherent in it, and it conceives of a body for itself with the help of the five cosmic elements I have already mentioned. This body it regards as gross, physical and material, and so it becomes.

This cosmic person is the Brahma. He appears to create all these countless beings; and he himself protects them. He first arose in the infinite consciousness: but apparently overcome by self-limitation and forgetfulness of the infinite nature, as in foetal sleep, he identifies himself with the body, fuelled and maintained by the life-force (prana) and composed of material substances. When he begins to enquire into his origin, his true nature is revealed to him; and he is liberated from self-limitation.

section IV - chapter 45

asadidam akhilaṃ maya sametaṃ tviti vigaṇayya visadita stu ma te sadiha hi
sakalam maya sametaṃ tviti ca vilokya visadita stu ma te (50)

Vasistha continued:

O Rama, though this universe seems to exist, nothing really exists as the universe. It is but the appearance or reflection of the infinite consciousness, which alone is the reality. In that consciousness, the creation appears as if in a dream. Hence, only the reality in which it appears is real: and that is the infinite void. You see the world because the eyes (or the other senses) perceive the world. And in the same way, if you think or believe or know that it exists, that is because your mind thinks so. And that mind has brought this body into being for its own dwelling.

All the powers that are inherent in the mind, and by which this world has been brought into being, are found in the infinite consciousness. Hence, the sages have declared that the mind is omnipotent. All these gods, demons and humans have all been conjured up by the mind. When the mind ceases to entertain such notions, they shall cease to be, even as a lamp without fuel.

The wise man who knows that all the objects in the world are unreal, does not consider them objects of pleasure to be pursued. He who runs after the objects created by his own mind surely comes to grief. This world-appearance has come into being on account of desire. It will cease only when desire ceases to arise (not when you turn against or hate it). When this world-appearance has been dissolved, nothing whatsoever has really been destroyed.

If an unreal appearance has vanished, what does one lose? If it is utterly unreal, then how can it even be destroyed; and why does one grieve over the unreal loss? Or, if it were real, then no one could destroy it or make it unreal. From this point of view this world is nothing but Brahman, the eternal truth. In which case, is there any room for sorrow at all?

Similarly, that which is unreal cannot grow or flourish. For what does one rejoice? What does one desire then? When all this is indeed the one infinite consciousness, what does one renounce?

That which was non-existent in the beginning, and that which shall cease to be in the end, is not real in the middle (in the present), either. That which exists in the beginning, and in the end, is the reality in the present, too. **See that 'all this is unreal, including myself', and there will be no sorrow in you. Or, see that 'all this is real, including myself', and sorrow will not touch you either.**

As the sage said this, the ninth day came to an end, and the assembly dispersed.

section IV - chapter 46

anagatanam bhoganam avagichanam akrtrimam agatanam casambhoga iti pandita
laksanam (8)

Vasistha continued:

Knowing that the entire universe including one's wealth, wife, son, etc. are nothing but the creation of the jugglery of the mind, one does not grieve when they are lost, nor does one feel elated when they prosper. On the other hand, it may be proper to feel unhappy when they prosper; for such prosperity may intensify one's ignorance. Hence, that which generates attachment and craving in the fool, generates detachment and cool indifference in the wise.

The nature of the wise person is not to desire those experiences which one does not effortlessly obtain, and to experience those which have already arrived. If one is able to wean the mind away from craving for sense-pleasure by whatever means, one is saved from being drowned in the ocean of delusion. He who has realised his oneness with the entire universe, and who has thus risen above both desire 'for' and desire 'against', is never deluded.

Therefore, O Rama, realise that self or infinite consciousness which permeates and therefore transcends both the unreal and the real. And, then, neither grasp nor give up whatever is inside or outside. The wise sage who is established in such self-knowledge is free from any sort of colouring or mental conditioning or self-limitation. He is like the sky or space which is totally free from being tainted by anything that happens within it.

Let your mind not entertain a feeling of 'mine-ness' in any of the objects of the senses. Then, whether you are active or inactive, you will not be sunk in the mire of ignorance. When your heart does not taste sensepleasures as sweet and desirable, then you have known all that there is to be known, and you are saved from this cycle of birth and death. He who is not attracted by the pleasures of either this world or of heaven (whether or not there is body-consciousness in him) is liberated, even if he does not specifically desire or strive for such liberation.

O Rama, in this ocean of ignorant mental conditioning, he who has found the raft of self-knowledge, is saved from drowning; he who has not found that raft is surely drowned. Therefore, O Rama, examine the nature of the self with an intelligence as sharp as the razor's edge; and then rest established in self-knowledge.

Live as the sages of self-knowledge live. They know the infinite consciousness and the world-appearance. Hence, they do not relish nor renounce activity in this world. You, too, have attained self-knowledge, Rama, and you are at peace.

section IV - chapter 47

nidarsanartham srstestu mayaikasya prajapateh bhavate kathitotpattir na tatra
niyamah kvacit (47)

Vasistha continued:

O Rama, in the past there have been millions of Brahmas, Sivas, Indras, and Narayanas. However, even the creations of these gods were but the jugglery of Maya! These creations were sometimes from Brahma; others were ascribed to Siva or Narayana or the sages. Again, sometimes Brahma was born of a lotus, at others he rose from the waters or from an egg or from space. In some universes Brahma is the supreme deity, in others it is the Sun, Indra, Narayana, or Siva. In some universes the earth is filled with trees, in others with people or with mountains. Somewhere the earth is of mud or clay, elsewhere it is rocky or golden or coppery. One may count the rays of the sun; but it is impossible to count the number of universes that exist. This creation is beginningless. In this 'city of Brahman' (which is the infinite consciousness or the consciousness in the space of one's heart) these universes arise and vanish again and again. But these are different from the one infinite consciousness.

These creations, whether they are gross or subtle, whether established or disintegrating, are all garlands of the subtle elements which have all arisen from the infinite space of consciousness. Sometimes, space gets established first, and the Creator is said to be born of space. At other times, air gets established first, and at other times, fire, water, or earth. And the Creator gets an appropriate title. From this Creator's body there arise 'words' like brahmana (a priest) etc., and these words become 'living beings' with appropriate designations.

Of course, all this is unreal, like the creations seen in a dream. Hence, the question "How did all this arise in the one infinite consciousness?" is immature and childish. The creation appears to take place on account of the intentions of the mind. This is certainly a mystery and a wonder.

I have described all this to you only as an illustration of the truth. However, in this creation, there is no such order or sequence. This creation is nothing but the creation of the mind. This is the truth, the rest is but a fanciful description. On account of the succession of the creation and dissolution of this universe, a time-scale is conceived of, from a moment to an aeon. But this universe is for ever present in consciousness, just as sparks are ever present in a red-hot iron. In the pure vision of an enlightened person, however, all this is Brahman alone, not a world-appearance. The repetition (creation and dissolution) of infinite number of universes, with the infinite variety of creators in them, is nothing but the fanciful perception of the ignorant and the deluded.

section IV - chapter 48

kriyavisesabahula bhogaisvarya hatasayah na peksante yada satyam na pasyanti
sathas tada (1)

Vasistha continued:

O Rama, they who are busy with the diverse affairs in this world in pursuit of pleasure and power, do not desire to know the truth which they obviously don't see. He who is wise but who has not completely controlled the pleasure-seeking tendencies of his senses, sees the truth and sees the illusion. And, he who has dearly understood the nature of the world and of the jiva, and who has firmly rejected the world-appearance as the reality, he is liberated and is not born again. The ignorant strive for the welfare of the body, and not of the self. Be not like the ignorant, O Rama, but be wise.

To illustrate this, I shall now narrate to you an interesting legend. In the country known as Magadha, which had an abundance of pleasure-gardens, there lived a sage by name Dasura. He was engaged in breath-taking penance. He was a great ascetic, who had no interest at all in worldly pleasures; and he was learned, too.

He was the son of another sage known as Saraloma. But, as ill-luck would have it, he lost both his parents when he was young. The deities of the forest took pity on this orphan who was inconsolable in his grief, and they said to him:

O wise boy! You are the son of a sage; why do you weep like an ignorant fool? Do you not know the evanescent nature of this world-appearance? Young one, such is the very nature of this world-appearance: things come into being, they exist for a while, and they are then destroyed. Whatever being there appears to be, from the relative point of view, (even if that being is called Brahma, the creator) is subject to this inevitable end. There is no doubt about this. Hence, do not grieve over the inevitable death of your parents.

The young man's sorrow was ameliorated. He got up and performed the funeral rites of his parents. Then, he began to lead a rigorously religious life, hemmed in on all sides with do's and don'ts. Since he had not yet realised the truth, he was immersed in the performance of the rituals, with all their injunctions and prohibitions. All this created in him a feeling that the whole world is full of impurities. He sought to live in an unpolluted place. A tree-top, he decided! Wishing to live on a tree-top, he performed a sacred rite during which he cut off and offered his own flesh into the sacred fire. Soon, the fire-deity himself appeared before him and announced, "You will surely attain the wish which has already appeared in your heart."

After accepting the ascetic's worship, fire disappeared.

section IV - chapter 49 50 51

jnanam tvam eva sya vibho krpayopadisa dhuna ko hi nama kule jatam putram
maurkhyena yojayet (51/28)

Vasistha continued:

The sage then saw in front of him a huge Kadamba tree which had a majestic appearance. It seemed to wipe with its hands (its foliage) the tears (raindrops) of his beloved sky. It had actually covered the space between heaven and earth with the thousands of its arms (branches), and it stood like the cosmic form of the Lord, with the sun and the moon for his eyes. Laden with flowers, it rained them on the holy and divine sages who traversed the sky. And the bees that dwelt on it sang a song of welcome to those sages.

The sage ascended this tree which stood like a pillar linking heaven and earth. He sat on the topmost branch of the tree. For a brief moment, he let his eyes roam in all the directions. He had a vision of the cosmic being.

Because he had taken his abode on the Kadamba tree, he had come to be known as Kadamba-dasura. He commenced his austerities sitting on the top of that tree. He had been accustomed to the ritualistic performances enjoined in the Vedas, and so he engaged himself in their performance, but this time mentally. Yet, such is the power of such mental performance, it purified the sage's mind and his heart, and he attained pure wisdom.

One day, he beheld in front of him a nymph clad in flowers. She was extremely beautiful. The sage asked her: "O beautiful lady, with your radiance you can overpower even Cupid. Who are you?" She replied: "Lord, I am a deity of the forest. In this world, nothing is unattainable to one who resorts to the presence of an enlightened sage like you. I have just been to attend a festival in the forest, where I met several other goddesses of the forest, each one of them with her offspring. I was the only one among them who had no children. Hence, I am unhappy. However, when you are in this forest, why should I be unhappy? Grant me a son or I shall reduce myself to ashes." The sage picked up a creeper and, handing it to her, said: "Go. Just as this creeper will produce flowers in a month, you too, will give birth to a son." The grateful goddess went away.

She returned to the sage, after twelve years, with the son of that age. She said: "Lord, this is your son. And, I have instructed him in all branches of learning. **I pray that you may instruct him in self-knowledge. For, who will let one's son grow into a fool?**" The sage accepted to do so, and the goddess went away. From that day, the sage began to instruct the young man in all branches of self-knowledge.

section IV - chapter 52

jayati gacchati valgati jrbhate sphurati bhati na bhati bhasurab suta
mahamahima sa mahipatih patirapamiva vatarayakulah (29)

Vasistha continued:

During this period I was myself going over that very tree, and heard the sage's instructions to his son.

Dasura said:

I shall illustrate what I wish to say concerning this world with a story. There lives a mighty king named Khottha who is capable of conquering the three worlds. The deities presiding over the worlds faithfully honour his commands. No one can even catalogue his innumerable deeds which were productive both happiness and unhappiness. His valour could not be challenged by anyone using any weapon whatsoever, or even by fire, any more than one can hit space with a fist. Even Indra, Visnu and Siva could not equal him in his enterprises.

This king had three bodies which had completely engulfed the worlds: and they were respectively the best, the middling, and the least. This king arose in space, and got established in space. There, in space, the king built a city with fourteen roads and three sectors. In it were pleasure gardens, beautiful mountain-peaks for sports, and seven lakes with pearls and creepers in them. In it there were two lights which were hot and cold, and whose light never diminished.

In that city the king created several types of beings. Some were placed above, others in the middle, and yet others below. Of them some were long-lived and others short-lived. They were covered with black hair. They had nine gates. They were well-ventilated. They had five lamps, three pillars, and white supporting wooden poles. They were soft with clay-plastering. All this was created by the Maya, or illusory power of the king.

Here, the king besports himself, with all, the ghosts and goblins (which are afraid of enquiry or investigation) that had been created to-protect the mansions (the different bodies). When he thinks of moving, he thinks of a future city, and contemplates migrating to it. Surrounded by the ghosts, he runs fast to the new abode after leaving the previous one, and occupies the new city built in the fashion of a magic creation. In that again, when he contemplates destruction, he destroys himself. Sometimes he wails, "What shall I do? I am ignorant, I am miserable". Sometimes he is happy, at others pitiable.

Thus, he lives and conquers, goes, talks, flourishes, shines and does not shine. My son, thus this king is tossed in this ocean of world-appearance.

section IV - chapter 53

asat sat sadasat sarvam sankalpadeva nia nyatah sankalpam sadasaccaivamiha
satyam kimucyatam (45)

Dasura continued:

Thus has been illustrated the creation of the universe and of man. Khottha, who arose in the great void, is none but a notion or an intention. This notion arises in the great void of its own accord, and dissolves in the great void of its own accord, too. The entire universe and whatever there is in it is the creation of this notion or intention, and naught else. In fact, even the trinity (Brahma, Visnu and Siva) are the limbs of that notion. That intention alone is responsible for the creation of the three worlds, the fourteen regions, and the seven oceans. The city built by the king is nothing but the living entity, with his different organs and their characteristics. Of the different kinds of beings thus created, some (the gods) are in a higher region, and the others are in lower realms.

Having built this imaginary city, the king placed it under the protecting care of ghosts. These ghosts are the ahamkara (ego-principle). The king thenceforth sports in this world, in this body. In a moment he sees the world in the waking state. And after some time, he abruptly shifts his attention to the world, within which he enjoys in his dreams. He moves from one city to another, from one body to another, from one realm to another.

After many such peregrinations, he develops wisdom, getting disillusioned with these worlds and their pleasures, and reaches the end of his wandering by the cessation of all notions.

In one moment he seems to enjoy wisdom, whilst the very next moment he is caught up in pleasure-seeking, and in an instant his understanding gets perverted, just as in the case of a little child. These notions are either like dense darkness (and give rise to ignorance and births in the lower orders of creation), or pure and transparent (and give rise to wisdom, drawing one close to the truth), or impure (and give rise to worldliness). When all such notions cease, then there is liberation.

Even if one engages oneself in every other sort of spiritual endeavour, and even if one has the gods themselves as one's teachers, and even if one were in heaven or any other region, liberation is not had, except through the cessation of all notions. **The real, the unreal, and the admixture of these two, are all but notions and naught else. And notions themselves are neither real nor unreal. What then shall we call real in this universe.** Hence, my son, give up these notions, thoughts and intentions. When they cease, the mind naturally turns to what is truly beyond the mind - the infinite consciousness.

section IV - chapter 54

ma sankalpaya sankalpam bhavam bhavaya ma sthitau etavataiva bhavena bhavyo
bhavati bhutaye (12)

The young man asked:

Father, please tell me how this sankalpa (notion, thought, idea, concept) arises, and how it grows and ceases.

Dasura replied:

My son, when, in the infinite consciousness, the consciousness becomes aware of itself as its own object, there is the seed of ideation. This is very subtle. But soon it becomes gross and fills the whole of space, as it were. When consciousness is engrossed in this ideation, it thinks the object is distinct from the subject. Then the ideation begins to germinate and to grow. Ideation multiplies naturally by itself. This leads to sorrow, not to happiness. There is no cause for sorrow in this world other than this ideation!

This ideation or notion has really come into being by sheer coincidence (the crow alights on the palm tree, and the fruit falls to the ground, without any causal connection). But this unreal nonsubstance is yet able to grow! Your birth, therefore, is unreal. Your existence, surely, is unreal too. When you know this and realise this, the unreality ceases.

Do not entertain ideas. Do not hold onto the notion of your existence. For it is only by these that the future comes into being. There is no cause for fear in the destruction of all ideation. When there is no thought, notion or ideation ceases. My son, it is easier to cease to entertain notions, than it is to crush a flower that lies on the palm of your hand. The latter demands effort; the former is effortless. When thus all notions cease, there is great peace, and sorrow is destroyed to its very root. For everything in this universe is but an idea, a notion, a concept. It has different names like the mind, the living soul or jiva, intelligence and conditioning - there are no real substances corresponding to these words. Hence, remove all thought. Do not waste your life and effort in other endeavours.

Already as the notions weaken, one is less affected by happiness and unhappiness, and knowledge of the unreality of the objects prevents attachment. When there is no hope, there is neither elation nor depression. The mind itself is the jiva when it is reflected in consciousness. And, mind itself builds castles in the air, stretching itself, as it were, into the past, the present and the future. It is not possible to comprehend, the ripples of ideation. But this much can be said: sense-experiences multiply them, and when these are given up, they cease to be. If these notions are real, like the blackness of coal, then you cannot remove them. But that is not so. Hence they can be destroyed.

section IV - chapter 55 56

karta na smi na ca hamasmi sa iti jnatvaivamantah sphutam karta ca smi
samagramasmi taditi jnatva thava niscayam ko pyeva smi na kincidevamiti va
nirniya sarvottame tistha tvam svapade sthitah padavido yattrottamah sadhavah
(56/49)

Vasistha continued:

Hearing the sage's words, I descended upon that Kadamba tree. For a considerable time, the three of us discussed self-knowledge, and I awakened in them the supreme knowledge. Then I took leave of them and went away. O Rama, this is meant to illustrate the nature of the world-appearance. And therefore, this story is as true as the world itself!

Even if you believe that this world and yourself are real, then be it so; rest firmly in your own self. If you think that this is both real and unreal, then adopt the appropriate attitude to this changing world. If you believe that the world is unreal, then be firmly established in the infinite consciousness. Similarly, whether you believe that the world has had a creator or not, let it not cloud your understanding.

The self is devoid of the senses. Hence, though the doer of everything, he is as if inert. One enjoys a life-span of just a hundred years. Why does the immortal self run after the sensual pleasures during this brief period? If the world and its objects are real, even then it does not stand to reason that the conscious self should seek the inert objects! And, of course, if they are not real, nothing but unhappiness can result from their pursuit.

Give up the desires of your heart. You are what you are in this world. Knowing this, sport in this world. In the very presence of the self, all activities take place in this world, just as in the very presence of a lamp there is light. The lamp has no intention to shine. Even so, the self does not intend to do anything, and yet everything happens in its very presence. You may adopt one or the other of the two attitudes: (1) I am the omnipresent being that does nothing, and (2) I am the doer of all actions in this world. In both cases you will arrive at the same state of perfect equanimity, which is immortality. You will be free from likes and dislikes, attraction and aversion. You will be rid of foolish feelings like "Someone served me", or "Someone else hurt me". Hence, **O Rama, you may feel, "I am not the doer, I do not exist", or "I am the doer and I am everything". Or enquire into the nature of the self - "Who am I?" - and realise "I am not any of this that is attributed to me."** Rest established in the self which is the highest state of consciousness, in which the best among the holy men who know of this state ever dwell.

section IV - chapter 57

yadi tvam atmana tmanam adhigacchasi tam svayam etat prasnottaram sadhu
janasyatra na samsayah (15)

Rama asked:

Holy sage, how does this unreal world exist in the absolute Brahman: can snow exist in the sun?

Vasistha said:

Rama, this is not the right time for you to ask this question, for you will not be able to comprehend the answer now. Love stories are uninteresting to a little boy. Every tree bears its fruits in due season; and my instruction will also bear fruit in good time. **If you seek your self with the self by your own self effort, then you will clearly find the answer to your question.** I discussed the question of doership and non-doership in order that the nature of the mental conditioning or ideation may become evident.

Bondage is bondage to these thoughts and notions; freedom is freedom from them. Give up all notions, even those of liberation. First, by the cultivation of good relationships, like friendship, give up tendencies and notions which are gross and materialistic. Later, give up even such notions as friendship, even though continuing to be friendly, etc. Give up all desires, and contemplate the nature (or notion) of cosmic consciousness. Even this is within the realm of ideation or thought. Hence, give this up in due course. Rest in what remains after all these have been given up. And, renounce the renouncer of these notions. When even the notion of the ego-sense has ceased, you will be like the infinite space. He who has thus renounced everything from his heart, he indeed is the supreme Lord, whether he continues to live an active life, or whether he rests in contemplation all the time. To him neither action nor inaction is of any use. O Rama, I have examined all the scriptures and investigated the truth. There is no salvation without the total renunciation of all notions or ideas or mental conditioning.

This world of diverse names and forms is composed of the desirable and the undesirable! For these people strive, but for self-knowledge no one strives. Rare are the sages of self-knowledge in the three worlds. One may be an emperor of the world, or the king of heaven; but all these are only composed of the five elements! It is a pity that people indulge in such colossal destruction of life for these petty gains. Shame on them. None of these engages the attention of the sage, because he is equipped with self-knowledge. He is established in that supreme seat to which the sun and the moon have no access (the susumna?). Hence, the sage of self-knowledge is not enamoured of the gains or the pleasures of the entire universe.

section IV - chapter 58

kim karomi kva gacchami kim grhnam tyajami kim atmana puritam visvam
mahakalpambuna yatha (5)

duhkhamatma sukham caiva khamasasumahattaya sarvamatmamayam jnatam nastakasto
hamatmana (6)

sabahyabhyantare dehe adhascordhvam ca diksu ca ita atma tatasca tma na
styanatmamayam kvacit (7)

sarvatraiva sthito hyatma sarvamatmamayam sthitam sarvamevedamatmaivam
atmanyeva bhavamyaham (8)

yannama nama tatkcincit sarvameva hamantaraha apuriitaparanabhah sarvatra
sanmayah sthitah (9)

punastisthami modatma sukhamekarnavopamah ityevam bhavayamstatra
kanakacalakunjake (10)

uccarayannonkaram ca ghantasvanamiva kramat omkarasya kalamatram pascatyam
balakomalam na ntarastho na bahyastho bhavayan parame hrdisi (11)

Vasistha continued:

In this connection, O Rama, I remember an inspiring song, sung by the son of the preceptor of the gods, Kaca. This Kaca was established in selfknowledge. He lived in a cave on the mount Meru. His mind was saturated with the highest wisdom, and hence it was not attracted by any of the objects of the world composed of the five elements. Feigning despair, Kaca sang this meaningful song. Pray listen to this.

Kaca said:

What shall I do? Where shall I go? What shall I try to hold? What shall I renounce? This entire universe is permeated by the one self. Unhappiness or sorrow is the self. Happiness is the self, too. For all desires are but empty void. Having known that all this is the self, I am freed from all travail. In this body, within and without, above and below, everywhere - here and there - there is only the self and self alone, and there is no non-self. The self alone is everywhere; everything exists as the self. All this is truly the self. I exist in the self as the self. I exist as all this, as the reality in all everywhere. I am the fullness. I am the self-bliss. I fill the entire universe like the cosmic ocean.

Thus he sang. And, he intoned the holy word Om which resounded like a bell. He had merged his entire being in that holy sound. He was neither inside anything nor outside anything. This sage remained in that place totally absorbed in the self.

section IV - chapter 59

moha evammayo mithya jagatah sthiratam gatah sankalpanena manasa kalpito
ciratah svayam (31)

Vasistha continued:

What else is there in this world, O Rama, except eating, drinking, and sex. Hence, what is there in this world that a wise man would find worthy of seeking? This world of five elements, and the body composed of flesh, blood, hair, and all the rest of it, are considered real by the ignorant, and they exist for his entertainment. The wise see in all this an impermanent and unreal but terrible poison.

Rama asked:

By the destruction of all notions, when the mind regains the state of the Creator himself, how does the notion of the world arise in it?

Vasistha continued:

Rama, the first-born Creator on arising from the womb of the infinite consciousness uttered the sound 'Brahma'. Hence he is known as Brahma, the creator. This Creator first entertained the notion of light, and light came into being. In that light he visualised his own cosmic body, and this came into being-from the brilliant sun to the diverse objects that fill the space. He contemplated the same light as of infinite sparks, and all these sparks became diverse beings. Surely, it is the cosmic mind alone that has become this Brahma and all the other beings. Whatever this Brahma created in the beginning is seen even today.

This unreal world has acquired substantiality on account of the persistence of the notion of its existence. All the beings in this universe sustain it by their own notions and ideas.

After creating the universe by his own thought-force, the Creator reflected thus: "I have created all this by the power of a little agitation in the cosmic mind. I have had enough of it. It will now perpetuate itself. Let me rest." Contemplating thus, Brahma the creator rested - rested in his own self in deep meditation.

Then, out of compassion for the created beings, the Creator revealed the scriptures which treat of self-knowledge. Once again he became absorbed in the knowledge of his own self, which is beyond all concepts and descriptions. This indeed is the highest 'state of the Creator' (brahmisthiti).

From there on, created beings acquired the character of the things with which they associated. By associating with the good they became good, and those who associated with the worldly, became worldly. Thus one gets bound to this world-appearance; and thus one is liberated too.

section IV - chapter 60 61

yaiva cid bhuvanabhogabhusane vyomni bhaskare dharavivarakogasthe saiva
citkitakodare (61/18)

Vasistha continued:

After the creation of the world-appearance, it (this world-appearance) became like a water-pot, in which the living creatures keep coming up and going down into the blind-well, with the 'desire to live' as the binding rope. These living beings that arose in the ocean of infinite consciousness, like waves and ripples, entered into the physical space. And when the elements like air, fire, water, and earth, were evolved, they became involved in them. Then the cycle of birth and death began to revolve.

The jivas come down, as it were, riding the rays of the moon, and enter into the plants and herbs. They become the fruits, as it were, of those plants. The fruits are ripened by the light of the sun. Then they are ready to incarnate. The subtle notions, ideas and mental conditioning are dormant even in the unborn being. At birth, the veil that covered them is removed.

Some of these beings are born pure and enlightened (satvic). Even in their own previous births they had turned away from the lure of sensual pleasures. But the nature of the others, who are born merely to perpetuate the cycle of birth and death, is a mixture of the pure, the impure, and the dark. There are others whose nature is pure with just a slight impurity. They are devoted to the truth and are full of noble qualities - rare are such people who are devoid of the darkness of ignorance. Other people are enveloped by the darkness of ignorance and stupidity - they are like rocks and hills!

Those beings in whom purity is preponderant with just a slight impurity (the rajasa-satvic people) are ever happy, enlightened, and do not grieve nor despair. They are unselfish like trees, and like them, they live to experience the fruition of past actions without committing new ones. They are desireless. They are at peace within themselves, and they do not abandon this peace, even in the worst calamities. They love all, and look upon all with equal vision. They do not drown in the ocean of sorrow.

By all means, one should avoid drowning in the ocean of sorrow, and engage oneself in the enquiry into the nature of the self: "Who am I, how has this world-illusion arisen?" One should thus abandon egoism in the body and attraction to the world. Then one will realise that there is no division in space, whether or not a building stands in space. **The same consciousness that shines in the sun also dwells as the little worm that crawls in a hole on this earth.**

section IV - chapter 62

tava tulyamatiriyah syat sujanah samadarsanah yogyo sau jnanadrstinam
mayokttanam sudrstiman (9)

Vasistha continued:

O Rama, one who is wise, and who is capable of enquiring into the nature of truth, should approach a good and learned person, and study the scripture. This teacher should be free from craving for pleasure, and he should also have had direct experience of the truth. And, with his help, one should study the scripture. And, by the practice of the great yoga, one can reach the supreme state.

O Rama, you are indeed a spiritual hero and an abode of good qualities. You are free from sorrow. You have reached the state of equanimity. Give up all delusion through the highest form of intelligence. When you are free from all concern about the objects of the world, you will be established in non-dual consciousness, and that is final liberation. There is no doubt about this. And, sages of self-knowledge will follow your noble example.

Rama, **only a person who is intelligent like you, who is natured and equal-visioned like you, and who sees only what is good, is entitled to the vision of wisdom which I have described here.**

O Rama, as long as you are embodied, live without being swayed by likes and dislikes, attraction and aversion, in conformity with the standards of the community in which you live, but without any desires and cravings. Constantly seek to discover the supreme peace, as the holy ones do.

It is by emulating the example of the holy ones that one makes progress towards the supreme state. Whatever be one's nature here in this life, that alone he obtains after leaving this life-span. But he who exerts seriously now is able to overcome such predispositions, and exalt himself from the states of darkness and stupidity (tamas) and impurity (rajas). It is by the exercise of one's wisdom that one can ascend from these other states to the state of purity and enlightenment (satva).

It is only by intense self-effort that one obtains a good embodiment. There is nothing that intense self-effort cannot achieve. By the practice of brahmacharya (continence or whole-souled devotion to Brahman), courage and endurance, and dispassion, and by intelligent practice based on common-sense, one obtains that which one seeks to obtain, self-knowledge.

Rama, you are already a liberated being: live like one!