

The Supreme Yoga

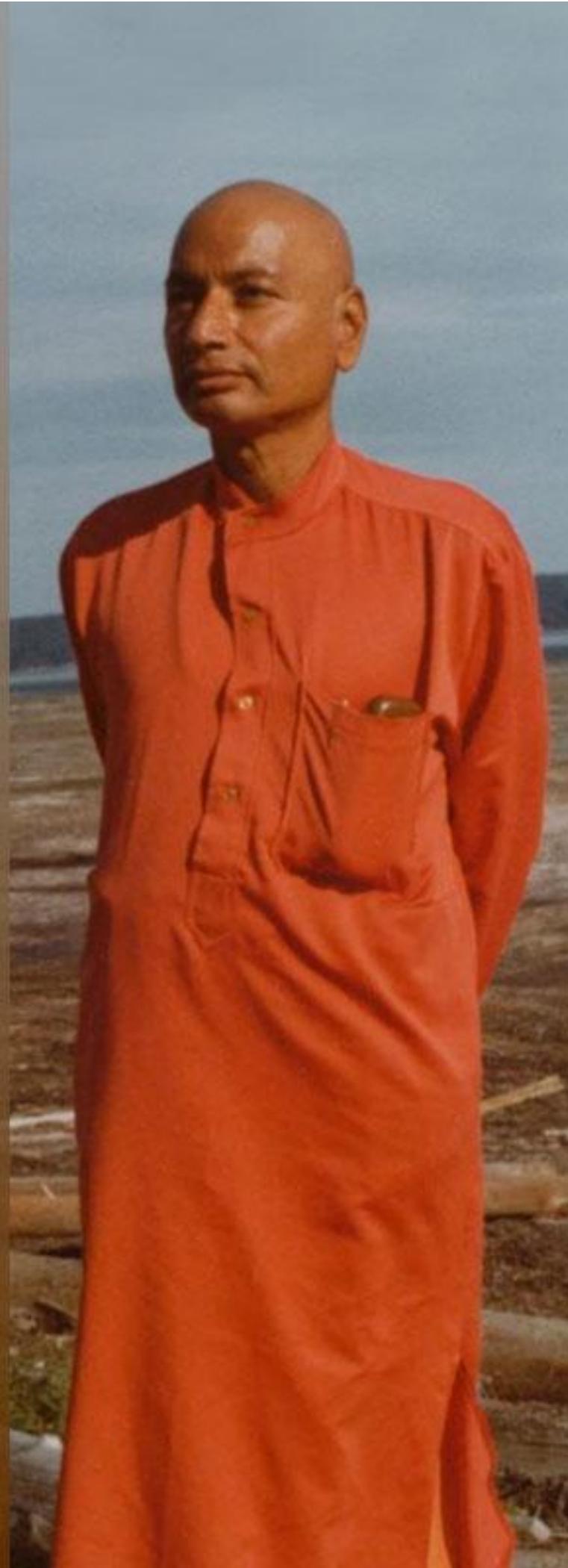
a new translation of

Yoga Vasistha

3 . Utpatti Prakaranam

Section dealing with Creation

Swami Venkatesananda



THE SUPREME YOGA

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

Swami Venkatesananda

3 - Utpatti Prakaranam

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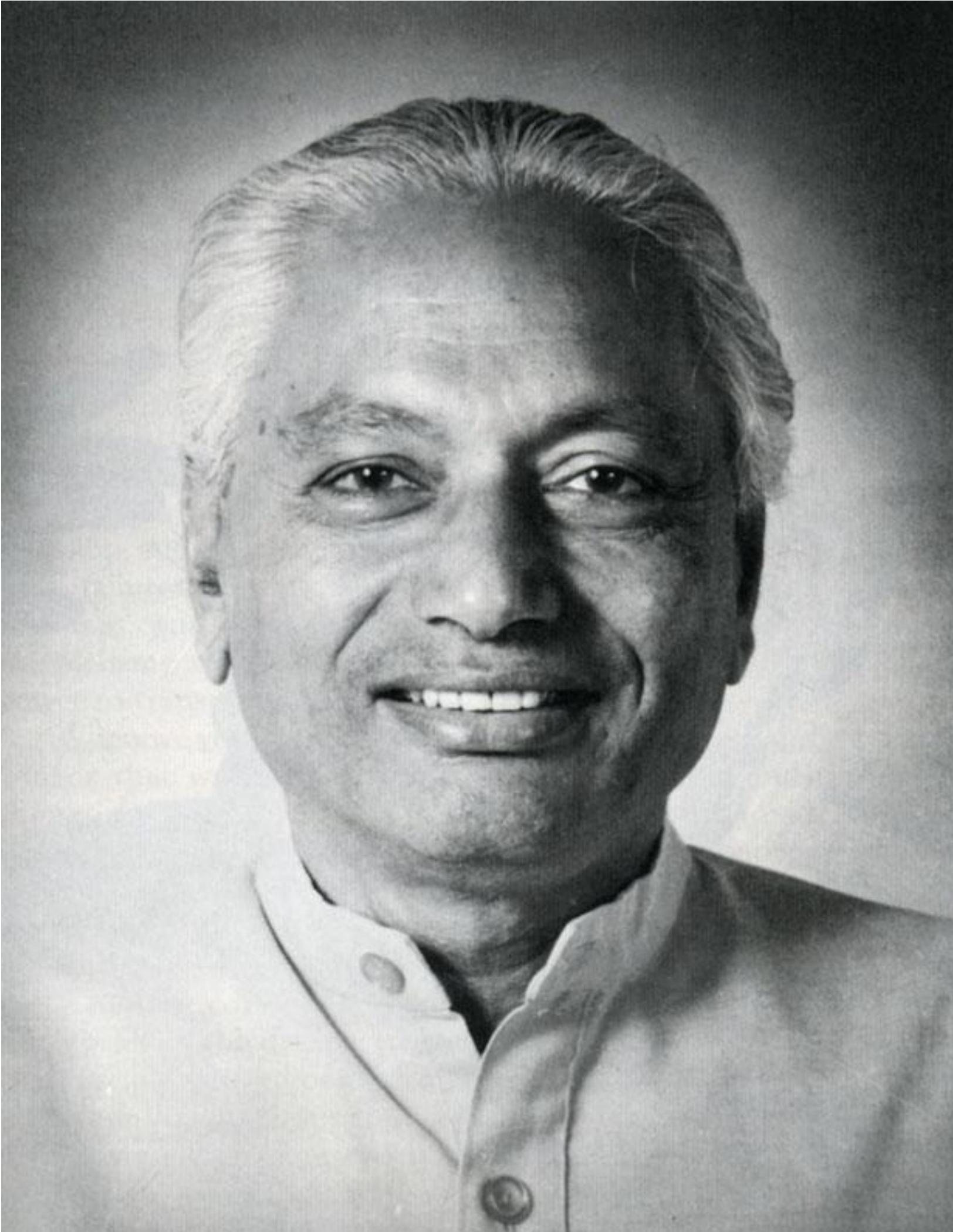
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This publication is dedicated to my Gurudev Swami Sivananda. His life was a symphony whose constant refrain was: "In all conditions I am Knowledge - Bliss Absolute." Sage Vasishtha incarnated as Swami Sivananda to embody the Supreme Yoga. In Gurudev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

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I. VAIRAGYA PRAKARANAM
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25. The Seven States of Yoga

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 jnaptyatmane namah (2)
sphuranti sikara yasmad anandasya mbare vanau
sarvesam jivanam tasmai brahmanandatmane namah (3)

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

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

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

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

section III - chapter 1

yatha rasah padarthesu yatha tailam tiladisu kusumesu yatha modas tatha
drastari drsyadhih (43)

Vasistha continued:

I shall now declare to you the creation and its secret. For, it is only as long as one invests the perceived object with reality that bondage lasts; once that notion goes, with it goes bondage. Here in this creation only that which is created grows, decays and then goes either to heaven or to hell, and it gets liberated.

During the cosmic dissolution the entire objective creation is resolved into the infinite being, which is variously designated as Atma, Brahman, Truth, etc., by the wise, to facilitate communication and dialogue. This same infinite self conceives within itself the duality of oneself and the other. Thence, mind arises, as a wave arises when the surface of the calm ocean is disturbed. But, please bear in mind that just as a bracelet of gold is but gold (and though gold exists without being a bracelet, bracelet does not exist without gold or other metal), the qualities and the nature of the created and the potentiality of creation are inherent in the creator. The mind is non-different from (has no existence independent of) the infinite self.

Even as the mirage appears to be a very real river of water, this creation appears to be entirely real. And, as long as one clings to the notion of the reality of "you" and "I", there is no liberation. Not by merely and verbally denying such a notion of existence is it obliterated: on the contrary, such denial itself becomes a further distraction.

Rama, if the creation is in fact real then there is no possibility of its cessation: for it is an immutable law that the unreal has no real existence and the real does not cease to be. Austerity, meditation and such other practices can therefore not cause its cessation nor enlightenment. As long as the notion of creation lasts, even the contemplation (samadhi) in which there is no movement of thought (nirvikalpa) is not possible. Even if it were possible, the moment one returns from such contemplation, the creation with its sorrow arises in the mind. Movement of thought creates the notion of created objects.

Even as the essence exists in all things, as oil exists in sesame seeds, as aroma exists in flowers, the faculty of objective perception exists in the perceiver. Even as the dream-objects are experienced only by the dreamer, the objects of perception are experienced by the perceiver. Just as from a seed the sprout arises in due time, this potentiality becomes manifest as the notion of creation.

section III chapter 2

pranaspando sya yatkarma laksyate ca smadadibhih drsyate smabhir evai tan na
tv asya sty atra karmadhih (25)

Vasistha continued:

There is a holy man named Akasaja (lit: born of space). He is in constant meditation and has the welfare of all at heart. He had lived for a long time, when death desired to devour him. When death approached him, it had to struggle with a fierce fire that protected the holy man. Even after fending this off, death was unable to touch him! Bewildered by this extraordinary and unprecedented event, death went to lord Yama who presides over the destinies of mortals and questioned him: "Pray, Lord, tell me why it is that I am unable to grasp him."

Yama answered:

"In fact, O death, you do not really kill anyone! Death is really caused by one's own karma (the fruition of one's own action). Hence, discover this man's fatal karma."

Even as no one can find the whereabouts of a barren woman's son, death could not discover the holy man's karma anywhere in the world. He reported this to Yama.

Yama said:

"O death, this holy man Akasaja was truly born of space and has no karma at all. He is as pure as space. Hence he has incurred no karma which can help you grasp him or devour him. Even as a barren woman's son, this holy man is not born. He had no 'previous birth' karma either; and therefore he has no mind - hence he has not even committed a mental action which could bring him within your reach. He is nothing but a mass of intelligence. **He appears to be a living being only in our eyes; in him there does not exist any such notion as can give rise to karma.** Consciousness is reflected in consciousness; and the reflection assumes independence! It is a false assumption, not a real existence; and this holy man knows this truth.

Even as liquidity is naturally present in water and emptiness in space, this holy man lives in the supreme spirit. His is a causeless manifestation: and hence he is known as self-created. He who entertains the foolish notion that 'I am this body made up of earth' is entangled in matter, and you can overpower him. Since this holy man has no such notion (and hence he is truly bodiless) he is beyond your reach.

This holy man has never been born. He is pure consciousness that has undergone no change. In the infinite being at the beginning of an epoch there arises a vibration on account of latent ignorance: and this manifests as diverse beings, as if in a cosmic dream. Uninvolved in this, this holy man remains pure consciousness."

Vasistha said:

In the Creator there is neither a seer nor an object of perception. Yet, he is known as self-created. He shines in cosmic consciousness as a painting in the mind of an artist.

section III - chapter 3

ativahikam eva ntar vismrtya drdharupaya adhibhautikabodhena mudha bhati
pisacavat (22)

Vasistha continued:

In the Creator there is no memory of the past since he had no previous karma. He does not even have a physical body; the unborn is of spiritual substance. Mortal beings have two bodies, as it were, one physical and the other spiritual, but the unborn Creator has only the spiritual, since the cause that gives rise to the physical does not exist in him.

He was not created, but he is the Creator of all beings. Surely, the created (like a bracelet) is of the same substance as that of which it was created (gold). The Creator's thought being the cause of this manifold creation and the Creator himself having no physical body, the creation, too, is truly of the nature of thought, without materiality.

A throbbing arose in the Creator whose thought had spread out as the universe. This throb brought into being the subtle body (made of intelligence) of all beings. Made only of thought, all these beings only appeared to be, though they felt that that appearance was real. However, this appearance thus imagined to be real, produced realistic results or consequences, even as sexual enjoyment in a dream does. Similarly, even the Creator (the holy man of the story) though he has no body, appears to have a body.

The Creator is also of a dual nature: consciousness and thought. Consciousness is pure, thought is subject to confusion. Hence, he appears to come into being (arise), though he does not so arise. He is the intelligence that supports the entire universe, and every thought that arises in that intelligence gives rise to a form. **Though all these forms are of the nature of pure intelligence, on account of self-forgetfulness of this, and of the thought of physical forms, they freeze into the physical forms even as goblins though formless are seen to have forms on account of the perceiver's delusion.**

The Creator, however, is not subject to such delusion. Hence, he is always of a spiritual nature, not materialistic. The Creator is spiritual; and even so, his creation, too, is in reality spiritual in essence. This creation is causeless. Hence, it is essentially spiritual even as the supreme being, Brahman, is. The materiality of the creation is like the castle in the air, an illusory projection of one's own mind - imaginary.

The Creator is the mind; mind or pure intelligence is his body. Thought is inherent in the mind. The object of perception is inherent in the perceiver. Who has ever discovered a distinction between the two?

section III - chapter 4

na drsyam asti sadrupam na drasta na ca darsanam na sunyam na jadam no cic
chantam evedam atatam (70)

Valmiki said:

At this stage the sun sped towards the western hills as if eager to meditate upon the sage's words and to illumine other parts of the earth. The assembly dispersed for prayers. The next morning all the members of the court reassembled as before.

Rama asked:

O Holy sage! Pray, tell me what the mind really is.

Vasistha replied:

Even as empty, inert nothingness is known as space, mind is empty nothingness. Whether the mind is real or unreal, it is that which is apprehended in objects of perception. Rama, thought is mind, there is no distinction between the two. The self that is clothed in the spiritual body is known as mind; it is that which brings the material or physical body into existence. Ignorance, samsara (repetitive history), mind-stuff, bondage, impurity, darkness and inertia are all synonyms. Experience alone is the mind; it is none other than the perceived.

This entire universe is forever non-different from the consciousness that dwells in every atom, even as an ornament is non-different from gold. Just as an ornament potentially exists in gold, the object exists in the subject. But when this notion of the object is firmly rejected and removed from the subject, then consciousness alone exists without even an apparent or potential objectivity. When this is realised, evils like attraction and repulsion, love and hate, cease in one's heart, as also the false notions of the world, you, I, etc. Even the tendency to objectify ceases; this is freedom.

Rama asked:

Holy sir, if the object of perception is real, then it shall not cease to be. If it is unreal, then we do not see it as unreal; so how can we overcome this?

Vasistha said:

Yet, O Rama, we see that there are holy ones who have overcome this! External objects like space, etc., and psychological factors like "I" etc., exist only in name. **In reality neither the objective universe, nor the perceiving self, nor perception as such, nor void, nor inertness exists; only one is, cosmic consciousness (cit).** In this it is the mind that conjures up the diversity, diverse actions and experiences, the notion of bondage and the desire for liberation.

section III - chapter 5 6

yasmad visnvadayo devah suryadiva maricayah yasmaj jaganty anantani budbuda
jaladher iva (5/9)

Rama asked:

O Holy sage! What is the source of this mind and how did it arise? Kindly enlighten me on these.

Vasistha replied:

After the cosmic dissolution and before the next epoch dawned, the entire objective universe was in a state of perfect equilibrium. There then existed the supreme Lord, the eternal, unborn, self-effulgent, who is the all and who is omnipotent. He is beyond conception and description; though he is known by various names like Atma etc., these are viewpoints and not the truth. He is, yet he is not realised by the world; he is within the body, too, yet he is far. **From him emerge countless divinities like lord Visnu, even as countless rays emerge from the sun; from him emerge infinite worlds as ripples arise from the surface of the ocean.**

He is the cosmic intelligence into which countless objects of perception enter. He is the light in which the self and the world shine. He ordains the characteristic nature of every created thing. In him the worlds appear and disappear, even as a mirage appears and disappears repeatedly. His form (the world) vanishes, but his self is unchanging. He dwells in all. He is hidden and he overflows. By his mere presence, this apparently inert material world and its inhabitants are ever active. Because of his omnipresent omnipotent omniscience, his very thoughts materialise.

This supreme self cannot be realised, O Rama, by means other than wisdom - not indeed by exerting oneself in religious practices. This self is neither far nor near; it is not inaccessible nor is it in distant places: it is what in oneself appears to be the experience of bliss, and is therefore realised in oneself.

Austerity or penance, charity and the observances of religious vows do not lead to the realisation of the Lord; only the company of holy men and the study of true scriptures are helpful, as they dispel ignorance and delusion. Even when one is convinced that this self alone is real, one goes beyond sorrow, on the path of liberation.

Austerity or penance is self-inflicted pain. Of what value is charity performed with wealth earned by deceiving others - only they derive the fruits of such charity! Religious observances add to one's vanity. There is only one remedy for ignorance of the Lord - the firm and decisive renunciation of craving for sense-pleasure.

section III - chapter 7

drastr drsya kramo yatra sthito py astamayangatah yad anakasam akasam rad
rupam paramatmanah (21)

Rama asked:

Where does this Lord dwell, and how can I reach him? Vasistha replied: He who has been described as the Lord is not very far: He is the intelligence dwelling in the body. He is the universe, though the universe is not he. He is pure intelligence.

Rama remarked:

Even a little boy says that the Lord is intelligence: what need is there for special instruction concerning this?

Vasistha replied:

Ah, one who knows that pure intelligence is the objective universe knows nothing. Sentient is the universe, and sentient is the soul (jiva). The sentient creates the knowable and gets involved in sorrow. When there is cessation of the knowable, and the flow of attention is towards that which is not knowable (pure intelligence), then there is fulfilment and one goes beyond sorrow.

Without the cessation of the knowable, one's attention cannot be finally turned away from the knowable. Mere awareness of the involvement of the jiva in this samsara is of no use. But if the supreme Lord is known, this sorrow comes to an end.

Rama asked:

Holy sir, please describe the Lord.

Vasistha replied:

The cosmic intelligence in which the universe as it were ceases to be, is the Lord. **In him the subject-object relationship appears to have ceased, as such. He is the void in which the universe appears to exist.** In him even cosmic consciousness stands still like a mountain.

Rama asked again:

How can we realise the Lord and realise the unreality of the universe that we have come to regard as real?

Vasistha answered:

The Lord can be realised only if one is firmly established in the unreality of the universe even as the blueness of the sky is unreal. Dualism presupposes unity, and non-dualism suggests dualism. Only when the creation is known to be utterly non-existent the Lord is realised.

section III - chapter 8 9

yo jagarti susuptastho yasya jagran na vidyate yasya nirvasano bodhah sa jivanmuktah ucyate (9/7)

Rama asked:

Holy sir, by what method is this known, and what should I know by which the knowable comes to an end?

Vasistha replied:

The wrong notion that this world is real has become deep rooted on account of persistent wrong thinking. However, it can be removed that very day on which you resort to the company of holy men and to the study of the holy scripture. Of all scriptures this Maharamayanam is best. What is found here is found elsewhere; what is not found here is not found anywhere else. However, if one does not wish to study this one is welcome to study any other scripture - there is no objection to this.

When the wrong notion is dispelled and the truth realised, that realisation so thoroughly saturates one, that one thinks of it, speaks of it, rejoices in it and teaches it to others. Such people are sometimes called Jivanmuktas and also Videhamuktas.

Rama asked:

Lord, what are the characteristics of Jivanmuktas (liberated while living) and Videhamuktas (liberated ones who have no body)?

Vasistha replied:

He who, while living an apparently normal life, experiences the whole world as an emptiness, is a Jivanmukta. He is awake but enjoys the calmness of deep sleep; he is unaffected in the least by pleasure and pain. **He is awake in deep sleep, but he is never awake to this world. His wisdom is unclouded by latent tendencies.** He appears to be subject to likes, dislikes and fear; but in fact he is as free as the space. He is free from egotism and volition; and his intelligence is unattached whether in action or in inaction. None is afraid of him; he is afraid of none. He becomes a Videhamukta when, in due time, the body is dropped.

The Videhamukta is, yet is not, is not 'I' nor the 'other'. He is the sun that shines, Visnu that protects all, Rudra that destroys all, Brahma that creates; he is space, the earth, water and fire. He is in fact cosmic consciousness - that which is the very essence in all beings. All that which is in the past, present and future - all indeed is he and he alone.

section III - chapter 9

drastr darsana drhyanam madhye yad darsanam sthitam sadho tad avadhanena
svatmanam avabuddhyase (75)

Rama asked again:

Lord, my perception is distorted: how can I attain to that state you have indicated?

Vasistha replied:

What is known as liberation, O Rama, is indeed the absolute itself, which alone is. That which is perceived here as 'I', 'you' etc., only seems to be, for it has never been created. How can we say that that Brahman has become all these worlds?

O Rama, in ornaments I see only gold, in waves I see only water, in air I see only movement, in space I see only emptiness, in mirage I see only heat, and naught else; similarly, I see only Brahman the absolute, not the worlds.

The perception of 'the worlds' is beginningless ignorance. Yet it will vanish with the help of enquiry into truth. Only that ceases to be which has come into being. This world has never really come into being, yet it appears to be - the exposition of this truth is contained in this - chapter on creation.

When the previous cosmic dissolution took place, all that appeared to be before disappeared. Then the infinite alone remained; it was neither emptiness nor a form, neither sight nor the seen, and one could not say that it was, nor that it was not. It has no ears, no eyes, no tongue, and yet it hears, sees and eats. It is uncaused and uncreated; and it is the cause of everything as water is the cause of waves. This infinite and eternal light is in the heart of all: and in its light the three worlds shine, as a mirage.

When the infinite vibrates, the worlds appear to emerge; when it does not vibrate, the worlds appear to submerge: even as when a firebrand is whirled fast a fiery circle appears, and when it is held steady, the circle vanishes. Vibrating or not vibrating, it is the same everywhere at all times. Not realising it, one is subject to delusion; when it is realised all cravings and anxieties vanish.

From it is time; from it is perception of the perceivable object. Action, form, taste, smell, sound, touch and thinking - all that you know is it alone; and it is that by which you know all this! **It is in the seer, sight and seen as the very seeing; when you know it, you realise your self.**

section III - chapter 10

purnat purnam prasarati samsthitam purnam eva tat ato visvam anutpannam yac
cotpannam tad eva tat (29)

Rama said:

Holy sir, how can it be said to be not empty, not to be illuminated and not dark? By such contradictory expressions you confuse me!

Vasistha replied:

Rama, you are asking immature questions. Yet, I shall elucidate the correct meaning.

Even as the uncarved image is forever present in a block, the world whether you regard it as real or unreal is inherent in the absolute, which is therefore not void. Just as in a calm ocean, one cannot say that there are no waves present, the absolute is not empty of the world. Of course, these illustrations have limited application and should not be exceeded.

In truth, however, this world does not arise from the absolute nor does it merge in it. The absolute alone exists now and for ever. When one thinks of it as a void, it is because of the feeling one has that it is not void; when one thinks of it as not-void, it is because there is a feeling that it is void.

The absolute is immaterial and so material sources of light like the sun, do not illumine it. But it is self-luminous, and therefore it is not inert nor dark. This absolute cannot be realised or experienced by another; only the absolute can realise itself.

The infinite (space of) consciousness is even purer than infinite space; and the world is even as that infinite is. But, one who has not tasted capsicum does not know its taste; even so, one does not experience consciousness in the infinite in the absence of objectivity. Hence, even this consciousness appears to be inert or insentient, and the world is experienced as such too. Even as in tangible ocean tangible waves are seen, in the formless Brahman the world also exists without form. **From the infinite the infinite emerges and exists in it as the infinite; hence the world has never really been created - it is the same as that from which it emerges.**

When the notion of self is destroyed by the withdrawal of the fuel of ideas from the mind, that which is, is the infinite. That which is not sleep nor inert, is the infinite. It is on account of the infinite that knowledge, knower and known exist as one, in the absence of the intellect.

section III - chapter 11

adav eva hi yan na sti karanasambhavat svayam vartamane pi tan na sti nasah
syat tatra kidrsah (13)

Rama said:

Lord, during the cosmic dissolution, this world which is clearly seen now - where does it go?

Vasistha said:

From where does the son of a barren woman come, and where does he go? A barren woman's son has no existence, ever. Even so, this world as such has no existence, ever. This analogy baffles you only because you have taken the existence of the world for granted.

Consider this: Is there a bracelet-ness in the golden bracelet, is it not just gold? Is there a thing called sky independent of the emptiness? Even so, there is no "thing" called the world independent of Brahman the absolute. Just as coldness is inseparable from ice, what is called the world is inseparable from Brahman.

Water in the mirage does not come into being and go out of existence; even so this world does not come out of the absolute nor does it go anywhere. **The creation of the world has no cause, and therefore it has had no beginning. It does not exist even now; how can it reach destruction?**

If you concede that the world has not been created out of Brahman but assert that it is an appearance based on the reality of Brahman, then indeed it does not exist and Brahman alone exists. It is like dream: in a state of ignorance the intelligence within oneself appears as numerous dream-objects, all of which are nothing other than that intelligence. Even so, in what is known as the beginning of creation, such an appearance happened; but it is not independent of Brahman, it does not exist apart from Brahman, hence it does not exist.

Rama said:

Holy sir, if that is so, how is it that this world has acquired such a sense of reality? As long as the perceiver is, the perceived exists, and vice versa, and only when both these come to an end is there liberation. If there is a clean mirror, it reflects something or other all the time: even so in the seer this creation will again and again arise. However, if the non-existence of creation is realised then the seer ceases to be. But, such a realisation is hard to get!

Vasistha said:

Rama, I shall presently dispel your doubts with the help of a parable. You will then realise the non-existence of creation and lead an enlightened life in this world.

section III - chapter 12

vivarattam eva dhavanti nirvivarattani santi ca cidvedhitani sarvani ksanat
pindibhavanti ca (30)

Vasistha said:

O Rama, I shall narrate to you how this creation appears to have emerged from the one pure undivided cosmic being, even as dreams appear in the consciousness of the sleeping person.

This universe is in fact the eternal effulgent infinite consciousness which generates within itself the knowable (which would be known as that which is to be) with an idea concerning its form (which is space), and with an enquiry concerning itself. Thus is space brought into being. When, after a considerable time the consciousness of creation becomes strong in the infinite being, the future jiva (living cosmic soul - also known as Hiranyagarbha) arises within it: and the infinite abandons, as it were, its supreme state, to limit itself as the jiva. However, even then Brahman remains the infinite, and there is no real transformation into any of these.

In space, the faculty of sound manifests itself. Then comes into being egotism which is vital to further creation of the universe, and, at the same time, the factor known as time. All this happens merely by the creative-thought inherent in the cosmic being, not as real transformations of the infinite.

By the similar exercise of the creative-thought, air is created. The Vedas come into being, too. Consciousness which is surrounded by all these is called the jiva which gives rise to all the different elements in this world.

There are fourteen planes of existence, each with its own type of inhabitants. And all these are the manifestations of the creative-thought of consciousness. Even so, when this consciousness thought 'I am light', sources of light like the sun, etc., were instantly created. Similarly water and earth were created.

All these fundamental elements continued to act on one another - as experiencer and experience - and the entire creation came into being like ripples on the surface of the ocean. And, they are interwoven and mixed up so effectively that they cannot be extricated from one another till the cosmic dissolution. **These material appearances are ever changing and the reality exists unchanged; since these are all linked with consciousness they instantly become gross physical substance,** though all these are the infinite consciousness alone, which has undergone no change whatsoever.

section III - chapter 13

jagatah pancanam bijam pancakasya cid avyaya yad bijam tat phalam viddhi
tasmat brahmamaya jagat (9)

Vasistha continued:

In the supreme being there exists the vibration which is at once equilibrium and disturbance; on account of this there appear space and light and inertia, though they have not really been created. Since all this happens in consciousness, they possess the quality of the knowable; at the same time there arises the knower. It is the inherent power of consciousness to illumine all things, hence it is the cosmic knower. That consciousness itself becomes its own knowable and the knower. When such a relationship arises, the notion "I am a jiva, living soul" arises in consciousness.

By the further identification with the knowable, in the pure consciousness there arises the notion of egotism and then the faculty of discrimination or the rationalising intellect. After this the mind and the root-elements arise. These root-elements combine again and again to form the worlds. Spontaneously and also by orderly changes, all these countless forms appear and disappear repeatedly, even as cities come and go in a dream. None of these needs any instrumental or material causes like earth, water or fire. For all this is of the essential nature of consciousness, and it is this consciousness that apparently creates all these, as one creates cities in a dream. It is nothing but pure consciousness.

The five elements are the seed of which the world is the tree; and the eternal consciousness is the seed for the elements. As is the seed, so is the fruit (tree). Therefore, the world is nothing but Brahman the absolute.

In this manner has the universe been conjured up in cosmic space by cosmic consciousness with its own infinite faculties; it is not real, nor has it been really created. Though these elements have combined among themselves and created apparent materiality in the world, yet, in truth, all this is mere appearance like the forms seen in space. They owe their reality to their substratum which is cosmic consciousness which alone is real.

Do not entertain the feeling that the world of five elements is their creation: look upon the five elements themselves as the manifestation of the power inherent in consciousness absolute. It may be said that the elements such as earth etc., have arisen in consciousness like dream-objects; or it may be said that they are mere appearances ignorantly superimposed on cosmic consciousness. Such is the vision or realisation of holy men.

section III - chapter 13

asatyam satyasamkasam brahma ste jivasabdavat ittham sa jivasabdarthah
kalanakulatam gatah (33)

Vasistha continued:

Rama, I shall now tell you how the jiva (living soul) came to dwell in this body.

The jiva thought "I am atomic in nature and stature" and so it became atomic in nature. Yet, it only apparently became so, on account of its imagination which was false. Even as one may dream that he is dead and that he has another body, this jiva which in truth had an extremely subtle body of pure consciousness, now begins to identify itself with grossness and so becomes gross.

Even as a mountain is reflected in a mirror and is seen as if it were in the mirror, the jiva reflects the external objects and activities, and soon begins to think that they are all within itself and that he is the doer of the actions and the experiencer of the experiences.

When the jiva wishes to see, eyes are formed in the gross body. Even so the skin (tactile sense), ears, tongue, nose and the organs of action are formed as a result of the appropriate desire arising in the jiva. Thus abides in the body, the jiva which has the extremely subtle body of consciousness, imagining various external physical experiences and various internal psychological experiences. **Thus, resting in the unreal which however appears to be real, Brahman, now appearing to be jiva, becomes confused.**

This same Brahman which has come to regard itself as a finite jiva and endowed with a physical body, apprehends the external world which on account of the veil of ignorance appears to be composed of matter. Someone thinks he is Brahma, someone else thinks he is something else - in this manner the jiva imagines it is this or that, and so binds itself to the illusion of world-appearance.

But all this is mere imagination or thought. Even now nothing has ever been created; the pure infinite space alone exists. Brahma the creator could not create the world as it was before the cosmic dissolution, for Brahma attained final liberation then. Cosmic consciousness alone exists now and ever; in it are no worlds, no created beings. That consciousness reflected in itself appears to be creation. Even as an unreal nightmare produces real results, this world seems to give rise to a sense of reality in a state of ignorance. When true wisdom arises, this unreality vanishes.

section III - chapter 14

evam brahma mahajivo vidyate ntadivarjitah jivakoti mahakoti bhavaty atha na kincana (35)

Vasistha continued:

As I have already explained to you, O Rama, this world consisting of egotism and the countless objects of experience has not been created and therefore it does not exist: what exists is Brahman, the absolute existence. Just as a wave is seen on the calm surface of the ocean when the latter is agitated, even so when the absolute 'thinks', as it were, that it is a jiva, the jiva-nature manifests itself. Just as a sleeping person appears to create diverse creatures within himself without ever abandoning his own unique and sole reality, by a mere thought or will the absolute brings into being these countless creatures without ever suffering diminution or change.

The cosmic form (Virat) of this cosmic consciousness is of course of the nature of pure consciousness, uncontaminated by gross materiality. The cosmic form made of pure consciousness can be compared to an ever-lasting dream in a sleeping person in which there exist palaces and other beings.

Even the creator Brahma is a mere thought-form in this cosmic consciousness: consciousness reflecting its own thought-forms within itself is all this apparent seer and seen, all of which are mere imaginations. All of them however exist in name only and multiply in name only. Even as the cosmic being arose in the cosmic consciousness as a cosmic thought-form, others arose from the thoughts of that cosmic being - just as one lamp is kindled from another. But all of them are non-different from that one cosmic being on account of whose thought-vibration they arose.

Brahman alone is the cosmic being (Virat) and the cosmic being is all this creation, with the jiva and all the elements that constitute this creation.

Rama asked:

Lord, is there only one jiva that is cosmic, or are there many jivas, or is there a huge conglomerate of jivas?

Vasistha answered:

Rama, there is neither one jiva nor many nor a conglomerate of jivas. Jiva is only a name! What exists is only Brahman. Because he is omnipotent, his thought-forms materialise. One alone appears as diverse on account of ignorance; we do not experience this ignorance which disappears on enquiry even as darkness vanishes when light is brought in to look at it. **Brahman alone is the cosmic (Mahajiva) soul and the millions of jivas. There is naught else.**

section III - chapter 14

cetya samvedanat jivo bhavatyayati samsrtim tad asamvedanad rupam samayati samam punah (36)

Vasistha continued:

By the apprehension of the perceived or the knowable, consciousness becomes jiva (the living soul) and is apparently involved in repetitive history (samsara). When the false notion of a knowable apart from the knower (consciousness) ceases, it regains its equilibrium.

In an orderly and sometimes disorderly way, the one Mahajiva thus becomes individual jiva, inheriting from the previous generation the sense of duality and of individuality.

The mysterious power of consciousness which in an inexplicable and miraculous way produces this infinite diversity of names and forms (body) is known as egotism. The same consciousness, when it wishes to taste or to experience itself, becomes the knowable universe. Only immature people see in this either a real transformation or even a deluded appearance; for there is nothing other than consciousness.

The ocean is water; the waves are water; and when these waves play upon the surface of the ocean, ripples (also water) are formed. Even so with the universe. Even as the ocean might look upon and recognise the individuality of the ripples, the consciousness thinks of the individuals as independent; and thus egotism is born ('I-ness'). All this is the wonderful play of the mysterious power of consciousness - and that alone is called the universe.

When egotism has come into being, that egotism (which is non-different from consciousness) entertains notions of the various elements that constitute this universe, and they arise. In unity diversity arises. O Rama, give up all these false notions of 'I' and 'you', by renouncing even the notions of a jiva and its own cause. When all these have gone, you will realise the truth which is in the middle between the real and the unreal. When all these 'clouds' have been dispelled, the one indivisible whole shines as it has never ceased to shine. We do not know what is real or what is false!

This consciousness is not knowable: when it wishes to become the knowable it is known as the universe. Mind, intellect, egotism, the five great elements, and the world - all these innumerable names and forms, are all consciousness alone. A man and his life and works are indistinguishable, the static and the kinetic manifestations of the same factor. Jiva and the mind etc., are all vibrations in consciousness.

section III - chapter 14

svayam astam gate bahye svajnanad udita cittih svayam jadesu jadyena padam
sausuptam agata (67)

Vasistha continued:

That consciousness indeed exists here, knowing "I cannot be cut, I cannot be burnt, I cannot be made wet, I cannot be dried; I am eternal, omnipresent and unchanging and unmoving." This is the truth. People like to argue and confuse others; they are indeed confused. But, O Rama, we are beyond confusion. Changes in the unchanging are imagined by ignorant and deluded people: but in the vision of sages who have self-knowledge no change whatsoever has taken place in consciousness.

O Rama, consciousness alone has spread itself out as space, without undergoing any change in itself. After that, consciousness alone appears as the wind that has the quality of motion. And then consciousness alone appears as fire, water, and the earth with its minerals, and also the bodies of living beings.

When the notion of an external knowable has been removed, self-knowledge arises; and when in it there is the notion of inertia or ignorance, the state of deep sleep has come to it. Hence, since consciousness alone exists at all times, it may be said that space exists and does not exist, the world exists and does not exist.

Even as heat is to fire, whiteness is to a conch-shell, firmness is to a mountain, liquidity to water, sweetness is to sugarcane, butter is to milk, coolness is to ice, brightness is to illumination, oil is to mustard seed, flow is to a river, sweetness is to honey, ornament is to gold, aroma is to a flower - the universe is to consciousness. The world exists because consciousness is: and the world is the body of consciousness. There is no division, no difference, no distinction. Hence the universe can be said to be both real and unreal: real because of the reality of consciousness which is its own reality, and unreal because the universe does not exist as universe, independent of consciousness. This consciousness is indivisible and has no parts or limbs. In it the mountain, the ocean, the earth, the rivers, etc., do not exist as such, but only as consciousness; hence there are no parts nor limbs in consciousness.

But, because of the unreality of the universe, etc., it cannot be said that their own cause, viz., the consciousness is also unreal: such a statement would only be a set of words with no meaning - for it runs counter to our experience, and the existence of consciousness cannot be denied.

At this stage, the third evening set in: and the assembly dispersed.

section III - chapter 15

varjayitva jnavijnanam jagac chabdartha bhajanam jagad brahma sva
sabdanamarthe na styeva bhinnata (10)

Vasistha continued:

O Rama, even as from the waking state experience, there is no materiality in the objects seen in a dream (though while dreaming the objects appear to be solid); this world appears to be material, yet in reality it is pure consciousness. There is not even a temporary or subtle river in the mirage. Even so, there is in no sense a real world, but only pure consciousness. **Only knowledge based on ignorance clings to the notion of a world. In reality, there is no difference in the meaning of the words 'world', 'Brahman or the infinite', and 'self'.** The world is as true in relation to Brahman as the dream-city is true in relation to the experience of the waking consciousness. Hence, 'world' and 'cosmic consciousness' are synonyms.

To make all this crystal clear, O Rama, I shall now narrate to you the story of Mandapa: pray, listen attentively.

Once upon a time, O Rama, there was a king on earth called Padma. He was perfect in every respect; and by his own nature and conduct he enhanced the glory of his dynasty. He honoured religious traditions even as the ocean respects the authority of the shore. He subdued his enemies even as the sun routs darkness. Even as fire reduces hay to ashes, he destroyed evil in society. Holy men resorted to him even as gods resort to heaven. He was the abode of virtue. He made his enemies tremble on the battlefield even as a gale ruffles a creeper. He was highly learned and a master of arts. To him there was nothing impossible of achievement, even as to lord Narayana there was no impossibility.

This king had a wife by name Lila. She was highly accomplished as a woman, and was very beautiful. It appeared as if she was goddess Laksmi (consort of Narayana) incarnate on earth. She was soft-spoken, her gait was slow and graceful, and her smile radiated the cool delight of moonlight. She was fair. She was sweet as honey. Her arms were soft and delicate. Her body was as pure and clear as the waters of the holy river Ganga; and even as a touch of the waters of the Ganga gives rise to bliss, to touch her was to experience bliss. She was highly devoted to her husband Padma, and knew how to serve him and to please him.

She was one with the king, and shared his joy and sorrow. She was in fact the alter ego of Padma - except that when the king became angry, she merely reflected fear.

section III - chapter 16

tapo japa yamair devi samastah siddhasiddhayah samprapyante maratvam tu na kadacana labhyate (24)

Vasistha continued:

King Padma and the queen Lila lived an ideal life. They enjoyed their life in every possible and righteous way. They were young and youthful like the gods, and their love for each other was pure and intense, without any hypocrisy or artificiality.

One day, the queen Lila thought: "The most handsome king who is my husband is dearer to me than even my own life. What should I do in order that he and I may live for ever, enjoying the pleasures of life? I shall immediately undertake such austerities as the holy ones would suggest, in order that I may fulfil my ambition." She sought the counsel of the holy ones.

The Holy ones said to her: "O queen, **austerities or penance, repetition of mantras, and a disciplined life, will surely bestow upon you all that is possible for one to attain in this world. But physical immortality is not possible of attainment in this world!**"

The queen pondered this advice and decided: "If I should die before my husband, then I should attain self-knowledge, and be free from sorrow. But, if he should leave before me, then I shall so strive now as to obtain a boon from the gods that his jiva does not leave our palace. I shall be happy to live in it in the knowledge that he is always with me."

Thus resolved, Lila began to propitiate the goddess Sarasvati immediately, without even discussing this project with her husband. Once in three nights she used to eat, after devoutly worshipping the Lord, the holy ones, the preceptor, the learned ones and the sages. She was utterly convinced that this penance would prove fruitful, and this conviction greatly strengthened her application to the penance undertaken. Though she did not reveal her intention to the king, she did not let her service to her husband suffer in the very least on account of this penance. After one hundred such three-nightly worship, the goddess Sarasvati appeared before her and granted her the boons of her choice. Lila prayed: "O Divine mother, grant me two boons: (1) when my husband departs from his body, let his jiva remain in the palace, and (2) whenever I pray to you, let me see you." Sarasvati granted these two boons and disappeared.

Time inexorably passed. King Padma, who was mortally wounded on the battlefield, died in the palace. Queen Lila was inconsolable with grief. When she was thus sunk in grief, an ethereal voice spoke to her.

section III - chapter 17

cittakasam cidakasam akasam ca trtiyakam dvabhyam sunyataram viddhi cidakasam
varanane (10)

The ethereal voice of Sarasvati said:

My child, cover the king's dead body with flowers, then it will not decay. He will not leave the palace.

Lila did so. Yet, she was not satisfied, and she felt like a wealthy man (who had the wealth) who had been tricked into poverty-stricken existence. She invoked goddess Sarasvati who appeared before her and said:

My child, why do you grieve? Sorrow, like water in mirage, is an illusion.

Lila asked her: Pray, tell me where my husband is.

O Lila, there are three types of space - the psychological space, the physical space, and the infinite space of consciousness. Of these the most subtle is the infinite space of consciousness. By intense meditation on this infinite space of consciousness, you can see and experience the presence of one (like your husband) whose body is that infinite space, even though you do not see him here. That is the infinite space which exists in the middle when the finite intelligence travels from one place to another; for it is infinite. If you give up all thoughts, you will here and now attain to the realisation of oneness with all.

Normally, only he who has realised the utter non-existence of the universe can experience this; but you will do so, by my grace.

Vasistha continued:

Lila began to meditate. Immediately she entered the highest state of consciousness, free from all distractions (nirvikalpa). She was in the infinite space of consciousness. There she saw the king once again, on a throne, surrounded by many kings who adored him, by many sages and holy men who chanted the Vedas, by many women, and by armed forces. She saw them, but they did not see her, as one's thought-forms are visible only to oneself, not to others. She saw that the king had a youthful body. She also saw in his court very many members of the court of king Padma. She wondered: are they all dead, too!

Again, by the grace of goddess Sarasvati, Lila came back to her palace, and saw her attendants asleep. She woke them and asked them to request the members of the royal court to assemble at once. Messengers were quickly despatched to summon all. And very soon the royal court of king Padma was teeming with the ministers, sages, civil servants, relations, and friends. Seeing them all there, Lila rejoiced.

section III - chapter 18

adarse ntarbahiscaiva yatha sailo nubhuyate bahirantas cid adarse tatha sargo
nubhuyate (5)

Vasistha continued:

Seeing all the members of the royal court, Lila was puzzled. She thought, 'This is strange, for these people seem to exist in two places at the same time - in that region which I saw in my meditation and here in front of me. **Just as a mountain is seen both inside the mirror and outside it, this creation is seen both within consciousness and outside it.** But, which of these is real and which the reflection? I must find out from Sarasvati'. She adored Sarasvati and saw her seated in front of her.

Lila asked:

Be gracious, O Goddess, and tell me this. That on which this world is reflected is extremely pure and undivided, and it is not the object of knowledge. This world exists both within it as its reflection, and outside as solid matter: which is real and which the reflection?

Sarasvati asked:

Tell me first: what do you consider real and what unreal?

Lila answered:

That I am here and you are in front of me - this I consider real. That region in which my husband is now - that I consider unreal.

Sarasvati said:

How can the unreal be the effect of the real? The effect is the cause, there is no essential difference. Even in the case of a pot which is able to hold water, whereas its cause (clay) cannot, this difference is due to the co-operative causes. What was the material cause of your husband's birth? For, only material effects are produced by material causes.

Hence, when you find no immediate cause for an effect, then surely the cause existed in the past - memory. Memory is like space, empty. All creation here is the effect of that emptiness - and hence the creation is empty, too. Even as the birth of your husband is an illusory product of memory, I see all this as the illusory and unreal effect of imagination.

I shall narrate to you a story which illustrates the dream-like nature of this creation. In pure consciousness, in a corner of the mind of the Creator, there was a dilapidated shrine, covered with a blue dome. It had the fourteen worlds for rooms. The three divisions of space were holes in it. The sun was the light. In it, there were little anthills (the cities), little piles of earth (mountains), and little pools of water (the oceans). This is creation, the universe. In a very small corner of it, there lived a holy man with his wife and children. He was healthy, and free from fear. He performed his religious and social duties well.

section III - chapter 19 20

prakrtani sa smrtir lupta yuvayor udita nyatha svabne jagrat smrtir yadvad
etan maranam angane (20/16)

Sarasvati continued:

That holy man was known as Vasistha and his wife was Arundhati (though they were different from the Vasistha and Arundhati of legendary fame). One day, when that holy man was seated on the top of a hill, he saw at the foot of that hill, a colourful procession on the move, with a king riding a stately elephant, followed by an army and other royal paraphernalia. Looking at this, a wish arose in the heart of the holy man: "Indeed, the life of a king is rich and full of delight and glory. When will I ride a royal elephant like that, and be followed by an army like this?"

Some time after this, the holy man grew old, and then death overtook him. His wife, who was highly devoted to him, prayed to me and asked for the same boon that you had asked for: that her husband's spirit should not leave her house. I granted her that boon.

Though that holy man was an ethereal being, on account of the power of his constant wish during the previous life-span, he became a mighty king, and ruled over a great empire which resembled heaven on earth. He was dreaded by his foes, he was indeed a cupid to womenfolk, he was stable and firm against temptations like a mountain, he reflected all the scriptures within himself like a mirror, he was the wish-fulfiller of everyone in need, and he was the resting place of holy men. He was indeed the full moon of righteousness. (Arundhati had also given up her body and attained reunion with her husband.) It is eight days since this happened.

Lila, it is the same holy man who is now your husband, the king; and you are the same Arundhati who was his wife. On account of ignorance and delusion, all this seems to take place in the infinite consciousness. You may regard all this as true or as false.

Lila asked:

O Goddess, all this seems so strange and incredible to me. It is like saying that a huge elephant is bound in the centre of a mustard seed, or that in an atom a mosquito fought with a lion, or that there is a mountain in a lotus pod.

Sarasvati said:

My dear, I do not utter falsehood, but am telling the truth. It sounds incredible, but this kingdom appears to be only in the hut of the holy man on account of his desire for a kingdom. **The memory of the past is hidden, and you two have risen again. Death is but waking from a dream.** Birth, which arises from a wish, is no more real than the wish, like waves in a mirage!

section III - chapter 20 21

yathaitat pratibhamatram jagat sargavabhasanam tathaitat pratibhamatram
ksanakalpavabhasanam (20/29)

Sarasvati continued:

Lila, your house, you, I, and all this, is pure consciousness, naught else. Your house was itself in the house of the holy man Vasistha. In the space of his jiva existed the rivers and the mountains and so on. Even after the 'creation' of all this in the holy man's house, it remained as it was before. Indeed, in every atom there are worlds within worlds.

Lila asked:

O Goddess, you said that it was only eight days ago that the holy man had died; and yet my husband and I have lived for a long time. How can you reconcile this discrepancy?

Sarasvati said:

O Lila, just as space does not have a fixed span, time does not have a fixed span either. **Just as the world and its creation are mere appearances, a moment and an epoch are also imaginary**, not real. In the twinkling of an eye, the jiva undergoes the illusion of the death-experience, forgets what happened before that, and in the infinite consciousness thinks 'I am this' etc., and 'I am his son, I am so many years old, I ...' etc. There is no essential difference between the experiences of this world and those of another - all this being the thought-forms in the infinite consciousness. They are like two waves in the same ocean. Since these worlds were never created, they will never cease to be. Such is the law. Their real nature is consciousness.

Even as in a dream there is birth, death, and relationship, all in a very short time, and even as a lover feels that a single night without his beloved is an epoch, the jiva thinks of experienced and non-experienced objects in the twinkling of an eye. And, immediately thereafter, he imagines those things (the world) to be real. Even those things which he had not experienced nor seen present themselves before him as in a dream.

This world and this creation is nothing but memory, dream. Distance, measures of time, like a moment and an age, all these are hallucinations. This is one kind of knowledge - memory. There is another which is not based on memory of past experience. This is the fortuitous meeting of an atom and consciousness which is then able to produce its own effects.

Liberation is the realisation of the total non-existence of the universe as such. This is different from a mere denial of the existence of the ego and the universe! The latter is only half-knowledge. Liberation is to realise that all this is pure consciousness.

section III - chapter 21

mahacidrupam eva tvam smaranam viddhi vedanam karyakaranata tena sa sabdo na
ca vastavah (23)

Lila asked:

O Goddess, without prior hallucination, how was the creation of the holy man and his wife possible?

Sarasvati said:

Indeed, that was due to the thought-form of Brahma, the creator. He himself had no hidden thought-forms (memory), for, before creation, there was dissolution, and at that time the Creator had attained liberation. At the beginning of this epoch, someone assumes the role of creator and thinks "I am the new Creator" - this is pure coincidence, even as one sees a crow alighting on a palm tree and the cocoanut falling, though these two are independent of each other. Of course, do not forget that even though all this seems to happen, there is no creation! **The one infinite consciousness alone is thought-form or experience. There is no cause and effect relationship, these ('cause' and 'effect') are only words, not facts.** The infinite consciousness is forever in infinite consciousness.

Lila said:

O Goddess, your words are truly enlightening. However, since I have never been exposed to them before, the wisdom is not well grounded. I wish to see the original house of the holy Vasistha.

Sarasvati said:

O Lila, give up this form of yours and attain the pure spiritual insight. For only Brahman can really see or realise Brahman. My body is made of pure light, pure consciousness. Your body is not. With this body of yours you cannot even visit the places of your own imagination, then how can you enter the field of another's imagination? But if you attain the body of light, you will immediately see the holy man's house. Affirm to yourself, "I shall leave my body here and take a body of light. With that body, like the scent of incense, I shall go to the house of the holy man." Even as water mixes with water, you will become one with the field of consciousness.

By the persistent practice of such meditation, even your body will become one of pure consciousness and subtle. For, I see even this, my body, as consciousness. You do not, for you see the world of matter, even as an ignorant man might mistake a precious stone for a pebble. Such ignorance arises of its own accord, but is dispelled by wisdom and enquiry. In fact, even such ignorance does not exist! There is neither unwisdom, nor ignorance - neither bondage, nor liberation. There is but one pure consciousness.

section III - chapter 22 23

taccintanam tatkathanam anyonyam tat prabodhanam etad eka paratvam ca tad
abhyasam vidur budhah (24)

Sarasvati said:

Dear Lila, in dream, the dream-body appears to be real. But when there is an awakening to the fact of dream, the reality of that body vanishes. Even so, the physical body which is sustained by memory and latent tendencies is seen to be unreal when they are seen to be unreal. At the end of the dream, you become aware of the physical body. At the end of these tendencies, you become aware of the ethereal body. When the dream ends, deep sleep ensues. When the seeds of thought perish, you are liberated. In liberation the seeds of thought do not exist. If the liberated sage appears to live and to think, he only appears to do so, like a burnt cloth lying on the floor. This is, however, not like deep sleep nor unconsciousness, in both of which the seeds of thought lie hidden.

By the persistent practice (abhyasa) egotism is quietened. Then you will naturally rest in your consciousness; and the perceived universe heads towards the vanishing point. What is called practice?

Thinking of that alone, speaking of that, conversing of that with one another, utter dedication to that one alone - this is called abhyasa or practice by the wise. When one's intellect is filled with beauty and bliss, when one's vision is broad, when passion for sensual enjoyment is absent in one - that is practice. When one is firmly established in the conviction that this universe has never even been created, and therefore it does not exist as such, and when thoughts like "This is world, this I am" do not arise at all in one - that is abhyasa or practice. It is then that attraction and repulsion do not arise. The overcoming of attraction and repulsion by the use of willforce is austerity, not wisdom.

At this stage, evening set in: and the court dispersed. Early next morning the court assembled, and Vasistha continued his discourse.

Vasistha continued:

O Rama, Sarasvati and queen Lila immediately sat in deep meditation, or nirvakalpa samadhi. They has risen above body-consciousness. Because they had given up all notions of the world, it had completely vanished in their consciousness. They roamed freely in their wisdom-bodies. Though it seemed that they had travelled millions of miles in space, they were still in the same 'room', but on another plane of consciousness.

section III - chapter 24 25

iti jaladhi mahadri lokapala tridasa purumbara bhutalaih paritam jagadudaram
aveksya manusi dragbhuvni nijamandirakotaram dadarsa (25/35)

Vasistha continued:

Holding each other's hands, Sarasvati and Lila, slowly ascended to far distant scenes in space. This space was intensely pure and totally empty. They rested on top of the mount Meru, the axis of the earth. They saw countless interesting sights, as they proceeded away from the orbit of the moon. They roamed within huge cloud-formations in space. They entered infinite space, the womb and source of infinite beings in infinite worlds.

They saw the seven great mountains in the cosmos which were radiant like the fire of dissolution; they saw golden plains near Meru; and they saw the densest form of darkness; they saw siddhas (beings with supernatural powers); they saw crowds and crowds of demons, goblins and other spirits; they saw space vehicles come and go everywhere; they saw celestial nymphs sing and dance; they saw a variety of birds and also animals; they saw angels and gods; they saw great yogis endowed with all auspicious qualities; they saw the abode of the Creator, the abode of diva, and others. Like a couple of mosquitoes, they roamed all these planes.

In short, they saw all that was already in the mind of Sarasvati, and which Sarasvati wanted to show to queen Lila. It was like the lotus of the heart, with the directions for its petals, the netherworld for the mud in which it grows, held by the divine serpent which is the root.

In this lotus, they saw what is known as Jambudvipa, in which there are very many countries and continents. It is surrounded by a salty ocean. Beyond that is Sakadvipa, surrounded by an ocean of milk. Beyond that is Kusadvipa with an ocean of curd. Then Krauncadvipa and an ocean of ghee. Then Salmalidvipa, surrounded by an ocean of wine. Then Gomedaadvipa, surrounded by an ocean of sugarcane juice. Then there is Puskaradvipa, surrounded by an ocean of sweet water. Then there is a cosmic hole. Beyond that is the Lokaloka mountain shining resplendently. Beyond that is the infinite forest, etc. Lastly there was infinite space, sheer emptiness.

Having thus seen the oceans, mountains, the protectors of the universe, the kingdom of the gods, the sky and the very bowels of the earth, Lila saw her own house.

section III - chapter 26

brahmatmaika cidakasamatra bodhavato muneh putra mitra kalatrani katham kani
kada kutah (54)

Vasistha continued:

O Rama, the two ladies then entered into the holy man's house. The whole family was in mourning. On account of their grief the house itself had a depressing atmosphere. By the practice of the yoga of pure wisdom Lila had acquired that faculty by which her thoughts instantly materialised. She wished that 'These, my relations, should see me and Sarasvati as if we are ordinary womenfolk'. They appeared so to the mourning family. But the two ladies were of supernatural radiance which dispelled the gloom that pervaded the house.

The eldest son of the departed holy couple welcomed the two ladies, taking them to be two angels of the forest! He said to them: "O angels of the forest, surely you have come here to relieve us of our grief in our bereavement. For such is the nature of divinities: they are eager to relieve the distress of others."

The two ladies asked the young man: "Tell us the cause of your sorrow which seems to afflict all these people here."

The son of the holy couple replied: "O ladies, in this very house there lived a pious man and his devoted wife, who were both devoted to a righteous life. Recently, they abandoned their children and grandchildren, their house and their cattle, and ascended to heaven. Therefore, to us this whole world appears to be empty. Look, O ladies, even the birds are crying for the departed ones. Even the gods are crying in grief (raining tears!). The trees are shedding tears every morning (the dew-drops). Abandoning this earth, my parents have surely gone away to the world of the immortals."

Hearing this, Lila laid her hand on the young man's head: instantly he was relieved of his sorrow. Seeing this, all the others were also relieved of sorrow.

Rama asked:

O Holy one, why is it that Lila did not appear to her own son as his real mother?

Vasistha replied:

Rama, he who has realised the unreality of material substances sees only the one undivided consciousness everywhere. A dreamer does not see this world, a man in deep coma may even see the other world. Lila had realised the truth. **He who has realised the truth that Brahman, the self, etc., are all one infinite consciousness - unto him where is son, friend, wife, etc.?** Even her laying her hand on the young man's head was the spontaneous expression of Brahman's grace.

section III chapter 27

paramanau paramanau sargavarga nirargalam mahaciteh sphuranty arkaruciva
trasarenavah (29)

Vasistha continued:

Having thus blessed the family of the deceased holy man, the two ladies disappeared. The consoled members of the family returned to their abodes. Lila turned to Sarasvati to ask her a question: in this state, of course, their bodies were made neither of matter like earth nor psychosomatic factors like life-breath. It was like two dream-objects conversing with each other.

Lila asked Sarasvati:

"How was it that we were seen by this family of mine here, and we were not seen by my husband who was ruling a kingdom when we visited him?"

Sarasvati answered:

"Then you were still clinging to your notion 'I am Lila'; now you have overcome that body-consciousness. Till the consciousness of duality is completely dispelled, you cannot act in the infinite consciousness; you cannot even understand it, even as one standing in the sun does not know the coolness of the shade of a tree. But, now if you go to your husband, you will be able to deal with him as before."

Lila said:

O Divinity! It was here itself that my husband was the holy man and I was his wife; here again I was his queen; here he died and here again he rules now! Pray, take me where I can see him.

Sarasvati said:

Lila, you and your husband have been through many incarnations, three of which you now know. In this incarnation, the king has slipped deep into the snare of worldliness and he thinks 'I am the lord, I am strong, I am happy, etc.' Though from the spiritual standpoint the whole universe is experienced here, from the physical point of view, millions of miles separate the planes. **In the infinite consciousness, in every atom of it, universes come and go like particles of dust in a beam of sunlight that shines through a hole in the roof.** These come and go like ripples on the ocean.

Lila reminisced:

O Divinity! Since emerging as a reflection in the infinite consciousness I have had 800 births. Today I see this. I have been a nymph, a vicious human woman, a serpent, a forest tribal woman, and on account of evil deeds I became a creeper, and by the proximity of sages I became a sage's daughter; I became a king, and on account of evil deeds done then, I became a mosquito, a bee, a deer, a bird, a fish; and again I became a celestial, after which I became a tortoise, and a swan, and I became a mosquito again. I have also been a celestial nymph when other celestials (males) used to fall at my feet. Just as the scales of balance seesaw constantly I have also been caught up in the seesaw of this repetitive existence, samsara.

section III - chapter 28 29

ihaiiva ngustamatrante tad vyomny eva padam sthitam mad bhartr rajya
samavagatam yojanakotibhak (29/36)

Rama asked:

Holy sir, how was it possible for the two ladies to travel to distant galaxies in the universe, and how did they overcome the numerous barrier on the way?

Vasistha replied:

O Rama, where is universe, where are galaxies, where are barriers? The two ladies remained in the queen's inner apartment. It was there that the holy man Vasistha was ruling as king Viduratha; it was he who was king Padma before. All this happened in pure space: there is no universe, no distance, no barriers.

Conversing with each other, the two ladies emerged from the room and proceeded towards a village on top of a mountain. The beauty and the glory of that mountain are indescribable. All its houses were literally covered with flowers that continually dropped from the trees. Young women slept in their rooms on beds made of clouds. The houses were illuminated by lightning.

On account of the intensity of her practice of the yoga of wisdom, Lila had acquired full knowledge of the past, present and future. She recollected the past and said to Sarasvati:

"O Divinity, some time ago I was an aged woman and I lived here. I was devoted to righteousness in every way; but I had never practised enquiry into the nature of the self ("Who am I, what is this world?"). My husband was also a good, righteous and learned man; but, his inner intelligence had also not been awakened. We were exemplars in conduct; and by such conduct we taught others how they should live." After saying this, Lila showed to Sarasvati her previous dwelling, and continued: "See, this is my favourite calf. On account of my separation, it does not even eat grass and has been constantly weeping for the past eight days. In this place, my husband ruled the world. Because of his strong will power and since he was determined to be a great king soon, he had indeed become an emperor within the short span of eight days, though it looked like a long long time. Just as air moves about unseen in space, even so in the space of this house, my husband lives, unseen. **Here, in the space of the size of a thumb, we imagined the kingdom of my husband to be a million square miles.** O Divinity, surely both my husband and I are of pure consciousness; yet, on account of the mysterious illusory power Maya, my husband's kingdom appears to encompass hundreds of mountains. This is truly marvellous. I wish to enter into the capital city where my husband rules. Come let us go there: for what is impossible of achievement to the industrious?"

section III - chapter 29 30

utpadyotpadyate tatra svayam samvit svabhavatah svasankalpaih samam yati
balasankalpajalavat (30/8)

Vasistha continued:

Along with Sarasvati, the queen Lila rose into the sky. They went beyond the region of the pole star, beyond the realms of the sages of perfection, even beyond the realm of the gods, of Brahma (the creator), Goloka and the realms of Siva, and of the manes and of the liberated ones. From there Lila saw that even the sun and the moon were far below, and were barely visible. Sarasvati said to Lila: "Dear one, you have to go beyond even this to the very top of the head of creation; all that you have seen is just a few particles that have emanated from there." Soon they had reached this summit, for their will becomes adamantine whose consciousness is pure and unveiled.

There, Lila saw that this creation was enveloped by layers of water, fire, air and space, and beyond that was pure consciousness. This supreme infinite consciousness is pure, peaceful, free from illusions, established in its own glory. In that Lila saw countless creations floating like dust-particles in light. The self-projections of the jivas dwelling in those universes give them their forms and nature. **Because of the essential nature of this infinite consciousness, all these keep arising and again arising, and by their own thought-force, return to a state of tranquillity; all this is like the spontaneous play of a child.**

Rama asked:

What do people mean by 'above' 'below' and so on, when only the infinite is truth?

Vasistha replied:

O Rama, just as when little ants crawl all over a round rock, what is under their feet is always 'below' and what is behind their back is always 'above'; so people talk of these directions.

Of those countless universes, O Rama, in some there are only plants; some have Brahma, Visnu, Rudra and others as the presiding deities, and some have none at all; in some there are only animals and birds; in some there is only an ocean; some are solid rocks; some are inhabited only by worms; some are pervaded by dense darkness; in some gods dwell; some are forever illumined. Some seem to be heading towards dissolution; some seem to be falling in space towards destruction. Since consciousness exists everywhere for ever, creation of these universes and their dissolution also goes on everywhere for ever. All these are held together by a mysterious omnipresent power. Rama, everything exists in the one infinite consciousness; everything arises from it; it alone is everything.

section III - chapter 31-40

prajopadravanisthasya rajno rajno thava prabhoh arthena ye mrta yuddhe te vai
nirayagaminah (30)

Vasistha continued:

Having seen all this, Lila saw the inner apartment of the palace where the corpse of the king lay buried under a heap of flowers. There arose in her an intense wish to behold her husband's other life. Instantly, she broke through the summit of the universe and entered into the realm where her husband now ruled.

At the same time, a mighty king who ruled over the Sindhu region was laying a siege to her husband's kingdom. As the two ladies were coursing the space above the battlefield they encountered countless celestials who had assembled there to witness the battle and the exploits of the great heroes.

Rama asked:

Holy one, tell me: who is a hero among soldiers and who is a beast or a war criminal?

Vasistha replied:

O Rama, he who fights a battle which is in accordance with the scriptural injunctions, on behalf of a righteous king of unblemished conduct, whether he dies in battle or wins, he is a hero. He who fights for an unrighteous monarch, who tortures people and mutilates their bodies, even if he dies fighting in battle, he is a beast or criminal and goes to hell. He who fights to protect the cattle, holy men, friends, or they who have taken his asylum, he is an ornament of heaven. On the other hand, **they who fight for a king who delights in harassing the people (whether he be a king or not, or just a landlord), they go to hell.** Only the hero who dies in battle goes to heaven; they who fight unrighteously, even if they die in battle, do not go to heaven.

O Rama, still standing in the sky, Lila saw the two great armies closing in on each other, ready to engage themselves in battle.

There follows a graphic description of the state of readiness of the armies, and of the different formations of the battalions, as also of the fierceness of the battle, and the gruesome scene of destruction that followed it.

As evening set in, Lila's husband held a council with his ministers concerning the events of the morning; and then he went to sleep.

The two ladies left the place where they stood watching the fierce battle and travelling like a breath of air, entered into the apartment where the king was asleep.

section III - chapter 40

yatha samvit tatha cittam sa tatha vasthitim gata paramena prayatnena niyate
nyadasam punah (13)

Rama asked:

Holy one, the body seems to be so large and heavy; how does it enter through a minute hole? Vasistha replied: O Rama, indeed it is impossible for one who is rooted in the idea that he is a physical body to pass through a subtle hole or tube. It is the innermost conviction that "I am the body which is obstructed thus in its movement that in fact manifests as such obstruction: when the former is absent, the latter is absent, too."

Just as water ever remains water and flows down, and fire does not abandon its nature of rising up, consciousness remains for ever consciousness. But, he who has not understood this does not experience its subtlety or true nature. **As is his understanding so is his mind, for it is the understanding that is the mind; yet, its direction can be changed by great effort.** Normally, one's actions are in accordance with one's mind (i.e. one's understanding).

But he who knows that his body is ethereal, how can his movement be obstructed? In truth, everyone's body everywhere is pure consciousness: but on account of an idea that arises in someone's heart, there seems to be all this coming and going. For, the same infinite consciousness is also the individual consciousness (mind) and the cosmic space (material). Therefore the ethereal body can enter anything anywhere, and it goes where the wish of its heart leads.

O Rama, everyone's consciousness is of this nature and power. In everyone's consciousness there is a different idea of the world. Death and such other experiences are like cosmic dissolution, the night of cosmic consciousness. When that comes to an end everyone wakes up to one's own mental creation, which is the materialisation of one's ideas, notions and delusions. Even as the cosmic being creates the universe after the cosmic dissolution, the individual creates his own world after his death.

However, divinities like Brahma, Visnu, and Siva, as also holy sages, attain final liberation during cosmic dissolution and their creation of the next cycle is not from memory. In the case of other beings, the new creation after the death in the previous one is conditioned by the impressions left in the mind by the various experiences during that life-span.

section III - chapter 40

sukrtam duskrtam ce dam mameti krtakalpanam balo bhuvam aham tvad ya yuveti
vilasadd hrđi (50)

Vasistha continued:

Immediately after death, the state in which it may be said that one is neither here nor there, when the consciousness, as it were, slightly opens the eyes though it seems not to do so - that state is known as pradhana or the material or inert state of consciousness. It is also known as ethereal nature, unmanifest nature; and it is regarded both as sentient and insentient. It is this which is responsible both for memory and its absence, and therefore for the next birth.

When that ethereal nature becomes awakened, and when in its consciousness the ego-sense manifests itself it gives rise to the five elements (earth, water, fire, air, and ether), space-time continuum and all the rest of the material needed for physical birth and existence. These then condense into their material counterparts. During dreaming and waking states they give rise to the feeling of a physical body. But in fact all this constitutes the ethereal body of the jiva.

When the idea 'I am the body' becomes deeply ingrained, this same ethereal body develops the physical characteristics of a body - like the eyes, etc. - though all this happens only like vibrations or movements in air. Even if all these appear to be real, they are as (un)real as the experience of sexual pleasure in a dream.

Wherever one dies, there itself that jiva sees all this happening. In that space, in that field of consciousness itself, he imagines "This is the world, this am I"; and, believing that he is born, he experiences the world which is nothing but space - he the jiva is space, too! He thinks "He is my father, she is my mother, this is my wealth, **I have done this wonderful deed, alas I have sinned.**" He imagines "**I have become a small child, and now I have become a youth,**" and sees all these in his heart.

This forest, known as creation, arises in the heart of every jiva. Wherever a person dies, there and then he sees this forest. In this manner, countless worlds born in the consciousness of individual jivas have in time vanished; even so countless Brahmas, Rudras, Visnus and suns have vanished. In this manner, the illusory perception of creation has taken place countless times, is taking place now, and will take place in the future. For all this is non-different from the movement of thought which, again, is not independent of the infinite consciousness. In reality, what is mental activity but consciousness, and that consciousness is the supreme truth.

section III - chapter 41

pasyasivaitad akhilam na ca pasyasi kincana sarvatmakataya nityam
prakacasyatmana tmani (55)

Vasistha continued:

The two ladies entered the apartment of the king like two divinities, resplendent like two moons. By their grace the king's attendants were fast asleep. As they took their seats, the king awoke and beheld them. He sat down and worshipped their lotus-like feet with flowers. Sarasvati wished that his minister should acquaint Lila with the king's ancestry: by her will, the minister awoke.

When Sarasvati asked the king who he was, the minister informed the ladies that he was a descendant of the great king Ikshvaku, that his father was Nabhoratha who when the son was ten years old had entrusted the kingdom to him and retired to the forest to lead a spiritual life. The king's name was Viduratha. Sarasvati then blessed Viduratha by laying her hand on his head and inspired him to recollect the facts of his own previous lives. Instantly, the king remembered everything and asked Sarasvati:

"O Goddess, how is it that though it is hardly one day since I died, it seems that I have lived in this body a full seventy years, and how is it that I remember all the things that happened when I was young in this life-span?"

Sarasvati replied:

O king, at the very moment of your death and in the very place of your death, all this that you are seeing here manifested. All this is where the holy man Vasistha lived, in the village on the hill. That is his world, and in that world is the world of king Padma, and in that world of king Padma is the world that you are in. Living in it you think "These are my relations, these are my subjects, these are my ministers, these are my enemies;" you think that you are ruling, you are engaged in religious rites; you think that you have been fighting with your enemies and you were defeated by them; you think you are seeing us, worshipping us, and that you are receiving enlightenment from us; you think "I have overcome all sorrow and I enjoy supreme bliss, I shall be established in the realisation of the absolute."

All this took no time to happen, even as in no time during a dream a whole life's drama is enacted. In reality, you are unborn nor do you die. **You see all this, as it were, though you do not see: for when all this is naught other than the infinite consciousness, who sees what?** Viduratha asked: Then, are not these, my ministers independent beings? To the enlightened person there is only one infinite consciousness, and there is no notion of 'I am' or 'these are'. While Vasistha said this, another day came to an end.

section III - chapter 42

dirgha svapnam idam visvam viddhy ahantadi samyutam atra nye svapna purusa
yatha satyas tatha srunu (8)

Sarasvati continued:

To an immature and childish person who is confirmed in his conviction that this world is real, it continues to be real - even as a child who believes in a ghost is haunted by it throughout his life. If a person is enamoured of the appearance of the bracelet, he does not see that it is just gold: he who sees the glory of palaces, elephants and cities does not see the infinite consciousness which alone is true.

This universe is but a long dream. The ego-sense and also the fancy that there are others, are as real as dream-objects. The sole reality is the infinite consciousness which is omnipresent, pure, tranquil, omnipotent, and whose very body and being is absolute consciousness (therefore not an object, not knowable): wherever this consciousness manifests in whatever manner, it is that. Hence when the seer fancies seeing a human being, a human being happens there. Because the substratum (the infinite consciousness) is real, all that is based on it acquires reality, though the reality is of the substratum alone. This universe and all beings in it are but a long dream. To me you are real, and to you I am real; even so the others are real to you or to me. And, this relative reality is like the reality of the dream-objects.

Rama asked:

Holy one, in the case of a city which appeared in one's dream, it continues to be if it is a real city: is this what you imply in your teaching?

Vasistha replied:

You are right, O Rama. Since the dream of a city etc., is based on the real substratum of infinite consciousness, these dream-objects appear to be real. But, then there is no real difference between the waking state of consciousness and the dream state. What is real in the one is unreal in the other - hence, both these states are essentially of the same nature. Therefore, the objects of the waking or the dreaming consciousness are equally unreal, except for the infinite consciousness on which they are all superimposed.

After having imparted this teaching to the king, Sarasvati blessed him and said: "May all auspiciousness attend you. You have seen what is to be seen. Give us leave to go."

Viduratha said:

"Soon, O Goddess, I shall go from here, just as one goes from one dream to another in sleep. Pray, grant that my ministers and my virgin daughter may go with me." Sarasvati granted his prayer.

section III - chapter 43

ka iva smin paritrata syad ityadinaviksitaih utpalaniva varsadbhih parirodita
sainikah (59)

Sarasvati said:

O king, you shall die in this war and then you will regain your previous kingdom. After your death in this body, you will come over to the previous city with your daughter and your ministers. We two shall go now as we came; and all of you will of course follow us in due course: for the nature of the motion of a horse, an elephant and a camel is different!

Vasistha continued:

Even as Sarasvati was saying this to the king, a royal messenger rushed in to announce that the enemy forces had entered the capital and were destroying it. There was an incendiary raid in progress, and the entire city was ablaze. The two ladies, the king and his ministers moved to a window to witness that dreadful scene.

Looting of the city had commenced; and the robbers were yelling fiercely everywhere. The entire city was enveloped in dense smoke. Fire was raining from the sky. (Anti-aircraft?) missiles described 'half-moon' shaped flaming streaks in the sky. Heavy rock-like missiles (bombs) were falling on the houses, destroying them and the roads around.

The king and the others heard the pitiable cries of the citizens. Everywhere there was weeping and wailing, the heart-rending cries of women and children. Someone was crying: "O dear, this woman has lost her father, mother, brother and her little infant: though she has not perished, the tragedy of her life is burning her heart." Another shouted: "Get out of that house quickly; it is about to collapse." Yet another: "Look, bombs and weapons rain into every house." Missiles were raining like the downpour that precedes cosmic dissolution. All the trees around the houses had been burnt and the whole place looked desolate. What looked like elephants had been propelled into the air from the battlefield and they were raining fire on the city. And, there were roadblocks everywhere. Bound by attachment, men tarried in burning houses looking for their wives and children. Even women of the royal household were being dragged about by the invading soldiers. Weeping and wailing, these noble ladies did not know what to do. **They cried: "Alas, who will help us in this terrible situation?" and they were surrounded by soldiers.**

Such is the glory of sovereignty, kingdoms and empires.

section III - chapter 44

mrtir janmany asadrupa mrtyam janma py asanmayam visared visararutvad
anubhutes ca raghava (26)

Vasistha continued:

In the meantime, the queen arrived there. The lady-in-waiting announced her to the king. She said: "Your Majesty, all the other ladies of the harem have been violently dragged away by the enemy. From this indescribable calamity that has befallen us, only Your Majesty can redeem us."

The king bowed to Sarasvati and excused himself: "I shall myself go to the battlefield, O Goddess, to deal with the enemy; and this, my wife, will wait upon you during that time."

The enlightened Lila was amazed to see that the queen was a complete replica of herself. She asked Sarasvati: "O Divinity, how is it that she is exactly what I am? Whatever I was in my own youth, she is now. What is the secret of this? Also: all these ministers, etc., who are here, are the same that were there, in our palace. If they are but a reflection or the objects of our fancy, are they sentient and are they also endowed with consciousness?"

Sarasvati replied:

O Lila, whatever vision arises within oneself, that is immediately experienced. Consciousness (as subject) itself becomes, as it were, the object of knowledge. When in consciousness the image of the world arises, at that very instant, it becomes so. Time, space, duration and objectivity do not arise from matter; for then they would be material. What is reflected in one's consciousness shines outside also.

What is regarded as the real objective world experienced in the waking state is no more real than that experienced during sleep (dream). During sleep, the world does not exist; and during the waking state, the dream does not exist! **Even so, death contradicts life: while living, death is non-existent, and in death, life is non-existent. Because, that which holds together either experience is absent in the other.**

One cannot say that either is real, or unreal, but one can only say that their substratum alone is real. The universe exists in Brahman only as a word, an idea. It is neither real nor unreal: just as a snake-in-the-rope is neither real nor unreal. Even so is the existence of the jiva. This jiva experiences its own wishes. It fancies that it experiences what it had experienced before; and some others are new experiences. They are similar at times and dissimilar at times. All these experiences, though essentially unreal, appear to be real. Such is the nature of these ministers and others. Even so this Lila exists as the product of the reflection in consciousness. Even so are you, me and all others. Know this and rest in peace.

section III - chapter 45 46

tapo va devata vu pi bhutva svaiva cid anyatha phalam dadaty atha svairam
nabhah phala nipatavat (45/19)

The second Lila said to Sarasvati:

O Divinity, I used to worship Sarasvati and she used to appear to me in my dreams. You look exactly like her: I presume that you are Sarasvati. I humbly beg of you to grant me a boon - when my husband dies on the battlefield, may I accompany him to whichever realm he goes, in this very body of mine.

Sarasvati replied:

O dear lady, you have worshipped me for a long time with intense devotion: therefore, I grant you the boon sought by you.

The first Lila thereupon said to Sarasvati:

Truly, your words never fail, your wish always comes true. Pray, tell me why you did not allow me to travel from one plane of consciousness to another with the same body.

Sarasvati replied:

My dear Lila, I do not really do anything to anyone. Every jiva earns its own state by its own deeds. I am merely the deity presiding over the intelligence of every being; I am the power of its consciousness and its life-force. Whatever form the energy of the living being takes within itself, that alone comes to fruition in course of time. You longed for liberation, and you obtained it. **You may consider it the fruit of your austerity or worship of the deity; but it is consciousness alone that bestows the fruit upon you - even as the fruit that seems to fall from the sky really falls from the tree.**

Vasistha continued:

As they were talking among themselves like this, the king Viduratha ascended his resplendent chariot and proceeded to the battlefield. Unfortunately, he had not assessed the relative strength of his and the enemy's forces right up to the moment he actually entered into the enemy ranks.

The two Lilas, Sarasvati, as also the princess who had received the blessings of Sarasvati, were watching the terrible war from their apartment in the palace.

The sky was crowded with the missiles from both the armies. The battle-cries of the warriors were heard everywhere. There was a pall of smoke and dust over the entire city.

Even as the king Viduratha entered the ranks of the enemy, there was an intense tut-tut sound of intense crossfire. As the missiles collided, there were sounds like khut-khut, tuk-tuk, jhun-jhun.

section III - chapter 47-50

yo yatha prerayati mam tasya tisthami tat phala na svabhavo nyatam dhatte
vahner ausnyamivaisa me (47/5)

The second Lila asked Sarasvati:

O Goddess, please tell me, why is it that though we are blessed by you, my husband cannot win the battle?

Sarasvati replied:

No doubt, I was adored by king Viduratha for a considerable time; but he did not pray for victory in battle. Being the consciousness that dwells in the understanding of every person, I bestow upon that person that which he seeks. **Whatever it be that a person asks of me, I bestow upon him that fruit: it is but natural that fire gives you heat.**

On the other hand, the king of Sindhu worshipped me, and prayed for victory in battle. Hence, the king Viduratha will be slain in battle, and he will rejoin you both and in course of time will attain liberation. This king of Sindhu will win the war and will rule the country as the victorious monarch.

Vasistha continued:

As the ladies were witnessing the battle, the sun rose in the eastern horizon, as if eager to witness the concluding phase of this terrible battle. Surrounded by a thousand soldiers each, the two kings fought each other. Their missiles had several different shapes and sizes. Some of them, though they were single-headed when they left the ground, multiplied into a thousand in the air and rained literally in tens of thousands when they hit their target.

Both the kings were well matched in strength and valour: Viduratha's was inborn, while the strength of the enemy was derived from a boon he had obtained from lord Narayana. While they fought, their armies watched dumbfounded.

At one stage, when it looked as though Viduratha was winning, the second Lila was highly elated and pointed him out to Sarasvati; but the very next moment, the enemy emerged unscathed. For every deadly missile of one the other used a countermissile. The missile that created depression was countered by one that inspired the warriors. The serpent-missile had its antidote. The water-missile was met with the fire-missile. And the Visnu-missile was used by both the kings.

Both the kings lost their vehicles, and they continued to fight standing on the ground. As Viduratha was about to ascend a new one he was cut down by the king of Sindhu. Viduratha's body was soon brought to the palace which the pursuing enemy could not enter on account of Sarasvati's presence.

section III - chapter 51 52

trijagac cid anv antar asti svapnapuram yatha tasya py antas cid anv
astesvapy ekaikaso jagat (52/20)

Vasistha continued:

Soon after the king Viduratha fell, there was utter post-war confusion and chaos in the city. The king of Sindhu announced that his son would be the new ruler. There was great rejoicing among his subjects and his ministers quickly got ready for the coronation. Immediately the new administration proclaimed martial law in the new state, which restored peace and order to it.

Seeing Viduratha fall, the second Lila fell down unconscious. The first Lila said to Sarasvati: "O Goddess, see, this my husband is about to give up the ghost."

Sarasvati said:

Dear one, all this terrible war, this destruction and death, are as real as a dream; for there is neither a kingdom nor the earth. All this took place in the house of the holy man Vasistha on top of the hill. This palace and this battlefield and all the rest of it is nowhere but the inner apartments of your own palace. In fact, the entire universe is there. For, within the house of the holy man is the world of the king Padma; and within the palace of that king in that world is all that you have seen here. All this is mere fancy, hallucination. What is, is the sole reality - which is neither created nor destroyed. It is that infinite consciousness that is perceived by the ignorant as the universe.

Just as a whole city exists within the dreamer, the three worlds exist in a small atom; surely there are atoms in those worlds, and each one of those atoms also contains the three worlds.

The other Lila who fell down unconscious has already reached that world in which your husband Padma's body is lying.

Lila asked:

O Goddess, tell me: how did she go there already, and what are the people there telling her?

Sarasvati replied:

Just as both of you are the fancied objects of the king, even so the king himself and I are dream-objects. One who knows this gives up looking for 'objects of perception'. In the infinite consciousness we have created each other in our fancy. The other youthful Lila was indeed yourself. She worshipped me and prayed that she would never be widowed: hence, before the king Viduratha died she left this place. Dear one, you are all individualised cosmic consciousness, but I am the cosmic consciousness: and I make all these things happen.

section III - chapter 53

mahacit pratibha satvan mahi niyati niscayat anyonyam eva pasyanti mithah sampratibimbitat (25)

Vasistha continued:

O Rama, the second Lila who had obtained a boon from Sarasvati rose into the sky and there met her daughter. The girl introduced herself to Lila. And Lila requested her to guide her to where her husband the king was. The girl thereupon flew away with her mother.

First, they passed through the region of the clouds, then they passed through the region of air. Beyond that they went through the orbit of the sun into the starry heaven. They proceeded still further to the realms of Brahma the creator, Visnu, and Siva, and after all that into the summit of the universe. They were able to do all this even as the coolness of ice is able to radiate from the ice-jar without breaking it. Of course, Lila who had an ethereal body composed of materialised thought, experienced all this within herself.

Passing beyond even this universe, Lila crossed over the oceans and other elements that envelop this universe, and entered into the infinite consciousness. In that infinite consciousness there are countless universes which do not know of one another's existence.

Lila entered one of those universes in which lay the body of king Padma covered with a heap of flowers. She again passed through the regions of the gods (Brahma, etc.), entered the city and the palace in which the body lay. But, alas, when she looked around she could not see her daughter - who had disappeared mysteriously. She recognised the king as her husband and thought that having died a warrior's glorious death on the battlefield he had ascended to the hero's heaven. She thought: "By the grace of Sarasvati, I have physically reached this place. I am the most blessed among persons." She began to fan the king's body.

The first Lila asked Sarasvati: Seeing her, what did the servants of the king do?

Sarasvati answered:

The king, the servants of the royal household and all the rest of them, are only infinite consciousness. **However, since the substratum is the reflection of the infinite consciousness which is real, and since there is a conviction in the order of fanciful creation, they recognise one another.** The husband says, "She is my wife" and the wife says, "He is my husband".

She could not go in her own physical body to the new realm because light cannot co-exist with darkness, and as long as there is in oneself the blind notion of ignorance, wisdom does not arise. When the wisdom concerning one's ethereal body arises, the physical body ceases to be recognised as true. This is the fruit of the boon that I granted her. The recipient of the boon thinks, "Just as you have made me think by your boon, so I am". Therefore, she thinks she has reached her husband's abode in her physical body. One may ignorantly see a snake in the rope; but the rope cannot behave like a snake.

section III - chapter 54

tasmin prathamatah sarge ya yatha yatra samvidah kacitas tas tatha tatra
sthita adya pi niscalah (13)

Sarasvati said:

Only one who has arrived at wisdom can ascend to the ethereal realms, O Lila, not others. This Lila does not possess such wisdom; hence, she only fancied that she had reached the city where her husband dwelt.

The enlightened Lila said:

Let that be as you say, O Goddess. But, please tell me: how did the objects acquire their characteristics - like heat in fire, coolness in ice, solidity of earth? How did the world order (niyati) first arise, as also birth and death?

Sarasvati said:

Dear one, during the cosmic dissolution, the entire universe having disappeared, only the infinite Brahman remains in peace. This infinite being of the nature of consciousness feels 'I am' and then 'I am an atom of light'. Thus it experiences the truth of that statement within itself. It also fancies the existence within itself of the diverse creatures: and since its nature is pure and absolute consciousness, that fanciful creation appears to be a real creation, with objects of diverse characteristics in strict accord with the fancy of the infinite consciousness.

Whatever wherever and however was conceived or fancied by the infinite consciousness during that first creation, all that has remained there and in that manner and with those characteristics even now. Thus was a definite order brought into being here.

In fact, this order is inherent in infinite consciousness. All these objects and their characteristics were potentially present in it even during the cosmic dissolution: into what else could they dissolve? Moreover, how can something become nothing? Gold that appears as bracelet cannot become formless entirely.

Thus, although all the elements of this creation are utter emptiness, yet whatever element was conceived of in the beginning with whatever characteristic, such order has persisted until now. All this is only from the relative point of view: for the universe has not been created at all, and whatever is, is the infinite consciousness and naught else. It is the nature of appearance to appear to be real, even though it is unreal.

Such is the order (niyati) in the universe, that nothing until now has been able to alter it. It was the infinite consciousness itself that thought of all these elements within itself and it experienced them within itself, and that experience appears to have materialised.

section III - chapter 54

ko dya yavanmrtam bruhi cetanam kasya kim katham mriyante dehalaksani cetanam
sthitam aksayam (69)

Sarasvati continued:

According to the order that existed in the first creation, human beings were endowed with a life-span of one, two, three or four hundred years. The shortening or the lengthening of the life-span is dependent upon the purity or impurity of the following factors - country, time, activity, and the materials used and consumed. He who adheres to the injunctions of the scriptures enjoys the life-span guaranteed by those scriptures. Thus, the person lives a long or short life and reaches its end.

The enlightened Lila said:

O Goddess, kindly enlighten me concerning death: is it pleasant or unpleasant, and what happens after death?

Sarasvati said:

There are three types of human beings, my dear: the fool, one who is practising concentration and meditation, and the yogi (or intelligent one). The two latter types of human beings abandon the body by the practice of the yoga of concentration and meditation and depart at their sweet will and pleasure. But, the fool who has not practised concentration or meditation, being at the mercy of forces outside himself, experiences great anguish at the approach of death.

This fool experiences a terrible burning sensation within himself. His breathing becomes hard and laboured. His body becomes discoloured. He enters into dense darkness and sees the stars during the day. He gets dizzy. He is confused in his vision: he sees the earth as space and the sky as the solid earth. He experiences all sorts of delirious sensations - that he is falling into a well, entering into a stone, riding a fast vehicle, melting away like snow, being dragged with a rope, floating away like a blade of grass, etc. He wishes to express his suffering, but is unable to do so. Gradually, his senses lose their power; and he is unable even to think. Therefore he sinks in un wisdom and ignorance.

The enlightened Lila asked:

Though every person is endowed with the eight limbs, why does he experience all this agony and ignorance?

Sarasvati replied:

Such is the order established in the beginning of creation by the infinite consciousness. When life-breath does not flow freely, the person ceases to live. But all this is imaginary. How can infinite consciousness cease to be? The person is nothing but infinite consciousness. **Who dies and when, to whom does this infinite consciousness belong and how? Even when millions of bodies die, this consciousness exists undiminished.**

section III - chapter 55

jiva ity ucyate tasya nama nor vasanavatah tatraiva ste sa ca savagare
gaganake tatha (6)

The enlightened Lila said:

Kindly proceed with your discourse on birth and death: listening to it again will certainly deepen my wisdom.

Sarasvati said:

When there is cessation of the flow of the life-breath, the consciousness of the individual becomes utterly passive. Please remember, O Lila, that consciousness is pure, eternal and infinite: it does not arise nor cease to be. It is ever there in the moving and unmoving creatures, in the sky, on the mountain and in fire and air. When life-breath ceases, the body is said to be 'dead' or 'inert'. The life-breath returns to its source - air - and consciousness freed from memory and tendencies remains as the self.

That atomic ethereal particle which is possessed of these memories and tendencies is known as the jiva: and it remains there itself, in the space where the dead body is. And they refer to it as 'preta' (departed soul). That jiva now abandons its ideas and what it had been seeing till then, and perceives other things as in dreaming or day-dreaming.

After a momentary lapse of consciousness, the jiva begins to fancy that it sees another body, another world and another life-span.

O Lila, there are six categories of such 'departed souls': bad, worse and worst sinners; good, better, best of virtuous ones. Of course, there are sub-divisions among these, too. (In the case of some of the worst sinners, the momentary lapse of consciousness may last a considerable time.)

The worst among the sinners undergo terrible sufferings in hell and then are born in countless living species, before they see the end of their agony. They might even exist as trees for a long time.

The middling among sinners also suffer lapse of consciousness for a considerable time; and then are born as worms and animals.

The light sinners are soon reborn as human beings.

The best among the righteous ascend to heaven and enjoy life there. Later they are born in good and affluent families on earth.

The middling among the righteous go to the region of the celestials, and return to the earth as children of brahmanas, etc.

Even the righteous among the departed ones, after enjoying such heavenly pleasures, have to pass through the realms of the demi-gods to suffer the consequences of the iniquities they might have committed.

section III - chapter 55

iti sarvasarirena jangamatvena jangamam sthavaram sthavaratvena sarvatma bhavayan sthitah (54)

Sarasvati continued:

All these departed souls experience within themselves the fruition of their own past actions. At first there is the notion 'I am dead', and then 'I am being carried away by the messengers of the god of death'. The righteous among them fancy that they are taken to heaven; and the ordinary sinners fancy that they are standing in the court of the god of death where, with the help of Citragupta (the hidden record of one's deeds), they are being tried and judged for their past life.

Whatever the jiva sees, that the jiva experiences. For in this empty space of infinite consciousness there is nothing known as time, action, etc. Then the jiva fancies, 'The god of death has sent me to heaven (or hell)' and 'I have enjoyed (or suffered) the pleasures (or tortures) of heaven (or hell)', and 'I am born as animal, etc., as ordained by the god of death'.

At that moment, the jiva enters into the body of the male through the food eaten; it is then transferred to the female and delivered into this world, where it undergoes life again in accordance with the fruition of past actions. There it grows and wanes like the moon. Once again it undergoes senility and death. This goes on again and again till the jiva is enlightened by self-knowledge.

The enlightened Lila asked:

O Goddess, but please tell me how all this began in the very beginning.

Sarasvati replied:

The mountains, the forests, the earth and the sky - all these are but infinite consciousness. That alone is the very being of all, the reality in all; and hence that pure infinite consciousness appeared to become whatever form it took whenever it manifested itself. Till now it continues to be so. When the life-breath enters into the bodies and begins to vibrate the various parts of the bodies, it is said that those bodies are living. Such living bodies existed right in the beginning of creation. When those bodies into which the life-breath had entered did not vibrate, they were known as trees and plants. It is indeed a small part of the infinite consciousness that becomes the intelligence in these bodies. This intelligence, entering into the bodies, brings into being the different organs like the eyes.

Whatever this consciousness thinks it is, it takes that form. **Thus, this self of all exists in all bodies, with motion as the characteristic of moving bodies, immovability as the characteristic of the immovable bodies.** Thus do all these bodies continue to be even now.

section III - chapter 55

na tu jadyam prthak kincid asti na pi ca cetanam na tra bhedo sti sargadau
satta samanyake na ca (57)

Sarasvati continued:

When that intelligence, which is part of the infinite consciousness, fancied itself to be a tree, it became a tree; or a rock, it became a rock; or grass, it became grass. **There is no distinction between the sentient and the insentient, between inert and intelligent: there is no difference at all in the essence of substances**, for the infinite consciousness is present everywhere equally. The differences are only due to the intelligence identifying itself as different substances. The same infinite consciousness is known by different names in these different substances. In the same way, it is the same infinite consciousness that the intelligence identifies as the worms, ants and birds. In it there is no comparison, nor a sense of difference: just as the people living in the north pole do not know (and therefore do not contrast themselves with) the people of the south pole. Each independent substance identified as such by this intelligence exists by itself, without distinction from the other substances. Ascribing distinctions to them as 'sentient' and 'insentient' is like a frog born in a rock and a frog born outside it considering themselves different, one insentient and the other sentient!

The intelligence which is a part of the infinite consciousness is everywhere, and it is everything: whatever that intelligence thought of as itself, it became that in the very beginning of creation and so it has remained ever since.

It thought of itself as space, it thought of itself as the moving air, it thought of itself as the insentient, it thought of itself as the sentient beings. All this is nothing but the fancy of that intelligence. Such appearance is not the reality, though it appears to be real.

O Lila, I think that now the king Viduratha wishes to enter into the heart of the body of king Padma. He is proceeding towards it.

The Enlightened Lila said:

O Goddess, let us also proceed in the same direction.

Sarasvati said:

Tuning himself to the ego-principle in the heart of Padma, Viduratha fancies that he is proceeding to another world. Let us proceed along our own paths: one cannot tread the path of another!

section III - chapter 56

yatha vasanaya jantor visam apy amrtayate asatyah satyatam eti padartha
bhavanat tatha (31)

Vasistha continued:

In the meantime, the life-breath left the body of the king Viduratha even as birds abandon a tree that is about to fall. His intelligence rose into space, in an ethereal form. Lila and Sarasvati saw this and followed it. In a few moments, that ethereal form became conscious, when the period of post-mortem unconsciousness came to an end. And, the king fancied that he saw even the gross form which had been put together by the funeral rites performed by his relatives.

With this he travelled towards the south and reached the abode of the god of death, who declared that the king had not committed any sinful action at all and ordered his messengers to let him enter his own previous body (of Padma) which lay embalmed.

Instantly, the jiva of Viduratha crossed over to the other universe in which Padma's body lay, and reached the palace. Obviously Viduratha had been linked with Padma's body through the ego-sense of the latter, even as a man travelling in distant countries is still attached to the place where he has buried his treasure!

Rama asked:

O Holy sir, if one's relatives fail to perform the funeral rites properly, then how can that one obtain the ethereal form?

Vasistha answered:

Whether the funeral rites had been duly performed or not, if the departed one believes that they have been performed, he gets the benefit of the ethereal form. This is a well-known truth: whatever be one's consciousness, that one is. Things (objects or substances) come into being on account of one's fancy (thought or idea); and one's fancy also arises from the things. **Poison turns into nectar through one's fancy (or faith); even so, an unreal object or substance becomes real when such intense faith is present.** Without a cause no effect is produced anywhere at any time; and therefore there is no fancy or thought either. Hence, but for the one causeless infinite consciousness nothing whatsoever has ever arisen or been created. Rest assured of this.

If the funeral rites are performed by one's relatives with the right faith it helps the intelligence of the departed soul, unless the latter is overpoweringly vicious.

Let us return to the palace of king Padma. As I said, Lila and Sarasvati re-entered that beautiful palace and the room in which the embalmed body of Padma had been kept. All the royal attendants were fast asleep.

section III - chapter 57

dehad dehantara praptih purva deham vina sada ativahika dehe smin svapnesv
iva vinasvari (22)

Vasistha continued:

There, seated near the body of king Padma they saw the second Lila who was devoutly fanning the king. The first Lila and Sarasvati saw her, but she did not see them.

Rama asked:

It was said that the first Lila had temporarily left her body near the king and travelled with Sarasvati in an ethereal body: but now the first Lila's body is not mentioned at all.

Vasistha replied:

When the first Lily became enlightened, the egoistic fancy of her ethereal real being abandoned its link with the gross physical form, and it melted away like snow. In fact, it was Lila's ignorant fancy that made it appear as if she had a physical body. It was as if one dreams and thinks "I am a deer": on waking up and finding the deer missing, does one go about searching for it? In the mind of the deluded the unreal manifests itself; and when the delusion has been dispelled (like the realisation that it is rope and not snake!) there is no longer an ignorant fancy. This fanciful conviction that the unreal is real is deep-rooted by repeated imagination.

Even without destroying it, one can move from one ethereal body to another just as in dream one can take one form after another without abandoning the previous one. The yogi's body is truly invisible, ethereal, even though it appears to be visible in the eyes of the ignorant beholder. And it is such a beholder who, on account of his own ignorance, thinks and says "This yogi is dead". For, where is the body, what exists and what dies? That which is - is: only delusion vanished!

Rama asked:

Holy sir, does a yogi's physical body then become an ethereal body?

Vasistha replied:

How many times I have told you, O Rama: yet you do not grasp it! The ethereal body alone is: by persistent fancy, it appears to be linked to a physical body. Just as when an ignorant man (who thinks he is the physical body) dies and the body is cremated, has a subtle body, even so the yogi on being enlightened while living, has an ethereal body. The physical body is only the creation of one's ignorant fancy, and is not real. There is no difference between the body and the ignorance. To think they are two - this indeed is samsara (repetitive history).

section III - chapter 58

sad vasanasya rudhayam ativahika samvidi deho vismrtim ayati garbhasamstheva yauvane (16)

Vasistha continued:

In the meantime, Sarasvati restrained Viduratha's jiva from entering into the body of king Padma. The enlightened Lila asked Sarasvati: O Goddess, from the time I sat here in contemplation till now, how much time has elapsed?

Sarasvati replied:

Dear one, it is a month since you entered into contemplation. During the first fifteen days, your body, on account of the heat generated by pranayama, became vaporised. Then it became like a dry leaf and fell down. Then it became rigid and cold. The ministers then thought that you had died of your own accord and cremated that body. Now, on account of your own wish you appear here in your ethereal body. In you there are no memories of past life nor latent tendencies brought forward from previous incarnation. **For when the intelligence is established in the conviction of its ethereal nature, the body is forgotten, even as in youth one forgets life as a foetus.** Today is the thirty-first day and you are here. Come, let us reveal ourselves to this other Lila. When the second Lila saw them before her, she fell at their feet and worshipped them.

Sarasvati asked her: Tell us how you came here.

The second Lila replied:

When I fainted in the palace of Viduratha, I did not know anything for some time. I then saw that my subtle body rose to the sky and was seated in an aerial vehicle which brought me here. And, I saw that Viduratha was lying here asleep in a garden of flowers. I thought he was fatigued from battle and without disturbing him, I fan him.

Sarasvati immediately let Viduratha's jiva enter the body. The king at once awoke as if from slumber. The two Lilas bowed to him. The king asked the enlightened Lila: "Who are you, who is she, and from where has she come?"

The enlightened Lila replied: "Lord, I am your wife in your previous incarnation and your constant companion, even as a word and its meaning are. This Lila is your other wife; she is my own reflection, created by me for your pleasure. And she who is seated on yonder golden throne is the goddess Sarasvati herself. She is present here on account of our great good fortune."

Hearing this, the king sat up and saluted Sarasvati. Sarasvati blessed him with long life, wealth and so on, and enlightenment.

section III - chapter 59 60

dukhhitasya nisa kalpah sukhitasyaiva ca ksanah ksanah svapne bhavet kalpah kalpas ca bhavati ksanah (60/22)

Vasistha continued:

After granting the desired boons to the king, Sarasvati vanished at that spot. The king and the queen fondly embraced each other. The royal attendants who were guarding the king's body woke up and rejoiced that the king had come back to life.

There was great rejoicing in the state. People far and wide recounted for a long time how the queen Lila returned from the other world with another Lila as a gift to the king. The king heard from the enlightened Lila all that took place during the previous month. He continued to rule and enjoy the blessings of the three worlds through the grace of Sarasvati, which he had no doubt earned by his own self-effort.

Thus is the story of Lila, O Rama, which I have narrated in detail to you: contemplation of this story will remove from your mind the least faith in the reality of what is perceived. Truly, if only that which is true can be removed, how can one remove what is unreal? There is nothing to be removed, for all that appears to be in your eyes (the earth, etc.) is nothing but the infinite consciousness; and if something has been created even that has taken place by it, within it itself. Everything is as it is; nothing has ever been created. You may say that what appears to be is the creation of Maya, but then Maya itself is not real!

Rama said:

Lord, what a grand vision of the ultimate truth you have given me! But, Holy one, there is an insatiable hunger in me for the nectar of your enlightening words. Pray, explain to me the mystery of time: in the story of Lila sometimes a whole life-time was spent in eight days, sometimes in one month. I am puzzled. Are there different time-scales in different universes?

Vasistha replied:

O Rama, whatever one thinks within oneself in his own intelligence, that alone is experienced by him. Even nectar is experienced as poison by him who fancies it is poison. Friends become enemies and enemies become friends, depending upon one's inner attitude. The object is experienced by one strictly in accordance with one's inner feeling. **To a suffering person a night is an epoch; and a night of revelry passes like a moment. In dream a moment is non-different from an epoch.** A life-time of Manu is but an hour an a half to Brahma; Brahma's life-time is a day of Visnu. Visnu's life-span is Siva's day. But to the sage whose consciousness has overcome limitations, there is neither day nor night.

section III - chapter 60

tivra vegavati ya syat tatra samvid akampita saiva yati param sthairyam
amoksam tv eka rupini (53)

Vasistha continued:

The yogi knows that it is one's own mentality that turns sweet things into bitter things and vice versa, and friends into enemies and vice versa. In the same way, by changing the angle of vision and by persistent practice one can develop a taste for the study of scriptures and for japa, etc., which were uninteresting earlier. For these qualities are not in the objects but only in one's own thinking: just as a sea-sick man sees the world go round, the ignorant man thinks that these qualities abide in the objects. A drunken man sees empty space where a wall stands; and a non-existent goblin kills a deluded person.

This world is nothing but a mere vibration of consciousness in space. It seems to exist even as a goblin seems to exist in the eyes of the ignorant. All this is but Maya: for there is no contradiction between the infinite consciousness and the apparent existence of the universe. It is like a marvellous dream of a person who is awake.

O Rama, in the autumn the trees shed their leaves; in springtime the same trees sprout new leaves which were surely within the trees themselves. Even so this creation exists all the time within the absolute consciousness. It is not seen: even as the liquidity that exists in gold is not always evident. If the creator of one epoch attains liberation and if the creator in the next epoch projects the new universe from his memory, even that memory is none other than the infinite consciousness.

Rama asked:

Lord, how is it that the king and also the citizens experienced the same objective facts?

Vasistha replied:

That is because the intelligence of all the jivas is based upon the one infinite consciousness, O Rama. The citizens, too, thought that he was their king. Thought-vibrations are natural and inherent in the infinite consciousness and they are not motivated. Even as it is natural for a diamond to sparkle, the king's intelligence thinks "I am king Viduratha" and so do all the beings in the universe. **If one's intelligence is established in this truth concerning the infinite consciousness, it reaches the supreme state of liberation.** This depends upon one's own intensity of self-effort. A man is pulled in two different directions: towards the realisation of Brahman the absolute and towards the ignorant acceptance of the reality of the world. That which he strives to realise with great intensity wins! Once he overcomes ignorance, the deluded vision of the unreal is for ever dispelled.

section III - chapter 61

samastah samataiva ntah samvido buddhyate yatah sarvatha sarvada sarvam
sarvatmakam ajas tatah (2)

Rama asked:

Holy sir, please tell me briefly again: how does the delusion of the notions of 'I' and 'the world' arise in the first place, without any cause?

Vasistha replied:

As all things are equally indwelt by intelligence, so at all times in every way the uncreated is all, the self of all. We use the expression 'all things': it is only a figure of speech, for only the infinite consciousness or Brahman exists. Just as there is no division between a bracelet and gold, no division between waves and water, there is no division between the universe and the infinite consciousness. The latter alone is the universe, the universe as such is not the infinite consciousness, just as the bracelet is made of gold but gold is not made of bracelet. Just as we refer to a man and his limbs as being one and the same, we refer to the presence of the infinite consciousness as all beings, which does not imply a division in it.

In that infinite consciousness there is an inherent non-recognition of its infinite nature. That appears to manifest as 'I' and 'the world'. Just as there is an image in a marble slab, even if it has not been carved, even so this notion of 'I' and 'the world' exists in the infinite consciousness. Even as in a calm sea the waves exist in their potential state, the world exists in its potential state in the infinite consciousness: and that is known as its creation. The word 'creation' has no other connotation. No creation takes place in the supreme being or the infinite consciousness; and the infinite consciousness is not involved in the creation. They do not stand in a divided relationship to each other.

This infinite consciousness regards its own intelligence in its own heart, as it were, though it is non-different from it even as wind is non-different from its own movement. At that very moment, when there is an unreal division, there arises in that consciousness the notion of space, which, on account of the power of the consciousness, appears as the element known as space or ether. That itself later believes itself to be air and then fire. From this notion there arises the appearance of fire and light. That itself further entertains the notion of water with its inherent faculty of taste; and that itself believes itself to be the earth with its inherent faculty of smell and also its characteristic of solidity. Thus do the water and the earth elements appear to have manifested themselves.

section III - chapter 61

na stameti na codeti kvacit kincit kadacana sarvam santam ajam brahma
cidghanam susilaghanam (31)

Vasistha continued:

At the same time, the same infinite consciousness held in itself the notion of a unit of time equal to one-millionth of the twinkling of an eye: and from this evolved the time-scale right up to an epoch consisting of several revolutions of the four ages, which is the life-span of one cosmic creation. The infinite consciousness itself is uninvolved in these: for it is devoid of rising and setting (which are essential to all time-scales), and it is devoid of a beginning, middle and end.

That infinite consciousness alone is the reality, ever awake and enlightened: and with creation also it is the same. That infinite consciousness alone is the unenlightened appearance of this creation: and even after this creation it is the same always. It is ever the same. When one realises in the self by the self that consciousness is the absolute Brahman, then he experiences it as all - even as the one energy dwelling in all his limbs.

One can say that this world-appearance is real only so far as it is the manifestation of consciousness and because of direct experience; and it is unreal when it is grasped with the mind and the sense-organs. Wind is perceived as real in its motion, and it appears to be non-existent when there is no motion: even so this world-appearance can be regarded both as real and unreal. This mirage-like appearance of the three worlds exists as non-different from the absolute Brahman.

The creation exists in Brahman just as the sprout exists in the seed, liquidity in water, sweetness in milk, and pungency in capsicum; but in ignorance it appears to be different from and independent of Brahman. There is no cause for the world's existence as a pure reflection in the absolute Brahman. When there is notion of creation, the creation seems to be: and when, through self-effort, there is understanding of non-creation, there is no world.

Nothing has ever been created anywhere at any time; and nothing comes to an end either. The absolute Brahman is all, the supreme peace, unborn, pure consciousness and permanent. Worlds within worlds appear in every atom. What can be the cause and how do these arise?

As and when one turns away from the notions of 'I' and the 'world', one is liberated: the notion of 'I am this' is the sole bondage here. They who know the infinite consciousness as the nameless, formless substratum of the universe, gain victory over samsara (repetitive history).

section III - chapter 62 63

astiha niyatir brahmi cic chakttih spandarupini avasya bhavitavyaika satta
sakala kalpaga (60/8)

Rama asked:

It is evident that Brahman alone exists, O Holy sage! But, then why do even these sages and men of wisdom exist in this world, as if so ordained by god - and what is god?

Vasistha replied:

There does exist, O Rama, the power or energy of the infinite consciousness which is in motion all the time; that alone is the reality of all inevitable futuristic events, for it penetrates all the epochs in time. It is by that power that the nature of every object in the universe is ordained. That power (cit sakti) is also known as Mahasatta (the great existence), Mahaciti (the great intelligence), Mahasakti (the great power), Mahadrsti (the great vision), Mahakriya (the great doer or doing), Mahodbhava (the great becoming), Mahaspanda (the great vibration). It is this power that endows every thing with its characteristic quality. But this power is not different from or independent of the absolute Brahman: it is as real as a pie in the sky. Sages make a verbal distinction between Brahman and the power and declare that creation is the work of that power.

The distinction is verbal, even as one speaks of the body (as a whole) and its parts. The infinite consciousness becomes aware of its inherent power, even as one becomes aware of the limbs of his body: such awareness is known as niyati (the power of the absolute that determines nature). It is also known as daiva or divine dispensation.

That you should ask me these questions is ordained by niyati; and that you should act upon my teaching is also ordained by niyati. If one says 'The divine will feed me' and remains idle, that also is the work of niyati. This niyati cannot be set aside even by gods like Rudra. But, wise men should not give up self-effort because of this, for niyati functions only as and through self-effort. This niyati has two aspects, human and superhuman: the former is seen where self-effort bears fruit and the latter where it does not.

If one remains idle, depending upon niyati to do everything for him, he soon discovers that his life departs - for life is action. He can, by entering into the highest superconscious state, stop the breath and attain liberation: but then that is indeed the greatest self-effort!

The infinite consciousness alone appears as one thing in one place and another in another place. There is no division between that consciousness and its power, as there is no division between wave and water, limbs and the body. Such division is experienced only by the ignorant.

section III - chapter 64 65

brahmanah sphuranam kincid yad avatambudher iva dipasyeva py avatasya tam
jivam viddhi raghava (64/8)

Rama asked:

When the only reality is the infinite consciousness and its own inherent kinetic power, how does the jiva acquire an apparent reality in the secondless unity?

Vasistha replied:

In the mind of the ignorant alone does this terrible goblin known as jiva arise as a reflected reality or appearance. No one, not even the men of wisdom or sages can definitely say what it is: because it is devoid of any indications of its nature.

In the mirror of infinite consciousness countless reflections are seen, which constitute the appearance of the world. These are the jivas. **Jiva is like unto just a little agitation on the surface of the ocean of Brahman; or just a little movement of the flame of a candle in a windless room.** When, in that slight agitation the infinitude of the infinite consciousness is veiled, limitation of consciousness appears to arise. This too is inherent in that infinite consciousness. And that limitation of consciousness is known as the jiva.

Just as when a spark from a flame comes into contact with flammable substance it bursts into an independent flame, even so this limitation of consciousness, when it is fed by latent tendencies and memories, condenses into egotism: 'I'-ness. This I-ness is not a solid reality: but the jiva sees it as real, like the blueness of the sky. When the egotism begins to entertain its own notions, it gives rise to the mind-stuff, the concept of an independent and separate jiva, mind, Maya or cosmic illusion, cosmic nature, etc.

The intelligence which entertains these notions conjures up the natural elements (earth, water, fire, air and space). Associated with these, the same intelligence becomes a spark of light, though it is the cosmic light in truth. It then condenses into countless forms - somewhere it becomes a tree, etc., somewhere a bird, etc., somewhere it becomes a goblin, etc., somewhere it becomes demi-gods, etc. The first of such modifications becomes the creator Brahma and creates others, by thought and will. Thus the vibration in consciousness alone is the jiva, karma, god; and all the rest follows.

Creation (of the mind) is but agitation in consciousness; and the world exists in the mind! It seems to exist because of imperfect vision, imperfect understanding. It is really not more than a long dream. If this is understood, then all duality will come to an end, and Brahman, jiva, mind, Maya, doer, action, and the world will all be seen as synonymous with the one non-dual infinite consciousness.

section III - chapter 66 67

cidghanenaikatam etya yada tisthati niscalah samyan vyavaharan va pi tada
samsanta ucyate (66/12)

Vasistha continued:

The one never became many, O Rama. When many candles are kindled from another, it is the same flame which burns in all candles; even so, the one Brahman appears to be many. When one contemplates the unreality of this diversity, he is freed from sorrow.

Jiva is nothing more than the limitation of consciousness; when the limitation goes, there is peace - even as for one who wears shoes the whole world is paved with leather. What is this world? Nothing but an appearance, even as a plantain stem is nothing but leaves. Even as liquor is able to make one see all sorts of phantasms in the empty sky, mind is able to make one see diversity in unity. Even as a drunkard sees a tree moving, the ignorant one sees movement in this world.

When the mind perceives duality, then there is both duality and its counterpart which is unity. When the mind drops the perception of duality, there is neither duality nor unity. **When one is firmly established in the oneness of the infinite consciousness, whether he is quiet or actively engaged in work, then he is considered to be at peace with himself.** When one is thus established in the supreme state, it is also known as the state of non-self or the state of knowledge of the void or emptiness.

On account of the agitation of the mind, consciousness appears to become the object of knowledge! Then there arise in the mind all sorts of false notions like 'I am born' etc. Such knowledge is not different from the mind. Hence it is known as ignorance or delusion.

To rid oneself of the disease of this samsara or world-appearance, there is no remedy but wisdom or self-knowledge. Knowledge alone is the cure for the wrong perception of a snake in the rope. When there is such knowledge, then there is no craving in the mind for sense-pleasure which aggravates the ignorance. Hence, if there is craving, do not fulfil it: what difficulty is there in this?

When the mind entertains notions of objects, there is agitation or movement in the mind; and when there are no objects or ideas, then there is no movement of thought in the mind. When there is movement, the world appears to be; when there is no movement, there is cessation of world-appearance. The movement of thought itself is called jiva, cause and action; that is the seed for world-appearance. Then follows the creation of the body.

section III - chapter 67

yatha sampadyate brahma kitah sampadyate tatha kitastu rudhabhutaugha valanat
tucchakarmakah (69)

Vasistha continued:

On account of various causes, there is this movement of thought; someone is freed from this in one life-time, and someone else is freed in a thousand births. When there is movement of thought one does not see the truth; and then there is the feeling of 'I am', 'This is mine' etc.

The world-appearance is the waking state of consciousness; egotism is the dreaming state; the mind-stuff is the deep sleep state; and pure consciousness is the fourth state or uncontradicted truth. Beyond even this fourth state there is absolute purity of consciousness. One who is established in it goes beyond sorrow.

The world-appearance is said to have the absolute Brahman as its cause, in just the same way as the sky (space) is the cause of the growth of a tree (since the sky does not obstruct its growth, it promotes or causes it). In fact, Brahman is not an active causative factor; and this is revealed by enquiry. Even as one digging the solid earth finds empty space as he continues to dig, when the enquiry is continued, you will find the truth that all this is none other than the infinite consciousness. Rama asked: Pray, tell me how this creation becomes so extensive.

Vasistha continued:

The vibration in the infinite consciousness is not different from that consciousness itself. From that vibration, just as the jiva becomes manifest, even so from the jiva the mind becomes manifest because the jiva thinks. The mind itself entertains the notions of the five elements and it transforms itself into those elements. Whatever the mind thinks of, that alone it sees. After this, one by one the jiva acquires the sense-organs: the tongue, the eyes, the nose, the sense of touch, etc. In this there is no causal connection between the mind and the senses, but there is the coincidence of the thought and of the manifestation of the sense-organs - just like a crow sits on a palm tree and accidentally the fruit drops from it and it appears that the crow dislodged it! Thus the first cosmic jiva came into being.

Rama asked:

Holy sir, if ignorance is non-existent in truth, then why should one even bother about liberation or about enquiry?

Vasistha replied:

Rama, that thought should arise in its own time, not now! Flowers bloom and fruits ripen in their due time.

The cosmic jiva utters 'Om' and by pure will creates the various objects. **Just as the creator Brahma was willed into being, even so is a worm brought into being: because the latter is caught up in impurity, its action is trivial.** The distinction is illusory. In truth, there is no creation, and hence no division at all.

section III - chapter 68 69

atha varsa sahasrena tam pitamaha ayayau darunam hi tapah siddhyai visagnir
api sitalah (1)

Vasistha continued:

In connection with this, O Rama, there is an ancient legend which I shall now narrate to you.

There once lived to the north of the Himalaya mountain a terrible demoness known as Karkati. She was huge, black and dreadful to look at. This demoness could not get enough to eat, and she was ever hungry.

She thought: "If only I can eat all the people living in Jambudvipa-continent in one meal, then my hunger will disappear even as a mirage disappears after a heavy rain. Such a course of action is not inappropriate, since it is appropriate to preserve one's life. However, since the people of Jambudvipa are pious, charitable, devoted to god, and endowed with a knowledge of herbs, it is inappropriate to harass these peaceloving people. Let me engage myself in penance, for through penance is attained that which would otherwise be extremely difficult to attain."

Karkati then went up one of the snow-peaks and commenced her penance, standing on one leg. She was as firm as a marble statue and did not even notice days and months pass by. In course of time, she had grown so thin that it looked as if she was a skeleton clad in transparent skin. Thus she remained for one thousand years.

After a thousand years had passed, the creator Brahma appeared before her, pleased with her penance: by intense penance one can attain anything -- even poisonous fumes are extinguished. She bowed to him mentally and began to wonder what boon she should ask of him. "Ah, yes," she thought, "I shall request that I should become a living steel pin (Sucika) an embodiment of disease. With this boon I shall simultaneously enter the hearts of all beings and fulfil my desire and appease my hunger." When Brahma said to her, "I am pleased with your penance; ask a boon of your choice," she expressed her wish.

Brahma said:

So be it; you shall also be Visucika. Remaining a subtle thing, you will inflict pain on those who eat the wrong food and indulge in wrong living, by entering their heart. However, one can attain relief by the use of the following mantra:

himadrer uttare parsve karkati nama raksasi
visucikabhidhana sanamna 'py anyayabadhika
om hram hrim srim ram visnusakttaye namo bhagavati
visnusaktti ehi enam hara hara daha daha hana hana paca paca
matha matha utsadaya utsadaya dure kuru kuru svaha visucike
tvam himavantam gaccha gaccha jivasara candramandalam gato si svaha

One who is proficient in this mantra should wear it on his left arm and, thinking of the moon, pass that hand over the patient who will be cured at once.

section III - chapter 70

svārtha kriyogṛa samarthyaḍ yati bhavanaya nyatam padartha bhimatamsadhyo
nishvaseneva darpanah (19)

Vasistha continued:

Immediately, O Rama, the demoness with a mountainous body began to shrink gradually to the size of a pin. She became so subtle that her existence could only be imagined. She was like the extremely subtle susumna nadi that links the base of the spine with the crown of the head. She was like the alaya-consciousness described by the Buddhists. She was constantly followed by her other form known as Visucika (cholera).

Though she was extremely subtle and unseen, her demoniacal mentality underwent no change at all. She had gained the boon of her choice; but she could not fulfil her desire to devour all beings! That is because she was of the size of a needle! How strange: the deluded ones do not have foresight. **The selfish person's violent efforts to gain his selfish ends often lead to other results, even as a person is unable to see his face when he runs to the mirror puffing and panting - his own breath mists the mirror.**

Significantly, again, the demoness who had a huge form gave up that body, died to it, in order to fulfil her ambition to become a needle: even death becomes desirable when one is keen on some selfish gain and when one is possessed by excessive craving.

Visucika was radiant and was as subtle as the aroma of flowers. Dependent upon the life-force of others, she was devoted to her own work.

With her twofold form of Sucika and Visucika, the demoness roamed the world afflicting all the people. By her own wish she had become small: indeed, people become what they intensely wish to be. Mean-minded people even pray for trivia; just as the demoness prayed to be transformed into a cruel needle. One's inborn nature is not easily counteracted even by penance.

Sucika entered into the physical bodies of people who, on account of previous illness had been greatly debilitated or had become obese, and transformed herself into Visucika (cholera). Sucika entered into the heart of even a healthy and intelligent person, and perverted his intellect. In some cases, however, she left that person when the latter underwent a healing treatment either with the aid of the mantra or with drugs.

Thus, the demoness roamed the earth for many many years.

section III - chapter 70

vina parapakarena tiksna maranam ihate vedanad rodhita suci karmapase
pralambate (66)

Vasistha continued:

Sucika had her numerous hiding places. Among them were: dust and dirt on the ground, (unclean) fingers, threads in a cloth, within one's body in the muscles, dirty skin covered with dust, unclean furrows on the palms and on other parts of the body (due to senility), places where flies abound, in a lustreless body, in places full of decaying leaves, in places devoid of healthy trees, in people of filthy dress, people of unhealthy habits, in tree-stumps caused by deforestation in which flies breed, in puddles of stagnant water, in polluted water, in open sewers running in the middle of roads, in rest houses used by travellers, and in those cities where there are many animals like elephants, horses, etc.

Being Sucika (a sewing needle), she wore dirty pieces of cloth thrown on the roads, sewn together; and she roamed freely in the bodies of sick people. Even as a sewing needle which has been well used by a tailor feels fatigued and falls to the ground to take some rest, as it were, Sucika also got tired of her destructive activity. Just as sewing (piercing) is the natural function of a needle, cruelty was the nature of Sucika. Just as the needle keeps on swallowing the thread that passes through it, Sucika continued to claim her victims.

It is seen in the world that even wicked and cruel people are sometimes moved to pity when they see others who have been poverty-stricken and miserable for a long time. Even so, Sucika saw the endless thread that had passed through her in the cloth (her own karma) in front of her. This worried her. She fancied that this dark cloth, which had been woven by her (as Sucika or sewing needle) was covering her face and that she was blindfolded. She wondered "How shall I tear this veil?" She (the needle) passed through soft cloth (good people) as also hard cloth (the wicked ones), for what fool or wicked person discriminates between what is good and what is not?

Unharmmed and unprovoked by others, Sucika works for the destruction and death of others: bound by this thread, she is dangling perilously. Known also as Jiva-sucika, she moves in all beings as the life-force with the help of prana and apana, subjecting the jiva to sorrow, by causing terribly sharp pain (of gout, rheumatism) which makes one lose his mind. She enters into the feet (like a needle) and drinks blood. Like all wicked people, she rejoices in others' sorrow.

As Vasistha was saying this, the sun set and another day came to an end. The assembly adjourned for prayers.

section III - chapter 71 72

apatadd hi mano moham purvamapat prayacchati pascad anartha vistara rupena
parijmbhate (71/12)

Vasistha continued:

After living in this manner for a long long time, the demoness Karkati was thoroughly disillusioned and repented her foolish desire to devour people, which entailed severe penance for a thousand years and the degraded existence as a needle (and cholera virus). She thus bewailed her own self-inflicted misfortune:

"Alas, where is my mountainous body and where is the form of a needle? Sometimes I fall into mud and filth, I am trampled upon by people. Alas, I am lost. I have no friends, no one takes pity upon me. I have no fixed abode, nor have I a body worth the name. I have surely lost my mind and my senses! **The mind that is heading towards calamity first creates delusion and wickedness: and these themselves later expand into misfortune and sorrow.** I am never free, ever at the mercy of others. I am in the hands of others and do what they make me do. I desired to appease the goblin of a desire to devour all; but that has led to a remedy worse than the disease, and a greater goblin has arisen. Surely, I am a brainless fool; hence, I threw away such a great and gigantic body and deliberately chose this despicable body of a virus (or a needle). Who is now going to liberate me from this miserable existence as a being smaller than a worm? The very thought of such a vicious creature as I am may not even arise in the heart of sages. Ah, when will I again be as large as a mountain and drink the blood of large beings?.... Let me become an ascetic again and perform penance as I did before."

At once Karkati abandoned all wish to devour living beings, and went to the Himalayas for doing intense penance again. Standing as if on one foot, she began her penance. The fire of penance generated smoke from the crown of her head, and that too became another Sucika, a helpmate. Her shadow became yet another Sucika, yet another friend.

Even the trees and creepers of the forest admired Sucika's penance and radiated their pollens for her to eat. But she would not consume anything at all. She stood firmly on her resolve. The god of heaven also sent small particles of meat to where she stood; but she would not even let them touch her. Thus she stood for seven thousand years, utterly motionless, unmoved by wind, rain, or forest-fire.

Karkati's whole being became completely purified by this penance. All her sinful tendencies had been washed away by the penance and she gained the highest wisdom. The energy of her penance set the Himalayas on fire, as it were. Indra the king of heaven learnt from the sage Narada of Karkati's unprecedented undertaking.

section III - chapter 73

sati dharmini dharma hi sambhavantiha na sati sariram vidyate yasya tasya tat
kila trpyati (32)

In answer to Indra's request, sage Narada narrated the story of Karkati:

This despicable goblin Karkati became a living needle embodied in a metal needle. As such she entered into the bodies of sinful people and afflicted their muscles, their joints and their blood. She entered these bodies like wind, and caused stabbing and pricking pains. She inflicted such pain on those bodies which had been nourished on impure food like meat, etc.

She also entered into the bodies of all beings like vultures, etc., and devoured the bodies of others. On account of the power of her penance she had acquired the faculty of entering into the mind and heart of all, and participating in all that the 'host' did. What is impossible to one who is invisible and subtle like the wind?

However, since she sometimes liked some beings more than others and some pleasures more than others (on account of her impure tendencies), she became bound to them and hovered over them. She roamed freely, but when there was trouble she returned to the needle-body, as ignorant people do in times of trouble.

Yet, she was not satisfied physically. **Only an existential factor can undergo appropriate experiences; how can a non-existent body experience satisfaction?** Thus dissatisfied, Sucika was miserable. In order to regain her previous body as a gigantic goblin, she began to perform penance again. She entered the body of a vulture which flew to the peak of the Himalayas where the vulture deposited the needle and flew off. Using the solid needle as her support, Sucika began her penance which continues till now. O Indra, if you do not interrupt her penance, she might seek to destroy the world by the power of that penance.

Vasistha continued:

Hearing this, Indra commissioned Vayu the wind-god to find out the exact spot where Sucika dwelt. Vayu wafted through all the different planetary systems in the universe and finally entered the earth-plane and descended upon the Himalayas where, on account of its proximity to the sun, there was no vegetation and the whole area looked like an arid desert.

section III - chapter 74 75

vidita parama karana dya jata svayam anucetana samvidam vicarya svamanana
kalananusara ekastviha hi guruh paramo na raghava nyah (28)

Vasistha continued:

In the Himalayas, Vayu saw the ascetic Sucika standing like another peak of the mountain. As she was not eating anything at all she had become almost completely dried up. When Vayu (wind) entered her mouth, she threw it out again and again. She had withdrawn her life-force to the crown of her head and stood as a perfect yogini. Seeing her, Vayu was amazed and lost in wonderment. He could not even talk to her. Convinced that she was engaged in supreme penance he forthwith returned to heaven where he reported to Indra:

"Lord, in the Jambudvipa-continent Sucika is performing unprecedented penance. She does not even let wind enter her mouth! And to overcome hunger, she has turned her stomach into solid metal. Pray, get up at once and approach the creator Brahma to appease her by granting her the desired boon. Or else, the power of her penance might burn us all up."

Thereupon, Indra went to Brahma and in answer to his prayer, Brahma went to where Sucika was engaged in penance.

In the meantime, Sucika had become totally pure by her penance. Only her own two other forms - her shadow, and the fire of her austerities - were witness to her penance. By coming into contact with her, even the air around her and the particles of dust near her had attained final liberation! **At this time she had gained direct knowledge of the supreme causeless cause of all by her own examination of the intelligence within her. Surely, direct enquiry into the movements of thought in one's own consciousness is the supreme guru or preceptor, O Rama, and no one else.**

Brahma said to her: "Ask a boon" (though since she had no sense-organs, she experienced this within herself). She reflected within herself in response to this: "I have reached the realisation of the absolute; and there are no doubts or wants in me. What shall I do with boons? When I was an ignorant girl, I was haunted by the goblin of my desires; now, through selfknowledge, that ghost has been laid."

Brahma said: "The eternal world-order cannot be set aside, O ascetic. And it decrees that you should regain your previous body, live happily for a long time and then attain liberation. You will live an enlightened life, afflicting only the wicked and the sinful, and causing the least harm - and that too only to appease your natural hunger." Sucika accepted what Brahma had said and soon her needle-body grew into a mountainous body.

section III - chapter 76 77

akrtrimam sukham kirtim ayus caiva bhivanchata sarvabhimatadanena pujaniya
gunanvitah (77/26)

Vasistha continued:

Though she had regained her former demoniacal form, Karkati remained in the superconscious state for a considerable time, devoid of all demoniacal tendencies. She remained in the same place, seated in the lotus posture of meditation. After a period of six months she became fully aware of the outside world and her body. Immediately, she experienced hunger; for as long as the body lasts it is subject to its own physical laws, including hunger and thirst.

Karkati reflected: "What shall I eat? Whom shall I devour? Destruction of other living beings for the sake of prolonging one's life is condemned by wise sages. Hence, if while not consuming such forbidden food, I have to give up this body, I see no harm in it. Unwholesome food is poison. Moreover, to an enlightened person like me, there is no distinction between physical life and death."

As she was reflecting thus, she heard an aerial voice say: "O Karkati, approach ignorant and deluded people and awaken wisdom in them. This indeed is the only mission of enlightened beings. One whom you thus endeavour to enlighten but who fails to awake to truth is fit for your consumption. You shall incur no sin by devouring such an ignorant person."

Hearing this, Karkati got up and descended from the mountain. She entered a dense forest where hill-tribes and hunters dwelt. Night fell over the earth.

In that region, there was a king of the hunters known as Vikram. As was his custom, this king, along with his minister, went out into the dense darkness of the night to protect his subjects by subduing robbers and dacoits. Karkati saw these two brave and adventurous men who were just then offering their prayers to the tribal demi-gods of the forest.

Seeing them, Karkati reflected: "Surely, these two men have come here to appease my hunger. They are ignorant and therefore a burden on earth. Such ignorant people suffer here and hereafter; suffering is the only mission in their life! Death, unto them, is a welcome release from such suffering and it is possible that after death they will awake and seek their salvation. Ah, but, it may be that they are both wise men, and I do not like to kill wise men. For, **whoever wishes to enjoy unalloyed happiness, fame and long life, should by all means honour and worship good men, by giving them all that they might wish to have.** Let me therefore test their wisdom. If they are wise I shall not harm hem. Wise men, good men, are indeed great benefactors of humanity."

section III - chapter 78

samrambha dvaram utsrjya samata svacchaya dhiya yukttya ca vyavaharinya
svarthah prajnena sadhyate (25)

Vasistha continued:

Having decided to test the king and his minister, the demoness Karkati let out a piercing cry and roared. Then she shouted: "Hey you two little worms roaming this dense forest! Who are you? Tell me quick or else I shall devour you."

The king replied:

"O ghost, who are you and where are you? I only hear you; let me see who you are."

Hearing this calm and cool reply of the king, the demoness felt that his answer was appropriate and made herself visible to him. The king and the minister then beheld her dreadful form, and without being perturbed in the very least, the minister said to her: "O demoness, why are you so angry? To seek food is natural to all living beings; and in performing one's natural functions one need not be bad-tempered. Even **selfish ends are gained by the wise by appropriate means and proper behaviour or action, after they give up anger and mental agitation and resort to equanimity and clear mind.** We have seen thousands of insects like you and have dealt justly with them, for it is the duty of a king to punish the wicked and protect the good. Give up your anger, and achieve your end by resorting to tranquillity. Such indeed is appropriate conduct - whether one is able to achieve one's ambition or not, one should remain peaceful. Ask of us what you will have; for we have never turned a beggar away empty-handed."

Karkati greatly admired the courage and the wisdom of the two men. She thought that they were not ordinary human beings but enlightened men, for the very sight of their faces filled her heart with peace. When two enlightened men meet, their hearts mingle in peace and bliss, even as the waters of two mountain streams mix at their confluence. Moreover, who but a wise man can maintain his calm while faced with almost certain death? Hence, she thought: "Let me utilise this opportunity to clear the doubts that are in my mind; for he is surely a fool who, having the company of a wise man, neglects to clear his doubts."

At her request, the minister informed her of the king's identity. Karkati retorted: "O king, you do not seem to have a wise minister! A good minister makes the king wise; and as is the king so are his subjects. Lordship and equal vision accrue from the kingly science (of self-knowledge); he who does not possess this is neither a good minister nor a wise king. If you two are men not possessed of self-knowledge, then in accordance with my inherent nature, I shall devour you both. In order to determine this, I shall ask you some questions. Give me the right answers: this is the only thing I ask of you."

section III - chapter 79

ekasya neka sankhyasya kasya nor ambudher iva antar brahmada laksani liyante
budbuda iva (2)

The demoness asked:

O king, **what is it that is one and yet is many and in which millions of universes merge even as ripples in an ocean?** What is it that is pure space, though it appears to be not so? What is it that is me in you and that is you in me; what is it that moves yet does not move, that remains stationary though it is not so; what is it that is a rock though conscious and what plays wonderful tricks in empty space; what is it that is not the sun and the moon and fire and yet eternally shines; what is that atom that seems to be far and yet so near; what is it that is of the nature of consciousness and yet is not knowable; what is it that is all and yet is not any of these; what is it that though it is the very self of all, is veiled by ignorance and is regained after many life-times of intense and persistent effort; what is it that is atomic and yet contains a mountain within it, and that transforms the three worlds into a blade of grass; what is it that is atomic and yet is immeasurable; what is it that without ever renouncing its atomic nature appears to be bigger than the biggest mountain; what is that atom in which the entire universe rests like a seed during the cosmic dissolution?

What is it that is responsible for the function of all the elements in the universe, though it does nothing at all; even as ornaments like bracelets are made of gold, of what are the seer, the sight and the seen made; what is it that veils and reveals the threefold manifestation (viz., the seer, the sight and the seen); in what is the apparent threefold division of time (the past, the present, and the future) established, even as the tree is in a seed; what is it that comes into manifestation and vanishes alternately, even as the tree comes out of the seed and the seed comes out of the tree alternately?

O king, what is the creator of this universe and by whose power do you exist and function as a king, protecting your subjects and punishing the wicked; what is it, seeing which your own vision is purified and you exist as that alone without a division?

O king, to save yourself from certain death, answer these questions. By the light of your wisdom dispel this darkness of doubt in me. He is not a wise man who is unable, when questioned, to cut at the very root of ignorance and doubt.

If, however, you are unable to uproot this ignorance in me and to answer these questions, you will appease my hunger today.

section III - chapter 80

sarvatmakatvan naiva sau sunyo bhavati karhicit yad asti na tad astiti vaktta
manta iti smrtah (10)

The minister replied:

I shall surely answer your questions, O lady! For that to which all your questions refer is the supreme self.

That self is subtler than even space since it has no name and cannot be described; and neither the mind nor the senses can reach it or comprehend it. It is pure consciousness. The entire universe exists in the consciousness that is atomic, even as a tree exists within the seed: but, then the universe exists as consciousness and does not exist as the universe. That consciousness exists, however, because such is the experience of all, and since it alone is the self of all. Since it is, all else is.

That self is empty like space; but it is not nothingness, since it is consciousness. It is: yet because it cannot be experienced by the mind and senses, it is not. It being the self of all, it is not experienced (as the object of experience) by anyone. Though one, it is reflected in the infinite atoms of existence and hence appears to be many. This appearance is however unreal even as 'bracelet' is an imaginary appearance of gold which alone is real. But, the self is not unreal. **It is not a void or nothingness: for it is the self of all, and it is the very self of one who says it is and of one who says (or thinks) it is not!** Moreover, its existence can be experienced indirectly just as the existence of camphor can be experienced by its fragrance. It alone is the self of all as consciousness; and it alone is the substance that makes the world-appearance possible.

In that infinite ocean of consciousness, whirlpools known as the three worlds arise spontaneously and naturally, even as whirlpools are caused by the very nature of the running water. Because this consciousness is beyond the reach of the mind and senses, it seems to be a void; but since it can be known by self-knowledge, it is not a void. On account of the indivisibility of consciousness, I am you and you are me; but the indivisible consciousness itself has become neither I nor you! When the wrong notions of 'you' and 'I' are given up, there arises the awareness that there is neither you, nor I, nor everything; perhaps it alone is everything.

The self being infinite moves not though moving, and yet is for ever established in every atom of existence. The self does not go nor does it ever come: for space and time derive their meaning from consciousness alone. Where can the self go when all that is is within it? If a pot is taken from one place to another, the space within does not move from one place to another, for everything is for ever in space.

section III - chapter 80

yavat katakasamvittis tavan na stiva hemata yavac ca drsyatapattis tavan na stiva sa kala (48)

The minister continued:

The self which is of the nature of pure consciousness seems to be inert and insentient when it is apparently associated with inertia. In infinite space, this infinite consciousness has made infinite objects appear; though all this seems to have been done, such effect being a mere fancy, nothing has been done. Hence, it is both consciousness and inertia, the doer and the non-doer.

The reality in fire is this self or consciousness: yet, the self does not burn nor is it burnt, since it is the reality in all, and infinite. It is the eternal light which shines in the sun, the moon, and the fire, but independent of them. It shines even when these have set: it illumines all from within all. It alone is the intelligence that indwells even trees, plants and creepers, and preserves them. That self or infinite consciousness is, from the ordinary point of view, the creator, the protector and the overlord of all; and yet from the absolute point of view, in reality, being the self of all, it has no such limited roles.

There is no world independent of this consciousness: hence, even the mountains are in the atomic self. In it arise the phantasies of a moment and of an epoch: and these appear to be real time-scales, even as objects seen in a dream appear to be real at that time. Within the twinkling of an eye there exists an epoch, even as a whole city is reflected in a small mirror. Such being the case, how can one assert the reality of either duality or non-duality? This atomic self or infinite consciousness alone appears to be a moment or an epoch, near and far, and there is nothing apart from it; and these are not mutually contradictory in themselves.

As long as one sees the bracelet as a bracelet, it is not seen as gold; but when it is seen that 'bracelet' is just a word and not the reality, then gold is seen. Even so, **when the world is assumed to be real, the self is not seen:** but when this assumption is discarded, consciousness is realised. It is the all; hence real. It is not experienced; hence unreal.

What appears to be is but the jugglery of Maya which creates a division in consciousness, into subject and object. It is as real as the dream-city. It is neither real nor unreal, but a long-standing illusion. It is the assumption of division that creates diversity, right from the creator Brahma down to the little insect. Just as in a single seed the diverse characteristics of the tree remain at all times, even so this apparent diversity exists in the self at all times, but as consciousness.

section III - chapter 81

atma yatnasataprapyo labdhe smin na ca kincana labdham bhavati tac caitat
paramam va na kincana (9)

Karkati said:

I am delighted with your minister's answers, O king. Now I would like to hear your answers.

The king said:

Your questions, O noble lady, relate to the eternal Brahman which is pure existence. It is known when the threefold modification known as waking, dreaming and deep sleep cease and when the mind-stuff is rid of all movements of thought. The extension and withdrawal of its manifestation are popularly regarded as the creation and the dissolution of the universe. It is expressed in silence when the known comes to an end, for it is beyond all expression. It is the extremely subtle middle, between the two extremes; and that middle itself has two sides. All these universes are but its playful but conscious projection. As the diversity of this universe, it seems to be divided in itself; but truly, it is undivided.

When this Brahman wishes, wind comes into being, though that wind is nothing but pure consciousness. Similarly, when sound is thought of, there is a fanciful projection of what sounds like sound: but being pure consciousness, the reality is far from what is thought of as sound and as its meaning or substance. That supreme subtle atomic being is all and is nothing; I am that yet I am not. That alone is. By its omnipotence all this appears to be.

This self can be attained by a hundred ways and means; yet, when it is attained, nothing has been attained! It is the supreme self; yet it is nothing. One roams in this forest of samsara, or repetitive history, till there is the dawn of that wisdom which is able to dispel the root-ignorance in which the world appears to be real. Just as the ignorant man is attracted by the perception of water in the mirage, this world-appearance attracts the ignorant man. But the truth is that it is the infinite consciousness that perceives the universe within itself, through its own power known as Maya. That which is seen within appears also outside, like the hallucination of one who is mad with lust.

Though the self is extremely subtle and atomic and of the essential nature of pure consciousness, by it the entire universe is wholly pervaded. This omnipresent being by its very existence inspires the world-appearance to 'dance to its tunes'. That which is thus subtler than a hundredth part of the tip of hair is yet greater than the greatest, because of its omnipresence.

section III - chapter 81

cid anor antare santi samagranubhavanavah yatha madhurasasya ntah puspa patra
phalasiyah (35)

The king continued:

The light of self-knowledge alone illumines all experiences. It shines by its own light. What is the light by which one 'sees' (knows), if all the lights in the world from the sun onwards become inert? Only the inner light. This inner light appears to be outside and to illumine external objects. The other sources of light are indeed non-different from the darkness of ignorance and only appear to shine: though there is no essential difference between fog and cloud (both of which veil objects), it is often seen that fog seems to radiate light, while cloud seems to obscure it. The inner light of consciousness shines for ever within and without, day and night; mysteriously, it illumines the effects of ignorance without removing the darkness of ignorance. Just as the ever-luminous sun reveals its real nature with the help of night and day, even so the light of the self reveals its real nature by revealing both consciousness and ignorance.

Within the atomic space of consciousness, there exist all the experiences, even as within a drop of honey there are the subtle essences of flowers, leaves and fruits. From that consciousness all experiences expand, for the experiencing is the sole experiencer (which is consciousness). Whatever may be the particular description of the experiences, they are all encompassed in the one experiencing of consciousness. Indeed, this infinite consciousness alone is all this: and all the hands and eyes are its own, though being extremely subtle, it has no limbs. In the twinkling of an eye this infinite consciousness experiences an epoch within itself, even as in the course of a brief dream one experiences youth and old age and even death. All these objects which appear in consciousness are indeed non-different from consciousness, even as a sculpture carved of stone is nothing but stone. Just as the whole tree with all its future ramifications is in the seed, the entire universe of the past, the present and the future is contained in the atom of infinite consciousness. Therefore, though the self is neither the doer of actions nor the experiencer of experiences, it is the doer of all actions and the experiencer of all experiences: there is nothing apart from it. Within the atom of infinite consciousness the doership and the experiencer are inherent.

The world, however, has never really been created, nor does it disappear: it is regarded as unreal only from the relative point of view, from the absolute point of view it is non-different from the infinite consciousness.

section III - chapter 81

drasta drsyataya tisthan drastrtam upajivati satyam katakasamvittau hema
kancanatham iva (80)

The king continued:

Sages only speak of the inner and the outer, which are but words with no corresponding substance: it is meant to instruct the ignorant. The seer, himself remaining unseen, sees himself; and the seer does not ever become an object of consciousness. The seer is the sight only, and when the latent psychic impressions have ceased, the seer regains its pure being; when the external object is imagined, a seer has been created. If there is no subject, there is no object either: it is the son that makes a man 'father'. Again, it is the subject that becomes the object; there is no object (sight) without a subject (seer), even as without a father there is no son. Because the subject (seer) is pure consciousness, he is able to conjure up the object. This cannot be the other way round: the object does not give birth to the subject. Therefore the seer alone is real, the object being hallucination: gold alone is real, the bracelet is a name and a form. As long as the notion of bracelet lasts, the pure gold is not apprehended; as long as the notion of the object persists, the division between the seer and the seen also persists. But, **just as because of the consciousness in the bracelet, gold realises its goldness, the subject (seer) manifesting as the object (the seen) realises subjectivity (consciousness)**. One is the reflection of the other: there is no real duality. The seer does not see himself as he sees the object: the seer sees himself as the object, and therefore does not see - though he is the reality, yet he appears to be unreal. However, when self-knowledge arises and the object ceases to be, the seer (subject) is realised as the sole reality.

The subject exists because of the object, and the object is but a reflection of the subject: duality cannot be if there is not one, and where is the need for the notion of 'unity' if one alone exists? When thus real knowledge is gained by means of right enquiry and understanding, only that remains which is not expressible in words. Of that it cannot be said that it is one or that it is many. It is neither seer nor seen, neither subject nor object, neither this nor that. Neither unity nor diversity can be truly established as the truth: for every thesis gives rise to antithesis. Yet, one is not different from 'the other': just as the wave is not other than water, bracelet is not different from gold. Even so, division is not a contradiction of unity! All this speculation concerning unity and diversity is only to overcome sorrow: that which is beyond all this is the truth, the supreme self.

section III - chapter 82

mahatam eva samparkat punar duhkham na badhate ko hi dipa sikha hastas tamasa paribhuyate (8)

Vasistha continued:

After listening to these wise words of the king, Karkati became tranquil, and her demoniacal nature left her. She said to them: "O wise men, you are both fit to be worshipped by all and to be served by all. And, I have been thoroughly awakened by your holy company. **One who enjoys the company of enlightened men does not suffer in this world even as one who holds a candle in his hand does not see darkness anywhere.** Pray, tell me what I can do for you."

The king said:

"O lady, in my city many people suffer from rheumatic heart troubles. In the country there is also an epidemic of cholera. It is in order to investigate these and find a remedy for them that my minister and I came out of the palace tonight. My humble submission to you is this: do not take the life of any of my people. (Karkati at once acceded to the king's request.) Now, please tell me: how shall I recompense you for your kindness and appease your hunger?"

Karkati replied:

"Once I had the intention of engaging myself in penance in the Himalayas and giving up the body. But now I have given up that idea. I shall give you my biography. Once upon a time I was a demoness of gigantic proportions. I wished to devour people and with this intention performed penance. From the creator Brahma I obtained a boon, as a result of which I became a needle (and also the cholera virus); as such I brought untold misery to people. Brahma, however, also evolved a mantra by which alone I am brought under control. Learn this mantra, and with its help you can enable people to get rid of rheumatic heart troubles, also leukemia and other blood illnesses. I used to spread leukemia in such a way that it was passed on by the parent to his children!"

All the three of them then went to the bank of the river where the king received the mantra from Karkati; this mantra becomes effective by its repetition (japa).

The grateful king said to Karkati:

"O kind lady, now you have become my guru and friend. Friendship is valued by good people. Pray, assume a gentle and smaller form, and come to my palace and live as my guest. You need not afflict good people at all. But I shall feed you with sinners and thieves."

Karkati agreed. She became a charming young woman and accompanied the king to live as his guest. He entrusted thieves and other criminals and sinners to her. At night everyday she resumed her demoniacal form and consumed them. During the day-time she continued to be a charming woman - the friend and guest of the king. After her meal she would often go into samadhi for a few years at a time, before returning to normal consciousness and normal life.

section III - chapter 83 84

avibodhad ayam vado jnate dvaitam na vidyate jnate samsantakalanam maunam eva
vasisyate (84/25)

Vasistha continued:

Thus, Karkati lives even now protecting the king's descendants. She was the daughter of a demon who resembled a crab (?). Demons are of many kinds and colours (white, black, green and red); and she was of the black kind. I told you the story, however, because I remembered her questions, and the king's answers. In essence, even as the ramifications of the tree (with its leaves, flowers, fruits, etc.) extend from the seed in which there is no such diversification, the universe of diversity extends from the infinite consciousness.

O Rama, by merely listening to my words you will be enlightened, there is no doubt in this. Know that the universe has arisen from Brahman and it is Brahman alone.

Rama asked:

If oneness alone is the truth, why then do we say, "By this, that is attained"?

Vasistha replied:

Rama, in the scriptures words have been used in order to facilitate the imparting of instruction. Cause and effect, the self and the Lord, difference and non-difference, knowledge and ignorance, pain and pleasure: **all these pairs have been invented for the instruction of the ignorant. They are not real in themselves. All this discussion and argumentation take place only in and because of ignorance; when there is knowledge there is no duality. When the truth is known, all descriptions cease, and silence alone remains.**

Then you will realise that there is only one, without beginning and without end. But as long as words are used to denote a truth, duality is inevitable; however, such duality is not the truth. All divisions are illusory.

I shall give you another illustration. Listen very carefully. By means of the potent medicine of my explanations, you will surely overcome the illness that afflicts your mind. This samsara (world appearance) is nothing but the mind filled with likes and dislikes; when it is free of them, world appearance too comes to an end. The consciousness in the mind is the seed of all substances; and the inert aspect of the mind is the cause of the illusory appearance of the world. Because of the omnipresence of consciousness, the mind takes the form of the knowable and thus becomes the seed of the universe; the mind, like a child, imagines the existence of the world. When the mind is illumined it experiences the infinite consciousness within itself. I shall presently explain to you how this subject-object division arises.

section III - chapter 85

sad asaditi kalabhiratatam yat sadasadabodha vimohadayinibhih
avirataracanabhir isvaratman pravilasatiha mano mahan mahatman (39)

Vasistha continued:

Once I asked the creator Brahma to tell me how this universe was first created. And he gave me the following reply. Brahma said: My child, it is only mind that appears as all this. I shall tell you what happened to me at the beginning of this epoch. At the end of the previous epoch there was the cosmic night, and as soon as I woke at the end of that night I offered my morning prayers and looked around, wishing to create the universe. I beheld the infinite void which was neither illumined nor dark. In my mind there was the intention to create; and in my heart I began to see subtle visions. There in my mind and with my mind I saw several seemingly independent universes. In them all I also saw my own counterparts-creators. In those universes I saw all kinds of beings, as also mountains and rivers, oceans and wind, sun and heavenly beings and the netherworld and the demons. In all these universes I also saw scriptures and moral codes which determine good and evil and heaven and hell; as also the scriptures that lay down the path to pleasure and the path to liberation. And I saw people pursuing all these different goals.

I saw seven worlds, seven continents and also oceans and mountains, all of them inexorably heading for destruction. I saw time and its divisions, right down to days and nights. I saw the holy river Ganga as it knit together the three worlds - the celestial region, the atmosphere, and the earth.

Like a castle in the air, this creation shone extensively with its sky, earth and oceans. Looking at all this I was wonderstruck and puzzled: "How is it that I am seeing all these with my mind in the great void, even though I have not seen them with physical eyes?" I contemplated this problem for a considerable time and eventually I thought of one of the suns in one of the solar systems and requested him to come to me. I asked him the question that was engaging my attention.

The sun replied:

O great one, being the omnipotent creator of all this you are indeed the Lord. It is the mind alone that appears as all this ceaseless and endless creative activity, which, on account of nescience, deludes one into thinking that it is real or that it is unreal. Surely, you know the truth, Lord: yet since you commanded me to answer your query, I say this.

section III - chapter 86

aisvaryanam hi sarvesam akalpam na vinasi yat rocate bhrataras tan me
brahmatvam iha netarat (31)

The sun said:

O Lord of lords, near the holy mountain Kailasa in a place known as Suvarnajata, your sons had established a colony. In that place there was a holy man known as Indu, a descendant of the sage Kasyapa. He and his wife enjoyed every blessing except an offspring. In order to obtain this blessing they went to Kailasa and engaged themselves in severe penance, living only on a very small quantity of water. They had resorted to the state of trees and stood unmoving.

Lord Siva was pleased with their penance and appearing before them, asked them to choose a boon from him. They prayed that they might beget ten worthy sons who would be devoted to God and righteousness. Lord Siva granted the boon.

Very soon after this, the holy man's wife gave birth to ten brilliant and radiant sons. These boys grew up into young men; they had mastered all the scriptures even when they were barely seven years of age. After a considerable time, their parents abandoned their bodies and became liberated.

The ten young men were sorely distressed at the loss of their parents. One day they got together and asked themselves: "O brothers, what is the most desirable goal here, which is proper for us to aspire to and which will not lead to unhappiness? To be a king, to be an emperor, even to be Indra the god of heaven - all these are trivial, since even Indra rules heaven just for an hour and a half of the Creator's life-span. Ah, **therefore, I think only the attainment of creatorship is the best of all lordship, for it will not come to an end for a whole epoch.**"

All the others heartily agreed with this statement. They said to themselves: "Well then, we should soon reach Brahma-hood which is devoid of old age and death."

The eldest brother said: "Please do as I tell you to do. From now on contemplate as follows, 'I am Brahma, seated on a full-blown lotus'."

All the brothers thereupon began to meditate in the following manner: "I am Brahma, the creator of the universe. The sages as also Sarasvati the goddess of wisdom are within me in their personal forms. Heaven is within me, with all the celestials. Mountains, continents and oceans are within me. Demi-gods and demons are within me. The sun shines within me. Now the creation takes place. Now the creation exists. Now is the time for the dissolution. An epoch is over. The night of Brahma is at hand. I have selfknowledge and I am liberated."

Meditating thus with all their being, they became that.

section III - chapter 87 88

tathaiva karmakarane kamana nasti dhimatam tathaiva karmasamtyage kamana
nasti dhimatam (88/12)

The sun continued:

Lord, after that, still deeply contemplating on their intention to be the creators of the universe, the ten holy men stood in contemplation. Their bodies had withered away and whatever was left was consumed by wild beasts. But they continued to stand there in their disembodied state, for a long long time... till an epoch came to a close and there was the great scorching heat of the sun and the terrible cloud-burst which destroyed everything. The holy men still continued to stand in their disembodied state, with the sole intention of becoming the creators of the universe.

At the dawn of a new creation, these men continued to stand in the same place and in the same manner and with the same intention. They became the creators. They were the ten creators whom you saw; and you saw their universes, too. Lord, I am one of the suns that shine in the universes thus created by them.

The Creator asked the sun:

O sun, when thus the universes have been created by these ten creators, what need I do? What is there for me to do?

The sun replied:

Lord, you have no wishes, nor any motives of your own. Naturally, there is no need for you to do anything. What benefit do you derive from creating the universe? Creation of the universe is surely a motiveless pastime to you!

Lord, creation emerges from you who are free from the least desire or motive, just as the sun without intending to shine is reflected in a pool of water without the water intending to so reflect it. Just as without intending to do so, the sun causes night and day to follow each other, even so, engage yourself in the non-volitional act of creation. For, what will you gain by abandoning your natural function?

Wise men do not desire to do anything; and wise men do not desire to abandon action either.

Lord, you are viewing, with your own mental eye, this universe thus created by those holy men. One beholds with physical eyes only such objects as have been created by him in his own mind - naught else. These objects which have been created by the mind are indestructible: only those objects which have been put together with material substances disintegrate. A person is made of whatever is firmly established as the truth of his being in his own mind: that he is, naught else.

section III - chapter 89

mano hi jagatam kartr mano hi purusah parah manah krtam krtam loke na sarirakrtam krtam (1)

The sun continued:

Lord, the mind alone is the creator of the world; and mind alone is the supreme person. What is done by the mind is action, what is done by the body is not action. Behold the powers of the mind: by determined thinking the sons of the holy man became creators of the universe! When one, on the other hand, thinks 'I am a little body' he becomes a mortal being. One whose consciousness is extroverted experiences pleasure and pain; the yogi, on the other hand, whose vision is introverted does not entertain ideas of pain and pleasure. In this connection there is a legend which I shall narrate to you.

In the country of Magadha there was a king named Indradyumna. Ahalya was his wife. In that place there was also a handsome young man of loose morals known as Indra. One day during a discourse, the queen listened to the story of the seduction of the famed Ahalya by Indra the king of heaven. As a result she conceived a great love for the young man Indra.

Ahalya was distraught with love for Indra and with the help of one of her maids managed to have the young man brought to her. From then onwards Indra and Ahalya used to meet each other in a secret house and enjoy themselves.

Ahalya was so fond of Indra that she saw him everywhere. The very thought of him made her face radiant. As their love grew, their relationship became public, and it reached the king's ears.

The irate king, in an effort to break this relationship, punished them in numerous ways: they were immersed in ice-cold water, they were fried in boiling oil, they were tied to the legs of an elephant, they were whipped. Indra said to the king, laughingly:

"O king, the entire universe to me is nothing but my beloved. So it is to Ahalya. Hence we are unaffected by all these. Sir, I am only mind; and mind alone is the individual. You can punish the body; but you cannot punish the mind nor bring about the least change in it. If the mind is fully saturated with something, whatever happens to the body does not affect the mind. The mind is unaffected even by boons and curses, even as the firmly established mountain is not moved by the horns of a little beast... The body does not create the mind, but the mind creates the body. The mind alone is the seed for the body: when the tree dies, the seed does not, but when the seed perishes, the tree dies with it. If the body perishes, the mind can create other bodies for itself."

section III - chapter 90 91

pratibhasam upayati yadyad asya hi cetasah tattat prakatatam eti sthairyam
saphalataam api (91/17)

The sun continued:

Lord, the king thereupon approached the sage Bharata and pleaded that he should punish the recalcitrant couple by cursing them. And, the sage pronounced a curse upon the couple. However, they said to the sage and to the king: "Alas, you are both of little understanding. By thus cursing us you have squandered the merit acquired by penance. Your curse will surely destroy our bodies, but we shall lose nothing by that. No one can destroy the mind of others." However, the sage's curse destroyed their bodies, and on leaving those bodies, they were born together as animals and then as birds, and then as a human couple in a holy family. Till now, on account of the total love for each other, they are born together as husband and wife. Even the trees of the forest were inspired and infected by the supreme love and devotion of this couple.

Even the sage's curse could not bring about the mutation of the couple's mind. Even so, Lord, you cannot interfere with the creation of the ten sons of the holy man. But what do you lose if they are thus engaged in their own creation? Let them remain with the creations of their own mind! It cannot be destroyed by you any more than the reflection in crystal can be removed.

Lord, in your own consciousness, create the world as you like. In truth, the infinite consciousness, the mind (one's own consciousness) and the infinite space are all of one substance, pervaded by the infinite consciousness. Therefore regardless of what the young men have created, you can create as many worlds as you like!

Brahma said to Vasistha:

Having listened to this advice of the sun, I immediately began to create the worlds as the natural expression of my own being. I requested the sun to be my first partner in this task. Thus, he was the sun in the creation of the young men, and the progenitor of the human race in my creation, and he played this dual role efficiently. In accordance with my intentions, he brought about the creation of the worlds. **Whatever appears in one's consciousness, that seems to come into being, gets established, and even bears fruits!** Such is the power of the mind. Just as the sons of the holy man gained the position of creators of the world on account of the powers of their mind, even so have I become the creator of the world. It is the mind that makes things appear here. It brings about the appearance of the body, etc. Naught else is aware of the body.

section III - chapter 91

kathyate jiva namnaitac cittam pratanuvasanam santa deha camatkaram jivam
viddhi kramat param (23)

The creator Brahma said:

The individualised consciousness (mind) has in it its own manifold potentialities, even as spices have taste in them. That consciousness itself appears as the subtle or ethereal body, and when it becomes gross that itself appears to be the physical or material body. **That individualised consciousness itself is known as the jiva or the individual soul, when the potentialities are in an extremely subtle state. And, when all this jugglery of the jiva ceases, that itself shines as the supreme being.** I am not, nor is there anyone in this universe: all this is nothing but the infinite consciousness. Just as the intention of the young men became manifest, all this is appearance based on infinite consciousness. The young men's intention made them feel that they were the creators: even so I am.

The pure and infinite consciousness alone thinks of itself as the jiva and as the mind and then believes itself to be the body. When this dreamlike phantasy is prolonged, this long dream feels like reality! It is both real and unreal: because it is perceived, it appears to be real, but because of inherent contradiction it is unreal. The mind is sentient because it is based on consciousness; when viewed as something apart from the consciousness, it is inert and deluded. When there is perception, the mind takes on the role of the object of perception: but not in reality - even as when it is perceived as such, the bracelet is seen, though the truth is that it is gold.

Because Brahman alone is all this, even what is inert is pure consciousness; but all of us, from me down to the rock, are indefinable, neither inert nor sentient. There can be no apprehension of two completely different things: only when there is similarity between the subject and object is perception possible. Concerning what is indefinable and whose existence is not certain, 'inert' and 'sentient' are only words with no substance. In the mind, the subject is believed to be sentient and the object is said to be inert. Thus, caught in delusion, the jiva hangs around. In truth, this duality itself is the creation of the mind, a hallucination. Of course, we cannot determine with certainty that such a hallucination exists, either. The infinite consciousness alone 'is'.

When this illusory division is not seen for what it is, there is the arising of the false egotism. But when the mind enquires into its own nature, this division disappears. There is realisation of the one infinite consciousness, and one attains great bliss.

section III - chapter 92

manasaiva manas tasmāt paurusena puman iha svakam eva svakenaiva yojayet
pavane pathi (28)

Vasistha asked Brahma:

Lord, how is it possible that the sage's curse affected Indra's body and not his mind? If the body is non-different from the mind, then the curse should affect the mind, too. Kindly explain to me how the mind is not thus affected - or that it is affected!

The creator Brahma replied:

Dear one, in the universe, from Brahma to a hill, every embodied being has a twofold body. Of these, the first is the mental body which is restless and which acts quickly. The second is the body made of flesh, which does not really do anything. Of these the latter is overpowered by curses and also by boons or charms: it is dumb, powerless, weak and transient like a droplet of water on lotus-leaf, and it is entirely dependent upon fate, destiny and such other factors. Mind however, is independent, though it might seem to be dependent. When this mind confidently engages in self-effort, then it is beyond the reach of sorrow. Whenever it strives, then and there it surely finds the fruition of its striving.

The physical body achieves nothing; on the other hand, the mental body gets results. When the mind dwells constantly on what is pure, it is immune to the effects of curses. The body may fall into fire or mire, but the mind experiences only that which it contemplates. This was demonstrated by Indra. It was also demonstrated by the sage Dirghatapa who wished to perform a religious rite, but fell into a blind well while collecting the materials for it; he performed the rite mentally and derived the fruit of actual physical performance of the rite. The ten sons of the holy man were also able to achieve Brahma-hood by their mental effort: even I could not prevent it.

Mental and physical illness, as well as curses and "evil eye" do not touch the mind that is devoted to the self, any more than a lotus flower can split a rock into two by falling on it. Hence, **one should endeavour with the mind to make the mind take to the pure path, with the self make the self tread the path of purity.** Whatever the mind contemplates that instantly materialises. By intense contemplation it can bring about radical change within itself, to heal itself of the defective vision in which illusions were perceived as real. What the mind does, that it experiences as truth. It makes the man who is sitting in moonlight experience burning heat; and it makes one who is in burning sun experience cool comfort!

Such is the mysterious power of the mind.

section III - chapter 93

esa jagaj jangala jirnavalli samyak samaloka kutharakrtta valliva viksubdha
manahsarira bhuyo na samrohata ramabhadra (24)

Vasistha continued:

Thus was I instructed by the creator Brahma in days of yore and that I have conveyed to you, O Rama.

Thus, since the absolute Brahman in its undifferentiated state pervades everything, everything is in an undifferentiated state. When that of its own accord condenses, the cosmic mind is born. In that mind there arises the intention of the existence of the different elements in their extremely subtle state: the totality of all this is the luminous cosmic person who is known as Brahma the creator. Hence, this Creator is none other than the cosmic mind.

This Brahma the creator sees whatever he intends to see in his own mind, for he is of the nature of consciousness. It is he (Brahma the creator) who has wished into being this nescience which is the differentiating principle in the universe, and on account of which one confuses the self with the not-self, and it is with this factor of nescience that the Creator has caused this universe (the mountains, the blade of grass, water, etc.) to appear as one of diverse creatures. Because of this - though the entire universe is nothing but infinite consciousness - there appear to be creatures born of atomic particles and molecules.

Therefore, O Rama, all objects and substances in this universe have emerged in Brahman the absolute, just as waves manifest in the ocean. In this uncreated universe, the mind of Brahma the creator perceives itself as the egotism and thus does Brahma the cosmic mind become Brahma the creator of the universe. The power of that cosmic mind alone appears to be the diverse forces in the universe. Infinite number of diverse creatures manifest themselves in this cosmic mind and they are then known as diverse jivas.

When these diverse jivas arise in the infinite space of consciousness, seemingly composed of the elements, into each of the bodies consciousness enters through the aperture of life-force, and thence forms the seed of all bodies, both moving and unmoving. Thence, birth as individuals takes place, each individual being accidentally (like a crow alighting and a cocoanut falling) brought into contact with different potentialities whose expression gives rise to the law of cause and effect, etc., and thence to rise and fall in evolution. Desire alone is thereafter the cause of all this.

Rama such is this forest known as world-appearance; he who cuts its very root with the axe of investigation (enquiry) is freed from it. Some arrive at this understanding soon, others after a very long time.

section III - chapter 94

sarva etah samayanti brahmano bhutajatayah kincit pracalitabhogat payoraser
ivormayah (19)

Vasistha continued:

Rama, I shall now describe to you the divisions of beings into the best, the worst and the middling, as it happened in the beginning of this cycle of creation.

The first and foremost among the creatures are born of noble practices. They are naturally good and devoted to good deeds. They reach liberation in a few life-times. They are full of the quality of purity and light (satva). Then there are those who are full of impurity, in whom the worldly habits are strong and variegated, who will perhaps reach liberation in a thousand births - they are the least among the good. Among them there are those in whose case liberation itself is doubtful in this world-cycle: they are beings of dense darkness.

The middling type are the ones who are full of the quality of dynamism and desire (rajas). When such people are close enough to liberation that on their departure from this world they reach it, they have a mixture of rajas and satva. But when the rajasic (passionate desire) tendency is so strong that it takes a little longer to sublimate it, they are purely rajasic. But when the rajasic tendency is extremely dense, then it partakes of darkness (tamas). In the case of those from whom liberation is so remote that it is doubtful, the quality of rajas partakes of the densest darkness.

They who even after a thousand births are still in darkness unawakened, are known as beings of darkness (tamas). They may take a long time to reach liberation. But when this liberation seems to be at hand, then their tamas is mixed with satva. If they are proceeding close to liberation, then their tamas is mixed with rajas. When, even after a hundred births, liberation is another hundred births away, they are full of tamas; and if liberation is doubtful, they are in dense darkness.

All these beings have arisen in the absolute Brahman when there was just a slight disturbance in its equilibrium, even as waves arise on the surface of the ocean. Even as the space in a jar, the space in a room and the space in a small hole are all integral parts of one cosmic space, all these are but the infinite being in which there are no parts. And, as they arose in it, they merge in it. Thus, by the will of the infinite Brahman, all these seem to arise and then dissolve in it.

section III - chapter 95

karmanase manonaso manonaso hy akarmata mukttasyaisa bhavatyeva na mukttasya kadacana (36)

Vasistha continued:

Action and the doer of the action arose spontaneously in the supreme being at the same time, even as flower and its fragrance arise simultaneously. However, it is only in the eyes of the ignorant that the creation of the jivas appears to be real, even as only the ignorant see blueness in the sky! To the enlightened the expressions "Jivas are born of Brahman" and "Jivas are not born of Brahman" are both meaningless.

Only for the sake of instruction is the dualism provisionally accepted; otherwise instruction is impossible. After having posited that jivas are born of Brahman, it is pointed out by the teacher that since the effect is non-different from the cause, jivas are non-different from Brahman. All these appear to be born of Brahman, even as fragrance is born of flower. And they re-enter into Brahman, even as one season 'enters' into another!

With every species of being that manifests itself in the universe is simultaneously born its natural behaviour. It is only their ignorance of their own essential nature or self which leads to such behaviour or action as to cause reaction in a later birth.

Rama said:

Holy sir, truly the declarations of sages whose minds are uncoloured constitute scripture. And; they who are pure at heart and in whose vision there is no division are regarded as sages. The immature person can hope to see the light of truth only with the aid of a scripture and of the knowledge of the nature of an enlightened person. Holy sir, we see in this world that the seed is born of a tree, and the tree grows from the seed. Is it then appropriate to say that without the seed of previous karma, diverse beings were born of the absolute Brahman?

Vasistha replied:

If you observe carefully, O Rama, you will see that it is only when the mind is involved in the action that there is the extension of the action into its own fruition. Hence, mind is the seed of action. Even so, when the cosmic mind manifested itself in the absolute Brahman, at that very instant the natural tendencies of diverse beings and their behaviour were born, and the embodied beings came to be regarded as jivas. There is no division between mind and action. Before it is projected as action it arises in the mind, with the mind itself as its 'body'. Hence, action is nothing but the movement of energy in consciousness, and it inevitably bears its own fruit. **When such action comes to an end, mind comes to an end, too; and when the mind ceases to be, there is no action. This applies only to the liberated sage, not to the others.**

section III - chapter 96

kakataliya yogena tyaktta spharadrgakrteh cites cetyanupatinyah krtah
paryayavrttayah (15)

Vasistha continued:

Mind is only perception; and perception is movement in consciousness. The expression of this movement is action, and fruition follows this. Mind is an intention arising in the omnipotent and infinite consciousness. It stands between the real and the unreal, as it were, but inclined towards comprehension. Though non-different from the infinite consciousness, it thinks that it is. Though non-doing, it thinks it does. Such is the mind, and these qualities are inseparable from the mind. Even so the jiva and the mind are inseparable.

Whatever the mind thinks of, the organs of action strive to materialise: hence, again, mind is action. However, mind, intellect, egotism, individualised consciousness, action, fancy, birth and death, latent tendencies, knowledge, effort, memory, the senses, nature, Maya or illusion, activity and such other words are but words without corresponding reality: the sole reality is the infinite consciousness in which these concepts are conceived to exist. **All these concepts have arisen when, by accidental coincidence (the crow dislodging the cocoanut), the infinite consciousness in a moment of self-forgetfulness viewed itself as the object of perception.**

When, thus veiled by nescience, the same consciousness views diversity in an agitated state and identifies objects as such, it is known as mind. That itself when it is firmly established in the conviction of a certain perception, is known as intellect (or intelligence). When it ignorantly and foolishly identifies itself as an existent separate individual, it is known as egotism. When it abandons consistent enquiry, allowing itself to play with countless thoughts coming and going, it is known as individualised consciousness (or mind-stuff).

Whereas pure movement in consciousness is karma or action without an independent doer, when it pursues the fruition of such action, it is known as karma (action). When it entertains the notion "I have seen this before" in relation to something either seen or unseen, it is known as memory. When the effects of past enjoyments continue to remain in the field of consciousness though the effects themselves are unseen, it is known as latent tendency (or potentiality). When it is conscious of the truth that the vision of division is the product of ignorance, it is known as knowledge. On the other hand, when it moves in the wrong direction, towards greater self-forgetfulness and deeper involvement in false fancies, it is known as impurity. When it entertains the indweller with sensations, it is known as the senses (indriya). When it remains unmanifest in the cosmic being, it is known as nature. When it creates confusion between reality and appearance, it is known as Maya (illusion). When it dissolves in the infinite there is liberation. When it thinks "I am bound" there is bondage; when it thinks "I am free" there is freedom.

section III - chapter 97

mana eva vicarena manye vilayam esyati manovilayamatrena tatah sreya
bhavisyati (10)

Vasistha continued:

The light of consciousness eclipsed by a firm conviction in the existence of the mind is indeed the mind. This mind embodies itself in diverse beings - humans, gods, demons, demi-gods and celestials. It then spreads itself out as various forms of behaviour - as also the cities and towns, etc. Such being the truth, what is the use of examining all these external appearances? It is mind alone that is the proper factor for us to examine. For when we enquire into the nature of the mind, all the created objects or all appearances are seen to be its creations; only the infinite consciousness remains as uncreated by the mind. **When deeply observed, the mind is absorbed into its substratum, and when it is thus absorbed, there is supreme felicity.** When the mind thus disintegrates there is liberation, and there is no more rebirth, for it was mind alone that appeared to take birth and to die. (Vicara, usually translated 'enquiry' is 'direct observation'.)

Rama asked again:

Pray, Lord, how did all this take place in the pure infinite consciousness? How was it possible for the mind, which is apparently a mixture of the real and the unreal, to arise in it?

Vasistha said:

Rama, space is threefold - the infinite space of undivided consciousness, the finite space of divided consciousness and the physical space in which the material worlds exist. The infinite space of undivided consciousness (cid akasa) is that which exists in all inside and outside, as the pure witness of that which is real and of that which appears to be. The finite space of divided consciousness (citta akasa) is that which creates the divisions of time, which pervades all beings and which is interested in the welfare of all beings. The physical space is that in which the other elements (air, etc.) exist. The latter two are not independent of the first, the infinite space of undivided consciousness. In fact, the others do not exist, and this division of consciousness into three is arbitrarily suggested only while instructing the ignorant. The enlightened one knows that there is only one reality - the infinite consciousness.

Rama, when that consciousness apparently thinks "I am intelligent" or "I am inert", that is the mind. It is from this wrong notion that all the other physical and psychological factors have been imaginarily created.

section III - chapter 98

yatah kutascid utpannam cittam yat kincid eva hi nityam atma vimoksaya
yojayed yatnato nagha (1)

Vasistha continued:

O Rama, whatever might have been the origin of the mind and whatever it might be, one should constantly direct it towards liberation through self-effort. The pure mind is free from latent tendencies, and therefore it attains self-knowledge. Since the entire universe is within the mind, the notions of bondage and liberation are also within it. In this connection there is the following legend which I heard from the creator Brahma himself. Listen to it attentively:

There was a great forest, so large that millions of square miles were like the space within an atom, in it. In it there was just one person who had a thousand arms and limbs. He was for ever restless. He had a mace in his hand with which he beat himself and, afraid of the beating, he ran away in panic. He fell into a blind well. He came out of it, again beat himself and again ran away in panic, this time into a forest. He came out of it, again beat himself and again ran away in panic, this time into a banana grove. Though there was no other being to fear, he wept and cried aloud in fear. He kept running as before, beating himself as before.

I witnessed all this intuitively and with the power of my will I restrained him for a moment. I asked him, "Who are you?" But, he was sore distressed and called me his enemy and wept aloud and then laughed aloud. Then he began to abandon his body - limb by limb.

Immediately after this, I saw another person running like the first one, beating himself, weeping and wailing. When I similarly restrained him, he began to abuse me and ran away intent on his own way of life. Like this I came across several persons. Some listened to my words and abandoning their previous way of life became enlightened. Some others ignored me or even held me in contempt. Some others even refused to come out of the blind well or the dense forest.

Such is the great forest, O Rama: no one finds a sure resting place in it, whatever be the mode of life they may adopt. Even today you see such people in this world; and you yourself have seen such a life of ignorance and delusion. Because you are young and ignorant, you do not understand it.

section III - chapter 99

svayam praharati svantam svayam eva svayecchaya palayate svayam caiva pasya
jnana vijrmbhitam (36)

Vasistha continued:

O Rama, this great forest is not far away, nor is that strange man in a strange land! This world itself is the forest. It is a great void; but this void is seen only in the light of enquiry. This light of enquiry is the 'I' in the parable. This wisdom is accepted by some and rejected by others, who continue to suffer. They who accept it are enlightened.

The person with thousands of arms is the mind with countless manifestations. This mind punishes itself by its own latent tendencies and restlessly wanders in this world. The blind well in the story is hell and the banana grove is heaven. The dense forest of thorny bush is the life of a worldly man, with the numerous thorns of wife, children, wealth, etc. hurting him all the time. The mind now wanders into hell, now into heaven and now into the world of human beings.

Even when the light of wisdom shines on the life of the deluded mind, it foolishly rejects it, considering that that wisdom is its enemy. Then it weeps and wails in distress. Sometimes, it experiences an imperfect awakening, and it renounces the pleasures of the world without proper understanding - such renunciation itself proves to be a great source of sorrow. But, when such renunciation arises out of the fullness of understanding, of wisdom born of enquiry into the nature of the mind, the renunciation leads to supreme bliss. Such a mind may even look at its own past notions of pleasure with puzzlement. Just as the limbs of the person as they were cut away fell down and disappeared, the latent tendencies of the person who wisely renounces the world also vanish from the mind.

Behold the play of ignorance which makes one hurt oneself out of one's own volition, and which makes one run hither and thither in meaningless panic. Though the light to self-knowledge shines in every heart, yet one wanders in this world driven by one's own latent desires. And, the mind itself intensifies this sorrow and goads one to go round in circles. By its own whims and fancies, thoughts and hopes, it binds itself.

When it is visited by sorrow it despairs and becomes restless. When one who gains wisdom preserves it for a long time and persists in the practice of enquiry, he does not experience sorrow. An uncontrolled mind is the source of sorrow; when it is thoroughly understood, the sorrow vanishes like mist at sunrise.

section III - chapter 100

karanam karma karta ca jananam maranam sthitih sarvam brahmaiva nahyasti
tadvina kalpanetara (30)

Vasistha continued:

The individualised consciousness (the mind) has arisen in the supreme being, O Rama: it is both different and non-different from the infinite consciousness even as a wave is different and non-different from the ocean. To the enlightened the mind is the absolute Brahman and naught else. To the unenlightened, the mind is the cause of repetitive history (samsara). When dualistic concepts are used by us, O Rama, it is only to facilitate instruction: the division is not real.

The absolute Brahman is omnipotent: and there is nothing which is outside of it. It is his own power or energy that pervades all things. In embodied beings, it is the cit-sakti (the power of consciousness or intelligence). It is motion in air, stability in earth, void in space, and it is the power of self-consciousness ('I am') in created beings. Yet all this is nothing but the power of absolute Brahman. It is the power of disintegration, the power that causes grief in the grief-stricken and the power that causes elation in the joyous; in the warrior it is valour; it is the power that triggers creation and the same power brings about the dissolution of the universe.

The jiva is at the junction of consciousness and matter; and because it is a reflection of the absolute Brahman, it is said to be in Brahman. See the entire universe and also the 'I' as the absolute Brahman, for the self (which is Brahman) is omnipresent. When that self thinks, it is known as mind. It is nothing but the power of the absolute Brahman which is non-different from Brahman: in it all this arbitrary division into 'I' and 'this' are but apparent reflections. The very reality of the mind is Brahman alone.

Here and there, now and then, this power of Brahman makes manifest one or the other of its powers. But all this manifestation is but the apparent reflection of the power of Brahman, not a real creation. Thus creation, transformation, existence and destruction are all brought about by Brahman in Brahman: it is nothing but Brahman. **The instruments of action, action and the doer, birth, death and existence - all this is Brahman. Nothing else is, even in imagination.** Delusion, craving, greed and attachment are non-existent; how can they exist when there is no duality? When bondage is non-existent, surely liberation is false, too.

Rama asked:

section III - chapter 101

sankalpajalakalanaiva jagatsamagram sankalpameva nanu viddhi vilasacetyam
sankalpamatramalam utsrjya nirvikalpa masritya nigcayam avapnuhi rama santim
(39)

Vasistha continued:

To illustrate this, there is an interesting legend. Kindly listen to it. A young boy asked his nanny to tell him a story and the nanny told him the following story to which the boy listened with great attention:

Once upon a time in a city which did not exist, there were three princes who were brave and happy. Of them two were unborn and the third was not conceived. Unfortunately all their relatives died. The princes left their native city to go elsewhere. Very soon they fell into a swoon unable to bear the heat of the sun. Their feet were burnt by hot sand. The tips of grass pierced them. They reached the shade of three trees, of which two did not exist and the third was not even planted. After resting there for some time and eating the fruits of those trees, they proceeded further.

They reached the banks of three rivers; of them two were dry and in the third there was no water. The princes had a refreshing bath and quenched their thirst in them. They then reached a huge city which was about to be built. Entering it, they found three palaces of exceeding beauty. Of them two had not been built at all, and the third had no walls. They entered the palaces and found three golden plates; two of them had been broken into two and the third had been pulverised. They took hold of the one which had been pulverised. They took ninety-nine minus one hundred grams of rice and cooked it. They then invited three holy men to be their guests; of them two had no body and the third had no mouth. After these holy men had eaten the food, the three princes partook of the rest of the food cooked. They were greatly pleased. Thus they lived in that city for a long long time in peace and joy. My child, this is an extremely beautiful legend; pray remember this always, and you will grow up into a learned man.

O Rama, when the little boy heard this he was thrilled.

What is known as the creation of the world is no more real than this story of the young boy. This world is nothing but pure hallucination. It is nothing more than an idea. In the infinite consciousness the idea of creation arose: and that is what is. **O Rama, this world is nothing more than an idea; all the objects of consciousness in this world are just an idea; reject the error (dirt) of ideation and be free of ideas; and remain rooted in truth, attain peace.**

section III - chapter 102

abaddho baddha ity uktva kim socasi mudhaiva hi anantasya tmatattvasya kim
katham kena badhyate (9)

Vasistha continued:

Only a fool, not a wise man, is deluded by his own ideas; it is a fool who thinks that the imperishable is perishable, and gets deluded. Egotism is but an idea based on a false association of the self with the physical elements. When one alone exists in all this as the infinite consciousness, how has what is called egotism arisen? In fact, this egotism does not exist any more than the mirage exists in the desert. Therefore, O Rama, abandon your imperfect vision which is not based on fact; rest in the perfect vision which is of the nature of bliss and which is based on truth.

Enquire into the nature of truth. Abandon falsehood. **You are ever free; why do you call yourself bound and then grieve? The self is infinite; why, how and by whom is it bound?** There is no division in the self, for the absolute Brahman is all this. What then is called bondage and what is liberation? It is only in a state of ignorance that you think you experience pain, though you are untouched by pain. These things do not exist in the self.

Let the body fall or rise or let it go on to another universe; I am not confined to the body, then how am I affected by all this? The relation between the body and the self is like the relation between cloud and wind, like the relation between lotus and the bee. When the cloud is dispersed, the wind becomes one with space. When the lotus withers, the bee flies away into the sky. The self is not destroyed when the body falls. Even the mind does not cease to be until it is burnt in the fire of self-knowledge; not to mention the self.

Death is but the veiling by time and space of the ever-present self. Only foolish people fear death.

Abandon your latent tendencies even as a bird wishing to fly into the sky breaks out of its shell. Born of ignorance, these tendencies are hard to destroy, and they give birth to endless sorrow. It is this ignorant self-limiting tendency of the mind that views the infinite as the finite. However, even as sun dispels mist, enquiry into the nature of the self dispels this ignorant self-limiting tendency. In fact, the very desire to undertake this enquiry is able to bring about a change. Austerities and such other practices are of no use in this. When the mind is purified of its past by the arising of wisdom, it abandons its previous tendencies. The mind seeks the self only in order to dissolve itself in the self. This indeed is in the very nature of the mind. This is the supreme goal, Rama: strive for this.

At this stage, another day came to a close.

section III - chapter 103 104

tivramandatva samvegad bahutvalpatva bhedatah vilambanena ca ciram na tu
sakttim asakttitah (103/15)

Vasistha continued:

Having manifested in the infinite consciousness, the mind has by its own nature spread itself out. By its nature, again, it makes the long appear short and vice versa, and makes one's own appear to be different and vice versa. Even a little thing which it touches, it magnifies and makes its own. In the twinkling of an eye it creates countless worlds and in the twinkling of an eye it destroys them. Even as an able actor plays several roles one after the other, this mind assumes several aspects one after the other. It makes the unreal appear as real and vice versa; and on account of this it seems to enjoy and to suffer. Even that which it gets naturally it grabs with hands and feet, and as a result of this false sense of ownership, suffers the consequences.

Time as changing seasons is able indirectly to bring about changes in the trees and plants; even so, the mind makes one thing appear to be another by its powers of thought and ideation. Therefore, even time and space and all things are under the control of the mind. **Depending upon its intensity or dullness, and upon the size (big or small) of the object created or influenced, the mind does what is to be done with some delay or much later: it is not incapable of doing anything whatsoever.**

Pray, O Rama, listen to another interesting legend to illustrate this.

In a country known as Uttarapandava, in whose forests sages dwelt and whose villages were beautiful and prosperous, there reigned a king known as Lavana who was a descendant of the famous king Hariscandra. He was righteous, noble, chivalrous, charitable and in every way a worthy king. His enemies had all been conquered; and their followers could not even think of him without becoming feverish with anxiety.

One day, this king went to his court and ascended the throne. After all the ministers and others had paid their homage to him, a juggler entered the court and saluted him. He said to the king: "I shall show you something wonderful!" As he waved a bunch of peacock feathers, there entered into the court a cavalier leading an exquisitely beautiful horse. He requested the king to accept it as a gift. The juggler requested the king to ride that horse and roam freely throughout the world. The king, too, saw the horse.

Thereupon, the king closed his eyes and sat motionless. Seeing this everyone assembled in the court became silent. Absolute peace reigned in the court, as no one dared to disturb the king's peace.

Holy sir, you said that when the mind thinks of something it materialises. Now you say that bondage does not exist! How can these be reconciled?

Vasistha replied:

O Rama, the mind, in a state of ignorance, imagines bondage. The bondage exists only in that state of ignorance. Just as the dream-objects vanish when the dreamer wakes up, all these hallucinations known as bondage and liberation do not exist in the eyes of the enlightened.

section III - chapter 105 106

anabhyasta vivekam hi dessakalavasanugam mantrousadhivasam yati mano
nodaravrttimat (105/15)

Vasistha continued:

Rama, after some time, the king opened his eyes and began to tremble as if in fear. As he was about to fall down, the ministers supported him. Dismayed to see them, the king asked: "Who are you and what are you doing to me?" The worried ministers said to him: "Lord, you are a mighty king of great wisdom and yet this delusion has overpowered you. What has happened to your mind? Only they who are attached to the little objects of this world and the false relationships of wife, children, etc., are subject to mental aberrations, not one like you, devoted to the supreme. Moreover, **only he who has not cultivated wisdom is adversely affected by spells, drugs etc., not one whose mind is fully developed.**

Hearing this, the king partly regained his composure, though upon looking at the juggler he trembled as if in fear and said to him: "O magician, what have you done to me? You have spread a net of illusion over me. Truly even the wise are overpowered by the jugglery of Maya; even as though I am still in this body, within a short period I experienced wonderful hallucinations." Turning to the members of the court, the king recounted his experiences during the previous hour:

"As soon as I saw this juggler wave his bundle of peacock feathers, I jumped on the horse which stood in front of me and experienced a slight mental delusion. Then I went away on a hunting expedition. The horse led me into an arid desert where nothing lived, nothing grew, where there was no water and it was bitterly cold. I experienced great grief. I spent the whole day there. Later, riding that horse again I crossed that desert and reached another which was less dreadful. I rested under a tree. The horse ran away. I rested for some time, and the sun set. Frightened, I hid myself in a bush. The night was longer than an epoch.

The day dawned. The sun rose. A little later, I saw a dark girl clad in black clothes carrying a plateful of food. I approached her and begged for food: I was hungry. She ignored me; I pursued her. At last, she said: "I shall give you food, if you consent to marry me." I consented; survival was the first and foremost consideration then. She gave me food and later introduced me to her father who was even more dreadful to look at. Soon the three of us reached their village which was flowing with blood and flesh. I was introduced to all as that girl's husband. I was treated by them with great respect. They entertained me with dreadful stories which were a source of pain. At a diabolical ceremony, I got married to that girl."

section III - chapter 107 108

akrustamuddharataram ruditam vipatsu bhukttam kadannamusitam hatapakvanesu
kalantaram bahu mayopahatena tatra durvasananigada bandhagatena sabhyah (48)

The king continued:

Very soon, I had become a member of the primitive tribe. My wife gave birth to a daughter, the source of more unhappiness to me. In course of time three more babies arrived. I had become a family man in that tribe. I spent many years among this tribe, suffering the agonies of a family man with a wife and children to feed and to protect. I cut firewood and often I had to sleep under a tree at night. When the weather became cold, I hid myself in a bush in order to keep warm. Pork was my staple diet.

Time rolled on and I became old. I began to trade in meat. I took the meat to the villages on the Vindhya mountains and sold the best part of it there; what could not thus be sold at a decent profit, I cut up into bits and dried in a terribly filthy place. I would often fight with others in the tribe for a piece of meat to eat when I was afflicted with hunger. My body had become black as soot.

Thus engaged in sinful activities, my mind had also become inclined towards sin. Good thoughts and feelings had taken leave of me. My heart had shed all compassion even as a snake sheds its slough. With nets and other traps and weapons I caused untold hardship to birds and animals.

Clad only in a loin cloth I endured every inclemency of the weather. Thus I spent seven years. **Bound by the ropes of evil tendencies, I grew wild with anger and used abusive words, wept in misfortunes and ate rotten food. Thus I lived for a long time, in that place.** I drifted like a dry leaf in the wind, as if my only mission in life was eating.

There was drought in the land. The air was so hot that it seemed to waft sparks of flame. The forest caught alight. Only ashes remained. People were dying of hunger. People chased after mirages thinking there was water. They mistook pebbles to be balls of meat and began to chew them.

Some had even begun to eat corpses. Some, while doing so, even chewed their own fingers which had been soaked in the blood of those dead bodies. Such was their demented state of starvation.

What was once a flourishing forest had been transformed into a huge crematorium. What was once a pleasure-grove resounded with the agonised cries of the dying.

section III - chapter 109

manovilasah samsara iti yasyam pratiyate sarvasaktter anantasya vilaso hi
mano jagat (25)

The king continued:

Thus afflicted by famine, many people left the country and migrated elsewhere. Some others, deeply attached to their wife and children, perished in that land. Many others were killed by wild animals.

I, too, left the country to go away along with my wife and children. At the border of the country, I found the cool shade of a tree tempting and, after putting down the little children I was carrying on my shoulders, I rested under that tree for a long time.

The youngest of my children was quite small and innocent, and therefore was the dearest to my heart. With tears in his eyes, he demanded food. Although I told him that there was no meat to eat, in his childish innocence he persisted in his demand, unable to bear his hunger. I said to him in despair, "All right, eat my flesh!" The innocent child said, without thinking, "Give me."

I was moved by attachment and pity. I saw the child was unable to endure the pangs of hunger any more. I decided that the best way to end all these miseries was to end my life. I raised a pyre with the help of the timber I found nearby. And, as I ascended that pyre, I shuddered - and I found myself in this court, being hailed and greeted by all of you.

As the king said this, the juggler vanished.

The ministers said:

Lord, he cannot be a juggler, for he was not interested in money, in a reward. Surely, some divine entity wished to demonstrate to you and to all of us the power of cosmic illusion. **From all this it is clear that this world-appearance is nothing but the play of the mind; the mind itself is but the play of the omnipotent infinite being.** This mind is able to fool even men of great wisdom. Else, where is the king who is well versed in all branches of learning, and where is this bewildering delusion?

Surely, this is not a juggler's trick: for a juggler performs for material gain. It is really the power of illusion. Hence, the juggler vanished without looking for a reward.

Vasistha said:

Rama, I was there in that court at that time and so I know all this firsthand. In this manner the mind veils the real nature of the self and creates an illusory appearance with many branches, flowers and fruits. Destroy this illusion by wisdom, and rest in peace.

section III - chapter 110

manomatram jagat krtsnam manah paryantamandalam mano vyoma mano bhumir mano
vayur mano mahan (15)

Vasistha continued:

In the beginning, there arose a division in the supreme being or infinite consciousness, and the infinite apparently became both the observer and the observed. When this observer sought to grasp or comprehend the observed, there arose a mixture (of the reality and the apparent appearance) or a confusion. On account of this confusion, in the infinite consciousness there arises the concept of finiteness.

The finite mind then generates countless ideas within itself which weaken and veil it leading to sorrow - which the mind greatly magnifies. These ideas and these experiences leave their mark on the mind, forming the impressions or conditioning tendencies which are for the most part latent or dormant. But, when the mind is rid of these, the veil vanishes in a moment like mist at sunrise, and with it the greatest sorrow also vanishes. Till then the mind plays with all, even as little children play with fledglings and tease them.

The impure mind sees a ghost where there is just a post, and pollutes all relationships, creating suspicion among friends and making enemies of them, even as a drunken man sees that the world is revolving around him. A distressed mind turns food into poison and causes disease and death.

The impure mind (laden with the tendencies) is the cause for delusions (manias and phobias). One should strive to uproot these and discard them. What is man but the mind? The body is inert and insentient. One cannot say that the mind is inert, though one cannot say that it is sentient either. What is done by the mind is action; what is renounced by the mind is renunciation.

Mind is the whole world, mind is the atmosphere, mind is the sky, mind is earth, mind is wind, and mind is great. Only he whose mind is foolish is called a fool: when the body loses its intelligence (for example, in death) the corpse is not said to be foolish!

Mind sees: the eyes are formed. Mind hears: ears come into being. Even so with the other senses: it is the mind that creates them.

Mind decides what is sweet and what is bitter, who is friend and who is enemy. Mind decides the length of time: the king Lavana experienced the period of less than an hour as if it extended to a life-time. Mind decides what is heaven and what is hell. Hence, if this mind is mastered, everything is mastered, including the senses.

section III - chapter 110

na spandate mano yasya sastrastambha ivottamah sadvastuto sau purusah sistah
kardamakitakah (63)

Vasistha continued:

What is more mysterious, Rama, than that the mind is able to veil the omnipresent, pure, eternal and infinite consciousness making you confuse it with this inert physical body? The mind itself appears as wind in the moving element, lustre in the lustrous, solidity in earth and void in the space. If 'the mind is elsewhere' the taste of food that is being eaten is not really experienced.

If 'the mind is elsewhere' one does not see what is right in front of oneself. The senses are born of the mind, but not the other way round.

It is only from the point of view of fools that the body and the mind are said to be quite different; in fact, they are non-different, being mind alone. Salutations to those sages who have actually realised this truth.

The sage who has realised this is not disturbed even if the body is embraced by a woman: to him it is like a piece of wood coming into contact with the body. Even if his arms are cut off, he does not experience it. He is able to convert all sorrow into bliss.

If the mind is elsewhere, even if you hear an interesting story, you do not hear anything at all.

Just as an actor is able to portray in himself the character of different personalities, the mind is able to create different states of consciousness like waking and dreaming. How mysterious is the mind which is able to make the king Lavana feel that he is a primitive tribesman! The mind experiences what it itself constructs, the mind is nothing but what has been put together by thought; knowing this, do as you please.

It is the mind indeed that, on account of persistent thinking, thinks that it is born, that it dies; and though it has no form, thinks that it is a jiva with a body etc. On account of thoughts alone does it acquire a nationality, and enjoys or suffers pleasure and pain - all of which are in the mind like oil in a seed.

He who does not allow his mind to roam in objects of pleasure is able to master it. **Even as one who is bound to a pillar does not move, the mind of a noble man does not move from the reality: he alone is a human being, the others are worms.** He attains to the supreme being by constant meditation.

section III - chapter 111

sarvam sarvagatam santam brahma sampadyate tada asankalpana sastrena chinna
cittam gatam yada (15)

Vasistha continued:

Victory over this goblin known as mind is gained when, with the aid of one's own self-effort, one attains self-knowledge and abandons the craving for what the mind desires as pleasure. This can easily be achieved without any effort at all (even as a child's attention can be easily diverted) by the cultivation of the proper attitude. Woe unto him who is unable to give up cravings, for this is the sole means to one's ultimate good. By intense self-effort it is possible to gain victory over the mind; and then without the least effort the individualised consciousness is absorbed in the infinite consciousness when its individuality is broken through. This is easy and is easily accomplished: they who are unable to do this are indeed vultures in human form.

There is no other path to one's salvation except control over one's mind, which means resolute effort to abandon cravings in the mind. Make a firm resolve to kill the mind as it were, which is easily achieved without the least doubt. If one has not abandoned the cravings of the mind, then all the instructions of a preceptor, study of scriptures, recitation of mantras and so on are as valuable as straw! **Only when one severs the very root of the mind with the weapon of non-conceptualisation, can one reach the absolute Brahman which is omnipresent, supreme peace.** Conceptualisation or imagination is productive of error and sorrow; and it can be so easily got rid of by self-knowledge - and when it is got rid of there is great peace. Why does one find it so difficult?

Abandon your reliance on fate or gods created by dull-witted people, and by self-effort and self-knowledge make the mind no-mind. Let the infinite consciousness swallow, as it were, the finite mind and then go beyond everything. With your intelligence united with the supreme, hold on to the self which is imperishable.

When the mind is thus conquered by remaining completely unagitated, you will consider even the conquest of the three worlds worthless. This does not involve studying the scriptures, or rising or falling - nothing but self-knowledge. Why do you consider it difficult? If this is found difficult by someone, how does he even live in this world without self-knowledge?

One who knows the deathless nature of the self is not afraid of death. Nor is he affected by separation from friends and relations. The feelings 'This is I' and 'This is mine' are the mind; when they are removed, the mind ceases to be. Then one becomes fearless. Weapons like sword generate fear; the weapon (wisdom) that destroys egotism generates fearlessness.

section III - chapter 112

yat tu cancalatahinam tan mano mrtam ucyate tad eva ca tapah sastra siddhanto
moksa ucyate (8)

Vasistha continued:

Towards whichever object the mind flows with intensity, in that it sees the fulfilment of its cravings. The cause of this movement in a particular direction is not obvious; like ripples on the surface of the ocean, such intense movement appears now here and now there, comes into being and dies. However, just as coolness is inseparable from ice, this restless movement is inseparable from mind.

Rama asked:

How, then, Holy sir, can this restless movement of the mind be restrained by force without causing greater restlessness?

Vasistha said:

Of course, there is no mind without restlessness; restlessness is the very nature of the mind. It is the work of this restlessness of the mind based on the infinite consciousness that appears as this world, O Rama: that indeed is the power of the mind. **But, when the mind is deprived of its restlessness, it is referred to as the dead mind; and that itself is penance (tapas) as also the verification of the scriptures and liberation.**

When the mind is thus absorbed in the infinite consciousness there is supreme peace; but when the mind is involved in thoughts there is great sorrow. The restlessness of the mind itself is known as ignorance or nescience; it is the seat of tendencies, predispositions or conditioning - destroy this through enquiry, as also by the firm abandonment of contemplation of the objects of sense-pleasure.

O Rama, mind constantly swings like a pendulum between the reality and the appearance, between consciousness and inertness. When the mind contemplates the inert objects for a considerable time, it assumes the characteristic of such inertness. When the same mind is devoted to enquiry and wisdom, it shakes off all conditioning and returns to its original nature as pure consciousness. Mind takes the very form of that which one contemplates, whether it is natural or cultivated. Therefore, resolutely but intelligently contemplate the state beyond sorrow, free from all doubts. The mind is capable of restraining itself; there is indeed no other way.

Wise men remove from their mind the manifestations of the latent tendencies or conditioning (which alone is the mind) as and when they rise: thus is nescience removed. First destroy the mental conditioning by renouncing cravings; and then remove from your mind even the concepts of bondage and liberation. Be totally free of conditioning.

section III - chapter 113

ma va karta bhava prajna kim akartrtayehite sadhyam sadhyam upadeyam tasmāt
svastho bhava nāgha (7)

Vasistha continued:

The psychological tendency (or mental disposition or mental conditioning) is unreal, yet it does arise in the mind: hence it can be compared to the vision of two moons in a person suffering from diplopia. Hence this tendency should be renounced as if it were sheer delusion. The product of ignorance is real only to the ignorant person; to the wise, it is just a verbal expression (just as one speaks of the barren woman's son). Do not remain ignorant, O Rama, but strive to be wise, by renouncing mental conditioning as you would abandon the idea that there is a second moon.

You are not the doer of any action here, O Rama; so, why do you assume doership? When one alone exists, who does what and how? **Do not become inactive, either; for what is gained by doing nothing? What has to be done has to be done. Therefore, rest in the self.** Even while doing all the actions natural to you, if you are unattached to those actions, you are truly the non-doe; if you are doing nothing and are attached to that non-doership (then you are doing nothing) you become the doer! When all this world is like the juggler's trick, what is to be given up and what is to be sought?

The seed of this world-appearance is ignorance; without being seen as 'this is it', this ignorance has the quality of truth! The power which creates this world-appearance and keeps it revolving as the potter's wheel is kept revolving by a potter, is the psychological tendency (or mental conditioning). Like a bamboo, it is hollow and without substance. Like the waves of a river, it does not die even when it is cut asunder. It cannot be grasped. It is subtle and soft, but it has the power of a sword. Though it is perceived in its own reflection as its effects, it is not useful in one's quest of truth. On account of this conditioning, differences are seen in the objects of this creation.

Though it cannot be said to abide in a particular place, it is seen everywhere. This mental conditioning is not a manifestation of intelligence, yet being based on intelligence it has the appearance of intelligence. Though it is ever changing, it creates in oneself an illusion of permanence. Because of its proximity to the infinite consciousness, it seems to be active; and when that infinite consciousness is realised, it (the conditioning) comes to an end.

This mental conditioning dies when not fed by attachment to objects; but even in the absence of such attachment, it continues to remain as a potentiality.

section III - chapter 113

sanitambastami citre na stri stridharmini yatha tathaivakaracinteyam kartum
yogya na kincana (32)

Vasistha continued:

This ignorance or mental conditioning is acquired by man effortlessly and it seems to promote pleasure, but in truth it is the giver of grief. It creates a delusion of pleasure only by the total veiling of self-knowledge. Thus it was able to make the king Lavana experience less than an hour as if it were of several years' duration.

This ignorance or mental conditioning is powerless to do anything, yet it seems to be very active, even as a mirror actively reflects the light of a lamp. **Even as a life-like painting of a woman is unable to perform the duties of a living woman, this ignorance or mental conditioning is incapable of functioning, though it appears to be potent.** It is even unable to delude the wise man, though it overpowers the stupid one even as a mirage fools animals and not an intelligent man.

This ignorance or mental conditioning has but a momentary existence: yet, since it flows on, it seems to be permanent like a river. Because it is able to veil the reality, it seems to be real: but when you try to grasp it, you discover it is nothing. Yet, again, it acquires strength and firmness on account of these qualities in the world-appearance, even as a flimsy fibre when rolled into a rope acquires great strength. This conditioning seems to grow, but in fact it does not. For when you try to grasp it, it vanishes like the tip of a flame. Yet, again, even as the sky appears to be blue, this conditioning also seems to have some kind of real appearance! It is born as the second moon in diplopia, it exists like the dream-objects, and it creates confusion even as people sitting in a moving boat see the shore moving. When it is active, it creates a delusion of the long dream of world-appearance. It perverts all relationships and experiences. It is this ignorance or mental conditioning that is responsible for the creation and perception of duality, and of division and the consequent confusion of perception and experience. When this ignorance or mental conditioning is mastered by becoming aware of its unreality, mind ceases to be - even as when the water ceases to flow, the river dries up.

Rama asked:

On the other hand, Holy sir, the river seen in the mirage does not come to an end. How astonishing it is that this ignorance has blinded the whole world! This ignorance or mental conditioning thrives on the twin forces of desire and hate. Pray, tell me of the best way to ensure that this ignorance or mental conditioning may not arise at all.

section III - chapter 114

na ham brahmeti sankalpat sudrdhad badhyate manah sarvam brahmeti sankalpat
sudrdhanmucyate manah (23)

Rama asked:

Holy sir, also tell me how this dreadful darkness of ignorance disappears.

Vasistha said:

O Rama, even as darkness disappears on turning towards light, ignorance disappears if you turn towards the light of the self. As long as there does not arise a natural yearning for self-knowledge, so long this ignorance or mental conditioning throws up an endless stream of world-appearance. Even as a shadow vanishes when it wishes to see the light, this ignorance perishes when it turns towards self-knowledge.

Rama, it is desire that is ignorance or mental conditioning; and the coming to an end of desire is liberation. This happens when there is no movement of thought in the mind.

Rama asked:

O sage, you have said that when ignorance ceases to be, there is self-knowledge. What is the self (atman)?

Vasistha replied:

O Rama, from Brahma the creator down to the blade of grass, all this is nothing but the self: ignorance is non-existent unreality. There is no second thing here known as the mind. In that self itself, the veil (that is also of itself) floats, creating the polarisation of subject-object; and the infinite consciousness itself is then known as the mind. This veil is an idea, an intention or a thought in that infinite consciousness. Mind is born of this idea or thought, and mind has to vanish with the help of an idea or thought, i.e., by the coming to an end of the idea or thought.

The firm conviction that 'I am not the absolute Brahman' binds the mind; and the mind is liberated by the firm conviction that 'everything is the absolute Brahman'. Ideas and thoughts are bondage; and their coming to an end is liberation. Therefore, be free of them and do whatever has to be done spontaneously.

Even as thought or idea 'sees' blueness in the sky, the mind sees the world as real. There is no blueness in the sky: the inability of the sense of sight to see beyond a certain limit appears as blueness. Even so, it is only the limitation of thought that perceives the world-appearance. This world-appearance is delusion, O Rama: it is better not to let the very thought of it arise again in the mind.

By thinking 'I am lost' one comes to grief, and by thinking 'I am alert' one goes towards bliss.

section III - chapter 114

tasman manonusandhanam bhavesu na karoti yah antas cetana yatnena sa santim
adhigacchati (48)

Vasistha continued:

When the mind continually dwells on deluded or stupid ideas it becomes deluded; and when the mind continually dwells on enlightened and magnanimous ideas it is enlightened. When the thought of ignorance is sustained in the mind, ignorance is firmly established; but, when the self is realised, this ignorance is dissolved. Moreover, whatever the mind seeks to attain, that the senses strive for with all their energy.

Therefore, he who does not let his mind dwell on such thoughts and ideas, by striving to be conscious of the self, enjoys peace. That which was not in the beginning does not exist even now! That which was and therefore is now, is the absolute Brahman - contemplation of this bestows peace, for that Brahman is peace. One should not contemplate anything else at any time and in any manner anywhere. One should uproot the very hope of enjoyment with one's utmost strength, and using one's utmost intelligence.

Ignorance alone is the cause of old age and death. Hopes and attachments seem to ramify on account of the mental conditioning which is ignorance. This ramification takes the form of ideas like 'This is my wealth', 'These are my sons', etc. In this empty physical body, where is it that is called 'I'? In truth, O Rama, 'I', 'mine' etc., have no existence at all; the one self alone is the truth at all times.

It is only in a state of ignorance that one sees a snake in the rope, not in an enlightened state. Even so, to the enlightened vision, only the infinite consciousness exists, naught else. O Rama, do not become an ignorant man; become a sage. Destroy the mental conditioning that gives rise to this world-appearance. Why do you, like an ignorant man, consider this body as your self and feel miserable? Though the body and the self appear to exist together, they are not inseparable; when the body dies, the self does not die.

Is it not a great wonder, O Rama, that people forget the truth that the absolute Brahman alone is, and are convinced of the existence of the unreal and non-existent ignorance? Rama, do not let the foolish idea of the existence of ignorance take root in you; for if the consciousness is thus polluted, it invites endless suffering. Though it is unreal, it can cause real suffering! It is on account of ignorance that illusions like a mirage exist, and one sees various visions and hallucinations (like flying in the air and flying in space) and one experiences heaven and hell. Therefore, O Rama, give up mental conditioning which alone is responsible for the perception of duality, and remain totally unconditioned. Then, you will attain incomparable pre-eminence over all!

section III - chapter 115

sarvesu sukhaduhkhesu sarvasu kalanasu ca manah kartr mano bhokttr, manasam viddhi manavam (24)

After a few minutes of deep contemplation Rama asked:

Holy sage! It is indeed incredible that this non-existent nescience creates such an illusion that this non-existent world appears to be very real: pray explain to me further how this is possible. Also please tell me why the king Lavana underwent all sorts of sufferings. Please tell me who or what it is that experiences all these sufferings.

Vasistha replied:

O Rama, it is not really true that consciousness is in any way related to this body. The body has only been fancied by the consciousness as if in a dream. When consciousness, clothed as it were, by its own energy, limits itself and considers itself a jiva, that jiva, endowed with this restless energy, is involved in this world-appearance.

The embodied being who enjoys or suffers the fruits of past actions and who dons a variety of bodies is known as egotism, mind and also jiva. Neither the body nor the enlightened being undergoes suffering: it is only the ignorant mind that suffers. It is only in a state of ignorance (like sleep) that the mind dreams of the world-appearance, not when it is awake or enlightened. Hence the embodied being that undergoes suffering here is variously known as the mind, ignorance, jiva, and mental conditioning, as also the individualised consciousness.

The body is insentient and hence can neither enjoy nor suffer. Nescience gives rise to heedlessness and unwisdom; hence it is nescience alone that enjoys or suffers. It is indeed the mind alone that is born, weeps, kills, goes, abuses others, etc., not the body. **In all the experiences of happiness and unhappiness as also in all the hallucinations and imaginations, it is mind that does everything and it is mind that experiences all this: mind is man.**

I shall narrate to you the reason for the sufferings of the king Lavana. Lavana was a descendant of Hariscandra. Lavana thought: "My grandfather performed a great religious rite and became a great man. I should also perform the same rite." He gathered the necessary materials and the religious men and he performed the rite mentally for a whole year (while sitting in his own garden).

Since he had thus successfully completed the religious rite performed mentally, he was entitled to its fruits. O Rama, thus you see that mind alone is the performer of all actions and hence it is also the experiencer of all happiness and unhappiness. Therefore, guide your mind along the path to salvation, Rama.

section III - chapter 116 117

bijajagrat tatha jagran mahajagrat tathaiva ca jagrat svapnas tatha svapnah
svapna jagrat susuptakam iti saptavidho mohah punareva parasparam (117/12)

Vasistha continued:

I myself was a witness to the scene in king Lavana's court, and when they wished to know who that juggler was after he had abruptly disappeared from the court, I saw his identity through my subtle vision and found that he was a messenger of the gods. It is the tradition that Indra would send all sorts of afflictions to test the strength of anyone who engaged himself in that particular religious rite which Lavana was performing mentally. The hallucinations he had were the result. The rite was performed by the mind and the hallucinations were experienced by the mind.

When the same mind is thoroughly purified, you will get rid of all duality and diversity which it creates.

Rama, I have already narrated to you the process of cyclical creation (after the previous cosmic dissolution), and of how one comes to entertain the false notions of 'I' and 'mine'. Equipped with wisdom he who gradually ascends the seven steps to perfection in yoga attains liberation from these.

Rama asked:

Holy sir, what are the seven steps you have referred to?

Vasistha replied:

O Rama, there are seven descending steps of ignorance; and there are seven ascending steps of wisdom. I shall now describe them to you. To remain established in self-knowledge is liberation; when this is disturbed, there arises egotism and bondage. The state of self-knowledge is that in which there is no mental agitation, neither distraction nor dullness of mind, neither egotism nor perception of diversity.

The delusion that veils this self-knowledge is sevenfold: seed state of wakefulness, wakefulness, great wakefulness, wakeful dream, dream, dream wakefulness and sleep. In pure consciousness when mind and jiva exist only in name it is the seed state of wakefulness. When notions of 'I' and 'this' arise it is known as wakefulness. When these notions get strengthened by the memory of previous incarnations, it is great wakefulness. When the mind is fully awake to its own fancies and is filled with them, it is wakeful dream. The false notions of experiences during sleep, which yet appear to be real, are dreams. In the dream wakeful state one recalls past experiences as if they are real now. When these are abandoned in favour of total inert dullness, it is sleep. These seven have their own innumerable sub-divisions.

section III - chapter 118

jnanabhumih subhecchakhya prathama samudahrta vicarana dvitiya tu trtiya
tanumanasa (5)

sattvapattis caturthi syat tato samsakttinamika padarthabhavani sasti saptami
turyaga smrta (6)

Vasistha continued:

I shall now describe to you, O Rama, the seven states or planes of wisdom. Knowing them you will not be caught in delusion. **Pure wish or intention is the first, enquiry is the second, the third is when the mind becomes subtle, establishment in truth is the fourth, total freedom from attachment or bondage is the fifth, the sixth is cessation of objectivity and the seventh is beyond all these.**

'Why do I continue to be a fool? I shall seek holy men and scriptures, having cultivated dispassion' - such a wish is the first state. Thereupon one engages in the practice of enquiry (direct observation). With all these, there arises non-attachment, and the mind becomes subtle and transparent: this is the third state. When these three are practised, there arises in the seeker a natural turning away from sense-pleasures and there is natural dwelling in truth: this is the fourth state.

When all these are well practised, there is total non-attachment and at the same time a conviction in the nature of truth: this is the fifth state. Then one rejoices in one's own self, the perception of duality and diversity both within oneself and outside oneself ceases, and the efforts that one made at the inspiration of others bear fruition in direct spiritual experience.

After this, there is no other support, no division, no diversity, and self-knowledge is spontaneous, natural and therefore unbroken: this is the seventh, transcendental state. This is the state of one who is liberated even while living here. Beyond this is the state of one who has transcended even the body (the turiyatita).

Rama, all these great ones who ascend these seven planes of wisdom are holy men. They are liberated and they do not fall into the mire of happiness and unhappiness. They may or may not work or be active. They rejoice in the self and do not stand in need of others to make them happy.

The highest state of consciousness can be attained by all, even by animals and by primitive men, by those who have a body and even by disembodied beings, for it involves only the rise of wisdom.

They who have reached the highest planes of consciousness are indeed great men. They are adorable; even an emperor is like a worthless blade of grass compared to them, for they are liberated here and now.

section III - chapter 119

tvatta hanta tmata tatta satta satta na kacana na kvacid bhedakalana na bhavo
na ca ranjana (21)

Vasistha continued:

The self ignorantly imagines an egotistic existence even as if gold forgetting its goldness might think it is a ring and weep and wail "Alas, I have lost my goldness".

Rama asked:

Holy sir, how can this ignorance and egotism arise in the self?

Vasistha said:

Rama, one should ask questions concerning the reality only, not concerning the unreal. Neither goldless ringness nor limited egotism exists in truth. When the goldsmith sells the ring he weighs out the gold: for it is gold. If one were to discuss the existence of the ringness in the ring, and the finite form in the infinite consciousness, then one has to compare it with the barren woman's son. The existence of the unreal is unreal: it arises in ignorance and vanishes when enquired into. In ignorance one sees silver in the mother-of-pearl: but it cannot serve as silver even for a moment! As long as the truth that it is mother-of-pearl is not seen, the ignorance lasts. Even as one cannot extract oil from sand and even as one can obtain only gold from the ring, there are no two things here in this universe: the one infinite consciousness alone shines in all names and forms.

Such indeed is the nature of this utter ignorance, this delusion and this world-process: without real existence there is this illusory notion of egotism. This egotism does not exist in the infinite self. In the infinite self there is no creator, no creation, no worlds, no heaven, no humans, no demons, no bodies, no elements, no time, no existence and no destruction, **no 'you' , no 'I' , no self, no that, no truth, no falsehood (none of these), no notion of diversity, no contemplation and no enjoyment.** Whatever is, and is known as the universe, is that supreme peace. There is no beginning, no middle and no end: all is all at all times, beyond the comprehension of the mind and the speech. There is no creation. The infinite has never abandoned its infinity. That has never become this. It is like the ocean, but without ocean's movement. It is self-luminous like the sun, but without activity. In ignorance, the supreme being is viewed as the object, as the world. Even as space exists in space, one with space, even so what appears to be the creation is Brahman existing in Brahman, as Brahman. The notions of far and near, of diversity, of here and there are as valid as the distance between two objects in a mirror in which a whole city is reflected.

section III - chapter 120 121

ityevam raghava vidya mahati bhramadayini asat sattam nayatyasu sacca sattam
nayatyalam (121/10)

Vasistha continued:

The day after his hallucinatory experience king Lavana thought: "I should actually go to those places that I saw in the vision; perhaps they exist in reality". Immediately, he set out with his retinue and proceeded in a southerly direction. Soon, he came across the very scenes of his vision and the type of people whom he had seen then. He met the very people whom he knew during his existence as a tribesman. He even saw his own destitute children.

He saw there an old woman who was weeping and screaming in agony: "O my beloved husband, where have you gone, leaving us all here. I have lost my beautiful daughter who had an extraordinary stroke of luck to obtain a handsome king for her husband. Where have they all gone? Alas, I have lost all of them." The king approached her, consoled her and learnt from her that she was indeed the mother of his tribal wife! Out of compassion he gave them enough wealth to meet their needs and to help them out of the drought that had stricken the whole countryside, even as he had seen the day before. He dwelt among them for some time and then returned to his palace.

The next morning, the king asked me to explain the mystery and was fully satisfied with my answer. **O Rama thus the power of nescience is capable of creating a total confusion between the real and the unreal.**

Rama asked:

O sage, this is indeed puzzling. How can that which was seen in a dream or a hallucination be also experienced in the reality of the waking state?

Vasistha answered:

But, O Rama, all this is ignorance! The notions of far and near, a moment and eternity, are all hallucinations: in ignorance the real appears to be unreal, and the unreal seems to be real. The individualised consciousness perceives what it thinks it perceives, on account of its conditioning. On account of ignorance, when the notion of egotism arises, at that very moment the delusion of a beginning, a middle and an end also arises. One who is thus deluded thinks that he is an animal and experiences this. All this happens on account of accidental coincidence: just as a crow flies towards a cocoanut palm and as it alights on the tree, a fruit falls down as if the crow dislodged it - though, in fact, the crow did not! Similarly, by pure coincidence and in ignorance, the unreal seems to be real.

section III - chapter 121

avidyaya tmatattvasya sambandho nopapadyate sambandhah sadrsanam ca yah sphutah svanubhutitah (33)

Vasistha continued:

In his hypnotic state, the king Lavana obviously saw reflected in his own consciousness the marriage of a prince with the tribal woman, etc., and he experienced it as if it happened to him. A man forgets what he did earlier in his life even if at that time he had devoted a lot of time and energy to that action. Even so, he now thinks that he did not do what he actually did. Such discrepancies in memory are often seen.

Even as one sometimes dreams of a past incident as if it happens now, Lavana experienced in his vision some past incident connected with the tribesmen. It is possible that the people in the forests on the slopes of the Vindhya experienced in their own minds the visions that appeared in the consciousness of Lavana. It is also possible that Lavana and the tribesmen saw in their own minds whatever was experienced by the other. These hallucinations become reality when experienced by many, even as a statement made by very many people is accepted as true. When these are incorporated in one's life, they acquire their own reality: after all, what is the truth concerning the things of this world, except how they are experienced in one's own consciousness?

Nescience is not a real entity, even as oil in sand is not a real entity. **Nescience and the self cannot have any relationship: for there can be relationship only between same or similar entities - this is obvious in everyone's experience.** Thus, it is only because consciousness is infinite that everything in the universe becomes knowable. It is not as if the subject illumines the object which has no luminosity of its own, but since consciousness is all this, everything is self-luminous, without requiring a perceiving intelligence. It is by the action of consciousness becoming aware of itself that intelligence manifests itself, not when consciousness apprehends an inert object.

It is not correct to say that there is a mixture in this universe of the sentient and the inert, for they do not mix. It is because all things are full of consciousness and when this consciousness comprehends itself there is knowledge.

One may see a relationship between a tree and a rock, though they appear to be inert: but such relationship exists in their fundamental constituents which have undergone a certain kind of change to become a tree and another to become a rock. This is also seen in the sense of taste: the taste-buds in the tongue respond to the taste in the food, etc., because of their similarity in constitution.

section III - chapter 121

sambandhe drsyadrstinam madhye drastur hi yad vapuh drastr darsana
drsyadivarjitam tad idam param (53)

Vasistha continued:

All relationship is therefore the realisation of the already existing unity: it is regarded as relationship only because of the previous false and deluded assumption of a division into subject and object. In fact, there is only one All, the infinite consciousness. Therefore, O Rama, realise this universe as the infinite consciousness. It is filled with the jugglery of the power of that consciousness; yet, nothing has happened, for the full cannot be filled with more. It is filled only in the sense of a space which is filled with an imaginary city.

Only when the gold is forgotten does one see a bracelet. Bracelet is an illusory appearance of gold; even so are the illusory notions of a nation or the world and also that of repeated births. When the false notion of the bracelet is rejected, the truth of the gold is realised; and when the false notion of the subject-object is rejected, there is no ignorance to create a division. Thought alone creates all these divisions and illusions. When it ceases, creation ceases, too: then you realise that all the waves constitute one ocean, dolls are wood, pots are clay, and the three worlds are absolute Brahman.

In the middle between the sight and the seen, there is a relationship which is known as the seer. When the division between the seer, the sight and the seen is abolished, that is the supreme. When the mind travels from one country to another, between them is cosmic intelligence. Be that always. Your true nature is distinct from the limited wakeful, dreaming and sleep consciousness; it is eternal, unknowable, not inert - remain as that always. Remove dullness and be established in the truth in your heart: and then, whether you are busily engaged in activity or in contemplation, remain as that always, without cravings and hatred and without getting tangled in body-consciousness. Even as you do not busy yourself with the affairs of a future village, do not get tangled with the moods of your mind, but be established in truth. Regard the mind as a foreigner or a piece of wood or stone. There is no mind in infinite consciousness; that which is done by this nonexistent mind is also unreal. Be established in this realisation.

In fact, the mind does not exist: if it did exist, now it is dead. Yet this dead mind sees all this, which is therefore false perception - be established firmly in this realisation. He who is ruled by this mind which is totally non-existent is indeed insane and feels that a thunderbolt is descending from the moon! Therefore, reject the reality of the mind from a great distance and be ever devoted to right thinking and meditation. I have investigated the truth concerning the mind for a very long time, O Rama, and have found none: only the infinite consciousness exists.

section III - chapter 122

aparijnayamanaisa mahamohapradayini parijnata tv anantakhya sukhada
brahmadayini (29)

Vasistha continued:

This seemingly endless stream of ignorance can be crossed over only by the constant company of the holy ones. From such company there arises wisdom concerning what is worth seeking and what is to be avoided. Then there arises the pure wish to attain liberation. This leads to serious enquiry. Then the mind becomes subtle because the enquiry thins out the mental conditioning. As a result of the rising of pure wisdom, one's consciousness moves in the reality. Then the mental conditioning vanishes and there is non-attachment. Bondage to actions and their fruits ceases. The vision is firmly established in truth and the apprehension of the unreal is weakened. Even while living and functioning in this world, he who has this unconditioned vision does what has to be done as if he is asleep, without thinking of the world and its pleasures. After some years of living like this, one is fully liberated and transcends all these states: he is liberated while living.

Such a liberated sage is not elated at what he gets, nor does he grieve for what he has not. O Rama, in you also the conditioning of the mind has been weakened: strive to know the truth. By attaining knowledge of the self, which is infinite consciousness, you will go beyond grief, delusion, birth and death, happiness and unhappiness. The self being one and undivided, you have no relatives and therefore no sorrow born of such false relationship. The self being one and undivided, there is nothing else worth attaining or desiring. This self undergoes no change and does not die: when the pot is broken, the space within it is not broken.

When mental conditioning is overcome and the mind is made perfectly tranquil, the illusion that deludes the ignorant comes to an end. **It is only as long as this illusion (Maya) is not clearly understood that it generates this great delusion; but once it is clearly understood, it is seen as the Infinite, and it becomes the source of happiness and the realisation of the absolute Brahman.** It is only for the sake of scriptural instruction that one speaks of the self, Brahman, etc., but in truth one alone is. It is pure consciousness, not embodied being. It is, whether one knows or not, whether one is embodied or without a body. All the unhappiness you see in this world belongs to the body; the self which is not grasped by the senses is not touched by sorrow. In the self there is no desire: the world appears in it without any wish or intention on its part. Thus, O Rama, through my precepts the false notion of a creation and its existence has been dispelled. Your consciousness has become pure, devoid of duality.