

The Supreme Yoga
a new translation of
Yoga Vasistha

The Laghu Yoga Vasistha

Swami Venkatesananda



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

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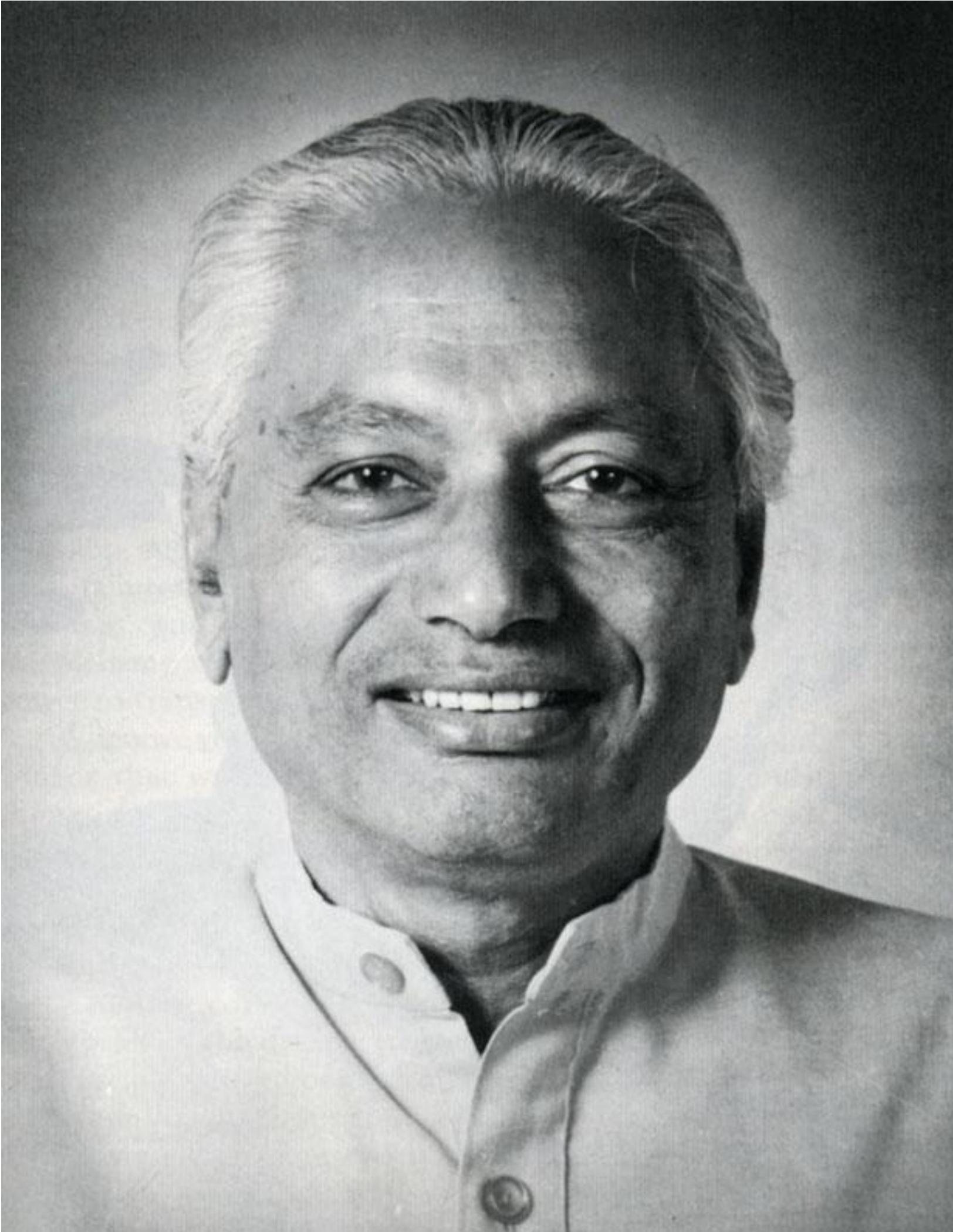
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This publication is dedicated to my Gurudev Swami Sivananda. His life was a symphony whose constant refrain was: "In all conditions I am Knowledge - Bliss Absolute." Sage Vasistha incarnated as Swami Sivananda to embody the Supreme Yoga. In Gurudev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

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The Laghu Yoga Vasistha

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 NAMA SIVANANDAYA
OM NAMA NARANAYANA
OM NAMO VENKATESAYA

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

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

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

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

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

section upatti - chapter prakaranam

yatkrtam manasa nama tatkrtam viddti raghava yattyakttam manasi
tavattattyakttam viddhi raghava (1)

Vasistha said:

O Rama, what is done by the mind, alone is action; and what is abandoned or renounced by the mind, alone is renunciation. The mind that has been relieved of its object, becomes steady. Then, by deep meditation, it attains the supreme state. When the mind is properly and effectively disciplined, the world-illusion vanishes. The seeds of experiences that fall on the soil of the mind, sprout and grow into the gigantic tree of samsara.

I shall tell you the very best treatment for this dreadful disease, known as samsara, or the perception of world-illusion: he who abandons the pursuit of pleasure, conquers the mind, and is free from the illness of samsara. He who is unable to do this, is a worm in human form.

With the aid of the study of the scriptures, and the company of the wise ones, crush the mind with the mind itself. You cannot attain the desirable goal, except through self-effort, the abandonment of the pursuit of pleasure, and the tranquillity of the mind. When the mind has been shattered by the weapon known as the non-arising of concepts and percepts, then one attains the realisation of the omnipresent Brahman, which is supreme peace. Let the mind merge in the mind, rise above the mind itself, and remain in the supreme state.

Be freed from all conceptualisation. Remain steady and unagitated, with your intelligence fully awakened. You will bring your mind under your absolute control. By a supreme effort, divest the mind of its characteristic objective awareness. Attain the supreme state, where you do not exist, nor does another exist. It is by non-agitation that peace of mind is intensified; the conquest of the three worlds is nothing, compared to the conquest of the mind.

By fixing your attention in the 'space in the heart', you will doubtless destroy the mind; then you will not be subject to psychological distress. If the sense-objects lose their attraction for you, then surely the mind's sting has been cut. The mind is nothing more than the concepts 'I am this' and 'This is mine'; when these concepts do not arise, the mind vanishes. The non-arising of these concepts purifies the mind. Then, even the greatest calamity is not experienced as a loss. Therefore, in the non-arising of concepts, lies perfection. You are conquered by the mind when a concept arises in it, and illumines diverse objects. You will conquer the mind if you rest content in the self, undistracted by the concepts.

The characteristic of the mind is restlessness; mind devoid of restlessness is like dehydrated water. It is the power of restlessness of the mind that creates this world-illusion. The mind that is freed of restlessness, is itself known as liberation, or immortality.

section upatti - chapter prakaranam

tasya cancalata yaisa tvavidya rama socyate vasanapanamnim tam vicarena
vinasaya (26)

Vasistha continued:

The restlessness of the mind itself is known as ignorance; vasana (mental conditioning) is yet another name for it. Destroy it by vicara (inquiry). When this restless mind is made quiescent by true renunciation, then the supreme good is attained.

The mind swings between the real and the unreal, the sentient and the insentient. By the constant contemplation of the unreal and the inert substance, the mind itself becomes dull and ignorant. Similarly, by the constant practice of enlightened understanding, the mind attains consciousness of the one indivisible reality. Hence, when the mind is trained to contemplate the truth by meaningful effort, it realises the truth. Therefore, control the mind by the mind, and overcome sorrow.

The mind alone is capable of controlling the mind. Only a king can conquer a king. The mind alone is the safe boat for those who are threatened by the crocodiles of craving in the ocean of samsara. By the mind alone is the mind to be conquered; there are no other means. As and when a movement arises in the mind on account of past mental habit or conditioning, the wise man should restrain it then and there; by this alone does ignorance come to an end. First abandon the pursuit of pleasure, then give up the vision of division, and then go beyond even being and non-being, and remain in the bliss of non-movement in consciousness. This is the destruction of the mind and of ignorance. The total abandonment of hope and desire alone is nirvana; clinging to hopes and desires is sorrow. By the abandonment of hope and desire, Brahman is attained in the twinkling of an eye. For, ignorance does not exist as a real entity. Only they who have lost their intelligence or wisdom, have accepted the concept of ignorance as if it were real.

As long as the desire for self-realisation does not arise in one who is being tormented in this thorny bush of embodied existence, so long the destructive self-ignorance will continue to exist. When, in this ignorant state, there arises the desire to know itself, then ignorance ceases to be. Desire or craving alone is ignorance, and its cessation is liberation, which is attained by non-conceptualisation (non-building of psychological images). When the sun of self-knowledge arises, the cloud of ignorance or mental conditioning is at once dispelled.

The self is the supreme Lord, who is also known as pure consciousness devoid of objectification. All this is indeed Brahman, eternal, and an indivisible mass of consciousness. There is indeed nothing known as mind except for the concept of 'mind'. Nothing is ever created, nothing is ever destroyed in the three worlds, and nothing ever undergoes any change at all. There is only infinite consciousness, which shines eternally.

section upatti - chapter prakaranam

atah sankalpasiddheyam sankalpenaiva nasyati yenaiva jata tenaiva
vahnijvaleva vayuna (55)

Vasistha continued:

In that infinite consciousness, which is pure, and which is of the nature of perfect peace, there arises the concept of the object of its own accord; consciousness, aware of this concept, is known as the mind. The infinite consciousness is omnipresent and omnipotent; hence, this activity of the mind expands in concentric circles, throwing up countless concepts at the same time. However, **since the mind was created by a concept, it is destroyed by a concept, just as fire generated by wind is also quelled by it.** The mind is bound by a notion 'I am not-Brahman', and when the firm notion or conviction arises in it, that 'All this is Brahman', it is freed. One is bound by the thought 'I am a puny miserable creature with hands and feet'; one is liberated by the thought (with corresponding action) that 'I am not miserable, I am not the body; what binds whom?' The firm conviction 'I am different from the body, I am the supreme being', destroys ignorance, and one is freed. It is only the unawakened and unenlightened person who entertains notions of ignorance, not the enlightened.

Whatever the mind contemplates, that the senses pursue. Hence, one should destroy pursuit of pleasure with all one's might. It is only on account of mental conditioning that one feels "These are my sons, my wealth, and I am so and so," Be not deluded. Be wise, and abandon such mental conditioning. Why do you cry, as if you were ignorant, thinking that the non-self is the self? How can this inert and dumb body be yours, O Rama? It is because of this confusion that you think you experience pleasure and pain! It is indeed a great wonder that the reality or Brahman is completely forgotten by the people who cling to the unreal. Remain engaged in your activity O Rama, without infatuation or aversion, even as a crystal non-volitionally reflects objects.

The mind alone, being the doer of actions, experiences the fruits of such actions; not the body. I shall give you an illustration which will make it dew. A descendant of Hariscandra, known as Lavana, reflected thus: "My grandfather performed a religious rite. I am his descendant. Let me perform the same rite mentally." He gathered all the requisite articles, visualised the gods in front of him, and mentally kindled the sacred fire. He concluded this rite in a year's time, but when he got up after the conclusion, the day was about to come to an end. Mentally he performed the rite, and mentally he experienced its fruits. Later, a magician appeared in the royal court of king Lavana. He spread his magic over the king, as a result of which he suffered mentally for a considerable mental-time. I myself witnessed this. When I contemplated on its true cause, I discovered that the performer of the religious rite had to undergo some tests and tribulations; and, since Lavana had performed the rite mentally, he had to undergo these tribulations also mentally.

section upatti - chapter prakaranam

atah param pravaksyami srnu rama yathatatham ajnanabhuh saptapada jnabhuh
saptapadaiva hi (89)

Vasistha continued:

I shall now describe to you the seven states of ignorance, as well as the seven states of knowledge or wisdom. All these act upon one another, and their permutations and combinations are countless.

To remain established in one's own unconditioned nature is liberation; this is attained through self-knowledge. In the case of enlightened beings, their consciousness is pure, and does not move away from its pure unconditioned nature. In them, likes and dislikes, and such other feelings and notions, do not arise. When one loses sight of one's own unconditioned nature, there is awareness of 'the other'; this is delusion and none other. Thus, the mind goes from one object to another, whereas the true or the unconditioned intelligence is between 'this' and 'that'. That state in which there is absence of all concepts, and when the consciousness remains motionless like a rock, but in which there is neither dullness nor inertia, that is the unconditioned state. In that, the 'I'-notion, as well as the vision of division, cease to be.

Delusion or ignorance is sevenfold, though the permutations and combinations are countless. I shall describe them to you: (1) bija-jagrat, (2) jagrat, (3) mahajagrat, (4) jagrat-svapna, (5) svapna, (6) svapna-jagrat, and (7) susuptam. The first is the consciousness, which is nameless and pure, but in which the jiva, etc., exist potentially, associated with their corresponding concepts and names. Because all these exist in their seed-state, this is known as the 'seed of wakefulness'. The second: in the consciousness, the pure, natural, and unperverted notions of 'I' and 'mine' arise for the first time, and it is known as the 'waking' (jagrat) state. When this expands to include 'the other', and when such notions as 'I am so and so' and 'This is mine' arise, however feebly, it is known as 'the great wakefulness' (maha-jagrat). When the mind is totally occupied by the objects of perception, whether they are gross or subtle, and when this mind is constantly busy creating images in itself, which it believes to be real, that is known as 'the waking dream' state (jagrat-svapna). This is also characterised by the experience of division and diversity, which, though illusory, appear to be reality, on account of repeated indulgence. That is the dream (svapna) state, in which, for a short time, one experiences various objects which are later remembered in the waking state as having been seen in the dream. That is known as 'svapna-jagrat' (the dream wakefulness) in which the memories of the distant past are revived and experienced as if 'now'. When one abandons these six, and when there is total inertia in which the seeds of sorrow are still present, that state is known as deep sleep (susuptam). In that state, the world vanishes into dense darkness.

section upatti - chapter prakaranam

imam saptapadam jnanabhumi makarnayanagha nanaya jnataya bhuyo mohapanke
nimajjati (110)

Vasistha continued:

Now listen to these seven steps of jnana or wisdom; one who has ascended them, does no once again get caught in the mire of delusion. Very many such states of yoga have been described, but I feel that these seven are the bestowers of bliss. Awakening or enlightenment is known as jnana, which is sevenfold: (1) subheccha, (2) vicarana, (3) tanumanasa, (4) satvapatti, (5) asamsakti, (6) padarthabhavani, and (7) turiya.

Subheccha is the noble wish or desire which arises in the heart of one who reflects thus: "Why do I live like a fool? Let me look into the scriptures, and listen to the wise men", when such a wish is preceded by the absence of craving for pleasure. When one, endowed with all this, undertakes enquiry into the nature of the reality, it is vicarana (enquiry). With all this, there arises a disinterestedness in the pleasure of the senses, and the mind is therefore 'weakened' (tanumanasa). As a result of all this, there is purity (satva) at heart, which is satvapatti. Thereupon, there is non-attachment or freedom (asamsakti), which naturally flows from the previous four states of discipline. In this state, there is great inner peace and joy, which is independent of the external objects and the internal mental states. These states are therefore seen to be non-existent as reality. This absence of awareness of objects (padarthabhavani) is the sixth state, in which the man of wisdom is aware of objects only if he is compelled by others to be so. By the persistent practice of all these, when the vision of division ceases, and when one is fully established in one's own unconditioned being, that state is known as turiya. This last is the transcendental state, in which they who are liberated, live even in embodiment. There is a state beyond even this, in which they who have risen above body-consciousness, are.

Those great sages who have attained the seventh state of consciousness are the liberated ones, and they do not drown in this ocean of samsara with all its pleasure and pain. They may do what comes natural to them, or they may do nothing at all. They function as instructed by others around them, or they may behave as if they were in deep sleep. These seven states of consciousness can only be recognised by men of wisdom. They who have attained these states, are liberated, whether they are animals or untouchables, embodied or disembodied.

Self-knowledge is the cutting asunder of the knots of bondage. Only if the latter are recognised to exist is there liberation. If one realises that the universe is as real as water in the mirage, then there is immediate peace. They who have risen above delusion, rest in the supreme state. They are the holy men who have conquered their senses. They are fit to be adored. In comparison to them, even the emperor of the whole world is like a blade of grass.

section upatti - chapter prakaranam

etasam bhumikanam tu gamyam brahmabhidam param tvattahantatmata yatra parata
nasti kacana na kvaddbhedakalana na bhavadhavarajana (33)

Vasistha continued:

The means adopted to bring about utter tranquillity of the mind are known as yoga. This consists of these seven states. **The goal of all these states is known as Brahman in which there is no 'I' or 'you' of 'the other', no vision or division, or notions or being and non-being.** It is absolute peace, eternal, and all-good. It cannot be described as real nor as unreal, the all nor not-all - it is beyond description. When one is aware of it, it is said to pervade all; when this awareness is transcended, there is pure peace.

I shall tell you something more about this ignorance. The king Lavana had the terrifying experience, induced by the magic of the magician who came to his court. The very next day, he wished to go to the same forest where he had lived a wretched life. He went there with the royal retinue. After roaming for a while, he saw a tribal woman weeping inconsolably. The king dismissed his retinue for a while, approached the weeping woman, and questioned her. She related all that the king had experienced in his magic vision the previous day, which, according to her, was absolutely true. The king commanded his ministers to supply her needs and returned to the palace.

In answer to Rama's question:

"How could what the king experienced, under the spell of the magician, within a few minutes, be the real-life experience of the tribal woman?"

Vasistha replied:

All this is possible in ignorance, O Rama. All these concepts and notions, even of experiences, arise in one's consciousness accidentally, and they are also reflected in the consciousness of others. What the king saw in his vision, on account of the spell cast on him by the magician, was experienced by the tribal woman as if true. What happened in the village of these tribes people was reflected in the consciousness of the king and he took it to have happened to him. After all, what is the criterion for the substantiality of objects and the reality of experiences, except the experience itself? Between the seer and the object is the experience, which alone is the truth; the truth is in fact beyond this threefold division of subject, object, and experience.

Between 'this' and 'that' is the truth, which is the infinite and indivisible consciousness. Remain as that for ever. You are the eternal consciousness, which is undivided into waking, dream, and deep sleep. Remain as such for ever. That consciousness is like the core of a rock minus its inertness: it is devoid of a conditioned mind. Remain as such for ever. You are that which remains when the conditioned mind is abandoned. Cut asunder the bondage of conditioning, O Rama. Then the unconditioned being alone will shine as the truth.

section sthiti - chapter prakaranam

pravicyaryam preyatnene prajna saha sadhuna nakarmasu ninanktavayam nanaryena
sahavaset (47)

Vasistha said:

O Rama, they who are born with a preponderance of satva (purity) in them, shine radiantly all the time, like the full moon, gladdening the hearts of all. They do not grieve nor despair in calamities, just as the lotus-flower made of gold does not fold its petals with the onset of night. They do not wish for other than what is present and what is natural. They rejoice in doing what is right and appropriate. They experience the fullness of bliss and satisfaction within their heart at all times, and they do not abandon this, even in times of the worst calamities, even as the moon never abandons its coolness.

They are radiant with the noble qualities of friendliness, etc. They are ever in a state of equanimity. Their conduct is always good and noble. They conform to the world order, or the code of appropriate behaviour, even as the ocean abides by the world order, and does not transgress its bounds.

They must be followed at all times. One should enquire into the nature of this universe - "Who am I?" and "How has this universe arisen?" - and remain indifferent to it. **The wise man should engage himself in the enquiry into the nature of the reality, in the company of holy ones. He should not be involved in unworthy company or conduct, nor in inactivity.** He should not forget the all-devouring death. He should abandon the identification of the self or the infinite consciousness with the body composed of flesh and bones. He should inwardly behold the consciousness that knits together all the beings that exist in the universe. The light that shines in the sun is the same that exists and illumines the smallest of insects, and that is the light of the infinite consciousness.

By this means, even they who are of a tamasic (inert or dull) temperament, or of rajasic (dynamic and impure) temperament, and even they who are born in other species, can attain the characteristics of one born with a satvic (pure) temperament, by diligent self-effort.

section upasama - chapter prakaranam

anatmavidamuktto 'pi nabhoviharanadikam dravyamantrakriyakalasakttyapnotyeva
raghava (2)

Rama asked:

How is it, Lord, that such powers as levitation are not often seen in the sages who have attained liberation?

Vasistha replied:

One who is ignorant of the self and who is not liberated can, with the help of certain substances, spells (mantras), practices, and in course of time, attain powers such as levitation. The man of self-knowledge is not interested in them; he is interested in self-knowledge. His heart does not concern itself with any external phenomenon, but it rests content in the self. He is free from all cravings and therefore he does not strive for any achievement nor does he desire it. Whatever exists in this world, is polluted by ignorance; how, then, does one who seeks liberation strive for it? Of course, if a sage of self-knowledge accidentally entertains a wish for such powers, he attains them with the appropriate aids. The substances, spells, and other practices, as also the energy latent in time, which were mentioned above, are capable of giving rise to psychic powers, not to self-knowledge. But, one who has attained self-knowledge, does not desire them. It is only when the network of desire has been destroyed that self-knowledge arises.

Rama asked:

Lord, how do some people attain great longevity?

Vasistha replied:

Life ebbs away on account of the movement of prana or the life-force. If the movement of prana can be arrested, longevity is gained. If one is able to banish movement of thought or movement of prana, he is also able to banish decay and death to a great extent. Then, the vital essences of the body do not abandon the body at any time. Such yogis, who are able to cut asunder the subtle bonds with which their bodies are tied to the wheel of time, who know the truth and who are therefore desireless - they are of great understanding, and they live as freed sages.

Rama said:

When self-knowledge arises, the activity of the mind subsides. In the case of the yogis, where do qualities like friendship abide?

Vasistha replied:

The destruction of the mind is of two types: the destruction of its form, and the destruction of its substance or core. The former leads to jivanmukti (embodied liberation), and the latter is the nature of disembodied liberation. The activity of the mind causes sorrow, and its cessation brings bliss. Hence, one should strive for the destruction of the mind. The person who is ignorant, is caught in the net of his own possessiveness ('This is mine'), and is miserable.

section upasama - chapter prakaranam

sukhaduhkhadasa dhiram samyanna proddharanti yam nihsvasa iva sailendram
cittam tasya mrtam viduh (21)

Vasistha continued:

That mind which is tied to the ego-sense and the notions of pleasure and pain, is the seed for this samsara or world-illusion. **The mind of a hero is not swayed in the least from its utter equanimity by any kind of pleasure or pain, any more than a great mountain is blown away by someone blowing it with his breath; that mind is considered dead.** Such a mind is totally unaffected in great honour and festivity and in great calamity. The destruction of ignorance or foolishness is the destruction of the mind. Then satva arises, along with noble qualities, like friendship. That is the mind of the sage of 'embodied liberation', and it does not lead to birth again. This is the destruction of the form of the mind.

The destruction of the very core of the mind is something which only exists in disembodied liberation, or in those who have completely transcended body-consciousness, when the pure mind which generated the noble qualities like friendship also ceases. Such a state is beyond description. In it, there are no characteristics, nor is it a state of no-characteristics. In it, nothing arises, and nothing sets - no light and no darkness, neither existence nor non-existence, nor even the middle. They who have transcended everything here, rest in that state, in their extremely subtle and ethereal bodies, freed from all sorrow and from ignorance and inertia, and full of infinite bliss.

Rama asked:

Lord, what is the seed of this world-illusion?

Vasistha replied:

The seed for this samsara or world-appearance is the body, O Rama, in which are hidden the sprouts of the experiences of pleasure and pain, etc. The seed for this body is the mind, which is dominated by hopes and desires, and which holds within it the precious gems of sorrow and the fruits of the past. The bodies, and therefore this samsara, arise on account of the mind, even as a dream arises in the dreamer.

There are two seeds for the mind: one, the movement of the prana or life-force, and two, mental conditioning which is deep-rooted. When the life-force moves along the subtle channels of 'the psychic force, then awareness and experience arise, and the mental activity commences. Though this awareness exists everywhere, it is activated by the movement of the life-force. Therefore, it is best to restrain this experience. It is the extension of experience that leads to countless experiences and to great sorrow. If this awareness rests in itself as if asleep, then one attains the supreme state. Therefore, if you restrain the movement of prana, and prevent the expansion of the field of objective experience, which results from the movement of the mental conditioning, then you will go beyond samsara.

section upasama - chapter prakaranam

cittopasantiphaladam paramam samyakaranam subhagam samvidah svasthyam
pranasamrodhanam viduh (46)

Vasistha continued:

The yogis practise pranayama in order to attain peace of mind. **Pranayama confers upon one peace of mind, supreme equanimity, happiness or blessedness, and healthy experience or awareness.**

This is how the mind arises from the seed of vasana or mental conditioning. Vasana or mental conditioning is that in which one perceives an object on the basis of his own conviction, without enquiring into it at all. It is the firmness of the notion, when it is held in one's consciousness with the greatest intensity, that gives it reality. Thus overpowered by the notion, the person sees it as the reality, and gets deluded. He abandons his own unconditioned nature, he is deluded, his vision is perverted. That is known as the mind (cittam), in which such perverse vision creates a confusion between what is and what appears to be, When thus such perverse vision gains firm ground, the restless mind comes into being, bringing in its train the cycle of birth and death.

When, however, all notions of 'This is desirable' and 'This is undesirable' are given up, then the mind does not arise. In the absence of mental conditioning, the intelligence functions in an unconditioned manner. This is a state of supreme quiescence. The mind does not arise in that pure heart which does not give rise to notions of worldly objects. Vasana alone is the form of the mind, O Rama, and that is the state of the mind when it thinks of objects on account of its taste for such objects. When such taste ceases to exist, and when the heart is as clean and clear as the sky, the mind does not come into being.

It is known as no-mind, in which there are no notions, and there is consciousness of pure consciousness alone, and which perceives what-is as what-is, not according to a pre-existing notion or mental conditioning, even if there are thoughts and ideas in such a mind. The sage of 'embodied liberation' lives and functions as a wheel revolves by past momentum; for, in him, the mental conditioning is not heavy and strong, and is therefore not capable of giving rise to future birth. In his case, the mental conditioning is like a burnt seed, a form without content. Then the mind becomes satva (pure). It is really no-mind, and once the body falls, it becomes totally unconditioned and limitless.

Of the two seeds of the mind (viz., movement of the life-force and mental conditioning), even if one is destroyed, both are destroyed, because they depend upon each other. Both of them arise from the objects of the world, which are therefore the seed of both prana and vasana. When the notion of the object of the world is abandoned, then both the movement of prana and vasana or mental conditioning are destroyed by their roots. Consciousness alone is the seed for the objects of experience. Without consciousness, no objects of experience can ever arise.

section upasama - chapter prakaranam

na bahir nantare kimcitsamvedyam vidyate prthak samvitsphurati samkalpya
samvedyam pasyati svatah (69)

Vasistha continued:

There is nothing either within or without which is distinct from consciousness, known as the object of consciousness. There is a notion or a movement in consciousness itself, which is known as the object of that very consciousness. Just as one dreams of one's own death or one's travel abroad, even so consciousness looks upon itself as its own object. Only as long as this is not understood, does the object seem to be endowed with its own reality, which constitutes samsara. The removal of this misunderstanding is liberation. Contact with and experience of 'objects' is sorrow; non contact, while remaining fully aware and active, promotes happiness. That which remains when there is no contact with or experience of objects, and when there is no inertia, is yourself.

That which is in constant motion, and is therefore not fixed to any one place, that jiva does not experience anything; hence, it is both the non-experiencer and also non-inert. When one's consciousness does not get fixed onto something, or depend upon something, he is non-experiencer and non inert, though he does a hundred things.

The pure consciousness in the heart is untainted by the object of experience; hence, he who is inwardly free from contact, is liberated. When one who has removed mental conditioning does not entertain thoughts of objects, but remains firmly in pure consciousness, although externally active like a dumb child, then he is rid of dullness and objective experience. He is unpolluted, though he is engaged in actions. He is bliss. By this means, one should endeavour with all one's being to cross the ocean of samsara.

The reality is the seed for consciousness. For, consciousness arises in pure existence, like rays from a lamp. This pure existence has two 'forms', as it were: one is diversity, and the other is unity. The diverse objects which are seen here are all diverse appearances of the one indivisible unity. But, when this diversity is abandoned by the consciousness, it rests in unity. Therefore, abandon all these apparent divisions of pure existence into time, different aspects, and diverse substances, and be devoted to the one pure existence. Though the time-factor and one's own existence may be freedom-oriented, and therefore appear to be desirable categories, yet they are not real. All such divisions create conflict and confusion in one's vision. How then can they be regarded as good and desirable? Hence, contemplate the one pure existence alone; your entire being will be filled with bliss. It is only a small particle of that pure existence that has apparently become the seed for this world-appearance; everything has evolved from that. However, if the notion of this world-appearance is abandoned, that seed is destroyed.

section upasama - chapter prakaranam

taddhetuh sarvahetunam tasya heturna vidyate sa sarah sarvasaranam tasmatsaro
na vidyate (96)

Vasistha continued:

One who has reached the state of pure being, does not experience sorrow again. **That is the cause of all; but that itself has no cause. It is the essence of all; other than that, there is no essence at all.** In that is everything reflected, just as objects are reflected in a mirror. That is the pure state. In it, the mind attains perfect peace. Reach that state, and be free from fear.

Rama asked:

How does one attain that state quickly?

Vasistha replied:

Each of the seeds that I have described has to be appropriately dealt with, so that it does not sprout. If you abandon with a mighty effort all the mental conditioning, while remaining in the state of pure being even for a moment, as it were, you will remain established in that state. Even by striving to remain in the state of pure being, you will reach this state. Even so, if you remain in the state of consciousness, you will attain the supreme state, but with a little more effort. However, contemplation or meditation should not be based on objects of awareness; it is more difficult to uproot mental conditioning by this means, than to uproot a mountain. Until the mind becomes quiescent, the conditioning is not overcome; unless the conditioning is overcome, there is no meditation. But if the conditioning is abandoned, then all physical and mental disturbances cease.

As long as the mind is not quiet, the conditioning does not cease; unless the conditioning ceases, the mind does not reach the state of quiescence. In the same way, knowledge of truth and quiescence of mind are inter-dependent. Even so are cessation of mental conditioning and the realisation of truth inter-dependent. Therefore, these three (knowledge of truth, quiescence of the mind, and eradication of mental conditioning) are hard to gain. Therefore, one should resolutely abandon the pursuit of pleasure with a mighty self-effort, accompanied by right understanding, and thereby accomplish all the three. Unless all these three are simultaneously accomplished, the truth is not realised even in a hundred years. They have to be practised simultaneously, and not one after the other. When practised simultaneously for some time, then the knots of ignorance are surely rent asunder. This world-illusion, in which one has indulged for many lifetimes, does not vanish without persistent effort for a considerable time. The restraint of prana or life-force is of equal value with the destruction of vasana or conditioning; hence, the wise man should practise pranayama also. Both these practices lead to the transmutation of the mind into no-mind. Prana is controlled by pranayama, by the practice of yoga asana, by discipline in eating, etc., and by other methods prescribed by the preceptor.

section upasama - chapter prakaranam

idhyatmavidyadhigamah sadhusamgama eva ca vasanasamparityagah
pranaspandanirodhanam (128)

Vasistha continued:

If one works without any attachment, and without any thought for the future, and if one is constantly aware that the life of the body is short, the mental conditioning does not arise. Then the mind is not activated. Control of the prana is also control of the mind and, therefore, an intelligent person should practise pranayama. It is not possible to master the mind without adopting intelligent methods. **Study of scriptures dealing with self-knowledge, company of holy ones, the abandonment of mental conditioning, and also the control of prana - these are the methods for the control of the mind.** Only ignorant people resort to violent (hatha) practices, neglecting these intelligent methods of controlling the mind. The ignorant are weak, and do not have enough faith even to investigate the truth. They waste their time in useless conventional pursuits, like religious rites, austerities, charity, pilgrimage, and worship of the gods. Give up all these, O Rama, and resort to pure intelligence. Remain free from attraction and repulsion, by the removal from your heart of the notion of the existence of objects of experience. Rest in your heart in the unchanging and indivisible consciousness. Live an active life, free from the false notion that 'I am the doer'.

He who engages himself in enquiry into the nature of truth, attains the fruit of his birth. A thought arising in the heart soon multiplies into a thousand; but, if one is firmly established in self-enquiry, he is unshaken by even the most violent distractions. He who is not ever engaged in self-enquiry, though walking, eating, and being engaged in various activities, is but a walking corpse. One should, alone or in holy company, enquire thus: "What is this world? Who am I?" Such enquiry is the essence of the science of self-knowledge, and the answer is in the question itself.

He who engages himself in self-enquiry, is fearless, for he knows that the infinite consciousness is pure and is the only truth. He looks upon his benefactor and his prospective murderer with equal love. The wise restrain their senses from apprehending the unreal world-appearance, whereas the ignorant, who are unable to rest in the self, are a prey to their own senses.

Contact is the cause of all objects, of samsara or world-appearance and of hopes and desires and therefore of sorrow. The abandonment of contact is liberation. Hence, refrain from contact with the world-appearance, and be free. 'Contact' (sanga) is the polluted mental conditioning in which likes and dislikes towards the objects of the world arise in the mind. When these likes and dislikes are abandoned, the heart is purified and one becomes liberated. He is no longer affected by pain and pleasure, good fortune or misfortune. Thus remain established in equanimity, non-volitionally, and appropriately playing your part in life.

section nirvana - chapter prakaranam

siddhanto 'dhyatmasastranam sarvapahnava eva hi navidyastiha no maya santam
brahmedamagrimam (1)

Vasistha said:

This is the conclusion of all scriptures dealing with self-knowledge: that there is no such thing as ignorance or maya. Whatever is seen in front of you, is the pure ever-peacefull Brahman, which is endowed with all the powers or energies. Some call it 'the void', others 'pure knowledge', others 'god' . Abandon all this, O Rama, and remain silent, without thinking, but established in nirvana. Remain at peace in the self, but outwardly as if you are deaf, dumb, and blind. Live an active life, but remain as if in deep sleep. Inwardly renounce everything; outwardly do what is necessary. The existence of the mind is sorrow; the absence of mental activity is bliss. Withdraw yourself from objective experience. Remain like a rock, unmoved by pleasant and unpleasant sights. By this much of self-effort, one overcomes samsara or world-appearance and sorrow.

Rama asked:

How does one ascend the seven states of yoga?

Vasistha replied:

There are two classes of human beings: the outgoing and the renunciate. The former thinks, "What is this nirvana? I prefer to live and enjoy in this world." After many lifetimes, one is spiritually awakened. Then he begins to think, "Enough of life in this samsara which is devoid of any essence. All actions are useless. I should now withdraw from them." He is known as a renunciate. Then he asks himself, "What should I do in order to cultivate dispassion and cross this mire of samsara?" He rejoices in renunciation. He avoids the snare of his own mental conditioning. He delights in beneficial actions. In secret, he performs auspicious actions. His actions are non-violent, and they do not excite others. He refrains from sin, and from the pursuit of pleasure. His speech is friendly and appropriate to the occasion. Then he is in the first stage of yoga. He serves holy ones with thought, word, and deed. He diligently searches for the scriptures of self-knowledge, and studies them. If such a person enquirers into the nature of samsara, and the means of crossing it, he is established in the state of yoga.

The second stage is known as vicara (self-enquiry). One who is in this stage, engages himself in the study of scriptures, in right conduct, and in the practice of concentration and meditation. He resorts to the company of learned men. He knows what is good and what is evil, what is right and what is wrong. He resolutely gives up all evil qualities, like pride, envy, vanity, desires, delusion, etc. By the study of scriptures and the devout service of the preceptors, he gains a knowledge of the secrets of the scriptures.

section nirvana - chapter prakaranam

abhyasatsadhusastranam karanatpunyakarmanam jantoryathavadeveyam vastudrstih
prasidati (32)

Vasistha continued:

Then, he goes to the third stage, which is non-attachment, freedom. He assimilates the teaching of the scriptures, and he lives with sages, and listens to their teachings. Being indifferent to this world, he sleeps on slabs of stone, and lives in the forest, completely free from all contacts. **By the practice of the teachings of holy ones and scriptures, and by doing food actions, he attains right perception of what is.** This non-attachment is of two types: the ordinary, and the superior. One who is endowed with ordinary non-attachment, feels "I am not the experiencer nor the doer; I have nothing to do with anyone, nor has anyone anything to do with me. Whether what happens is because of past karma or because of divine will, whether it is pleasure or pain, what have I to do? Pursuit of pleasure is a dire disease, prosperity is calamity, meetings are only for parting, time is all-devouring." By this means, and by the company of the holy ones, by avoiding the contact of evil, by the proper direction of self-awareness, by intense self-effort, he gains correct understanding of the truth concerning everything. When thus, he has directly realised the truth, 'I am not the doer; the doer is either past karma or the divine, and when he has crossed this ocean of samsara and rests in peace and silence, that is known as superior non-attachment or freedom. In it, there is no division between inside and outside, above and below, substantiality and insubstantiality, inertia and consciousness, appearance and non-appearance. Then there arises in the heart the lotus known as wisdom, that is characterised by contentment and right action, and which yields the fruit of total freedom, which is the third stage.

The first stage (right resolve, subheccha) arises almost accidentally (like the ripe cocoon falling when the crow alights on it), through righteous action. This should be carefully protected and nourished. Then the second stage or vicara (self-enquiry) arises. This should be well cultivated like a garden. It is by intense effort that it is possible to enter into the third stage. When one is well established in the third stage, then he is freed from concepts or mental images.

The ignorant man, in whom evil is firmly rooted, takes birth repeatedly till the first stage (right resolve) arises in him. Or he will accidentally find holy company (like the cocoon falling when the crow alights on it), or dispassion might arise in him by the very experiences he undergoes in his life. When dispassion or disinterestedness in the pursuit of pleasure arises in one's heart, then naturally the first stage (right resolve) is reached, and subsequently, by stages, he crosses this ocean of samsara. Such is the firm declaration of the scriptures. While ascending these seven stages of yoga, all his sins and sinful tendencies are destroyed.

section nirvana - chapter prakaranam

udeti yogayuktanam atra kevalamaryata yam drstva mudhabuddhihnamapyudeti
mumuksuta (63)

Vasistha continued:

(Should the yogi die at the third stage) He goes to heaven and rejoices with the gods there. Then he is born in the house of prosperous and noble parents, and pursues the practice of yoga.

The first three stages of yoga are like the waking state, since they recognise the existence of the objects of the waking state. **In one who practises these, there arises a nobility of being, seeing which even ignorant and foolish people wish to attain liberation.** He is a noble person (arya), who does what should be done, and refrains from doing what should not be done, and who lives a simple and natural life. He is a noble person (arya), who accepts whatever happens, but lives in accordance with the scriptures, engaging himself in appropriate activity. This nobility sprouts even in the first stage, grows in the second, and in the third stage it yields its fruits. One who dies in any of these is reborn as a yogi.

They who practise these three, overcome ignorance. True wisdom or right perception arises in them. The vision of division ceases. Such yogis reach the fourth stage. They perceive the world as if they were seeing a dream, because they have overcome diversity, and are firmly established in unity. Hence, the fourth stage is compared to the dream state. Beyond this, only the 'being' exists in the fifth stage. The perverse perception of the world disappears. The fifth stage is therefore compared to deep sleep. There is supreme peace, and all other special characteristics cease; and there is non-duality. Though he seems to be engaged in worldly activities, apparently thinking, etc., his vision is fully introverted. Hence, he is at peace, and he appears to be asleep. His practice of yoga continues here, and his mind is unconditioned. In due course, he rises to the sixth stage, known as turiya. In that state, he rises beyond the 'I' and the 'not-I', the real and the unreal. Mental activity has been greatly decreased, and there do not arise in him even the concepts of unity and diversity. All his bonds have been severed, and all his doubts dispelled. He is a jivanmukta (liberated in embodiment). He lives like the painting of a lamp, empty within, and empty without, like an empty pot held in space; but at the same time full within and full without, like a full pot held in the ocean. He has attained something, but truly nothing. Remaining firmly established in this stage, one should reach the seventh stage, which is known as the stage beyond body consciousness, beyond description. That is the boundary of becoming. That is known as Siva, Brahma, Visnu, void, truth, time, Prakrti-Purusa, and in various ways by different people. Though indescribable, it is described by different people in various ways. When you reach this stage, you go beyond sorrow, O Rama.

section nirvana - chapter prakaranam

rameccha nama karini sedam me 'stviti rupini sarirakanane matta
vividhollasakarini (126/78)

Vasistha said:

There is a dreadful elephant in the forest of samsara, which is terribly destructive. If this elephant has not been conquered, there is no hope of self-knowledge.

The elephant is desire, and her form is the wish 'May I attain this'. It roams in the forest known as this body, playing havoc in various ways. Its young ones are the agitated senses, especially the sense of taste. Actions are tusks. Mental conditioning is its rut. This elephant destroys everyone who is ignorant and conditioned. The entire samsara is the battlefield in which it roams. Its other names are vasana (mental conditioning), mind, cittam, samkalpa (concepts or mental images), bhavanam (mental attitude or its thought), and attachment. One should destroy this deadly elephant with the help of the supreme weapon, known as courage (persistence, endurance, etc.). Only as long as this elephant roams in the forest of the body, does this samsara or world-appearance persist.

Samsara is just this much - the feeling 'This exists'. When this feeling or wrong notion ceases, there is liberation. This is the essence of all wisdom. When the heart has been cleansed of desire, then the instructions of the preceptor are reflected perfectly in it. Whenever desire arises in one's heart, knowing that it is extremely destructive, one should, with the weapon of non-awareness of the object of that desire, destroy it. Rid of desire, the jiva abandons its conditioning or limitedness or finitude. When the object is not held in the mind, desire for it does not arise. The mind is quiescent, and this is known as pratyahara (introversion of the mind). By this, all desires are destroyed.

'May this object be mine', such a desire or thought is known as kalpana or concept; when the mind does not hold that object, the corresponding thought or concept is abandoned. Thinking or remembering is conceptualisation. Non-conceptualisation is good. He who exists having completely abandoned the thought of what has been or has not been experienced, is a wise person. I declare with uplifted arms that such a state alone is the best. One who has reached that state, is greater than an emperor. Then he functions as the feet of one who walks function, without volition or desire.

All this creation is peace, infinite, and eternal. Behold all this as the infinite consciousness, and rest in peace. Yoga is the cessation of experience of objects. Rest in yoga, and do what has to be done. Rest in yoga, and live. Then you will be free from the painful feelings of 'I' and 'mine'. Be freed from the experience of objects, and do what you wish to do. Constant awareness of that, 'All this is the Lord who is omnipresent, unborn and infinite consciousness', is itself known as the abandonment of all actions.

Om Tat Sat