

योगवासिष्ठ सार सङ्ग्रहः

YOGA VAASISHTHA SAARA-SANGRAH

*The Gist of
“Yoga Vasishtha”*

“THE SANDEEPANY EXPERIENCE”

TEXT

21

Reflections by
SWAMI GURUBHAKTANANDA



Sandeepany's Vedanta Course

List of All the Course Texts in Chronological Sequence:

Text No.	TITLE OF TEXT	Text No.	TITLE OF TEXT
1	<i>Sadhana Panchakam</i>	24	<i>Hanuman Chalisa</i>
2	<i>Tattwa Bodha</i>	25	<i>Vakya Vritti</i>
3	<i>Atma Bodha</i>	26	<i>Advaita Makaranda</i>
4	<i>Bhaja Govindam</i>	27	<i>Kaivalya Upanishad</i>
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6	<i>Forgive Me</i>	29	<i>Mundaka Upanishad</i>
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11	<i>Viveka Choodamani</i>	34	<i>Aitareya Upanishad</i>
12	<i>Jnana Sara</i>	35	<i>Narada Bhakti Sutras</i>
13	<i>Drig-Drishya Viveka</i>	36	<i>Taittiriya Upanishad</i>
14	<i>"Tat Twam Asi" – Chand Up 6</i>	37	<i>Jivan Sutrani (Tips for Happy Living)</i>
15	<i>Dhyana Swaroopam</i>	38	<i>Kena Upanishad</i>
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18	<i>"Nataka Deepa" – Panchadasi 10</i>	41	<i>Mandukya Upanishad</i>
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A NOTE ABOUT SANDEEPANY

Sandeepany Sadhanalaya is an institution run by the Chinmaya Mission in Powai, Mumbai, teaching a 2-year Vedanta Course. It has a very balanced daily programme of basic Samskrit, Vedic chanting, Vedanta study, Bhagavatam, Ramacharitmanas, Bhajans, meditation, sports and fitness exercises, team-building outings, games and drama, celebration of all Hindu festivals, weekly Gayatri Havan and Guru Paduka Pooja, and Karma Yoga activities.

This series is an effort to promote the learning of Vedanta; it does not replace the Course, but hopes to inspire young people to spend two years of their life for an experience that is sure to make a far-reaching spiritual impact on their personal lives. Sandeepany is an all-round spiritual course that gives proper direction to the youth and to those approaching retirement. Hinduism is in dire need of a band of systematically trained teachers or Acharyas who can serve this Eternal Religion.

– The Author, 2nd September, 2018, Sri Krishna Jayanti Day

Om Namah Shivaaya!

Text
21



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YOGA VAASISHTHA “Saara Sangrah”

“The Gist of Sage Vasishtha’s Teaching to Sri Rama”

A Book Condensed from the Original by

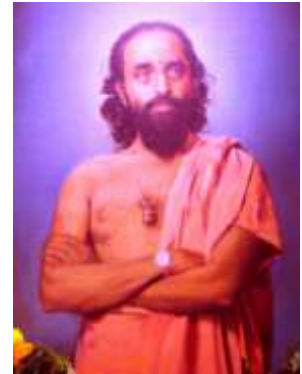
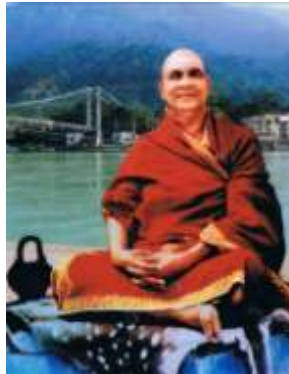
Sri Swami Tejomayanandaji

Reflections

by Swami Gurubhaktananda

*on the Series of 19 Lectures on the above Book delivered by
Guruji, **Swami Tejomayanandaji**, to the 15th Batch Vedanta Course
at Sandeepany Sadhanalaya, Powai, Mumbai*

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Adi Shankaracharya

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Author:

Swami Gurubhaktananda (ex Krishna Chaitanya, born Bipin R. Kapitan in Durban, South Africa)

Email: gurubhakta.dls@gmail.com

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Personal Dedication

1. To my Parents, Smt Sharadaben & Sri Ratilalbhai Kapitan

who inspired me to study in life, to stick to the path of Dharma and pursue the highest ideals; and swamped me with their abundant Love;

2. To Pujya Sri Swami Vimalanandaji Maharaj

the President of the Divine Life Society of Rishikesh, Uttarakhand, India, who constantly encouraged and supported this effort;

3. To Pujya Sri Swami Tejomayanandaji (Guruji)

for his boundless vision and inspiration to create a vibrant organisation;

4. To Sri Swami Advayanandaji and Sri Swami Sharadanandaji

my Acharyaji and Upa-Acharyaji at Sandeepany, who imparted their bountiful knowledge and wisdom with rare selfless Divine Love, just as the Rishis of yore would wish to see them do.

योगवासिष्ठ सार सङ्ग्रहः

YOGA VAASISHTHA

“SAARA-SANGRAH”

“The Gist of Sage Vasishtha’s Message”

YOGA VAASISHTHA “Saara Sangrah”
“Gist of Sage Vasishtha’s Message to Sri Rama”

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Total Verses = 86 No.



YOGA VAASISHTHA “Saara-Sangraha”
“Gist of Sage Vasishtha’s Message to Sri Rama”

INTRODUCTION

SAGE VASISHTHA WAS ONE of the Sapta Rishis or “Seven Great Sages”. He was the Guru of Sri Rama, being the family Guru of King Dasaratha (Sri Rama’s father).

In the title, *Yoga Vaasishtha*, ‘*Vaasishtha*’ means that which was taught by Sage Vasishtha. Since it was the science of union with the Self, the word ‘Yoga’ is attached. The name *Jnana Vaasishtha* may also be used, as it contains the knowledge of the Self.

In this text, Sri Rama is a disciple, the student of Sage Vasishtha. Sage Vishwamitra also played a small role in Rama’s early training. But it is Sage Valmiki who has authored this book. Valmiki was also the author of the *Ramayana*, the story of the Life of Sri Rama. The two books have been kept apart due to their subject matter. The 32,000 verses of *Yoga Vaasishtha* are about the spiritual instructions imparted to Sri Rama; whereas the 24,000 verses of the *Ramayana* are a record of the story of His life.

The story goes that Brahmaji asked Vasishtha to be a priest in the Surya dynasty (Raghu-Vamsha) during King Dasaratha’s life. Vasishtha was not in favour of the idea and rebelled against it. It was like a *demotion* for him to perform ceremonies when he wished to spend all his time in contemplation. But Brahmaji tempted him to take up the task, saying that the Lord Himself will come as his student. With such a prospect in mind, Vasishtha accepted the post. He could not escape his good Prarabdha!

The *Yoga Vaasishtha* is quite a voluminous book as indicated above. The 32,000 verses were condensed into 6,000 verses. This abridged version was called the *Laghu*. Someone further reduced them to 1000 verses, called *Laghu Tara*. This book is a further abridgement of even that, and has to be called a *Laghu Tama*. Having only 86 verses, it is described as just ‘a glimpse into the *Yoga Vaasishtha*’, a Nidarshini, and its purpose is only to lead the reader to a study of the full original. The name “*Saara Sangraha*” indicates that it contains just the essence of the original text. It has been placed into seven chapters.

The story’s catalyst is Bharadwaja who asks Sage Valmiki a question on Rama’s life in this world. Valmiki then unravels the early life of the Divine Prince, especially his studentship under Sage Vasishtha. The original text has six Chapters. They are:

- i) **Vairagya Prakarana** – on the state of Dispassion.
- ii) **Mumukshu-Vyavahara Prakarana** – on Yearning for liberation from bondage.
- iii) **Utpatti Prakarana** – on the Creation of the world.
- iv) **Sthiti Prakarana** – on the Sustenance of the world.
- v) **Upasama Prakarana** – on the Dissolution of the world.
- vi) **Nirvana Prakarana** – on Liberation or Mukti.

Unlike Arjuna’s withdrawal from battle out of delusion in the Bhagavad Geeta, Sri Rama’s state of withdrawal from the world in the Yoga Vasishtha arises out of genuine dispassion, and Sage Vasishtha instructs him accordingly, leading him on to Liberation.

योगवासिष्ठ सार-सङ्ग्रहः

Chapter One

(10 Verses)

SPIRITUAL YEARNING OF RAMA

Verse 1.1: The Invocation Verse

यतः सर्वाणि भूतानि , प्रतिभान्ति स्थितानि च ।

यत्रैवोपशमं यान्ति , तस्मै सत्यात्मने नमः

॥१.१॥

1	yatah sarvani bhootaani	From which all beings
2	prati-bhaanti sthitaani cha;	shine forth, in which all have their existence,
3	yatra eva upashamam yaanti	and wherein alone they attain dissolution –
4	tasmai satyaatmane namah.	salutations to that Truth which is the Self!

[This verse will be explained at the end, just as it was done at Sandeepany.]

Verse 1.2: The Adhikari – Qualified Student

अहं बद्धोविमुक्तः स्याम् , इति यस्यास्ति निश्चयः ।

नात्यन्तमज्ञो नोतज्ज्ञः , सोऽस्मिन् शास्त्रेऽधिकारवान्

॥१.२॥

1	aham baddhah vimuktah syaam	"I am bound; let me be liberated" –
2	iti yasya asti nishchayah;	he who has this understanding;
3	na anyantam ajnah na u tat jnah	who is neither totally ignorant nor a knower of the Truth;
4	sah asmin shaastre adhikaaravaan.	he is qualified to study this scripture.

The qualified student for the *Yoga Vasishtha* (the full edition), is being described:

1-2 i) Seeker of Liberation: the person who desires to be free from the cycle of endless rebirths and experiences in this Samsaric world. There has to be some degree of understanding that the experiences of this world alone are not satisfactory. Something beyond the call of the senses is desired by the reader.

3 ii) Seeker of Knowledge: Besides this desire, the person should not be at either of the two ends of the spiritual journey. He should not be totally ignorant nor fully knowledgeable. It is for the seeker of the Truth in between these two opposites. In Vedanta, an ignorant person is one who is identified fully with his body and related externals.

4 Thus the person who would be interested in this text is one who has gone past the Karma Kanda and Upasana Kanda, and is now serious about the Jnana Kanda of the Vedas.

Such a student will be looking at life with an urge to become more dispassionate towards worldly pleasures and more inclined towards building up his relationship with God.

Verse 1.3: Bharadwaja Asks About Rama's Life

भरद्वाजः स्वगुरुं वाल्मीकिं प्रति उवाच –
 भगवन् ज्ञातुमिच्छामि , कथं संसार-संकटे ।
 रामो व्यवहृतो ह्यस्मिन् , कारुण्याद् ब्रूहि मे गुरो ॥१.३॥

	<i>bharadvajaah svagurum vaalmeekim prati uvaachah:</i>	<i>Bharadwaja said to his teacher, Sage Valmiki:</i>
1	<i>bhagavan jnaatum icchhaami</i>	<i>O Revered Sage, I desire to know</i>
2	<i>katham samsaara sankate;</i>	<i>how, in the difficult course of worldly existence,</i>
3	<i>raamah vyavahritah hi asmin</i>	<i>did Sri Rama conduct himself in its midst?</i>
4	<i>kaarunyaad broohi me guro.</i>	<i>O Guruji, out of compassion, please tell me.</i>

1 The questioner's interest in the life of Rama arises from his own need of an ideal role model to structure his own spiritual life. He sees something in Rama which he feels attracted towards. Clearly, Bharadwaja is going through some difficulties in life, and he feels that the details of Rama's life would throw some light on his own path.

2-3 So he asks his Guru, Sage Valmiki, to tell him how Rama managed to live such a well balanced life in spite of his huge responsibility to run the Kingdom. It is difficult enough to live in the hustle and bustle of life. How much more would it be for a King who has the burden of the whole Kingdom on his head?

Besides, the nature of Sri Rama was to live an ascetic life of contemplation. A large part of Sage Valmiki's answer focuses on this temperament of Sri Rama and how it was reconciled with his life of administering the Kingdom. This is one of the intriguing features of this entire text.

4 The answer reveals to us why Sri Rama is considered to be the "Perfect Man" or *Maryaada Purusha*, as he is called in Hindi. In this text the life of Sri Rama is viewed from his status as an ideal man, not as a Deity, or Divine Avatara, or a God who is worshipped.

Verse 1.4: Valmiki Responds to Bharadwaja

वाल्मीकिरुवाच –
 जीवन्मुक्ति-पदं प्राप्तो, यथा रामोमहामनाः ।
 तत्तेऽहं शृणु वक्ष्यामि , जरा-मरण-शान्तये ॥१.४॥

	<i>vaalmeekih uvaacha:</i>	<i>Valmiki said:</i>
1	<i>jeevan-mukti padam praaptah</i>	<i>The attainment of liberation while living –</i>
2	<i>yathaa raamah mahaamanaah;</i>	<i>how the noble-minded Sri Rama attained it,</i>
3	<i>tat te aham shrunu vakshyaami</i>	<i>that I shall tell you. Listen to it</i>
4	<i>jaraa-marana-shaantaye.</i>	<i>for the alleviation of old age and death.</i>

1 The story of Rama's spiritual life begins with a statement of the goal he eventually arrives at, namely, Jivanmukti or liberation while living. What these terms mean and their significance in spiritual life shall be covered in the text.

2 The essential qualification of a seeker is given in addition to that in 1.2. The seeker, apart from wanting liberation and knowledge, has to be a very noble-minded person. This implies somebody with a very high sense of social responsibility, refined conduct, lofty ideals and virtuous deeds.

3 The story, then, is not about Sri Rama's adventures and relationships with people. That is to be found in the *Ramayana*, as recorded by the same sage, Rishi Valmiki. This is a story of Sri Rama's spiritual adventure within, a soul experience taking place in the depths of his being.

4 The purpose served by telling this story is also rather different from that served by any other story. What we learn from Sri Rama's spiritual saga will benefit us in two ways:

i) **Bodily Ailments:** The spiritual journey is one which takes us beyond body consciousness. Hardships typical of old age, such as bodily pains and diseases, may still be experienced, but our attitude towards these will be altered considerably. The knowledge that we are not this body is encouraged in this text. Thus, physical trials are not viewed as major setbacks in life.

ii) **Death:** One's outlook on death is bound to change upon reading this story of Sri Rama. It is taught by the spiritual Master that we are not the body but the Spirit. Thus the true "I" can never die; it is immortal. This takes away all fear of death.

At the very outset, the correct approach to this text is ensured by bringing out these facts. Only persons interested in this subject matter will pursue the study of this text.

SRI RAMA DESCRIBES HIS OBSERVATIONS

Verse 1.5: *Transitoriness of Life*

श्रीरामः विश्वामित्रं प्रति उवाच –

कथयाम्यहमज्ञोऽपि , विचारः क्रियते मया ।

जायते मृतये लोको, म्रियते जननाय च

॥१.५॥

	<i>shree-raamah vishvaamitram prati uvaacha:</i>	<i>Sri Rama said to Sage Visvamitra:</i>
1	<i>kathayaami aham ajnah api</i>	<i>Even though I am ignorant, I shall tell you</i>
2	<i>vicharah kriyate mayaa;</i>	<i>a few matters upon which I have reflected.</i>
3	<i>jaayate mritaye lokah</i>	<i>Men are born to die;</i>
4	<i>mriyate jananaaya cha.</i>	<i>and to be born again.</i>

After their studies at the Gurukula, all four sons of King Dasharatha (Rama, Lakshmana, Bharata and Sharughna) went for a pilgrimage to observe life first-hand. The summary of what Sri Rama observed is given in the verses 1.5 to 1.10.

1 Firstly, Sri Rama is speaking here to his Guru, Sage Vishwamitra. We should note this circumstance and not expect him to speak as an authority, but as a student. Sri Rama

played all his roles in life perfectly, being the living example of the “Ideal Man”; he is here shown in his role as an ideal disciple.

2 Rama was very observant. He saw everything with a particular focus on the deeper meaning of life.

3-4 Men are bound inextricably to this world. The round of births and deaths is seemingly endless. People are experiencing sorrow at every turn, peppered by a few experiences of joy. The young Rama sees no meaning in continuing such a meaningless existence.

This gives us a peep into the type of reflections Sri Rama is going to tell us about in the verses to come...

In the actual book, the first chapter is called “**Vairagya Prakaranam**”, which expands on Sri Rama’s view of what material existence boils down to. It is so utterly meaningless as to bore him totally. He is not interested in kingdom and enjoyments. He is more interested to find out what his true nature is. To him, the worldly life serves only one purpose – it makes one forget all about the real purpose of life!

Verse 1.6: “Circus” of Life vs. “Purpose” of Life

अस्थिरा सर्व एवैते , सचराचर-चेष्टिताः ।

किं मे राज्येन किं भोगैः , कोऽहं किमिदमागतम्

॥१.६॥

1	<i>asthiraah sarve eva ete</i>	<i>Impermanent indeed are all these</i>
2	<i>sachara achara cheshtitaah;</i>	<i>that are movable and immovable.</i>
3	<i>kim me raajyena kim bhogaih</i>	<i>Of what use to me are kingdom and enjoyments?</i>
4	<i>kah aham kim idam aagatam.</i>	<i>Who am I? What is the purpose of coming here?</i>

Filled with **dispassion** for the world of pleasure and power, Sri Rama’s reflections express his desire to know the deeper Truth about life’s supreme purpose. He has become a ripe vessel for divine knowledge to be poured into. Vairagya is the first step that a Teacher expects to see in his disciples.

1-2 The changing nature of the world is highlighted. “That is the only constant thing about the world!” says Guruji. This applies to both the sentient and the insentient objects, i.e. living beings as well as inert rocks, stones, metals and gemstones.

3 That which is coveted by people of the world is power and pleasure. Both of these are being rejected by Sri Rama after careful reflection upon their ephemeral nature.

4 On the positive side, Sri Rama is now more concerned with his true identity and his real purpose in life. These two basic questions are ignored by most people in this world.

Through reflections such as these on the external world we live in, Sri Rama teaches us how we should be viewing the world and what should be our sole concern in life.

Verse 1.7: The Arising of Dispassion

एवं विमृशतस्तीव्रं , सर्वेष्वपि च वस्तुषु ।
अरतिर्मम संजाता , पथिकस्य मरुष्विव

॥१.७॥

1	<i>evam vimrishatah teevram</i>	<i>Thus, by reasoning intensely,</i>
2	<i>sarveshu api cha vastushu;</i>	<i>in all external sense objects</i>
3	<i>aratih mama sanjaataa</i>	<i>there arises in me a dispassion</i>
4	<i>pathikasya marushu iva.</i>	<i>as in a traveller for mirage water in a desert.</i>

1-3 What is the outcome of these reflections upon Sri Rama? The bottom-line is that he is gripped by **Dispassion** for all sense objects of pleasure. This is the precursor of all noble spiritual enquiry and Sadhana. The edifice of spirituality can be built only upon the sure foundation of dispassion or complete distaste for all sensual pleasures and worldly achievements and power.

4 Simile of a Mirage: The water seen in a mirage in the desert cannot quench anyone's thirst. After a few hopeful attempts to reach mirage water, the traveller soon tires of it and develops dispassion for it, knowing that it is fruitless to reach it. Similarly, Sri Rama has discovered through reason that it is fruitless to chase down pleasurable objects in search of quenching his "thirst" for happiness.

Verse 1.8: How to Go Beyond Sorrow?

यथा जानासि भगवन् , तथा मोहनिवृत्तये ।
ब्रूहि मे साधवो येन , नूनं निर्दुःखतां गताः

॥१.८॥

1	<i>yathaa jaanaasi bhagavan</i>	<i>As you are well conversant, O Lord,</i>
2	<i>tathaa moha-nivrittaye;</i>	<i>in order to finally end my delusion,</i>
3	<i>broohi me saadhavah yena</i>	<i>tell me of that by which the virtuous wise ones</i>
4	<i>noonam nir-dukhataam gataah.</i>	<i>attained the state free from sorrow.</i>

1 Fortunately for Sri Rama, he has with him the company of a Teacher who is well established in the Supreme Truth. As an ideal disciple, he approaches his Guru in true Indian tradition – with a burning desire to know the Truth from his lips.

2 His objective is clear: the quest is for knowledge that will bring an end to his **Delusion**. He is not in search of finding other sources of pleasure not found on Earth, such as heavenly pleasures, etc, even though he knows that such pleasures far exceed those obtainable on earth. But even heavenly pleasures have an end when the meritorious Karma gets exhausted.

3-4 Based on this deep intellectual conviction, backed by his personal experience of what life has taught him, Sri Rama desires to know how the "wise ones" before him discovered the path beyond all sorrow. That is the only recourse for him in life. Nothing else will satisfy him.

Verse 1.9 & 10: *The State of Intense Renunciation*

स्वयं चैव न चाऽऽप्नोमि , तां विश्रान्तिमनुत्तमाम् ।

तदहं त्यक्त-सर्वेहो, निरहंकारतां गतः

॥१.९॥

न किञ्चिदपि वाञ्छामि , देहत्यागाद् ऋते मुने ।

मौन एवावतिष्ठामि , लिपिकर्मस्विवार्पितः

॥१.१०॥

1	<i>svayam cha eva na cha aapnami</i>	<i>And if I myself do not attain</i>
2	<i>taam vishraantim anuttamaam;</i>	<i>that unexcelled peace,</i>
3	<i>tad aham tyakta sarva eehah</i>	<i>then I, who have abandoned all actions,</i>
4	<i>nir-ahamkaarataam gatah.</i>	<i>and have become egoless;</i>
5	<i>na kinchid api vaanchhaami</i>	<i>would not seek anything else</i>
6	<i>deha-tyaagaat rite mune;</i>	<i>other than giving up the body, O Sage.</i>
7	<i>maune eva avatishthaami</i>	<i>I shall remain in the “silence of Death” alone,</i>
8	<i>lipi karmasu iva arpita.</i>	<i>and be like a picture that has been painted!</i>

1-2 Here we see yearning for God of the most intense type – *Teevra Mumukshutva*. Sri Rama will stop at nothing to get liberated. He feels the pangs of separation from God as intensely as a person caught in a forest fire desires to escape from it.

3-4 Sri Rama, who has already made enormous sacrifices by abandoning all worldly pleasures and giving up his sense of individuality, will be very disappointed if he does not attain the highest state of Peace.

5-8 So intense would be his disappointment that the young Prince would be prepared to die for the sake of his cherished spiritual aspiration. Until he attains liberation, he is not prepared to waste any effort in any material pursuit. Everything now hinges on his spiritual enlightenment.

The stage has been set perfectly to open the treasure-chest of spiritual wisdom upon such a ripe student. Sage Vishwamitra must be deeply delighted at seeing the yearning behind Sri Rama’s apparent melancholy and disinterested behaviour. Indeed, the Sage would not have expected anything less from his illustrious, divine disciple!



Chapter Two

(8 Verses)

PREPARATORY TEACHINGS

Verse 2.1: *Rama – Declared a Perfect Disciple*

विश्वामित्र उवाच –

न राघव तवास्त्यन्यद् , ज्ञेयं ज्ञानवतां वर ।

स्वयैव सूक्ष्मया बुद्ध्या , सर्वं विज्ञातवानसि

॥२.१॥

	<i>vishvaamitra uvaacha:</i>	<i>Sage Viswamitra then said (to Sri Rama):</i>
1	<i>na raaghava tava asti anyat</i>	<i>O Raghava, there is nothing else for you</i>
2	<i>jneyam jnaanavataam vara;</i>	<i>to be known, O best among the wise.</i>
3	<i>svayaa eva sookshmayaa buddhyaa</i>	<i>By your own subtle intellect,</i>
4	<i>sarvam vijnaatavaan asi.</i>	<i>you have known everything.</i>

The fact that it is Sri Rama's own Guru who is saying this is very significant. These are not mere praises by someone who needs to have a favour done. A Guru will never do that. The Guru is a spiritual scientist who will go by what he observes, not what he imagines. Sage Vishwamitra was recognized long before as being one of the most powerful spiritual figures of his time, so there would be no need for him to praise Rama with any selfish motive.

1-2 Imagine what Rama's reaction to the opening words of the Sage would be like. Having just expressed his utter disillusionment with the world and futility of pursuing any activity based upon his present mental state, he must have been rather surprised to hear his Guru compare him to the "best among the wise", and that there is nothing else he needs to know!

3-4 The key to Self-knowledge is the subtlety of one's intellect. That is a rare commodity, indeed, requiring great purity and one-pointedness of mind (**Chitta Shuddhi** and **Chitta Ekagrata**). We are getting glimpses of the greatness of the role which Sri Rama was born for.

Verse 2.2: *Definitions of Liberation & Bondage*

वासनातानवं राम , मोक्ष इत्युच्यते बुधैः ।

पदार्थवासनादार्ढ्यं , बन्ध इत्यभिधीयते

॥२.२॥

1	<i>vaasanaa taanavam raama</i>	<i>O Rama, the exhaustion of Vasanas</i>
2	<i>mokshah iti uchyate buddaih;</i>	<i>is called "LIBERATION" by the wise.</i>
3	<i>padaartha-vaasanaa-daardhyam</i>	<i>The firmness of such Vasanas for objects</i>
4	<i>bandhah iti abhidheeyate.</i>	<i>is called "BONDAGE".</i>

The Guru now gives his reason for his assessment in the previous verse.

Most parents today, on seeing this withdrawn behaviour in their children, will think that there is a serious deficiency in their child. They will perhaps take him for counselling, etc., hoping to get the child interested in the world once again. Instead of seeing a problem, the Guru sees in Rama a perfect disciple, brimming with dispassion of the rarest kind.

1 He sees someone in whom there is virtually an exhaustion of all Vasanas already. Could there ever be a more qualified disciple for Self knowledge?

2 As far as the wisdom of Vishwamitra is concerned, this is sufficient to declare the person to be liberated.

3-4 This is such a clear defining characteristic, that its absence would be a sure sign of Bondage. Bondage (and liberation, too) are clearly defined with reference to the Vasanas or latent tendencies which are seen manifesting in a person. That is the special message of this verse for all spiritual seekers.

In Vedanta, knowledge of the Self is one of the requirements; the other is dispassion. The former once heard and grasped does not vary; the latter is the only variable once knowledge is received. It is one's dispassion that determines one's progress in spiritual life.

Sage Vishwamitra sees great promise in this young disciple. However, he follows the protocol and refers Rama to the family Guru, Sage Vasishtha...

Verse 2.3: *The Need for Self-Effort*

तदनन्तरं , विश्वामित्रेण प्रेरितः सन् वसिष्ठ उवाच –
सर्वदा सर्वमेवेह , संसारे रघुनन्दन ।
सम्यक् प्रयुक्तात् सर्वेण , पौरुषात् समवाप्यते

॥२.३॥

	<i>tadanantaram, vishvaamitrena preritah san vasishtha uvaacha:</i>	<i>Thereafter, requested by Viswamitra, Sage Vasishtha said:</i>
1	<i>sarvadaa sarvam eva iha</i>	<i>Always, everything indeed in this</i>
2	<i>samsaare raghunandana;</i>	<i>worldly existence, O Raghunandana,</i>
3	<i>samyak prayuktaat sarvena</i>	<i>is, by everyone, through well-applied</i>
4	<i>paurushaat sama-vaapyate.</i>	<i>human effort, easily accomplished.</i>

As one may expect, Sage Vasishtha is more tight-lipped than Sage Vishwamitra when it comes to praising Sri Rama's qualities. Being directly responsible for Sri Rama's spiritual development, he takes the more cautious approach in advising his disciple.

1-4 Whilst much can be learnt from one's Guru, the most important thing that a true Guru asks of his disciple is to make a sincere effort, if possible a superhuman one, to reach any goal in the world, let alone the goal of spiritual enlightenment. Without effort, nothing can be gained. Thus the Sage places before the disciple the value of **self-effort**.

The Value of Self-Effort in Spiritual Life

Throughout the original book, great emphasis is placed on one's self-effort. One's spiritual growth is commensurate with the effort put into Sadhana. On this foundation, Sage

Vasishtha builds the spiritual life of his exceptional disciple. How much more effort would be needed from someone lesser than a Sri Rama!

Self-effort should be made in the right *direction* as well as it should be of sufficient *duration* and *strength*. We have also to think and act in our Sadhana. The fullest use has to be made of the purified intellect.

The reason for emphasizing self-effort is that many people in this field think that just by a touch from the Guru they will accomplish everything. This attitude breeds only laziness. If such is the expectation of the disciple, the Guru drives the thought out of his disciple. The Guru knows that if he makes the mistake of touching just one person, there will be a thousand waiting in the queue to be touched by his 'magical hands'. On the other hand, the pseudo-Guru does just that, in order to have a thousand people waiting upon him!

Success comes to the deserving, to those who work hard and intelligently. We are asked to give up all talk of luck, fate, destiny, palm-reading, fortune-telling, etc, and just work hard at our Sadhana. *There are no short-cuts to success.*

Verse 2.4 & 5 *The Effect of Pure and Impure Vasanas*

द्विविधो वासनाव्यूहः , शुभश्चैवाशुभश्च ते ।

वासनौघेन शुद्धेन , तत्र चेदपनीयसे

॥२.४॥

तत्क्रमेण शुभेनैव , पदं प्राप्स्यसि शाश्वतम् ।

अथ चेदशुभो भावो, यत्नात् जेतव्य एव सः

॥२.५॥

1	<i>dvividhah vaasanaa vyooahah</i>	<i>Your collection of Vasanas are of two kinds:</i>
2	<i>shubhah cha eva ashubhah cha te;</i>	<i>auspicious (pure) and inauspicious (impure).</i>
3	<i>vaasanaa oghena shuddhena</i>	<i>By the stream of auspicious Vasanas</i>
4	<i>tatra chet apaneeyase.</i>	<i>if you are led, then...</i>
5	<i>tat kramena shubhena eva</i>	<i>gradually by that auspicious stream alone,</i>
6	<i>padam praapsyasi shaashvatam;</i>	<i>you will reach the Eternal Abode.</i>
7	<i>atha chet ashubhah bhaavah</i>	<i>If, however, the stream is of inauspicious Vasanas,</i>
8	<i>yatnaat jetavyah eva sah.</i>	<i>then by effort alone should it be conquered.</i>

Sage Vasishtha is determined to make a *Lesson* out of the situation, no doubt, more for the benefit of posterity than because his disciple needed it.

1-2 There are favourable and unfavourable Vasanas in a person. The former are pure and auspicious; the latter are impure and inauspicious.

3-6 Favourable Vasanas provide the impetus to practice Sadhana; to go and search for holy company; and to perform good actions that will benefit others and reduce our own ego-sense. Taken to the extreme case, such Vasanas will take us to the very goal itself – the eternal Abode of the Supreme.

7-8 Unfavourable Vasanas will pull us into the sensual habits of the past; they will attract us to bad company; and will impel us to do those things which will inflate the ego. Every effort has to be made to keep out unfavourable Vasanas and cherish or nurture favourable ones. Obedience to one's Guru is the best guide on this matter.

Verse 2.6: Effort Needed to Maintain Pure Vasanas

शुभाशुभाभ्यां मार्गाभ्यां , वहन्ती वासनासरित् ।
पौरुषेण प्रयत्नेन , योजनीया शुभे पथि

॥२.६॥

1	<i>shubha-ashubh-aabhyaam maarg-aabhyaam</i>	<i>Through good and bad channels</i>
2	<i>vahantee vaasanaa sarit;</i>	<i>flow the river of Vasanas;</i>
3	<i>paurushena prayatnena</i>	<i>by great, manly effort</i>
4	<i>yojaneeyaa shubhe pathi.</i>	<i>it should be directed into the good channel.</i>

1-2 The simile of a ‘river’ is used to indicate to us that at any one time we can have either positive or negative Vasanas, not both at the same time. This makes it easier for us to channelize the Vasanas properly.

When auspicious Vasanas come, they can be shown the green light. When inauspicious Vasanas rise up in the mind, they have to be stopped and shown the red light.

Guruji, being a lover of cricket, changed the simile to suit him: As a cricketer carefully decides which balls to go for and which ones to leave alone, so also the aspirant should decide which thoughts in his mind he should give expression to and which ones he should simply ignore.

“Manly Effort”

3-4 To do this requires great alertness of mind, as is required by a driver in a busy city. This is called “manly effort” in this verse – which is no reflection on lady drivers or lady-aspirants! Guruji explained what “manly effort” referred to:

- i) Be intellectually alert. Do not allow any useless thought to pass through the mind.
- ii) Apply self-effort, be self-reliant, and draw inspiration from within.
- iii) Invoke the Grace of God and Guru. Their blessings help us through the dips in life.
- iv) We have to always remember the consequences of every action. Then we will be afraid to do the wrong thing, and encouraged to do the right thing.

The deciding question is: “Does this Vasana take me towards or away from God?” Those Vasanas that draw us towards God should be encouraged.

Verse 2.7: Even the Good Vasanas Must Be Burnt

ततः पक्वकषायेण , नूनं विज्ञातवस्तुना ।
शुभाऽप्यसौ त्वया त्याज्यो, वासनाद्यो निराधिना

॥२.७॥

1	<i>tatah pakva kashaayena</i>	<i>Thereafter, with passion being burnt-up,</i>
2	<i>noonam vijnaata vastunaa;</i>	<i>and having realised the nature of Reality,</i>
3	<i>shubhaa api asau tvayaa tyajyah</i>	<i>even the good Vasanas must be given up by you,</i>
4	<i>vaasanaa aadyah niraadhinaa.</i>	<i>free from the anxiety of (all) earlier Vasanas.</i>

The first stage in overcoming inauspicious Vasanas is to get rid of the Tamasic type. The dark, thick clouds of deluded thinking has to be destroyed through useful activities, i.e. through Rajas. This stage is implied in the above verse, as it is too obvious to mention.

1 After getting rid of the Tamasic Vasanas, the Rajasic Vasanas need to be worked out. They are “burnt-up” through the counter influence of Sattwic Vasanas.

2 The Sage suggests that the most effective way of overcoming unwanted Vasanas is to keep before the mind the nature of Reality, which stands unchanging and shining like a lighthouse to wandering ships.

3 Finally, the verse tells us to give up even the good Vasanas. How does one actually give up Sattwic Vasanas? It is by doing actions with the feeling that God is doing everything. Eliminating all sense of ‘*doer-ship*’ from our actions is sufficient to remain unaffected by Sattwic tendencies. It is, therefore, not necessary to give up the good actions themselves, but necessary only to give up the attachment to them.

Gurujī emphasized that giving up good Vasanas did not mean not doing good actions. It meant giving up the feeling that we are performing them, and feeling that we are only instruments in the hands of God.

4 A note of caution is sounded before taking this step. Care has to be taken not to do it prematurely, which means before all lower (“earlier”) Vasanas have been eliminated. Out of self-delusion and pride, it is possible that one can give up good, pure activities too quickly, in which case laziness will start establishing itself once again, and will be very hard to remove this time round. The mind has to be free from all Tamasic and Rajasic anxieties before the Sattwic tendencies are also given up.

By doing this Sadhana, i.e. by gradually eliminating all Vasanas of all three types from the subconscious mind, one gets purer and purer, and closer and closer to resembling the nature of God. Some sages say that by sticking to the practice of meditation upon the Self, all the good Vasanas also drop off by themselves, and one abides more and more in the Self. The idea is, “Keep the mind on God, and all other things will take care of themselves.”

Verse 2.8: *The Gatekeepers of Heaven*

मोक्षद्वारे द्वारपालाश्चत्वारः परिकीर्तिताः ।

शमो विचारः सन्तोषश्चतुर्थः साधुसंगमः

॥२.८॥

1	<i>moksha-dvaare dvaara-paalaah</i>	<i>At the gateway to Liberation, the gatekeepers</i>
2	<i>chatvaarah parikeertitaah;</i>	<i>are declared to be four in number: they are</i>
3	<i>shamah vichaarah santoshah</i>	<i>quietude of mind, enquiry, contentment,</i>
4	<i>chaturthah saadhu sangamah.</i>	<i>and the fourth is association with the wise.</i>

This last verse of the chapter is a very oft-quoted one among spiritual teachers. It beautifully signifies the checkpoints by which an aspirant is examined before being admitted through the gates of Liberation.

1-2 Firstly, the significance of the simile itself needs to be understood: Do there have to be gate-keepers at the gates of Liberation? It is very much like the checkpoints one goes through before boarding a flight. The customs clearance and security checks are to ensure that nothing illegal or dangerous to other passengers is smuggled into the plane.

The four gatekeepers perform a similar function. They ensure that the sanctity of the Eternal Abode is preserved. Fortunately, the gatekeepers are not people but qualities; so there is no chance of bribing them, for they have to be cultivated. Some may try to put on

the appearance of possessing the qualities, but that too has no chance, as one of the gatekeepers is Enquiry – he will promptly discover the pretence!

The four gatekeepers are posted at the four corners of **Sadhana Chatushtaya** or “the Fourfold Qualifications”, as follows:

3b ii) Vichara: This is linked to the first qualification in Sadhana Chatushtaya, namely, Viveka or discrimination. Viveka in general is the ability to think well and weigh our actions carefully. Self-enquiry is a very specialized form of Viveka by which one differentiates between what is Real and what is unreal. We may recall the disciple’s seven questions in *Viveka Chudamani* (verse 49). This is Self-enquiry. The idea is to keep the mind at a higher level so that it is not affected by the lower currents of the mind.

Through the practice of Vichaara, one is able to sift out the Real from all one’s experiences, and discard the unreal in them. The Lord is in everything, but He is covered over by a veneer of superimposed unreality which hides Him. Through Vichaara the Lord is unmasked and revealed to the seeker.

3c iii) Santosha: This is linked to the second qualification in Sadhana Chatushtaya, namely, Vairagya or dispassion. Contentment with respect to material gains is another way of referring to Vairagya from the positive angle. We must develop the *Alam* mentality, that is, “Enough is enough – now I want to go for higher things.” Fill the mind with noble thoughts. Seeing the Self in all is the positive way to develop contentment.

3a i) Shama: This is linked to the third qualification in Sadhana Chatushtaya, namely, Shat-Sampati, or the “Sixfold Virtue”. Shama is the first among them. It is a standard rule when reading the scriptures that when the leader of a pack is mentioned, the whole pack is meant to be included. The six virtues are: Shama, Dama, Uparati, Titiksha, Shraddha and Samadhana; i.e. calmness of mind, sense-control, mastery over mind, endurance, faith and single-pointedness of mind. All these six virtues are clubbed together as they influence each other and cannot be developed in isolation from the others. Their common aim is to make the mind fully available to God, i.e. Samadhana, a one-pointed mind.

4 iv) Sadhu Sangam: This is linked to the fourth qualification which is Mumukshutva or intense longing for God. Through the “company of noble, spiritually-minded people”, the holy ones, we develop this quality of longing for God. There is no better way to cultivate love for God, but by associating with those who have that love. The noble ones alone can honestly tell us where we stand on the spiritual ladder, and they can guide us to the next step.



Chapter Three
(14 Verses)
KNOWLEDGE OF THE SELF

WE HAVE ALREADY COME across (in verse 2.2) the definition of bondage and liberation in terms of Vasanas or desires. In the *Katha Upanishad* also a similar view has been taken to start with. The language that most people can relate to is that of their desires. Desires take hold of us and bind us firmly to the world of the objects desired.

In this chapter we go to the first principles upon which bondage and liberation is based. This is what the Sage is introducing to Sri Rama in this verse, and explains it in the rest of the Chapter.

Verse 3.1: Introduction to the Nature of Bondage

वसिष्ठ उवाच –

बन्धस्य तावद्रूपं त्वं , कथ्यमानमिदं शृणु ।

ततः स्वरूपं मोक्षस्य , ज्ञास्यसि त्वमसंशयम्

॥३.१॥

	<i>Vasishtha uvaacha:</i>	<i>Sage Vasishtha continued:</i>
1	<i>bandhasya taavat roopam tvam</i>	<i>The nature of bondage is to you now being</i>
2	<i>kathyamaanam idam shrinu;</i>	<i>described – listen eagerly to this.</i>
3	<i>tatah swaroopam mokshasya</i>	<i>Thereafter, the nature of Liberation</i>
4	<i>jnaasyasi tvam asamshayam.</i>	<i>will be understand by you without any doubt.</i>

1-2 Bondage and liberation mean different things to people in different stages of spiritual development. Gururji introduced the concept of bondage and liberation starting from the broad perspective of an ordinary ‘man of the world’.

i) **To a Robber:** We start with a thief, robber, and plunderer as an example. To him bondage is *being put behind bars*, where his freedom of movement is restricted. However, some people may not see that as bondage. A poverty-stricken man may actually wish for the security offered to him in a prison. He may actually court arrest, just to have the bare necessities provided for him in prison.

ii) **To the Exploited:** On the social side, we see sections of the community *being stifled, exploited, cheated* by a bureaucratic system. The women’s liberation was mentioned by Gururji. Some women find that they are in bondage in society under male dominance, and launch a campaign to free themselves from it.

iii) **To a Politically Enslaved Nation:** In politics, bondage is *domination by one group* over other groups. This is routinely practiced by the more powerful nations over weaker ones. The subjection of the whole of India by the British people is a case every Indian will

never forget. There were many groups that fought bravely, some very fiercely and others non-violently, for the country's freedom. Yet, many in the country were also quite indifferent to the struggle, not willing to see the bigger picture of their slavery. They were 'contented slaves'. They did not feel any bondage. They actually worked happily for their oppressors!

iv) **To the Poverty-Stricken:** Then we come to another social disequilibrium – that of distribution of wealth. Bondage to them means *not having enough resources* to enjoy life fully. The rich resort to suppression of the poor. Differences in wealth are perpetuated by one dominant group over other disadvantaged groups in the same nation. In the field of spirituality and religion, too, this can be seen to be practised. In order to seek relief from poverty, people have resorted to pray to Deities to bring them some material relief. They see God as one who relieves their material disadvantage.

v) **To Seekers of Heaven:** Others, having some sense of a code of morality, adhere to the path of Dharma but see themselves bound by *severe limitations to enjoy pleasures*. They perform actions with the desire to achieve 'Heaven' where they will be free from the afflictions of this world. Earthly limitations, they believe, are not present in heaven to restrict them in their enjoyments. They speak of celestial damsels and immortal ever-youthful bodies; freedom from hunger and thirst, etc.

3-4 Everything described so far holds the view that material prosperity is the basis of being free of all hardship and sorrow. In comparison to all these views of bondage, what does the Sage Vasishtha have to teach Sri Rama about bondage? So far no one has even thought of Moksha or spiritual Liberation, which is now going to be described . . .

Verse 3.2: *Bondage – the Seer and the Seen*

द्रष्टुर्द्रश्यस्य सत्ता हि , बन्ध इत्यभिधीयते ।
द्रष्टा द्रश्यवशात् बद्धो, द्रश्याभावे विमुच्यते

॥३.२॥

1	<i>drashtuh drashyasya sattaa hi</i>	<i>The existence of the seer and the seen is</i>
2	<i>bandhah iti abhi-dheeyate;</i>	<i>indeed called as "Bondage".</i>
3	<i>drashtaa drashya-vashaat baddhah</i>	<i>The seer influenced by the seen, is bound;</i>
4	<i>drashya abhaave vimuchyate.</i>	<i>and in the absence of the seen, is liberated.</i>

Here is the very basis of real, spiritual bondage in life. It takes us to the very root of all bondage that we may experience in life. Such a definition is not often heard of in ordinary life. Yet it contains in it the key that can free us from all troubles once and for all. The implications of this idea of bondage are enormous when we closely examine it.

1-2 The *Yoga Vasishtha* is expounded to aspirants such as Sri Rama who have already learnt from experience that worldly, sensual life can never satisfy anyone.

The 'seen' represents everything which the sense objects of the world promise to give us – happiness, fulfillment, satisfaction. The 'seer' is he who experiences or 'sees' these objects. That immediately means that the seen is different from the seer.

This verse says that as long as we have the mentality of seer and seen in our mind, we can never be truly free; we shall always be in bondage. This is a novel approach, indeed, to the topic of Bondage. Many may already be startled by it.

Thus, until we know who the Witness is, we will always remain in illusion. Our liberation from illusion depends entirely on our progress inwards from senses to mind and from mind to the Witness. In simple terms, Vedanta asks us to transcend the mind in order to attain liberation. It does so in a most logical manner without recourse to any dogma. That is the great appeal Vedanta has in the modern scientific age.

At this stage it must have struck us that we are talking of a completely different concept of bondage from that outlined earlier under verse 3.1. Vedanta takes us to the root of the problem, not to just a superficial solution to satisfy our individual preferences.

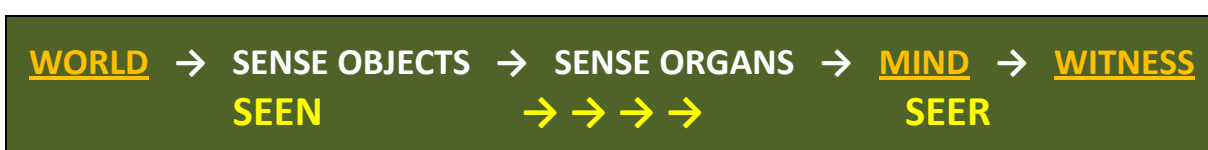
Verse 3.4: *The “Seen” is Like a Dream*

ततः सुषुप्ताविव स्वप्नः , कल्पान्ते प्रविनिश्यति

॥३.४॥

1	<i>yat idam drishyate sarvam</i>	<i>This which is “seen” – the entire</i>
2	<i>jagat sthaavara jangamam;</i>	<i>world, both movable and immovable –</i>
3	<i>tat sushuptau iva svapnah</i>	<i>even as a dream disappears in deep sleep, so too</i>
4	<i>kalpaante pravi-nashyati.</i>	<i>at the end of a cycle of creation, the world perishes.</i>

We enter this verse having the following sequence of five items:



From this point to the end of the Chapter, we shall look at the three underlined items, examining each of them in that order. From this exercise we aim to obtain the true relationship between the World at one end and the Witness at the other.

World: Verses 3.4 to 3.7 deal with the World or the Universe. The purpose of discussing the World is to show how changing it is, and hence it cannot be classified under Reality, but as the very opposite of Reality.

1 The grossest in the 'seen' sequence is the Universe, consisting of all the planets, suns, galaxies, solar systems, etc. The sheer magnitude of the Universe is enough to make our little ego appear insignificant.

2 The Universe consists of inert or insentient objects as well as living or sentient creatures. Sentient beings are called 'movable'; insentient objects are called 'immovable'.

3-4 The changing World may be compared to the cycles of waking and deep sleep that we undergo every 24 hours. The universe is subject to cosmic time cycles of creation (waking) and dissolution (sleeping), a cycle that takes many millions of years. At the dawn of the universe, creation begins, and at dusk of the universe, creation dissolves.

Everything disappears into dream and deep sleep at night. The next day we continue from where we left the previous day. In the same way creation also simply continues after the great dissolution.

Whether it is on a day-to-day scale or a cosmic scale of millions of years, the lesson is that the world is temporary, it has only a relative reality. We ought not give it more importance than it deserves. Relative to Reality, we can consider the universe as a mere dream and nothing more. There is something more permanent upon which we should be paying attention.

During the time of Cosmic Dissolution, we come face to face with that Reality...

Verse 3.5: “Stimita Gambheeram”

ततः स्तिमितगंभीरं , न तेजो न तमस्ततम् ।
अनाख्यमनभिव्यक्तं सत् , किञ्चिदवशिष्यते

॥३.५॥

1	<i>tatah stimita gambheeram</i>	<i>There is then a “still, profound Existence”;</i>
2	<i>na tejah na tamah tatam;</i>	<i>It is neither light nor darkness; It pervades;</i>
3	<i>anaakhyam anabhi-vyaktam</i>	<i>It is nameless and unmanifest;</i>
4	<i>sat kinchit avashishyate.</i>	<i>Existence alone remains.</i>

The previous verse closed with the dissolution of the World. This verse continues from that point and describes the situation during the state of dissolution of the World.

1 Stimita Gambheeram: This is a novel word used in this context, not found in any other text. It is unique and so apt in referring to the stillness that pervades the universe when everything has dissolved. Guruji tried to make us understand what was meant by such a profound state of existence. He gave us two examples:

An Ocean Without Waves: Can one imagine such an ocean? What would it be like? It is only possible when there is not a bit of breeze. Everything is dead still. A waveless ocean would be a noiseless ocean – it would be a haven for fish who wish to be in an undisturbed state of meditation!

A Classroom of Children: When the teacher is out, there is the non-stop prattle of children going on. Then the teacher walks in. The children do not notice him and continue their endless ‘waves’ of chatter. Suddenly, the teacher’s voice thunders out: “Silence”! Just as suddenly the classroom becomes dead quiet. That peace pervading such a class will give us some idea of the magical word *Stimita Gambheer*.

2 Light and darkness are also meaningless as there are no eyes to behold them.

3 With nothing perceivable in such a state of dissolution, there is no need for any names for there is nothing to differentiate.

4 Deep Existence alone is aware of Itself!

Verse 3.6: The Names of That Essence

ऋतमात्मा परं ब्रह्म , सत्यमित्यादिका बुधैः ।
कल्पिता व्यवहारार्थ , तस्य संज्ञा महात्मनः

॥३.६॥

1	<i>ritam aatmaa param brahma</i>	<i>The divine Truth, the Self, the Supreme Brahman</i>
2	<i>satyam iti aadikaah buddhaih;</i>	<i>and Truth, etc – the wise,</i>
3	<i>kalpitaah vyavahaaraartham</i>	<i>for the sake of transaction, have invented</i>
4	<i>tasya samjnaa mahaatmanah.</i>	<i>such names for that Great Essence.</i>

1-4 This state of dissolution of the universe has mystified many a poet in his effort to describe it. The great Masters have coined many names for this ‘nameless’ state, purely for communicating the ideas connected to it. Each name describes it from a different angle, but all of them are referring to the same still, profound, unmanifest Existence – the “*Stimita Gambheeram*” of the previous verse.

Even in this world of Plurality, every name bears two levels of understanding. The primary level of every word refers to its pure existence. Independent of what it is named, *IT IS!* Only the secondary meaning brings in the characteristics of the thing it refers to.

As the changeless Truth, it is called **Ritam**. Like the beats in a song which run on without changing, giving structure to the song; or as gold that is common in all gold ornaments; so also this substratum of Existence is common in all things created.

Param is a word used to show the ultimate degree of comparison. ‘Best’ is not good enough for such a great Truth. If the word may be coined, ‘Bestest’ would be more appropriate! That is the spirit of the meaning conveyed by **Param**.

Brahman comes from the same root as the word Brihat, meaning “limitlessly great or big”. It is hard to imagine what this “Big-ness” could mean. If we say a big mosquito, most people will imagine a mosquito like the size of pea seed. If we said big rat, perhaps one would think of a creature resembling a cat. Bigness is just relative. How big is Brahman? One would generally have to look up to indicate how big it is. It is absolutely ‘Big’ – everything in creation can fit into it comfortably and there will still be free space for more!

This Supreme Being is that which is beyond anything that is Seen, as described earlier. To know That would take us beyond all bondage.

Verse 3.7: How Individuality Comes About

स तथा भूत एवात्मा , स्वयमन्य इवोल्लसन् ।
जीवतामुपयातीव , मननात् स्थूलतां गतः

॥३.७॥

1	<i>sa tathaa bhootah eva aatmaa</i>	<i>The Self, being of That very nature,</i>
2	<i>swayam anyah iva ullasan;</i>	<i>appears as though It is different from Itself;</i>
3	<i>jeevataam upayaati iva</i>	<i>It appears as though It is an individual soul;</i>
4	<i>mananaat sthoolataam gatah.</i>	<i>due to the process of thinking, It becomes gross.</i>

We now shift our attention from the world to the individual being in the sentient part of creation. The core message of this verse is that individuality is a superimposition on

the Reality. Just as we have seen in the three verses above that the essence of the whole world is the supreme Brahman, so also, we now see that all individuality arises from the same Brahman.

1 Aatmaa: “*The Self*”. When Brahman expresses Itself through an individual body, then It is common to refer to It as the Self. There is no difference between these two terms except the point of reference. Aatmaa is used when the body is the point of reference, and Brahman is used when the whole cosmos is the point of reference.

2 Iva: “*as though*”. This word is particularly important. It tells us that the grossness of the world is only apparent, and that the essence of this creation is Brahman. The idea of superimposition arises from this statement. The individual qualities – limitedness and impurity – are superimposed on the unlimited and pure Self, making it *appear* different from the Self.

3 The Self, coming into association with the gross body, appears to be limited to it. It also takes upon Itself all the qualities of that limited being, all his faults and weaknesses, although they do not belong to It at all. Thus the individual is an unreal appearance of the Supreme Self.

4 Now we are told how this appearance or superimposition comes about. The direct answer is the process of thinking. There must be something in our thinking that is directly responsible for this superimposition taking place. Our attention is drawn to our thoughts to find a solution, and that means to the mind in which all thoughts are produced.

A useful simile here would be that of a knife cutting an apple. Every piece of apple has the imprint of the knife on it. When cut into smaller and smaller cubes, every small piece of apple has the print of the knife on it. Thinking is like that knife. As it continues, it keeps sub-dividing the unchanging Reality into smaller and smaller units that are within its grasp to comprehend. In the process of thinking, every thought carries with it the imprint of individuality, the imprint of a separate identity known as an individual soul. In reality there is no individual soul, there is only the universal soul. Superimposition creates the individual soul identity.

In the next section, we focus on the mind to see what actually takes place to produce this illusion.

THE MIND SEEN AS WORLD

Verse 3.8: *The World – A Magician’s Jugglery*

मनो भवति भूतात्मा , तरंग इव वारिधेः ।

तेनेयमिन्द्रजालश्रीः , जागती प्रवितन्यते

॥३.८॥

1	<i>manah bhavati bhootaatmaa</i>	<i>The mind is to the entire gross world,</i>
2	<i>taranga iva vaaridheh;</i>	<i>what a wave is to the ocean.</i>
3	<i>tena iyam indrajaala-shreeh</i>	<i>By that (mind) this splendid jugglery or magic show</i>
4	<i>jaagatee pravi-tanyate.</i>	<i>of the world is spread out.</i>

In this section, a new approach is introduced in the *Yoga Vasishtha*. A new, novel way of looking at the world is being suggested.

1 Instead of the “Self-Mind-World” chain, the suggestion is to simplify it to the “Self-Mind” chain, by incorporating the world into the mind. This makes the whole problem of discovering our true Self a matter solely between our mind and the Self. We have only two parameters now, not three. The external factor of world is cut out of the equation.

Implicit in this new method is that we are redefining the mind. Its boundaries are now no longer simply those of a single individual. The mind now takes on, in theory, the proportions of a cosmic entity. It can no longer be thought of as limited to an individual. One cannot now say ‘my mind’; he is compelled to say just ‘mind’ or ‘mind-stuff’. This itself is no small task. It means that one who wishes to use this new method due to its simplicity, has also got to be daring and bold enough to be able to expand his mind to the new dimensions! It is easier said than done. The Ego acts against this expansion. It rebels against the very idea.

2 Hence, we should warn ourselves of this additional qualification. If we are not ready to jump into the cosmic ocean, we are well advised to stay on the shore with individuality and develop ourselves till we are ready. We can choose to remain the little wave that we are, rather than think of ourselves to be the vast ocean. The choice is ours, and it can only be based on our capacity to expand.

3 Once we choose to expand and identify ourselves with the ocean, i.e. make our mind broad enough to include the world-show into it, then our entire outlook of the world changes. Everything is now seen as taking place within our own mind. The world show is happening in our mind. It makes us directly responsible for all the happenings around us.

Of what benefit is this to us? That is the mind that takes on the role of functioning as a juggler, producing the whole circus of “Maya’s tricks” within our own being! How this world goes on developing and dividing itself resembles the work of a master juggler. From the compounding of thought upon thought, the multiplication process goes on, producing what we behold as the world show. It not only sounds fantastic, it is fantastic!

Guruji expressed it beautifully. He said, “We start with the Self in our right palm and end with the world in the left palm – just like a juggler’s trick!”

Verse 3.9: *Names for the “Magical Power”*

अविद्या संसृतिर्मोहो, बन्धो माया मलं तमः ।
इति नामानि तस्याश्च , कल्पितानि भवन्ति हि

॥३.९॥

1	<i>avidyaa samsritih mohah</i>	<i>Ignorance, transmigration, delusion,</i>
2	<i>bandhah maayaa malam tamah;</i>	<i>bondage, illusion, impurity and darkness –</i>
3	<i>iti naamaani tasyaah cha</i>	<i>these are names by which</i>
4	<i>kalpitaani bhavanti hi.</i>	<i>this “magical power” is indeed variously termed.</i>

3-4 As 3.6 gave us various names for the Supreme Truth, so also, this power of differentiating it into innumerable small entities, which is essentially a “projecting power”, is given numerous names, even more names than those for the Self. The list given above is only a small fraction of these names.

1-2 Each name given represents a manner of viewing this process of differentiation. As is the theory proposed, so arises the name given. Philosophers and scientists have a field day in inventing various theories for this creation, from “Big Bang” down to “no bang” at all. Each theory would have a name to differentiate it from other theories. Ignorance is only one, but its names are many, depending on the theory trying to explain it.

The Hunt for Solutions

Guruji gave the example of a snake-bite. The antidote for a snake-bite exists in the same forest where the snake lives.

From the Vedantic point of view, the hunt for a solution is simple: ***“Where the problem is, there precisely lies the solution.”*** The solution to all this differentiation is not to be found outside creation but deep within it. This is the great contribution made by Vedanta towards the discovery of Truth.

The web of Samsara resembles the world-wide-web – “www” – of the internet. It is a jungle of ideas and thoughts from humanity. The solution lies amongst those thoughts. Vedanta says it lies in the **gap** between those thoughts.

VARIOUS THEORIES OF THE WORLD

- i) It is **Ignorance** if we cannot find any explanation.
- ii) it is **Transmigration** when we see it as a phenomenon of endless births and deaths.
- iii) It is **Delusion** when we are are baffled by the laws governing the world.
- iv) It is **Bondage** to a seeker who feels imprisoned by it.
- v) It is an **Illusion** to the Vedantin who gives it no reality of its own.
- vi) It is **Impurity** to the Vairagi trying to develop dispassion for the world.
- vii) And it is **Darkness** to the enlightened one, for he does not find Reality there!

The technique of seeing the world as a projection of the mind is one of the powerful methods in Vedanta by which the seeker can discover his relationship to the world, and also his relation to the Reality. The whole Sadhana takes place in the mind. The mind becomes the centre-stage for the enquiry into the discovery of the Self. Meditation is the platform it needs in order to do this.

A technical term has been to this method of seeing the world. Our usual way is to see the world outside of us. That is called **Srishti-Drishti Vada**, “that which is created out there is what we see”. For this novel approach the term used is its reverse, namely, **Drishti-Srishti Vada**, “that which we see inside here (in the mind) is the world.”

Various Vedantic texts turn to the Drishti-Srishti Vada (Vada means a “model”) when explaining the higher stages of spiritual growth. We first came across it in Text 3, *Atma Bodha* (v39). We shall see more of it again in the advanced text, *Advaita Makaranda*, Text 26. In the *Mandukya Upanishad*, Text 41, this technique is explored in very great depth, especially in the third and fourth Prakaranas. Finally, we shall come to it again in Text 42, the *Dakshinamoorthy Stotram*.

REALITY, MIND & WORLD

Verse 3.10: *Relation Between World & Reality*

यथा कटकशब्दार्थः , पृथक्त्वार्हो न कांचनात्
न हेम कटकात् तद्वत् , जगच्छब्दार्थता परे

॥३.१०॥

1	<i>yathaa kataka shabda arthah</i>	<i>Just as the meaning of the word 'bangle'</i>
2	<i>prithak-tva arhah na kaanchanaat</i>	<i>does not deserve differentiation from gold,</i>
3	<i>na hema katakaat tadvat</i>	<i>nor gold from bangle; similarly,</i>
4	<i>jagat shabda arthataa pare.</i>	<i>the meaning of the word 'universe' (cannot be separated) from the Supreme Reality.</i>

Having made a closer study of the World (3.4 to 3.7) and the Mind (3.8 to 3.9) we now come to the concluding section of this Chapter by seeing the relationship between Reality, Mind and World, the great triangle within which lies the mystery of this creation.

The Simile: Ornaments & Gold

1-2 The relationship of Reality or Truth to the world can be well illustrated with the simile of gold and the ornaments made from gold. "How far is gold from the necklace? So far is God from creation; so far is God from me!" – These words were often on the lips of Pujya Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda.

3-4 The manifested universe is related to Reality in the same way as gold ornaments are related to gold. The Presence of God is right here in our midst. Illusion makes us fail to see Him. Once we are able to clear this illusion, we should see only God everywhere.

This simile is very common in Vedanta. A search done throughout these Course notes shows that it has appeared in 15 texts out of the total 46.

Gold is a simile suitable to relate Reality with the gross inert manifestation of the world. What about the living beings in the world? How are they related to Reality?...

Verse 3.11: *Creatures Spread Forth from Intelligence*

यथाङ्कुरोऽन्तर्बीजस्य , संस्थितो देशकालतः ।
तनोति भासुरं देहं , तनोत्येवं हि दृश्यधीः

॥३.११॥

1	<i>yathaa angkurah antar beejasya</i>	<i>Just as a sprout emerges out of a seed,</i>
2	<i>samsthitah desha-kaalatah;</i>	<i>(so also), at the right condition of place and time,</i>
3	<i>tanoti bhaasuram deham</i>	<i>a sentient body is produced</i>
4	<i>tanoti evam hi drishya-dheeh.</i>	<i>and spreads likewise from the intelligent principle (within the universe).</i>

Sage Vasishtha changes the simile to illustrate the relationship for sentient beings. The simile given in this verse – the seed and the sprout – is an appropriate one drawn from the sentient world.

1 A seed, to all appearances, bears no resemblance to the tree that sprouts up from it. Yet there is no denying that the tree is somehow ‘hidden’ in it. The tree is a manifestation of the unmanifest conception of a tree that is within the seed.

2 The only thing separating a seed from the tree is place and time. **Place** stands for the right conditions under which the seed will sprout forth. This means the seed has to be placed in earth and surrounded with water. These two contain all the nutrients needed by the seed. **Time** is required for the transformation of the seed into a huge tree.

3 In the same way, for living creatures, there is a “seed” for the body as well as for the soul. The physical manifestation is not so much our concern here as it is not very different from the inert gross manifestation of the world, and we have already dealt with that. The spiritual manifestation of the soul is what makes sentient creation different from inert creation. So, it is the soul that concerns us here.

4 The seed for the soul is the Karma performed by the being in past births. That determines what type of body is ordered. The intellect or the principle of intelligence does the rest. From universal intelligence a suitable body is created which would be ideal for a particular type of Karma.

Thus the individual soul’s relation to the universal Self or Brahman may be written as an equation as follows:

$$\text{PURE CONSCIOUSNESS} + \text{KARMA} = \text{JIVA (or INDIVIDUAL SOUL)}$$

There is the principle of intelligence in every atom of creation, not just humans. The Earth has its own Intelligence just as an individual being has it. Then there is the Total Intelligence. Vedanta gives a name for this Total Intelligence in the universe – it is called Hiranyagarbha. It translates as Cosmic Womb (Garbha = womb). From it arises the manifestation of the entire creation.

Verse 3.12 & 13: *The State that Always Exists*

संकल्पजाले गलिते , स्वरूपमवशिष्यते ।

महाप्रलय संपत्तावसत्तां समुपागते

॥३.१२॥

अशेषदृश्य-सर्गादौ , शान्तमेवावशिष्यते ।

आस्तेऽनस्तमितो भास्वान् , परमात्मा महेश्वरः

॥३.१३॥

1	<i>sankalpa-jaale galite</i>	i) When the web of thoughts ceases,
2	<i>svaroopam avashishyate;</i>	one’s own natural state remains;
3	<i>mahaa pralaya sampattau</i>	ii) When the great dissolution occurs, during
4	<i>asattaam samupaagate.</i>	which state there is no manifestation of any objects,

5	<i>ashesha-drishya-sargaadau</i>	<i>up to the beginning of creation of the entire “seen”,</i>
6	<i>shaantam eva avashishyate;</i>	<i>(then,too) Stillness alone remains.</i>
7	<i>aaste anastamitah bhaasvaan</i>	<i>The shining Light which never sets, That alone exists –</i>
8	<i>paramaatmaa maheshwarah.</i>	<i>That is the Supreme Self, the Great Lord!</i>

In these two verses, the focus is on the Supreme Reality. Two points of time in the Time-cycle compel our attention to go to the Reality. One is the “dusk” of creation when everything is entering the state of dissolution or ‘going to sleep’. The other is the “dawn” of creation when everything is emerging out of its seed state and begins to bloom out.

Criss-crossing the idea of these time-nodes of creation, is the idea of the microcosm and macrocosm, called the Vyashti and Samashti respectively. This also is seen in the verses.

From the Microcosmic Viewpoint

1 From the individual viewpoint, the ceasing of thoughts happens under two distinctly different circumstances in an individual:

i) The usual case is the approach of death. When the last thought ceases, the Prana pushes the subtle body out of the gross body. Then follows the dissolution of the body.

ii) The other is a spiritual dissolution. The thoughts are consciously brought to an end in meditation by the spiritual adept. When he succeeds in doing this, he is unaware of the physical body as well as the subtle body. 8 He is merged in the Supreme Self, while still living. 2 This is the natural state of Self-realisation, the highest spiritual attainment. The ceasing of thoughts consciously leads to **Liberation** of the individual soul.

From the Macrocosmic Viewpoint

Sunrise and sunset are two especially beautiful moments of the day; so also dissolution and creation are the dusk and dawn periods in the cycle of creation which are more prominent than others. They are like the birth and death of Creation.

3 Here, the Cosmic Dusk is described. It is the onset of dissolution of the whole cosmos. 4 Every object in creation dissolves and returns to its original state. It goes without saying, that all bodies, both gross and subtle, of living creatures also dissolve. This means that all thoughts in the entire universe cease. The Total Mind (Hiranyagarbha) dissolves. This takes place at the dusk of creation, an event that marks the end of the Cosmic Day. It occurs once in many millions of years.

5 Then follows the Cosmic Dawn. During this period, everything returns to its original state of manifestation. Just as when we awake we are the same person as the one that slept yesterday, so with everything in creation. It just continues after a long night’s “sleep”. One can conceive of a huge Cosmic “Memory Bank” which had stored every detail during the period of dissolution. Where could this Bank be?

6 The answer can only be in that which remains. Sage Vasishtha says that “only Stillness” remained. The Memory Bank lies within the folds of this Stillness. 7 This Stillness strongly resembles the sun. The sun remains shining at all times. Earth’s rotation produces day and night. This makes the sun a pretty good simile for Reality, but it is only a simile. For one day even the sun, which is another object in the universe, will be dissolved like all other objects. However, the Reality never dissolves – it is ever present, come night or day.

8 This then is the great Vedic conception of Reality. It is that which has no end. It ever exists and is absolutely constant through all cycles of Time.

Some Thoughts on the Creation Cycle

1. The point of interest for us is that such a state of dissolution highlights the fundamental Truth of the universe. When everything dissolves, that which is left is the Truth, which alone never dies.

2. “Non-Existence” here simply means absence of manifestation of the universe, it does not mean that there is nothing in existence. The whole world goes into a seed state.

3. The spiritual teaching is that all thoughts in our mind need to cease and a ‘thought-silence’ has to prevail within us. That would represent the cosmic stillness at individual level. This silence can be experienced by each individual seeker of Truth within his own world – namely, his mind.

4. The idea that comes through is that the net of Samsara is self-created by each one of us. It lies in our own imagination. We are responsible for the net which entraps us, no one else. Every human being can therefore free himself from it, independent of anyone else in the world. Liberation is in each person’s hands, if only he wants it bad enough.

5. In this cyber age we have a beautiful example of how creation began. Before the coming of the Internet, the entire concept existed in the mind of a small group of individuals. Then the first website was posted. As the idea caught, more websites were posted. Then came a proliferation of thoughts focused on the internet, and millions of websites came into being. It is a perfect example of “the web of thoughts”.

Verse 3.14: *Realising the Supreme Reality*

भिद्यते हृदयग्रन्थिश्छिद्यन्ते सर्वसंशयाः ।

क्षीयन्ते चास्य कर्माणि , तस्मिन् दृष्टे परावरे

॥३.१४॥

1	<i>bhidyate hridaya-granthih</i>	i) The knot of his heart is cut asunder;
2	<i>chhidryante sarva samshayaah;</i>	ii) All doubts are dispelled; and
3	<i>ksheeyante cha asya karmaani</i>	iii) for him all Karmas are exhausted –
4	<i>tasmin drishte paraavare.</i>	when the Supreme Self is seen by the seeker.

This verse is from the *Mundaka Upanishad* (II-2.8), and has been quoted here as it was in *Drg-Drishya Viveka*, to give authenticity to the experience of the Self. The comments can be taken as the same as in *Drg-Drishya Viveka*:

The verse spells out the threefold benefits of **4** realizing Brahman, the Supreme Self:

1 i) Knot of the Heart: This knot is actually made up of a series of knots, one above the other. What are these knots that make up the “Knot of the Heart”?

a. The first one, at the first level, is Ignorance, over which all other knots appear.

b. Then discontent or the feeling of incompleteness arises from Ignorance;

c. This creates desires of various kinds to fill the vacuum of discontent.

d. Actions have to be done to fulfill the desires.

e. This sets off the next tier of knots to meet the competition from others for the same objects. These knots are disappointment, anger, greed, jealousy, envy, meanness.

f. The knots of bad Karma are raised due to compromising our morality.

g. From all this Karma arises the endless cycle of births and deaths in this world.

This whole vicious circle is referred to as the “knot of the heart.”

2 ii) Doubts: The fundamental doubt we all have is that we are uncertain who we are. We find it difficult to believe that we are God in reality. However, the practice of the meditation prescribed earlier – that of feeling the Presence of God in all – destroys all doubts completely.

3 iii) Karmas: The third benefit of realizing God is that all our Karmas are burnt to cinders. They are payable only by the soul tied in bondage to this world. After Self-realisation, the individual is ‘dead’ and so the person accountable for payment of Karmic debts no longer ‘exists’. At one stroke he is freed from all the Karmas that had accumulated from time immemorial.

Additional Remarks by Guruji:

The Granthis or knots are ignorance-born. A Jivanmukta, acting from knowledge and not ignorance, cannot be affected by them.

In the *Srimad Bhagavatam*, the Granthis are described in a unique manner. They are described as “a man’s attraction for woman, and a woman’s attraction for man.” This, according to the *Bhagavatam*, is the grossest form of Granthi. All the other knots are small villages compared to this knot which is like the capital city.

Doubts about the existence of Brahman are also born of ignorance. Thus, such doubts may be considered to be cousins of the Granthis of the heart. Sometimes, even after 2 years of the Vedanta Course, the conviction is still not there that Brahman exists.

Guruji then spoke about the sweetness of Brahman. He compared it to the *modaka* (sweetmeat) in the hands of Ganesha, which is supposed to represent Vedanta. Once we have tasted this *modaka*, how can we doubt that ignorance can be overcome? There will be no need to conquer ignorance – it will go by itself.

Guruji gave the example of a man who has married three times, each wedding 5 years apart. When he dies, do not all three of his wives become widows *at the same time*? In the same way ignorance may be long-standing but as soon as knowledge comes it vanishes instantly. Knowledge is death for ignorance.



Chapter Four

(8 Verses)

CHARACTERISTICS OF JIVANMUKTA

Verse 4.1: *What is Jivanmukti?*

नृणां ज्ञानैक-निष्ठानाम् , आत्मज्ञान-विचारिणाम् ।
सा जीवन्मुक्ततोदेति , विदेहोन्मुक्ततैव या

॥४.१॥

1	<i>nrinaam jnaana eka nishthaanaam</i>	<i>For persons wanting knowledge alone</i>
2	<i>aatma jnaana vichaarinaam;</i>	<i>and who, with that aim, reflect on Self knowledge,</i>
3	<i>saa jeevan-muktataa udeti</i>	<i>there arises, while yet living, the state of liberation</i>
4	<i>videha un-muktataa eva yaa.</i>	<i>which is verily the bodiless supreme liberation.</i>

It was emphasized in class again that only when we become realized ourselves can we understand what life is for a Jivanmukta. Until then, these descriptions are to be taken as inspiration for us to pursue our quest with greater zeal.

1 We note that the very first remark here is that the sole motivation for **Knowledge** should be the seeking of Jivanmukta. Any other motive for this knowledge will be regarded as “ulterior” and will contaminate the knowledge. Sincerity of purpose is emphasised at the very outset.

2 From the Vedantic point of view, knowledge is certain death for ignorance. Once knowledge is firm in a person through constant reflection, there is no possibility of ignorance creeping in again. “Once ignorance leaves the house, it cannot return to it again.” One is therefore being asked to have faith, not in human nature but in Divine nature, which is beyond human weakness. Faith in the Divine is rewarded when the motive is sincere.

3 Some people do not believe that one can be liberated while living. This is because of a basic lack of faith in human or divine nature – they believe that only death can tell whether a person has remained a true sage till the end of his life. For this reason, in some religions, saints are canonized only after their death.

4 The primary description of a Jivanmukta is that he goes beyond body-consciousness and attains liberation from worldly existence. All other descriptions of a Jivanmukta’s external behaviour, conduct, speech and reactions, are secondary. The point being clarified here is the sage, at the moment of realisation, has freed himself from all bondage to the body. He does not have to wait till death for that to happen. He can be considered to be already ‘bodiless’. Bodilessness while yet living is **liberation**.

In the next 5 verses (4.2 to 4.6) we are given different characteristics of a Jivanmukta or liberated sage. Gururji made a special effort to explain these verses as clearly as possible, especially because of the great tendency we have of trying to judge saints. Essentially the verses are meant to inspire us to that state, not to judge who is a saint and who is not.

Verse 4.2: Jivanmukta – Facing Opposing Effects

नोदेति नास्तमायाति , सुखे दुःखे मुखप्रभा ।
यथाप्राप्तस्थितिर्यस्य , स जीवन्मुक्त उच्यते

॥४.२॥

1	<i>na udeti na astam aayaati</i>	<i>Neither increasing nor fading away,</i>
2	<i>sukhe duhkhe mukha prabhaa;</i>	<i>in joy or in sorrow respectively, is his facial glow;</i>
3	<i>yathaa praapta sthithi yasya</i>	<i>remaining appropriate to circumstances,</i>
4	<i>sah jeevan-muktah uchyate.</i>	<i>he is said to be liberated while living.</i>

In general, the life of a Jivanmukta is free from all calculated intentions; spontaneous reactions are the opposite of calculated ones. Both these reactions are governed by the circumstances prevailing. The first will be appropriate without any selfishness added into it. The second will be appropriate after personal considerations are accounted for. The difference between these two is brought out in this verse.

Let us first consider the spontaneity of reactions.

Spontaneity

1-2 Mukha Prabhaa: “facial glow”. The spontaneous reaction is the one indicated by the “facial glow” or lack of it. None can hide or disguise this first reaction. It indicates the true feelings running through a person’s mind. The calculated reaction takes a bit of time to come through. It follows the spontaneous one. If both are the same then, of course, there will be no change in the “facial glow”. If they differ, the “facial glow” will change its hue in accordance with the calculation.

Why is this significant here? The absence of any calculation can be noted by constancy of the initial “glow”. Whether it reflects joy or sorrow is immaterial. A sincere person’s glow can be joyful or sorrowful, but it will not change from the first reaction. An insincere person’s glow will change.

This is the importance that Sage Vasishtha gives to “facial glow”. He is simply saying that in a sage, there is no change, because there are no personal considerations to cause the change. That is all he is saying. We can use this fact to judge our own intentions, not make the error of using it to judge the sage’s intentions.

Now we can look at appropriateness in the same way.

Appropriateness

3-4 The sage is not a stone which remains unmoved by joy or sorrow. He is not “a wooden log” who will remain coldly expressionless. The sage can express either joy or sorrow, in accordance with what is appropriate to the circumstances that are prevailing. His reactions will always be appropriate. If news is brought to him of someone’s death, he will respond with sympathy. If someone is getting married, he will respond with a blessing.

The difference between what is appropriate to a saint and what is appropriate to an ordinary worldly person lies in the vision from which the reaction arises. The saint’s vision is pure, unmixed with any selfishness. His vision is one of love and compassion. That is constant in a sage, since he lives in pure divine consciousness.

In this way the Sage carefully teaches us not to turn sages into stones and wood!

Verse 4.3: Jivanmukta – Beyond the Three States

यो जागर्ति सुषुप्तिस्थो, यस्य जागन्न विद्यते ।
यस्य निर्वासनो बोधः , स जीवन्मुक्त उच्यते

॥४.३॥

1	<i>yah jaagarti sushuptisthah</i>	<i>He who is awake while in deep sleep,</i>
2	<i>yasya jaagrat na vidyate;</i>	<i>for whom there is no waking,</i>
3	<i>yasya nir-vaasanah bodhah</i>	<i>whose knowledge is free from Vasanas;</i>
4	<i>sah jeevan-muktah uchyate.</i>	<i>he is said to be liberated while living.</i>

To understand the apparent contradiction here, we have to recall the fact that the Self is the **Witness** of the three states of waking, dream and deep sleep. The Jiva goes through the experience of these states because it is unaware of being their witness. The sage goes through the same three states while fully aware of being their witness. Once we understand this principle of Vedanta, it becomes easier to understand this verse.

1 The dream state is to be taken as included here. The Jivanmukta is identified with the Self, so that is where he is during these three fluctuating states. In our case, we are sound asleep in deep sleep; but the Jivanmukta is ‘awake’ witnessing the sleep. He never loses his awareness of the Self. The Self as the eternal Witness, is never asleep. Only the body and mind need a rest from their endless activity; the Self is ‘on duty’ all the time. From this angle, the Jivanmukta is said to be awake during deep sleep.

2 Then why is it said that the Jivanmukta is never awake? Again, these are expressions from our ignorant standpoint. To differentiate the ordinary ignorant person’s waking state from that of a Jivanmukta, such statements are made. When we are awake, it is only to experience the sense world, nothing else. Our waking state is fully engaged with sensory perceptions. The sage does not dwell at that level of stimulation from the outside world. He rests in his Self even when awake. He is awake only to the Self at all times. He is not awake to his senses as we are.

Freedom From Vasanas

3 What makes it possible for a saint to experience sleep and waking states differently from the ordinary person? This line explains the spiritual state of the Jivanmukta that justifies the above contradictions – absence of **Vasanas**:

Guruji gave an example to explain what is meant here. Consider that one who is not a realized sage is giving a speech on Vedanta. He has knowledge but it is not backed by experience of the Truth. Such a person, who still has worldly Vasanas, cannot prevent their “smell” coming through in his talk. The Vasanas will have their own impact on the audience, in addition to the impact of his words! The Jivanmukta is free of these Vasanas, and so his words will make a deep “unadulterated” impression on his listeners.

Another explanation for Vasana-less Knowledge is in the context of the three states. In ordinary experience, it is our Vasanas that dictate the flow of our waking state. It is a combination of Vasanas and imagination that dictate our dreams. And it is the presence of the cloud of Vasanas that prevent us from contacting our Self during deep sleep. Our Vasanas (causal state) are present with us in all three states. Being without Vasanas, the Jivanmukta’s experience of the three states is very different from ours.

Verse 4.4: Jivanmukta – Facing Opposite Causes

रागद्वेषभयादीनाम् , अनुरूपं चरन्नापि ।

योऽन्तर्व्योमवदत्यच्छः , स जीवन्मुक्त उच्यते

॥४.४॥

1	<i>raaga-dvesha bhaya aadinaam</i>	<i>In the presence of likes, dislikes, fear, etc ,</i>
2	<i>anu-roopam charan api;</i>	<i>though behaving in accordance with them,</i>
3	<i>yah antar vyoma-vat ati-acchhah</i>	<i>the sage, like space, remains fully pure within;</i>
4	<i>sah jeevan-muktah uchyate.</i>	<i>he is said to be liberated while living.</i>

We see in this verse the spring from which arises the later personality of Sri Rama as Maryaada Purusha, the one whose conduct is appropriate and ideal to his circumstances at all times. He always did the right thing in a given situation.

The general explanation of this verse is that the Self is unaffected by anything that is superimposed upon it. However, in applying this principle to a saint, we often forget that the saint's responses to outer events are themselves superimpositions on the Self. What are the implications of this? This is answered in this verse.

1-2 This verse bears strong similarity to verse 4.2. In place of the effects named joy and sorrow, we are now dealing with their *causes* named likes and dislikes, with fear and anxiety being other secondary causes. Once again the verse highlights a very common mistake we make in our relentless judgement on the realized sage. Seeing him expressing approval of certain things and disapproval in other things, we conclude that he is still a victim of likes and dislikes. When we view things from a narrow, restricted angle, we will always find a way to discredit others.

Sage Vasishtha has a practical interpretation of equality under opposing causal factors. He does not interpret equality to mean treating all alike. That would be repeating the error we corrected in verse 4.2. In the saint's dealing with the causes, we see the same spontaneity and appropriateness as we saw in the way he handled the effects they produced upon him. He acts with impartiality and appropriateness towards the causes also.

Some examples will help us to see this clearly. When Sita was abducted, Rama wept and cried out in despair; when Lakshmana was unconscious, he became very disconsolate; when faced by Ravana, he stood firmly against his wickedness. In every case he dealt with the situation as required by principles of righteousness.

3-4 How is the sage able to do this? It is only possible through purity of heart. Purity keeps him fully in touch with his Self. From that contact he acts and deals with the circumstances that he is placed in. The purity renders his deeds flawless and taintless. They do not leave any trace of stain upon him.

A Story by Guruji: A man asked a sage in what way the sage was different from himself. The saint simply smiled. The man had an ulterior motive to prove that a saint is no better than anyone else. He said, "You sleep, you eat, you write, you play – how are you different from us?"

To this the sage replied, "Yes, I do all the things just as you, but there is a difference. When I sleep, I sleep; when I eat, I eat; when I work, I work. That is the difference." He meant that his whole mind is always on what he is doing. It is in the present. This is unlike the man who lets his mind wander to many other things besides the work at hand.

Verse 4.5: Jivanmukta – Free from Doership & Taint

यस्य नाहंकृतो भावो, यस्य बुद्धिर्न लिप्यते ।
कुर्वतोऽकुर्वतो वापि , स जीवन्मुक्त उच्यते

॥४.५॥

1	<i>yasya na ahamkritah bhaavah</i>	<i>He who has no sense of doership,</i>
2	<i>yasya buddhih na lipyate;</i>	<i>and whose intellect is not tainted,</i>
3	<i>kurvatah akurvatah vaa api</i>	<i>whether he is engaged in action or not,</i>
4	<i>sah jeevanmuktah uchyate.</i>	<i>he is said to be liberated while living.</i>

This verse explains: the spontaneity of verse 4.2, the “absence of Vasanas” of verse 4.3, and the purity in verse 4.4. How do we recognize these three superb qualities possessed by the saint? The answer lies in two things: i) Doership; and ii) a tainted intellect.

1 Doership: This is seen in the feeling “I am acting”. Due to the combination of the above three qualities, this feeling does not arise in the Jivanmukta.

There is no “I-ness” and “mine-ness” in a saint. That makes his actions and words have a totally different result from those who act from ego and pride.

2 Tainted Intellect: This is an intellect that is obsessed by the ego; it is a slave to the ego and takes all credit to itself, having no thought of the Self that empowers it to act. It is a sign of lack of purity in the mind. Its opposite, an untainted intellect, has no pride in it. Sometimes, even not acting can be done out of pride, as when a person says, “I’m not going to speak to you. I don’t want to see your face!” Such feelings do not arise in a sage.

The absence of the above two are more easily recognized than the former three qualities which are hard to detect.

3 The thought, “I am not doing this” is a subtle form of ego just as the thought, “I am doing it.” One is an act of commission; the other is an act of omission. Both can arise from the ego. Doership is what produces a Karmic result, whether an act is committed or omitted.

Example: Guruji explained a saint’s actions with this very unusual example: If a person who is sleeping kicks another person, it is not taken as an offence because there is no sense of doership in the act. No intention can be ascribed to such a kick. It is an act which is equivalent to a ‘non-act’. But if he is awake, then even if he just says “I will kick you” without actually doing it, he offends the other person! This is a ‘non-act’ which is in effect an act. This is the subtle idea conveyed here.

It is the sense of doership and a tainted intellect that are responsible for an act which leaves a scar on the doer. Without them, a deed is really no deed at all. Saints are free from both. Hence their actions leave no scars of Karma. An action is only an action if it is done with a sense of “doership”. If “doership” is not there, then any act become Inaction and is rendered harmless, like writing on water.

The Bhagavad Gita speaks of this in verse 4.18.

***karmaṇi akarma yaḥ paśhyed, akarmaṇi cha karma yaḥ;
sa buddhimān manuṣhyeṣhu, sa yuktaḥ kṛtsna-karma-kṛit** ||18||*

“Those who see action in inaction and inaction in action are truly wise amongst humans. Although performing all kinds of actions, they are yogis and masters of all their actions.”

Verse 4.6: Jivanmukta – Free From Fear

यस्मान्नोद्विजते लोको, लोकान्नोद्विजते च यः ।

हर्षामर्षभयोन्मुक्तः , स जीवन्मुक्त उच्यते

॥४.६॥

1	<i>yasmaat na udvijate lokah</i>	<i>He whom the world does not fear,</i>
2	<i>lokaat na udvijate cha yah;</i>	<i>and who is not afraid of the world;</i>
3	<i>harsha amarsha bhaya unmuktah</i>	<i>who is free of elation, intolerance and fear –</i>
4	<i>sah jeevanmuktah uchyate.</i>	<i>he is said to be liberated while living.</i>

The *Bhagavad Gita* has a verse almost identical to this, in describing a Bhakta and a Jnani. The sage's sensitivity to the feelings of others is brought out in this verse, and in the process we learn that the underlying principle is that he is seeing the Self in all, and all in the Self. The application of this lofty Vedantic principle is at work here.

1 The people around a sage are not agitated by him, nor are they afraid of him.

Guruji introduced his explanation with a clever twist. Let alone being afraid of others, there are people who are very afraid of *themselves*. They hate being alone; they always seek companionship. To one such person, a wise man once said, "If you do not enjoy your own company, why do you inflict it on others?" The point is that the sage enjoys the company of others when he is with them, and enjoys his own company when he is in solitude!

2 The sage also does not get agitated by those around him, nor does he feel afraid of them. This is the other side of the same coin described above. The sage is fearless, and grants fearlessness to others.

What could be the explanation for this? How is it possible to possess this quality?

3 There are three conditions which enable this quality to manifest:

i) No Elation: The sage controls his rejoicing so that it does not arouse jealousy in the hearts of others who may be his opponents. He is quick to attribute his success to others. This diverts attention away from him. Others working with him then do not feel jealous of him. It requires absence of egoism to be able to act in this way. It also requires one to be anchored in his deeper Self, and remain free from surface disturbances which impinge on his mind.

ii) No Intolerance: People are not afraid of a sage because he has no intolerance in him. Fear is only instilled into people by being intolerant of them. Going a little deeper, we may enquire what makes the sage tolerant of others? This answer is also given in this line – he is free from elation (which means he is also free from displeasure). One who is thus balanced cannot become a source of fear to anyone. He radiates love only.

iii) No Fear: The sage is fearless. Fear is unknown to him. Guruji remarked that this was "Live and let live" in practice. This philosophy does not appeal to many in this world. For them it is "Kill or be killed."

The racial intolerance in recent South African history was quoted as an example of such an attitude. It requires vaster minds like that of Nelson Mandela and Gandhiji to bring peace among such people.

Verse 4.7: Jivanmukti & Videhamukti

जीवन्मुक्तिपदं त्यक्त्वा , स्वदेहे कालसात्कृते ।
विशत्यदेहमुक्तत्वं , पवनोऽस्पन्दतामिव

॥४.७॥

1	<i>jeevanmukti padam tyaktvaa</i>	The state of “ Liberation in Life ” naturally ends
2	<i>sva-dehe kaalasaat-krite;</i>	when the time of death of the body arrives.
3	<i>vishati adeha muktatvam</i>	Then, he enters the state of “ Disembodied Liberation ”.
4	<i>pavanah aspandataam iva.</i>	Wind, when free of movement, is called air.

The terms Jivanmukti and Videhamukti are used from the standpoint of those observing the saint, not from the saint’s viewpoint. To the saint there is not difference between the two, since he has already disconnected his relation with the body at the moment of realisation. To onlookers, who have the natural inclination to see things with reference to the body only, they see a saint who is living – the Jivanmukta – and then a saint who dies – the Videhamukta. They cannot, of course, ‘see’ what sainthood actually is.

The “End” of Jivanmukti

1 Logically speaking, the state of Jivanmukti or “*Liberation while living*”, obviously comes to an end when the saint dies. That is what observers see.

2 The state is, so to speak, ‘renounced’ or ‘abandoned’ when death comes. People are seeing the saint purely from the point of view of his body.

The “Beginning” of Videhamukti

3 When death occurs, then that same state of liberation, being permanent and having nothing to do with the body as far as the saint is concerned, is simply given a new name – Videhamukti or “*Disembodied Liberation*” – by people who only see his dead body. It is straightforward and logical for observers to make this distinction. The sage’s body condition is all that matters to outside viewers.

From the Saint’s Viewpoint

Now, for the important part of the verse. How does the saint himself see this change from living to being dead?

4 While the sage was in the body, although he was free from the effects of any Karma, he still had to obey the laws pertaining to his body. His body movements still continued. This movement is compared to wind, which is just “*moving air*”. A living saint has to undergo all the movements that his body is subjected to, but he is indifferent to these movements.

However, once he gives up his body, he is free from these movements. Then he is still. This stillness is compared to air, which has no movement at all. Even as there is no difference between wind and air in the actual substance, so also there is no difference in the saint’s realisation whether he is alive or dead. His sainthood remains unchanged.

All this sounds like beating about the bush, but Sage Vasishtha is educating Sri Rama into the knowledge of what it means to be free from body-consciousness. A person who is truly free from the body idea, has no fear for death, because it has no impact on his state of realisation.

Verse 4.8: What Becomes of the Soul After Death?

विदेहमुक्तो नोदेति , नास्तमेति न शाम्यति ।

किमप्यव्यपदेश्यात्मा , पूर्णात्पूर्णतराकृतिः

॥४.८॥

1	<i>videhamuktah na udeti</i>	<i>The liberated one on leaving the body rises not,</i>
2	<i>na astam eti na shaamyati;</i>	<i>nor sets, nor ceases to be;</i>
3	<i>kim api avyapadeshyaatmaa</i>	<i>Becoming something inexplicable in nature,</i>
4	<i>poornaat poornatara aakritih.</i>	<i>he is of a form which is fuller than fullness itself.</i>

Once again, Two points of view are presented to what becomes of the soul after death. Firstly, we are given the scenario that pertains to the common man. Thereafter, we are given what happens in the case of a saint.

The Common Man's Case

1 Na Udeti: “He rises not”; i.e. he does not go to heavenly planes.

2a: Na Astam: “He sets not”; i.e. he does not to the nether regions or hell either.

2b Na Shaamyati: “He ceases not to be”; i.e. he does not become non-existence.

These are the three options put forward for the general question of what becomes of the soul after death. Those who believe there is a soul, will then have the options of going to heaven or hell. Those who believe that there is no soul, will have only one option – that they become ‘nothing’!

There is a second meaning to “ceases not to be”. It means immediate rebirth into another body. Heaven and hell may not exist, but rebirth occurs. In fact it goes on and on, birth after birth. There is endless transmigration of the soul. This is the scenario a common man is looking at.

The Case of a Saint

In the case of the Jivanmukta or the realised sage, he goes neither to heaven nor to hell, nor does he become non-existence. Having trod the path of knowledge, he has extinguished the ignorance which makes people wish to go to heaven and avoid hell. The knowledge has taken him beyond both these options. And knowing that the Self is indestructible and eternal, the option of becoming ‘nothing’ is also closed to him.

So what happens to him after death?

3 He discovers himself to be everything, he merges into the Supreme Being! The Supreme is here described as “inexplicable”. This is not merely to create a suspense in the reader, but it actually is true that the Supreme is inexplicable. Nothing can describe it accurately because it is beyond words.

4 Poornaat Poornatara: An attempt is nevertheless made to describe it. It is said to be “fuller than fullness”. That merely creates another problem of trying to figure out what that means! How can he be fuller than fullness itself?

Fullness is only a concept in our mind. Whatever we may think of as being the fullest, the Self is *fuller* than that concept or thought. It's like the word ‘bestest’ that we had coined earlier in verse 3.6 to explain ‘Param’.

To the Rishis, English would have proved to be too ‘miserly’ a language!



SRI RAMA
*the young disciple of
Sage Vasishtha*

Chapter Five

(10 Verses)

THE SEVEN “BHUMIKAS”

NOW WE COME TO THE very well-known system of classification known as the Sapta Bhumikas, or “Seven Stages of Knowledge” which has made the *Yoga Vasishtha* famous amongst students of Vedanta. Many other texts have either quoted this system or given equivalents of it with the same idea in mind. The 7 steps cover the spiritual life from the point of entry into the Jnana Marga to its culmination.

We shall present the System, while drawing parallels found in the *Bhagavad Geeta* and the *Viveka Choodamani*, both being advanced texts on Vedanta.

The development of the aspirant is traced. The starting point is the dawn of dispassion in the aspirant, and the end point is the highest state of complete union with the Self. In seven well-defined stages we trace the progress of a seeker of Truth.

Spiritual evolution is very different from material evolution. Darwin explained the latter, but he had no idea of the former. In Darwin’s theory of evolution of matter, we go on “becoming” something new. Matter never remains stagnant. Beings go on to evolve into better-shaped, better-equipped bodies. Nothing is said of their souls.

Anecdote: Guruji gave us a modern anecdote on Darwin’s theory: A cellphone saw that its owner had preserved his old telephone which was the forerunner of the cordless cellphone. It was curious to see the cable connected to the phone. When it met its cellphone-friend one day in another home, he said to it, “You know, it is said that our ancestors had a *tail*. Well, it is true – I have actually seen it!”

Verse 5.1: **1. SHUBHECCHHAA – The “Auspicious Wish”**

वसिष्ठ उवाच –

ज्ञानस्य भूमिकानां त्वम् , अद्य निर्वचनं शृणु ।

किं मूढ इव तिष्ठामि , प्रेक्ष्येऽहं शास्त्रसज्जनैः ।

वैराग्य-पूर्वमिच्छेति , शुभेच्छेत्युच्यते बुधैः

॥५.१॥

	<i>Vasishtha uvaacha:</i>	<i>Vasishtha continued:</i>
1	<i>jnaanasya bhoomikaanaam tvam</i>	<i>The steps making up the Path of Knowledge</i>
2	<i>adya nirvachanam shrinu;</i>	<i>are now going to be described. Listen to them:</i>
3	<i>kim moodha iva tishthaami</i>	<i>“Why do I live like a deluded fool when</i>
4	<i>prekshye aham shaastra sajjanaih;</i>	<i>I am shown by scriptures and virtuous people</i>
5	<i>vairaagya poorvam icchhaa iti,</i>	<i>to need ‘the desire preceded by dispassion’,</i>
6	<i>SHUBHECCHHAA iti uchyate buddhaih</i>	<i>or ‘AUSPICIOUS WISH’, as the wise call it?”</i>

MILESTONES IN SADHANA

(A General Pictorial Map of the Whole Spiritual Path)

DESIRE SCALE (a rough idea)	THE SAPTA BHUMIKAS	GEETA REFERENCES	VIVEKA CHOODAMANI REFERENCES
0%	7 TH TURYAGAA	PHASE V JIVANMUKTI Illumination	PARTS 7, 8 & 9 NIRVIKALPA SAMADHI Full Abidance in Self
	6 TH PADAARTHA ABHAAVA		
	5 TH ASAMSAKTI	5. Sthitaprajna: Attain Steady Wisdom – Zero Vasanas	
10%		PHASE IV DHYANA YOGA Meditation	PARTS 4, 5 & 6 NIDIDHYASANA Intermittant Abidance in Self
	4 TH SATTWAAPATTI	4. Yoga-Aaroodhah: Quiet, Peaceful, Contemplative Mind	
	JNANA	PHASE III KARMA SANNYAS Firm Knowledge	PART 3 MANANA Reflect & Enquire, Clear Doubts
20%	3 RD TANU-MAANASA	3. Yoga-Yuktah: Equiposed Mind, Sharp & Subtle Intellect	
	KANDA	PHASE II BHAKTI YOGA Dispassion/Devotion	PART 2 SRAVANA Receive Knowledge of Self
	2 ND VICHARENAA	2. Aarurukshah: Mind Free from Sensuality, Begin Om Japa	
40%		PHASE I KARMA YOGA Work Out Karmas	PART 1 GURU UPASADANA Approach & Serve Guru
	1 ST SUBHECCHHAA	1. Saadhaka: Renounce fruits of Actions, Reduce Desires	
	UPASANA KANDA	JAPA YOGA Devotion Worship	PART 1 THE AWAKENING Sixfold Virtues
80%	Upaasaka	Grihasthi & Vanaprasthi: Chitta Shuddhi, Chitta Ekagrata	
	KARMA KANDA	Righteous Life Perfection in Work Secular Studies	PART 1 THE PREPARATION Basic Training & Learning
	Karma Kandi	Brahmachari in Gurukula: Follow Dharma (Righteous Conduct)	
100%			

Vedanta explains the spiritual evolution to the point of perfection. We are all made of the same spiritual 'substance' or Truth or Reality. Further, that Reality is not only identical in all of us, but it is Non-dual; It is the thread and the beads that form the necklace of creation. Nothing is excluded from it! Spiritual evolution lies in realising this Truth. The Bhumikas are milestones in this evolution process.

Preparation Prior to the 1st Bhumika

Prior to the seven Bhumikas, the seeker is in the "Primary Level" of development:

i) **The Karma Kanda**: A person enters this stage when he realizes that fulfillment of desires cannot be a totally uncontrolled scramble after pleasure. It has to be governed by Dharma. The man has many desires to fulfill, but through the Karma Kanda he does so in a regulated, scripturally-approved manner. He is not denied his desires; he is only asked to acquire them legitimately and in harmony with the rest of creation.

ii) **The Upasana Kanda**: This is the entry into religious life. Devotion to God finds a place in man's heart. He recognises that a Divine Being controls all human aspirations. He begins to relate to that Being. He worships a chosen Deity and places all his desires in His hands. There is, however, still a bargaining mentality with this Deity. Fulfillment of desire is the driving force, not an unconditional love for the Deity.

1-2 Passing these two stages, the seeker enters **Jnana Yoga** or the Path of knowledge, which is also called the Path of Renunciation. What makes him do so?

3 At the dawn of entering this Bhumika, the seeker takes stock of himself: "Am I going in the right direction? Is my life meaningful? Am I fulfilling life's purpose?" The answers come as a sort of shock when he realizes that however busy and active he is in the world, he is just wasting his time chasing his tail. He has been very busy – doing nothing!

He sees that desires lead him into a never-ending circle, and that he does not gain any permanent happiness through them. The thought of renunciation and dispassion enters his mind for the first time. He renounces such desires and strives for something higher.

4 Wanting to bring his life on the right track, he begins to study the scriptures more seriously. He meets fellow spiritual seekers, and perhaps a Guru to guide him. He is drawn to the Jnana Kanda of the Vedas which speak of the Path beyond Sorrow.

Arriving at the 1st Bhumika (Key factors are placed in bold letters)

In effect, this marks a complete "U-Turn" in life. According to the Geeta, **Renunciation** of the fruits of actions marks the 1st Bhumika, named **Subhecchha**, the "Auspicious Wish". Subhecchha is the auspicious desire for Self-knowledge. A thirst for the higher knowledge draws him in. He becomes a **Sadhaka**, a spiritual aspirant whose goal is set on God-realisation. He enters the "Secondary Level" of spiritual life.

5 **Vairagya** for sensual pleasures forms the theme of the Jnana Kanda portion of the Vedas. Dispassion is the precursor for the desire for God. When the seeker chooses desirelessness, only the desire for Truth remains. This is Subhecchhaa.

6 It is the beginning of a grand spiritual journey that is destined to lead the Sadhaka all the way to the Supreme Truth, to take him beyond the phenomenal plane and into the Absolute plane of existence. There he beholds the Lord of all Lords, known also as Brahman, the Ultimate Reality. This Path takes him permanently beyond all sorrow. He is liberated once and for all from the realm of **Transmigration** or births and deaths.

Verse 5.2: 2. VICHAARANAA – Righteous Reflection

शास्त्रसज्जनसंपर्क , वैराग्याभ्यासपूर्वकम् ।
सदाचारप्रवृत्तिर्या , प्रोच्यते सा विचारणा

॥५.२॥

1	<i>shastra sajjana samparka</i>	<i>Association with the scriptures and virtuous people</i>
2	<i>vairaagya abhyaasa poorvakam;</i>	<i>and practice of dispassion – preceded by these,</i>
3	<i>sadaachaara pravrittih yaa</i>	<i>the resulting inclination towards righteous conduct</i>
4	<i>prochyate saa VICHAARANAA.</i>	<i>is called REFLECTION or self-introspection.</i>

Sadhana From 1st to 2nd Bhumika

1-2 Everything that drew the Sadhaka to the 1st Bhumika is carried forward. Nothing is dropped or discontinued.

The Sadhana for this stage is threefold. All three have one single aim, and that is rapid purification of the heart. This is called **Chitta Shuddhi**:

i) **Karma Yoga**: In the Geeta, Lord Krishna starts Arjuna off with Karma Yoga. As one plunges into selfless service activities, especially the service of one's Guru, and service done with the full awareness of righteous principles in mind –such service removes all grossness from one's personality. Karma Yoga is the main preparation for entry into the 2nd Bhumika.

ii) **Guru Upasadana**: At this stage, Vedanta views the main Sadhana as building up one's relationship with the Guru. It is the seeker's good fortune to meet a spiritual guide or Guru. He serves his Guru wholeheartedly and develops purity. The Guru is one of exemplary character. He has attained a certain stability on the path and has a firm grasp of the basic principles of spiritual life.

Life under a Guru can be quite austere. All the sharp edges of the personality are chiselled out. There is an emphasis on a rigorous, austere and simple life lived under the watchful eye of the Guru. The seeker is essentially being groomed to receive the knowledge.

In this regard Swami Sivananda says that a matric student can teach a primary schoolboy; an M.A. graduate can teach a student of B.A.; a PhD graduate can teach an M.A. student; and a Professor can guide a Phd student to his Doctorate. This principle applies in spiritual growth as well. One need not wait for a God-realised saint to start his spiritual life.

3 iii) Righteous Conduct: In this text, correcting and divinising our conduct becomes the central Sadhana in going from the 1st Bhumika to the 2nd Bhumika. The idea is to render the mind more Sattwic. Turning away from sensuality and egoism is the main focus in Karma Yoga. Pleasure is no longer the driving force in our life. It is replaced by loftier ideals and a commitment to refined values. When one is free from gross sensuality, one can safely say that he has reached the 2nd Bhumika.

Arrival at the 2nd Bhumika

4 The second Bhumika or stage of knowledge is called Vichaaranaa, the stage of “deep reflection or self-introspection”. The three practices above produce a Sadhaka who is a well-prepared receptacle for knowledge. At this point, the old personality is completely overwritten by the new spiritual one. The seeker becomes a perfect **Karma Yogi**.

The transformation of the personality is the key characteristic that marks the entry into the 2nd Bhumika. The seeker is called an **Aarurukshah** in the Geeta, “one who is ready to mount the steed of Knowledge”. He is ripe to listen to the knowledge from the Guru.

Verse 5.3: 3. TANU-MAANASAA – Subtlety of Mind

विचारणा-शुभेच्छाभ्याम् , इन्द्रियार्थेष्वसक्तता ।

याऽत्र सा तनुता भावात् , प्रोच्यते तनुमानसा

॥५.३॥

1	<i>vichaaranaa shubhecchhaabhyaam</i>	<i>Along with Reflection and Auspicious Wish,</i>
2	<i>indriyaartheshu asaktataa;</i>	<i>non-attachment to the sense objects</i>
3	<i>yaa atra saa tanutaa bhaavaat</i>	<i>which arises due to subtle thinking</i>
4	<i>prochyate TANUMAANASAA.</i>	<i>is called SUBTLETY OF INTELLECT.</i>

Sadhana From 2nd to 3rd Bhumika

1-2 All the previous practices are continued unabated, i.e. scriptural study, spiritual company, and dispassion towards sense pleasures. A pure lifestyle is already in place.

Again the Sadhana to reach the 3rd Bhumika is threefold. All three have the single aim of rendering the intellect more subtle and sharp. This is called **Chitta Ekagrata**:

i) **Bhakti Yoga**: In the Geeta, the Sadhana of Karma Yoga progresses to **Bhakti Yoga** at this point in order to establish a stronger relationship with God. Dispassion and worship transform the personality. In Bhakti Yoga, one practices Upasanas designed to make the mind one-pointed and God-centred. The hold of the Ego is greatly diminished.

ii) **Sravana**: From the Vedanta perspective, the Teacher begins imparting knowledge of the Self to his worthy disciple. This is a very serious aspect of Vedantic Sadhana. The seeker comes to know details about the Self, Its nature, about that which is not the Self and the various forms taken by the not-Self.

3 iii) **Subtle Thinking**: In this text the Sadhana is seen as development of the intellect. By the practice of Bhakti, purification of the mind is taken further. A close bond of love and trust is developed between the seeker and his Teacher. The Sravana and Bhakti ensure that the intellect is given maximum exercise. Chitta Shuddhi and Chitta Ekagrata combine to produce a very *subtle intellect*.

In the 2nd Bhumika, the mind was engaged outwardly to free itself from sensuality and egoism. Now in the 3rd Bhumika, it is engaged inwardly to remain *equipoised and balanced* in all conditions. The knowledge of the Self is a great help in achieving this balance, due to knowing more and more about the nature of the Self.

Arrival at the 3rd Bhumika

4 The 3rd Bhumika is named *Tanumaanasaa* which means “*subtlety of intellect*”, due to the subtlety developed in the intellect as described above. This comes mainly due to the effect of knowledge of the Self. Renunciation becomes the watchword for the seeker who arrives at the 3rd Bhumika; at this stage the seeker may opt to take Sannyasa in order to devote more time to his spiritual practices. He becomes a perfect **Bhakta** or devotee.

In the Geeta the seeker at this stage is given the name **Yoga-Yuktah**, “*one whose mind is yoked to the Self.*” Bhakti is mainly responsible for the significant *withdrawal* from the outside world seen now. External activities are reduced to a minimum.

The fruits gathered so far – right desire, company of the Guru, scriptural study, perfect dispassion, an ego that is checked, an equipoised mind and subtle intellect – all these form the *foundation* that takes one forward to the next Bhumika.

Verse 5.4: 4. SATTWAAPATTI – Absorption into Being

भूमिकात्रितयाभ्यासात् , चित्तेऽर्थविरतेर्वशात् ।
सत्यात्मनि स्थितिः शुद्धे , सत्त्वापत्तिरुदाहता

॥५.४॥

1	<i>Bhoomikaa tritaya abhyaasaat</i>	<i>Due to the practice of the above three steps,</i>
2	<i>chitte artha virateh vashaat;</i>	<i>and by the power of withdrawal from the objects,</i>
3	<i>satya aatmani sthithi shuddhe</i>	<i>the mind becomes pure and abides in the Self.</i>
4	<u>SATTWAAPATTIH</u> <i>udaahritaa.</i>	<i>This is declared to be <u>ABSORPTION INTO BEING.</u></i>

Sadhana From 3rd to 4th Bhumika

1-2 The Sadhana for this stage is primarily to prepare the seeker for meditation. The preparation is seen in its three aspects in the Geeta, by Vedanta, and in this text:

i) **Bhakti Yoga**: In the Geeta, this phase is where Bhakti Yoga is taken to perfection. The withdrawal of the mind from the sense objects frees it from restlessness. Extroversion gives way to introversion. Knowledge of the Self provides a resting place for the withdrawn mind. With the mind engaged and dedicated to a higher altar, Egoism has little scope to become troublesome. Bhakti has the effect of rendering the Ego harmless.

ii) **Manana**: From the Vedantic viewpoint, the main Sadhana during this leg of the journey is Manana or Self-enquiry. The subtlety acquired by the intellect enables one to enquire deeply within to remove all doubts still lingering regarding the Self. All Asambhavana or doubts regarding the possibility of realising the Self are removed. A firm conviction to press ahead arises. The seeker feels confident of success in achieving the ultimate Goal.

iii) **Self-Abidance**: The development of the mind is taken to a new level. The equipoised and balanced mind of the 3rd Bhumika is taken a step further to become the quiet and peaceful mind of the 4th Bhumika. The mind in this condition is the perfect platform to remain still and focused in meditation for lengthy periods. It is fully available for deep contemplation on the Self. Whilst one-pointedness brings the mind to focus upon the Self alone, it is Purity of mind that it stays focussed for a long period in meditation.

Self-abidance is a major gain in this stage. Bhakti overcomes the distraction of the Ego, while Manana overcomes the distraction of doubts in the intellect. Together they open the highway of unruffled meditation to the seeker.

Arrival at the 4th Bhumika

4 We are now at a very advanced stage in spiritual evolution. The Sadhaka enters the "University Level" of spiritual life.

This Bhumika is called **Sattwaapattih**, "*absorption in the Self*". The fruit of this step are the first glimpses of the Self. However brief they may be, each time the seeker succeeds in contacting the depths of his Being, he feels a great sense of fulfillment. These experiences form the "Opening Ceremony" of the rich, inner life of meditation that characterises the remaining three Bhumikas. The seeker becomes a true **Sannyasi**, be it formal or informal.

The difference between Bhumikas from here onwards lies only in the degree of dispassion, and refinement to 100% purity. From the 4th Bhumika, we are already beholding a God-realised sage in the making. He is now at the Savikalpa Samadhi stage. He is called a **Yoga-Aaroodhah** in the Geeta, "*one who has mounted the steed of Knowledge.*"

Verse 5.5: 5. ASAMSAKTI – “Non-Union With the Not-Self”

दशाचतुष्टयाभ्यासाद् , असंसंगफलेन च ।

रूढसत्त्वचमत्कारा , प्रोक्ताऽसंसक्तिनामिका

॥५.५॥

1	<i>dashaa chatushtaya abhyaasaat</i>	<i>By the practice of the above four steps,</i>
2	<i>asamsanga phalena cha;</i>	<i>and as a result of non-attachment,</i>
3	<i>roodha sattwa chamatkaaraa</i>	<i>when the spectacle of pure Being has shot forth,</i>
4	<i>proktaa ASAMSAKTI naamikaa.</i>	<i>it is called by the name of NON-UNION.</i>

Sadhana From 4th to 5th Bhumika

1-2 Once again, the text reminds us to carry forward all previous progress, the last item of which was non-attachment (Actually it was the purity of being attached to the Self). The Sadhaka has gained the quietened mind, he has arrived at the Savikalpa Samadhi stage, and he is as good as a Sannyasi, even if it is not formal with ochre robes. He has had intermittent glimpses of the Self. But he still holds the “thought” of the Self. All this means he is at the threshold between the phenomenal plane and the Absolute plane.

The seeker is at that point where he is on the verge of being transformed into a God-realized sage. But there are certain requirements he still has to meet before becoming a full-blown one. For instance, the ‘thought’ of the Self has to dissolve. More importantly, deep under-currents of Vasanas still lie embedded in his subconscious mind that can surface and trouble him. They are called Viparita Bhavana in Vedanta.

The Sadhana lies in removing this Viparita Bhavana. Again we see it from our three sources of information:

i) **Karma-Sannyasa Yoga**: In the Geeta, this term is used to describe this Sadhana. It literally means “*The Yoga of Renunciation of Actions*”, but is also translated as “The Yoga of True Renunciation” or “The Yoga of Action and Knowledge”. This is the Yoga which describes the stage we are discussing in this context. It is covered in the 5th Discourse.

The true spirit of Renunciation is explained by Lord Krishna. It is not simply physical renunciation of the action while still performing it in the mind. It is performing of actions with the feeling of not being their ‘doer’. It is like writing on water – no trace remains. In conjunction with this type of action, there is combined the highest Knowledge. Only the knowledge makes such renunciation possible. That knowledge is the actual experience of the Self, not the theoretical knowledge received during Sravana.

ii) **Nididhyasana**: From the Vedantic perspective, the Sadhana of this phase is called Nididhyasana, which is equivalent to meditation, the only difference being that the former has to be accompanied by a full knowledge of the Self, while in the latter that requirement is not insisted on. Nididhyasana has the avowed aim of removing all Viparita Bhavana.

3 iii) **Roodha Sattwa Chamatkaara**: This is a beautiful way of expressing the fifth step. It means “*where the grand experience of the spectacle of Pure Being has shot forth*”. The term **Asamsakti**, means “*non-union*”, and refers to non-union with the world. The mind breaks away from its worldly moorings, as it were, and gets magnetically pulled into the Bliss of the Self. This is described as a **Chamatkaara**, “*a grand spectacle*”!

The above expression is unique to the *Yoga Vasishtha*, like ‘*Stimitta Gambheeram*’ of verse 3.5. A feeling of awe enters our being by these colourful words. Indeed, colourful and awesome are the spiritual experiences from this point onwards.

Guruji mentioned that sometimes the meditator can get a bit frightened when he is rising above body-consciousness, and hastens to get back into his body for its shelter and safety. This rush back into normal consciousness can be quite sudden and it may cause heat in the body. It resembles an emergency landing of an aeroplane! The guiding presence of a Guru is of great help in such a situation to handle the descent safely.

Arrival at the 5th Bhumika

4 The Sadhaka is getting closer to the ultimate goal called Nirvikalpa Samadhi. The 5th Bhumika is called **Asamsakti**, which means “Non-union with the not-Self” or simply “Detachment from all worldly moorings.” By intense practice of meditation, the glimpses of the Self become more stabilised in this stage. The seeker at this stage is called a **Dhyani**. He is on his way to becoming a **Sthithaprajna**, as described in the Geeta.

However, as seen in the example given by Guruji above, the meditator can still encounter difficulties and have feelings of insecurity when he is out of body-consciousness. With further progress in the next two Bhumikas, all difficulties are overcome and the **Nirvikalpa Samadhi** state is firmly established.

The next two stages have only hair-splitting differences from this Bhumika. We shall complete them with much less explanation.

Verse 5.6 & 7: 6. PADARTHA ABHAVANA – Non-Ideation of Objects

भूमिकापंचकाभ्यासात् , स्वात्मारामतया दृढम् ।

आभ्यन्तराणां बाह्यानां , पदार्थानामभावनात् ॥५.६॥

चिरं परप्रयुक्तेन , प्रयत्नेनावबोधनम् ।

पदार्थाभावना नाम , षष्ठी संजायते गतिः ॥५.७॥

1	<u>bhoomikaa panchaka abhyaasaat</u>	<i>From the practice of the above five steps,</i>
2	<u>svaatmaa-raama-tayaa dridham;</u>	<i>there is thorough revelling in one's own Self.</i>
3	<u>aabhyantaraanaam baahyaanaam</u>	<i>The inner and outer objects</i>
4	<u>padaarthaanaam abhaavanaat.</u>	<i>and thoughts are completely absent.</i>
5	<u>chiram para prayuktena</u>	<i>Others have to make long</i>
6	<u>prayatnena avabodhanam;</u>	<i>efforts to bring him to perception (of the world).</i>
7	<u>PADAARTHA ABHAAVANAA naama</u>	<i>This state is called <u>NON-IDEATION</u> of Objects.</i>
8	<u>shashthee samjaayate gatih.</u>	<i>It is the sixth state that arises.</i>

1 Once again all preceding steps are to continue on entering this Bhumika.

2 The path to the Self opens up and one gets more frequent spiritual ‘trances’.

3-4 In the sixth step, the mind which has been freed of its union with the sense objects is taken to the next level of subtlety. Since sense objects are not claiming its attention, the number of thoughts in the mind dwindles significantly. The gravitational pull of sense objects is not there. The mind is hurtling fast towards the “thought-free” state.

5-6 In these trances, the mind has been virtually destroyed. The sage loses body consciousness for long periods, sometimes for several days. If he is careful, he has to

arrange for someone to forcibly ‘awaken’ him out of this state. If he has not made such arrangements, God Himself takes up the responsibility. Somehow, he arranges for the person to come out of this Samadhi.

There is a known case of a saint who went into this Samadhi for days with no one else around. It is believed that God arranged for a snake to bite him out of that state, and then sent a refreshing downpour of rain to help get rid of the poison!

Indeed, at this level of spiritual awakening, the sage surrenders himself completely to the mercy of the Divine to take care of all his bodily needs. His feeling is, “If God so wishes, this (body) will be taken care of!”

7-8 As the thoughts have dwindled down to virtually a trickle in this state, the term given to it is ***Padaartha Abhavana*** meaning “Non-Ideation of Objects”. The purification has progressed to nearly 100%. There is no trouble from the mind as there are no distracting thoughts.

However, the highest state is yet to come...

Verse 5.8: 7. TURYAGAA – The “Fourth State” (Total Abidance)

भूमिषट्क-चिराभ्यासाद् , भेदस्यानुपलभ्यतः ।

यत् स्वभावैकनिष्ठत्वं , सा ज्ञेया तुर्यगा गतिः

॥५.८॥

1	<i>bhoomi shatka chira abhyaasaat</i>	<i>By the long practice of the above six steps,</i>
2	<i>bhedasya an-upa-labhyatah;</i>	<i>and by the non-cognition of differences,</i>
3	<i>yat svabhaava eka nishthatvam</i>	<i>that abidance which takes place in one’s own Being</i>
4	<i>saa jneyaa <u>TURYAGAA</u> gatih.</i>	<i>is known as the <u>FOURTH STATE</u> (of consciousness).</i>

Guruji compares the fifth, sixth and seventh states to a Bachelor’s Degree, Master’s Degree and a Doctorate respectively in spiritual knowledge. The doctorate is bound to come once the other degrees are attained.

1 Preceding steps have to be pursued for a long time. This time factor is being mentioned for the first time, indicating that to arrive at this final step could take very long. It is a rare occurrence in human history. Only a few blessed souls of enormous spiritual stature succeed in making this final ascent.

2 It is only a matter of eliminating every trace of duality and getting established in complete oneness. This is described here as “non-cognition of differences”. It is commonly known as Non-duality, wherein everything is beheld as the Self.

3 The abidance in the Self becomes fully and permanently established. This is a state from which it is not possible to fall back to the lower states. It is attained once and for all. It is the Supreme Destination or Abode – Brahman.

4 In another system of classification there are four states. These are the waking, dream and deep sleep states, and transcending all these is the unique “fourth” or Turiya state. This seventh Bhumika is the same. It is named ***Turyagaa***.

Other names for this state are **Nirvikalpa Samadhi**, the state where is no distinction between the unmanifest and the manifest, the seer and the seen; the **Superconscious State**; **Self-realisation**; **Cosmic Consciousness**; **Sahaja Samadhi**; (natural state); and **Nirvana**.

Verse 5.9: The Seventh State is the Ultimate

ये हि राम महा-भागाः , सप्तमीं भूमिकां गताः ।

आत्मारामा महात्मानः , ते महत्पदमागताः

॥५.९॥

1	<i>ye hi raama mahaa-bhaagaah</i>	<i>O Rama, those blessed ones, indeed,</i>
2	<i>saptameem bhoomikaam gataah;</i>	<i>having reached the seventh state (of knowledge),</i>
3	<i>aatmaa raamaah mahaatmaanah</i>	<i>the great ones who revel in the Self,</i>
4	<i>te mahat padam aagataah.</i>	<i>they have attained the Supreme State.</i>

The Sage Vasishtha uses two adjectives to describe the rare souls in the 7th state:

1 i) **Mahaa Bhaagaah**: “The Greatly Blessed”.

3 ii) **Mahaatmaanah**: “The Great Souls”.

The meanings attributed to ‘blessed’ and ‘great’ are quite different to those given to them from the worldly standpoint. Gururji brought out the difference in a striking manner: “A materialist measures achievement by the amount of power, fame and money he has accumulated. A spiritual person measures achievement by the amount of power, fame and money he has renounced.”

The objects that bring the greatest thrill to these two types of persons are the very opposite of each other. The former delights in sense pleasures; the latter revels in the Self.

4 Mahat Padam: “The Supreme State”. This is the highest that a human being can aspire for. It is the culmination of all spiritual Sadhana. Any number of adjectives will fall short in describing this Divine State. It is That for which everything in this world is worth renouncing.

Verse 5.10: Bhumikas Apply Only to the Living

जीवन्मुक्तेषु चैषा हि , तुर्यावस्थेह विद्यते ।

विदेहमुक्तिविषयस्तुर्यातीतमतः परम् ।

भूमिकासप्तकं चैतद् , धीमतामेव गोचरः

॥५.१०॥

1	<i>jeevanmukteshu cha eshaa hi</i>	<i>Only in those who are liberated while living</i>
2	<i>turya avasthaa iha vidyate;</i>	<i>does the “Fourth State” exist here.</i>
3	<i>videha-mukti vishayah</i>	<i>The realm of liberation without the body</i>
4	<i>turya ateetam atah param;</i>	<i>comes thereafter, i.e. beyond the fourth state.</i>
5	<i>bhoomikaa saptakam cha etad</i>	<i>These seven Bhumikas or stages</i>
6	<i>dheemataam eva gocharah.</i>	<i>are attainable only by the wise (the dispassionate).</i>

This verse clears two doubts, each occurring at the two ends of the seven steps:

A. The First Doubt: Jivanmukti & Videhamukti

1-2 At the top end there may be the doubt whether this applies to the person at the time of death or before death. It is clarified that the seventh state, if one does reach it, is **Jivanmukti**, i.e. it is reached only while he is alive. This is as logical as saying that a traveller can travel only when he is seated in his vehicle! The implication is that progress through all seven states can be made only while ‘one is seated in his body’.

3-4 The Sage follows this up by making certain that we have understood the distinction. The liberation known as **Videhamukti**, is only a liberation from one's body; it has no reference to liberation of the soul, which is **Jivanmukti**. It may be that the former term is used only in the case of a Jivanmukta, and not for any other category of human being. But that would be only out of respect to the Jivanmukta. In itself there is no significance in Videhamukti to the Jivanmukta. Death makes no difference to his state.

The dropping of the physical body itself is not considered very significant in Vedanta. It does not constitute a spiritual achievement. However, as a mark of respect, society terms it as Videhamukti or Mahasamadhi and observes the Tithi (lunar calendar day) of its occurrence annually, a day that is known as the Aradhana of the saint. That is society's tradition, and has no other significance.

If it had any spiritual significance, Videhamukti would need to be considered as the "8th Bhumika" on Sage Vasishtha's scale of measurement. However, the Sage has not made it one of the Bhumikas. Clearly, the disappearance of something unreal cannot be a cause for a progression in knowledge. The conclusion is that spiritual knowledge can be advanced only whilst one is present in his physical body, which is the home of his subtle body.

Why the fuss over this issue? This clarity is needed because there is a Liberation called **Krama Mukti** by which an evolved soul reaches Brahmaloaka, the highest heaven, and from where, after spending his allotted time, he is instructed by Brahmaji Himself and proceeds to the state of liberation. This liberation is also given the name **Videhamukti**, as it is liberation attained without the presence of the physical body.

Further discussion on this topic will be out of place in the context of this text.

B. The Second Doubt: The Place of Dispassion

5-6 The second point needing clarity is the qualification to enter the 1st Bhumika. It was said earlier that **Dispassion** was the requirement to enter the 1st Bhumika. Now the statement is made that all seven states are attainable "by the wise". Is this a revision to the earlier qualification? No, there is no contradiction in this.

The moment dispassion arises in a seeker, he is considered to be "wise", for he has made a wise choice that will ultimately lead him to the highest attainment. Dispassion remains the prerequisite to arrive at the ultimate goal; there is no short cut to the goal!

On the highway to the Ultimate, there is no "Dispassion By-Pass"!



Chapter Six
(15 Verses)
OBSTACLES ON THE PATH

Verse 6.1: Rama Asks Two Questions

श्री राम उवाच –

मूढस्याप्राप्तयोगस्य , कथमुत्तरणं भवेत् ।

आरूढस्य मृतस्याथ , कीदृशी भगवन् गतिः

॥६.१॥

	<i>Shree Raama uvaacha:</i>	<i>Sri Rama said:</i>
1	<i>moodhasya aprapta yogasya</i>	For the ignorant one who has not taken to Yoga
2	<i>katham uttaranam bhavet;</i>	how is the crossing of Samsara possible?
3	<i>aaroodhasya mrityasya atha</i>	And for one who has begun to practice Yoga , but then dies, (without reaching the goal)
4	<i>keedrishee bhagavan gatih?</i>	O Lord, what is his fate?

Sri Rama puts forward two important doubts to the Sage Vasishtha:

i) What is the fate of the person who knows nothing about Yoga?

This is similar to the question asked by Arjuna to Sri Krishna at the start of Chapter 17 of the Geeta:

“Those who, setting aside the ordinances of the scriptures, perform sacrifice with faith, what is their condition, O Krishna?” – Gita 17.1.

ii) Knowing about Yoga, if one has practised some of its steps and then dies without completing the rest of them, what is his fate?

This question is identical to the one asked by Arjuna to Sri Krishna towards the end of Chapter 6 of the Geeta:

“He who, though possessed of faith (knowing Yoga), is unable to control himself, whose mind wanders away from Yoga, to what end does he go, having failed to attain perfection in Yoga, O Krishna?” – Gita 6.37.

Verse 6.2: The Fate of the Ignorant

वसिष्ठ उवाच –

मूढस्यारूढ-दोषस्य , तावत्संसृतिरातता ।

यावज्जन्मान्तर शतैर्नोदिता प्रथमाऽपि भूः

॥६.२॥

	<i>Vasishtha uvaacha:</i>	<i>Sage Vasishtha replies:</i>
1	<i>moodhasya aaroodha doshasya</i>	<i>For the ignorant one whose sins are deep-rooted,</i>
2	<i>taavat samsritih aatataa;</i>	<i>the life of transmigration continues for as long as</i>
3	<i>yaavat janmaantara shataih</i>	<i>hundreds and hundreds of births, so long as</i>
4	<i>na uditaa prathamaa api bhooh.</i>	<i>even the first step (of dispassion) has not arisen.</i>

Sage Vasishtha answers here the first of the two questions.

1 Firstly, the ignorant person who has not taken to Yoga remains, as he was born, with his baggage of sins. [In comparison, the question in Chapter 17 of the Geeta speaks of one who tries to practice the good life but has not studied anything formally through the scriptures – what is his fate? There is a subtle difference between the two cases.]

2 For the sinful person who does not even try, there is no escape from the continuous round of births and deaths. [The “eternal damnation” spoken of in the Bible closely resembles this concept of endless rebirths. The only difference is that in the Bible it is a disembodied state in Hell, while in the Indian scriptures it is a recurring embodied state on Earth.]

3-4 The essential answer is that the ignorant person, so long as he has not set foot on the first step of **Dispassion**, will endlessly revolve in this cycle of births and deaths experiencing the sorrows of this world. There is no hope of liberation for him other than starting the spiritual path at square one – renunciation of selfish desire.

Anecdotes from Guruji

Guruji told us that the ignorant one is not even interested in the path. That is his least worry. It is like children who don’t care about their studies; in their eyes, that is for the parents to worry about! Rama, like a parent of humanity, is concerned on everyone’s behalf.

Addiction to pleasure is very hard to overcome. It needs a major calamity to knock the habit out completely. Sometimes even that is only temporary. Guruji told us an anecdote about a man addicted to drink. His wife always complained of his addiction. One day he persuaded her to try some. She took a sip and spat it out at once. “How filthy, it’s horrible!” she exclaimed. The tipsy man replied, “And you really think I am enjoying it?”

Guruji was reminded of a favourite saying of his:

“If you always do what you always did, you will always get what you always got.”

Verse 6.3: *The Certainty for the Aspirant*

वैराग्येऽभ्युदिते जन्तोर्वशं भूमिकोदयः ।

ततो नश्यति संसार , इति शास्त्रार्थसंग्रहः

॥६.३॥

1	<i>vairaagye abhyudite jantoh</i>	<i>However, when dispassion has arisen in a person</i>
2	<i>avasham bhoomikaa udayah;</i>	<i>the rise of the other steps (of knowledge) is certain.</i>
3	<i>tatah nashyati samsarah</i>	<i>Then follows the certain destruction of Samsara.</i>
4	<i>iti shaastra artha sangrahaah.</i>	<i>This is the import of the scriptures.</i>

The second question is now being answered, from verse 3-6:

1 This verse applies to the person who has made a start in spiritual life by practicing dispassion. To such a person, Sage Vasishtha gives the following assurance:

2 Once a person sets his foot firmly on this path through dispassion for sensual pleasures, he is set to climb higher and higher (from Bhumika to Bhumika).

3 The climb continues until he is fully liberated from Samsara at the 7th Bhumika. That is the assurance from Sage Vasishtha.

4 Liberation is also the assurance from all the Upanishads, which is the Jnana Kanda of the Vedas, and which deals with the subject of Liberation from Samsara.

Given these assurances, there should be no hesitation in a prospective student to pursue the spiritual path with all vigour and earnestness.

Verse 6.4: *Reduction of Karmas at Each Bhumika*

योगभूमिकयोत्क्रान्त , जीवितस्य शरीरिणः ।

भूमिकांशानुसारेण , क्षीयते पूर्वदुष्कृतम्

॥६.४॥

1	<i>yoga bhoomikayaa utkraanta</i>	<i>Passing through the (seven) Bhumikas of Yoga</i>
2	<i>jeevitasya shareerinah;</i>	<i>while still living in the body – such a seeker,</i>
3	<i>bhoomikaa amsha anusaarena</i>	<i>accordance to the step reached by him,</i>
4	<i>ksheeyate poorva dushkritam.</i>	<i>the sins of former incarnations get destroyed.</i>

The rise from one Bhumika to the next is essentially a transformation from one level of purity to a greater level of purity. With each Bhumika, more Karmic load is shed off.

1 Progress on the spiritual path is measured from one Bhumika to the next.

2 As stated at the end of the last Chapter, the journey can only be done by an embodied being, i.e. a living person, not a bodiless ghost after death. Here the person's development up to the point of death is being weighed. The point to be taken is that the person continues in his next birth from where he left off in this birth. This is taken up in greater detail in the next two verses.

3-4 Each step passed eliminates a certain bundle of sinful habits. The Karma that gets burnt up or dropped at each stage depends on that stage. At the lower end, the Karma dropped is of the grosser Rajasic and Tamasic type; while at the higher end, above the 4th Bhumika, it is of a more Sattwic type. In this way at each step the seeker raises himself to a higher level of purity by shedding his Karma.

Destiny & Self-Effort

These changes in his personality remain intact with him when he passes away. When he is reborn to continue life on earth, he continues his spiritual journey from where he had left off. He gets another chance to shed more Karma. And so his evolution progresses birth after birth, at the pace he decides according to the dexterity he puts into his Sadhana.

We see that one's destiny lies in his own hands. The more effort a Sadhaka puts into his Sadhana, the quicker he evolves from one Bhumika to the next. He sets his own pace.

Verse 6.5: A Favourable Re-Birth for the Yogi

पुण्य लोकेषु संचारात् , सुक्रितेऽपि क्षयं गते ।
शुचिनां श्रीमतां गेहे , जायते योगवासितः

॥६.५॥

1	<i>punya lokeshu sancharaat</i>	<i>After spending time living in the heavenly worlds,</i>
2	<i>sukrite api kshayam gate;</i>	<i>as soon as all his merits get exhausted, then,</i>
3	<i>shuchinaam shreemataam gehe</i>	<i>in the house of the pure and/or prosperous,</i>
4	<i>jaayate yoga vaasitah.</i>	<i>the Yogi (seeker) is reborn.</i>

1 After death, the seeker enjoys a well-deserved period of rest in heavenly worlds.

2 His stay there lasts only as long as his merits permit him; as soon as they are exhausted (by enjoyment in heaven), he returns to earth to continue his progress.

3 As he has been leading a good life with dispassion and following all the rules laid down by scriptures, he is reborn in a favourable home, into a family and into circumstances that will favour his onward journey on his spiritual quest. “Prosperous” could mean a home with material prosperity or a home providing the wealth of good spiritual values. For evolution, the spiritual environment is more important than the material environment. If hardship is needed for one’s growth, then an appropriate austere environment is provided.

This subject of being reborn into a favourable home is dealt with in great detail at the end of Chapter 6 in the Geeta. The term used there for the Yogi is “*Yoga-Brashthah*”, meaning one who had made progress but not succeeded fully in his spiritual quest.

4 Appropriate to his goal of union with the Lord, the term ‘Yogi’ is used for seeker.

Verse 6.6: The Re-Born Yogi Quickly Rises

ततः परिपतत्युच्चैरुत्तरं भूमिकात्रयम् ।
भूमिकात्रितयं त्वेतद् , राम जाग्रदिति स्मृतम्

॥६.६॥

1	<i>tatah paripatati uchaih</i>	<i>Then (on being reborn), he rapidly rises through</i>
2	<i>uttaram bhoomikaa trayam;</i>	<i>the first three Bhumikas in quick succession.</i>
3	<i>bhoomikaa tritayam tu etat</i>	<i>These first three Bhumikas taken jointly,</i>
4	<i>raama jaagrat iti smritam.</i>	<i>O Rama, can be thought of as waking up (in the new birth).</i>

1-2 The rapid rise may not be immediately from birth, but from some point when mature understanding awakens. When that point is reached, he rises rapidly through the first three Bhumikas, up to the point at which he had already reached in his previous birth.

3-4 This period of rapid rise is depicted here as ‘*waking up*’ into spiritual life as one left it in his previous birth.

The corollary of this would be to consider as the ‘*sleeping state*’ that portion of the new birth when the previous Samskaras are not yet awakened, but are still dormant.

The reason why particular mention is made of the first three Bhumikas is that they depend to a great extent on one’s external circumstances. From the 4th Bhumika onwards, the Sadhana is purely done through meditation, independent of external circumstances. In the new birth, the external circumstances can only affect the first three Bhumikas.

Once the seeker has reached the 4th Bhumika and beyond, he is beyond all the three states of waking, dream and sleep, figuratively speaking. He is now in the realm of the Reality underlying all three states.

Guruji humorously stretched the imagery of getting out of bed across the Four Ages as follows: “When the sleeper is in deep sleep, that is *Kali Yuga*; when he turns over in bed, it is *Dwapara Yuga*; when he sits up in bed, it is *Treta Yuga*; and when he gets out and walks (the spiritual path) he is in *Satya Yuga*.” This is a very inspiring and awakening way of looking at waking up to spirituality.

Guruji also joked, “Could it be that the student, Sri Rama, was feeling a bit drowsy at that point and needed to be reminded to be more attentive?”

At this point both of Sri Rama’s questions are answered in full. Now Guruji selects verses which deal with a few general problem areas in treading the spiritual path, in order to help seekers to beware of them and take suitable steps to avoid them.

Verse 6.7: *The She-Elephant of Lust*

अस्त्ययन्तमदोन्मत्ता , करिणीच्छासमाह्वया ।
सा चेन्न हन्यते नूनमनन्तानर्थकारिणी

॥६.७॥

1	<i>asti ayanta mada unmattaa</i>	<i>Extremely intoxicated with Lust,</i>
2	<i>karinee icchhaa samaahvayaa;</i>	<i>there is a she-elephant called “Desire”.</i>
3	<i>saa chet na hanyate noonam</i>	<i>If she is not killed instantly</i>
4	<i>ananta anartha kaarinee.</i>	<i>she causes endless problems...</i>

The first of these obstacles is **LUST**. It is the greatest obstacle of all that a seeker is likely to face. This verse is a huge warning sign, like the one we see on a highway when danger lies ahead. Waiting to ambush the unwary traveller is the obstacle of Lust.

[Guruji knew we were concurrently busy on the Kathopanishad, where the story is told of the fiery dispassion of Nachiketas. Guruji’s fine sense of humour rose to the demand of the topic under discussion.]

He said, “If a Nachiketas is there then there will be no problem. But instead of a Nachiketas, if we have a ‘*Chickenetas*’, then this will cause huge problems!”

1-2 Lust is compared to a she-elephant. This animal is known for its state of total intoxication under the influence of lust, expressed through touch. So intense is this feeling that the elephant can be easily trapped when in this intoxicated state.

Here is how Guruji expressed the intoxication of lust: “When one is in a fit of lust, the only way to describe him and her is Mr & Mrs Lust!”

3-4 If lust is not given a death blow immediately, it will trouble the aspirant endlessly all the way to his death. The problem of lust lies not just during the youthful period of one’s life. It may be stronger during youth, but it persists throughout one’s life. Its strength in youth is only to serve a legitimate purpose in nature and so it is understandable; at other times later in life, if it is still very active, it may be described as anything from being troublesome to being an embarrassment, completely out of line from nature’s plan. What to then speak of those who seek to artificially stimulate their lust with aphrodisiacs!

Verse 6.8 & 9: *Desire & Its Conquest*

भूमिकासु च सर्वासु , संचारो नैव साध्यते ।
 वासनेहा मनश्चित्तं , संकल्पो भावनं स्पृहा ॥६.८॥

इत्यादीनि च नामानि , तस्या एव भवन्ति हि ।
 धैर्यनाम्ना वरास्त्रेण , चैतां सर्वात्मना जयेत् ॥६.९॥

		(continued from previous verse)
1	<i>bhoomikaasu cha sarvaasu</i>	...in all the steps of Yoga, and
2	<i>sanchaarah na eva saadhyate;</i>	progress is never accomplished.
3	<i>vaasanaa eehaa manah chittam</i>	Vasana, wish, mind, memory,
4	<i>samkalpah bhaavanam sprihaa.</i>	will, imagination, longing...

5	<i>iti aadeeni cha naamaani</i>	and the like are also names (or locations)
6	<i>tasyaah eva bhavanti hi;</i>	verily, of this she-elephant herself.
7	<i>dhairya naamnaavara astrena</i>	With the great weapon named <u>Fortitude</u> ,
8	<i>cha etaam sarvaatmanaa jayet.</i>	one should slay her (the 'lust') completely.

1 Firstly, the problems created by lust can arise at any one of the Bhumikas, except the 7th when one is freed from it once and for all. This means all aspirants need to be careful regardless of their development or age. The slightest inadvertence can open the doors for the “she-elephant” to come charging in.

2 When this desire comes in the way, it is like a speed-breaker on the national highway – all traffic comes to a grinding halt. The she-elephant stands in the middle of the road and refuses to let anyone pass! She has the strength to toss anyone wherever she likes. Unless she is conquered, she rules the road!

3-4 The elephant of Desire has many other names. The names give an indication of where the elephant resides. We can locate her in these places where she hides comfortably. Mind and Imagination are her favourite haunts, with Will not too far behind.

5-6 Guruji humorously said that, like the thousand Names of Vishnu in *Vishnu Sahasranam*, one could write a *Vasana Sahasranam*! We look into some of those names to see what lessons can be learnt from them:

Vasanas: these are the deep “*inherent tendencies*”, propensities, or inclinations in our subconscious mind. They manifest when conditions are ripe, for example, at the supermarkets, at buffet parties where all varieties of delicacies are available for the picking. In such situations the mind races into top gear in imagination.

Cheshtha: (not in verse) This is the “*activity*” aroused by activated Vasanas. The hands become fidgety; the legs walk in one direction only – towards the object of desire; the tongue becomes restless; the whole body speaks the language of desire.

Chitta: Desire can be aroused from our memory bank, recent or ancient. If it has been enjoyed once, it will want it again, and again.

Bhavanam: These are feelings that are aroused by desire. They are active supporters of desire, accompanying it wherever it goes. Under the influence of their feelings, people usually say, “I have a weakness for such and such.” Emotions are roused in the presence of desire.

Spriha: This is intense longing or yearning for the fulfillment of one's desire. "I am missing it" or "I am missing you". The thought keeps coming up, until the intensity is such that one feels it has to be fulfilled.

Under the influence of these conditions, one loses all reserve, decorum, order, even manners, and does whatever is needed to get the desire fulfilled. One crosses the boundary of good behaviour, and behaves 'inappropriately', i.e. shamelessly. That brings about the ruin. Guruji quoted powerful demons like Hiranyakashipu and Ravana who had great physical strength, but became totally weak, literally 'on bent knees' when they faced the object of their lust.

How to Conquer Such a Stubborn 'Elephant'?

7-8 Dhairya: "Fortitude" is the answer, according to the wise Vasishtha. **Fortitude** is a combination of several key ingredients. Foremost among them is Will-power, which is the ability to say 'No'. This is the dominant part of fortitude. Will has two sisters. The elder one is Patience, which does not permit any obstacle to get the better over her. No matter how hard the struggle, patience keeps at it. Her sister is Hope. She always accompanies patience. She stands firmly with patience to make sure that she does not give up. And then there are the two younger brothers of Will. They are Steadfastness and Courage. These two are needed to do the actual fighting to kill off the enemy. With this army of five Generals, their Commander, Fortitude, is able to win the battle against this elephant of Lust.

An illustration by Guruji: If we ever studied how wild animals are trained, we would learn from it many lessons to help us overcome lust. A trainer first just watches the animal. He observes its habits, and finally he picks out its weakness. Then he exploits the weakness. An elephant's weakness is touch during the mating season. So that is the time to catch them without much effort. Even an army general follows the same principle – he looks for the enemy's weakness. Intelligence and patience are needed in any conquest.

When applied to lust, this leads us to discover that the weakness is in the **mind**. The weakness is continuous imagination on the object of desire. The next verse spells it out.

Verse 6.10: *Imagination & Its Renunciation*

इदं मेऽस्त्विति विज्ञानं , यत्तत् कल्पनमुच्यते ।

अर्थस्याभावनं यत्तत् , कल्पनात्याग उच्यते

॥६.१०॥

1	<i>idam me astu iti vijnaanam</i>	'Let this be mine' – a thought
2	<i>yat tat kalpanam uchyate;</i>	that is of this type is called <i>imagination</i>.
3	<i>arthasya abhaavanam yat tat</i>	Non-brooding over any object
4	<i>kalpanaa tyagah uchyate.</i>	is called renunciation of imagination.

1-2 Idam Me Astu: "Let this be mine!". This is imagination. Then come four things:

- i) Admiration: O, how beautiful it is!
- ii) Desire: How nice if I could only possess it!
- iii) Longing: What is life without it? I have to have it!
- iv) Infatuation: I can't even sleep without it....

Such imagination has to be slain. It is the she-elephant at work – the first two are her eyes and ears; the next two are her tusks and trunk, which toss us into the ditch on the roadside, ending all hopes of reaching our destination.

***Brooding is the small matchstick that starts the flames of desire
burning until it becomes a raging fire that is unstoppable.***

Renunciation of Imagination

3-4 To successfully conquer lust, the method indicated here is to stop fanciful imagination of the pleasure to be enjoyed by having the object. We are asked to stop brooding over the objects. This is renunciation of imagination, which puts an end to desire.

The word for brooding over objects is Sankalpa or **Kalpna**. This is the weak point of lust. If this is stopped, lust will not be troublesome. Even if it arrives at the door of the mind, by not getting a welcome reception there, it goes away of itself, dejected and disappointed. For the spiritual aspirant, this is of crucial importance to ensure that his spiritual journey is not terminated prematurely.

A Modern Example: In modern cars there is now a compulsory installation of a warning system if the seat-belt is not being used. A light flashes on the dashboard. If it is ignored, then a gentle audible tone is slowly repeated. If even this is ignored, the tone is changed to an irritable one and the frequency is increased. Finally the volume level is raised until discomfort forces the driver to obey the rule of safety by fastening his seat-belt!

Some drivers think they are very smart by keeping the seat-belt clicked all the time and simply sitting over it! Smart? In the next verse the Sage tells us how smart that is...

Verse 6.11: *None Heeds the Danger of Imagination*

ऊर्ध्वबाहुर्विरौम्येवं , न च कश्चित् शृणोति तत् ।

असंकल्पः परं श्रेयः , स किमन्तर्न भाव्यते

॥६.११॥

1	<i>oordhva-baahuh viraumi evam</i>	<i>I proclaim this with raised hands,</i>
2	<i>na cha kaschit shrinoti tat;</i>	<i>but none pays heed to it.</i>
3	<i>asamkalpah param shreyah</i>	<i>Absence of imagination is the greatest good.</i>
4	<i>sah kim antah na bhaavyate.</i>	<i>Why is it not fostered within?</i>

The Sage Vasishtha expresses a situation which we today think is unique to our generation. It existed even in Vedic times! It is a general problem that shall always be in human society, regardless of the times we are living in. The expressions of ignorance may get more sophisticated but the principle remains unchanged.

1-2 We ask how frustrated the Teacher can get when his well-intentioned advice is ignored by just about everyone. Moral and spiritual education is indeed the most painstaking work of all. The teacher is always swimming against the current. In spite of that he continues in his noble profession. There is a simile for this:

At a traffic intersection, the traffic lights do their job regardless of whether motorists obey them or not. They do not decide to stop functioning and walk away!

3 This is the advice. The Sage is certain it is sound. We, too, know it is sound. But...we bring into the equation the ifs and buts that refuse to co-operate with the advice.

4 What could be the reason? We know disobedience is going to be suicidal, yet we fall headlong to our own doom. The formula for spiritual suicide when it comes to Lust is very straightforward –

IMAGINATION ⇒ ATTRACTION ⇒ DISTRACTION ⇒ DESTRUCTION

Times without number the Sage has repeated this string, which has Imagination as its trigger. Does the Sage himself sound frustrated?

No. The whole Himalayas echo, No, no, no.

The spiritual Master never gets frustrated. He asks this question because he wants us to prepare ourselves for his answer. In the next verse he gives us the true reason.

Verse 6.12: In Silence is the Supreme Reached

तूष्णिमवस्थितेनैव , परमं प्राप्यते पदम् ।

परमं यत्र साम्राज्यमपि राम तृणायते

॥६.१२॥

1	<i>tooshnim avasthitena eva</i>	<i>Only by him who remains in silence</i>
2	<i>paramam praapyate padam;</i>	<i>is the Supreme Abode reached.</i>
3	<i>paramam yatra saamraajyam</i>	<i>The Supreme is where sovereignty itself is.</i>
4	<i>api raama trinaayate.</i>	<i>Yet, O Rama, even that is mere straw.</i>

HE “PRAYED HIS PRAYER”

Guruji started with an example: A man went daily to a nearby temple and ‘prayed his prayer’ as a matter of routine, mumbling them very fast, and very hard to decipher. He would then just as hastily walk out and go to work. He did this for quite a while and always wondered why God did not answer his prayers.

One day, it suddenly dawned on him, “May be it is because I am not giving myself time to listen to God’s reply. I just rush off from here.” So he began to spend at least 5 to 10 minutes after his prayer and wait anxiously for God’s reply.

When even this did not seem to work, he thought to himself, “May be I am waiting for an external reply. Let me sit quietly and close my eyes and listen to my heart.” So this is what he did. He had to refine even this when the thought came to him, “I don’t think I am really listening to Him; I am busy speaking to Him even when I am sitting apparently in silence.” So he would just switch off and tune in to the Voice from within.

God had brought His devotee closer and closer to Him in His own unique way!

1-2 With great patience and hope, Sage Vasishtha draws our attention to the call from within. Here we have the answer to our heedlessness. We do not have the strength to fight the she-elephant because we have not turned to Him within our heart in silent prayer.

If we do not turn to God for help our chances of succeeding in facing our difficulties are slim indeed. That is the message the Teacher is wanting to get across.

3-4 We remember the context of these words: Sage Vasishtha is training none other than the Prince of the kingdom of Ayodhya. To Rama, sovereignty was not just a dream but he had it running in his veins. To such a person, the Sage says, “Contacting Him is more enriching an experience than meeting with the greatest sovereign on earth. O Rama, this earthly power is mere ‘straw’ when compared to the Supreme Ruler within our heart.”

Verse 6.13: *Imagination Summarised*

बहुनाञ्ज किमुक्तेन , संक्षेपादिमुच्यते ।
संकल्पनं परो बन्धस्तदभावोविमुक्तता

॥६.१३॥

1	<i>bahunaa atra kim uktena</i>	<i>What is the use of many words on this matter?</i>
2	<i>sangkshepaat idam uchyate;</i>	<i>This (Truth) is declared in brief as:</i>
3	<i>samkalpanam parah bandhah</i>	<i>“Imagination is the greatest bondage;</i>
4	<i>tad abhaavah vimuktataa.</i>	<i>its absence is the state of freedom.”</i>

1-2 Six verses have been spent on the topic of Lust and the danger of its association with imagination. In this last verse on the subject, one line is used to summarise the whole subject. The feeling we get from Sage Vasishtha is that on this matter, there is no need to spend too many words to explain it. It needs will power more than words to succeed in conquering lust.

3-4 This text began with the theme of bondage and liberation. At the start we saw many ways of looking at bondage and liberation. The Sage’s last definition was: “When seer and seen are considered different from each other, that is bondage; removing the difference is liberation.” Now we have another view of bondage expressed equally briefly: “It is imagination (on lust) which is the greatest bondage; its absence is freedom.”

There is a common purpose in both statements – both of them lead us away from externals and towards our inner Being. They both tell us, “If you want God, stop searching for Him outside; just turn your gaze within.”

Verse 6.14: *The Science of Karma Yoga*

अवेदनं विदुर्योगं , चित्तक्षयमकृत्रिमम् ।
योगस्थः कुरु कर्माणि , विकर्माणि च मा कुरु ।
अकर्मनिरतो मा भूर्बन्धसम्भवशंकया

॥६.१४॥

1	<i>avedanam viduh yogam</i>	<i>Non-perception is known as Yoga,</i>
2	<i>chitta-kshayam akrittrimam;</i>	<i>for it ushers the spontaneous destruction of mind.</i>
3	<i>yogasthah kuru karmaani</i>	<i>Established in Yoga, perform actions,</i>
4	<i>vikarmaani cha maa kuru;</i>	<i>but do not perform prohibited actions.</i>
5	<i>akarma-niratah maa bhooh</i>	<i>And do not be attached to inaction</i>
6	<i>bandha sambhava shankayaa.</i>	<i>due to fear of creating bondage.</i>

1 Avedanam: This word actually means “the state of absence of any knowledge”, translated here as non-perception, which in the context here means “*non-brooding*”.

Guruji told us of a possible misinterpretation of this line. When an armchair seeker reads this line he may interpret it as “not knowing anything is Yoga,” and would hastily exclaim, “See, I was a born Yogi; I knew nothing as a baby. That is Yoga. I am fine as I am. I do not need to go for Vedanta classes!” [Guruji dramatized this till we were all bursting with laughter.] The very next line will make him re-think.

2 Chitta Kshayam: “*destruction of mind*”. The state of “not knowing” is deeper than it appears at first. It is the state when the mind is annulled of all thoughts. In Vedanta this is called by the terrifying name “destruction of mind”. It is terrifying to most people who think that they will lose their mind through Yoga!

In Vedanta, destruction of mind simply means emptying it of all thoughts. This is possible only when the mind, which is a bundle of desires and emotions, is so purified that the ‘thought-factory’ just shuts down – it has no work! This brings one to the Yogic state of perfect equipoise.

3 With this background, we are required to continue performing our duties. That requires actions. These actions have to be done as **Karma Yoga**; if not, they will bind us.

4 How do we act without the build-up of thoughts in the mind? Surely we have to think before we act. Sage Vasishtha begins his answer by first ruling out prohibited actions.

5 There are persons who would react to this by saying, “So, why not be on the safe side and don’t perform any action?” This follows the common misconception among seekers that to give up all actions is the same as renunciation. The Sage forbids getting into such an inactive state, which would be very detrimental to society.

6 There is a wrong notion arising from the fear that actions bind a person. This is only true if it is the wrong actions and actions done with desire. Obligatory actions that are beneficial to society have to continue.

A COMPARISON BETWEEN RAMA AND ARJUNA

This teaching ties up exactly to what is taught in the *Bhagavad Geeta*. In fact, the correlation between this text and the *Geeta* is so complete that one would think their authors were the same person. The *Geeta*’s teaching on Karma Yoga matches what is taught by Sage Vasishtha to Rama. It is interesting that although Arjuna and Rama are two very different persons (as we have already mentioned earlier), yet both of them are being instructed to perform Karma Yoga as their Sadhana.

In Arjuna’s case it was because he was in need of the purity that Karma Yoga brings. In Rama’s case it is because, being already totally pure and enlightened, he had a great task ahead of him as the Avatara to restore righteousness.

Sri Rama had a justifiable reason to withdraw from action because he was fully qualified for the contemplative life. This was unlike Arjuna, who was only trying to escape his duties by withdrawing from the battlefield. For these two opposite types, the same Yoga is prescribed by their respective Gurus, and both the Gurus are fully justified in doing so.

Verse 6.15: True Renunciation of Action

शिवं सर्वगतं शान्तं , बोधात्मकमजं शुभम् ।
तदेकभावनं राम , कर्मत्याग इति स्मृतः

॥६.१५॥

1	<i>Shivam sarva-gatam shaantam</i>	<i>Auspicious, all-pervading, serene,</i>
2	<i>bodhaatmakam ajam shubham;</i>	<i>pure knowledge, unborn and shining –</i>
3	<i>tad eka bhaavanam raama</i>	<i>Abidance in That Reality alone, O Rama,</i>
4	<i>karma tyaagah iti smritah.</i>	<i>is considered as the renunciation of action.</i>

The Teacher finally explains to Sri Rama the great principle of renunciation of action. Renunciation is not merely giving up of action; it is giving up that which is ‘unreal’ in action, and retaining that which is Real. It all depends on what we take the Reality to be.

1-2 In Vedanta the Reality is considered to be present everywhere – in all creation as well as outside creation. It is the only thing that exists. One will find it very difficult to find such a definition of Reality in any other philosophy. Amongst western philosophies, the closest equivalent is found in the writings of Plotinus, the ancient Greek philosopher.

The six qualities mentioned here are truly representative of Brahman, the Reality. This Reality alone is the basis of all that exists in the universe. It is a complete non-partisan definition of the Truth. Truth can never be the preserve of a ‘chosen people’. It cannot have any partiality in it. Such is the lofty Vedantic vision of Reality.

3-4 Truth is really what we are in essence, i.e. what is referred to as the Atman or the Self. Vedanta holds that there is identity between the Atman and Brahman. This is the Vedantic view of the ultimate that man is capable of realising.

Our ego has no place in this broader picture. Renunciation of egoism in action is true renunciation of action. We are called upon to renounce the notion that we are the Doer of actions and feel that everything is done by the Supreme Reality. That is abidance in the Reality; that is true renunciation – the giving up of ego, not merely giving up of action.

This is the Sage’s summarized advice to his divine disciple. It is the quintessence of the Yoga Vasishtha’s message. It is identical to the message of the Geeta.

Thus concludes the teaching of Sage Vasishtha, bringing the science of Karma Yoga to the forefront. It is this appeal to do action as Karma Yoga that brings Rama out of his withdrawn state of mind in which he preferred death rather than acting in this world full of misery (verses 1.9 and 1.10).



Chapter Seven
(21 Verses)
Training for AVATARAHOOD

Verse 7.1 & 2: *Rama in Bliss Consciousness*

वाल्मीकिरुवाच –

ज्ञानसारं वसिष्ठोक्तमिदमाकर्ण्य राघवः ।

मुहूर्तमासीत् उद्बुद्धश्चैतन्यानन्दसागरः ॥७.१॥

महासामान्यरूपत्वात् , चिद्व्यापकतया स्थितः ।

न किञ्चिदुचे संपन्नः , शिवे परिणतः पदे ॥७.२॥

	<i>Vaalmeekih uvaacha:</i>	<i>Sage Valmiki said:</i>
1	<i>jnaana-saaram vasishtha uktam</i>	<i>Thus the essence of Knowledge was expounded by Sage Vasishtha.</i>
2	<i>idam aakarnya raaghavah;</i>	<i>This was heard by Raghava (Rama).</i>
3	<i>muhoortam aaseet udbuddhah</i>	<i>For some time He, who was already enlightened,</i>
4	<i>chaitanya aananda saagarah.</i>	<i>remained as an ocean of bliss-consciousness.</i>
5	<i>mahaa-saamaanya roopatvaat</i>	<i>On account of the state of great identity (with Self),</i>
6	<i>chid vyaapaka-tayaa sthitah;</i>	<i>remaining as all-pervading consciousness,</i>
7	<i>na kinchit oochhe sampannah</i>	<i>he was silent and happy,</i>
8	<i>shive parinatah pade.</i>	<i>and one with the Blessed Abode (of the Self).</i>

1-2 The conversation which began in verse 1.3 between Sage Valmiki and his disciple is now brought to a conclusion. Bharadwaja's question about how Rama 'conducted himself in the difficult course of worldly existence' has been answered.

3-4 Muhoortam: "For some time". This implies that Sri Rama remained in this blissful state until something else pulled him out of it. That something else was the call from Sage Vasishtha to fulfil his duty as the **Avatara** for the age. This topic occupies the main part of this concluding chapter.

5-8 Whilst Sri Rama remained absorbed in the Self, he was quite content – he was silent and happy. This state never left Sri Rama. He did not remain in it only "for some time" as stated earlier, but for all time to come. That is the point being brought out here.

Even when His external situation changed and He was called upon to play the role of the divine Avatara, this position of Sri Rama never changed. Despite going through all the ups and downs in His life, this "silent and happy" state was never renounced. That is the greatness we see in Sri Rama. That is the greatness that is explained in the rest of this chapter. What followed in Sri Rama's life would have shattered anyone lesser than Him!

Sri Rama remained firm in this state and executed all his kingly duties in the normal way whilst always fixed in divine consciousness.

Three Categories of People

Guruji was reminded of a saying at this point: “There are three types of people – i) the first are those who makes things happen; ii) the second discuss things that happened (to learn from them); and iii) the third just wonder what happened!”

Sage Vasishtha and Sri Rama, we have seen, made things happen – the Sage produced another sage who was to transform the world for milleniums to come. Sage Valmiki and Bharadwaja were discussing things that happened in order to learn lessons from them. What are we going to do? Are we going to be the ones that just wonder what happened, or will we act now on what we have read and do something with our lives?

Bharadwaja certainly wants to shift into the first category...

THE TEACHING SUMMARISED

Verse 7.3: *Bharadvaja Thrilled at Rama’s Attainment*

भरद्वाज उवाच –

अहो खलु महाश्चर्यं , रामः प्राप्तो महत्पदम् ।

कथमेतादृशी प्राप्तिरस्माकं मुनिनायक

॥७.३॥

	<i>Bharadvaja uvaacha:</i>	<i>Sage Bharadvaja said:</i>
1	<i>aho! Khalu mahaa aascharyam</i>	<i>Ah, indeed! How wonderful it is</i>
2	<i>raamah praaptah mahat padam;</i>	<i>that Rama attained the great Abode.</i>
3	<i>katham etaadrishee praaptih</i>	<i>How may such an attainment be repeated</i>
4	<i>asmaakam muni-naayaka.</i>	<i>by us, O best amongst the sages?</i>

1-2 Bharadvaja, a pure student, marvels at the success story he has just heard. To marvel at someone else’s success is a very great virtue. Sadly, jealousy usually prevents us from being so charitable in our feelings. The fact that Bharadvaja has marvelled at Sri Rama’s success, indicates that he deserves to achieve the same himself.

3-4 Success always inspires others to emulate it. The great ones set the example for others to follow. Bharadvaja wishes to imbibe the lesson in his own life and achieve the same goal. He asks his Guru how to do so.

But isn’t that what he has just been told by Sage Valmiki! . . .

Verse 7.4: *Examine and Reflect upon Rama’s Life*

वाल्मीकिरुवाच –

अशेषं रामवृत्तान्तं , आदितो यो निरूपितः ।

तं विचार्य धीया सम्यक् , परामृश स्वयं पुनः

॥७.४॥

	<i>Vaalmeekih uvaacha:</i>	<i>Sage Valmiki said:</i>
1	<i>ashesham raama vrittantah</i>	<i>The account of Sri Rama in all completeness</i>
2	<i>aaditah yah niroopitah;</i>	<i>has been narrated from the beginning.</i>
3	<i>tam vichaarya dheeyaa samyak</i>	<i>Examine it well with your intellect;</i>
4	<i>paraamrisha swayam punah.</i>	<i>reflect upon it by yourself again and again.</i>

1-4 Aaditah: “from the beginning”. This refers to the whole 32,000 verses of the original Yoga Vasishtha, not just this super-concise version.

Guruji paraphrased this verse in the following humorous way:

The Guru, so to say, tells him, “But I have just told the whole story to you with all the details. Were you not listening? Were you playing games on your cellphone while I was talking? I cannot spoon-feed you. Now you have to carefully reflect over what I said and think about it for yourself. Do some deep inner enquiry with your own intellect. That will help you.”

But Bharadwaja insisted on hearing it from his Guru’s own lips – quite justifiably, due to the length of the conversation – it must have taken many days. Since he was the disciple, his relationship is very much like father to son, based on love, respect and trust. It is not like that between a military commander and his cadet.

In the next three verses Sage Valmiki, seeing that his disciple has a justified case, relents and presents a concise summary of Sage Vasishtha’s teaching to Sri Rama. It is terse; it is also a magnificent piece of poetry.

Verse 7.5: *The World Summarised*

अविद्यया जगज्जातं , नास्ति सत्यमिहाण्वपि ।

नास्ति भिन्नं चितः किञ्चित् , स्वप्न वृत्तमिदं जगत् ॥७.५॥

1	<i>avidyayaa jagat jaatam</i>	<i>The world has risen from ignorance.</i>
2	<i>na asti satyam iha anu api;</i>	<i>There is not even an iota of truth in it.</i>
3	<i>na asti bhinnam chitah kinchit</i>	<i>There exists nothing different from consciousness.</i>
4	<i>swapna vrittam idam jagat.</i>	<i>This world is like a dream.</i>

So Sage Valmiki begins his summary of what was taught by Sage Vasishtha. This verse has the power to revolutionize our attitude towards the world.

The Truth could not have been put in terser words than these. There is nothing further to say to comment on them. Guruji’s own comment was, “This verse is Vedanta in its purest form. Undiluted, it may seem like a hard blow for the unprepared.”

From Guruji’s commentary we draw a paragraph of immense inspiration:

“The best students of Truth do not question if the Truth will be of benefit to them. Nor do they wonder how relevant the Truth is to their day-to-day existence. They never ask if the Truth will improve worldly life and reduce its stresses and strains. They wish to know the Truth even if it is bitter, even if it may shatter their world, even if it calls for a total transformation of their lifestyle and thinking.

*“The best students are even willing to face death in the process of knowing the Truth. Seekers of **utility** are not true seekers of **Reality**.”*

1-2 Here is an anecdote from Guruji that explains this line:

How to Face Defamation: A man was considering opening a case of defamation against him by some jealous colleagues who placed a false article on him in the newspaper. To finalise his decision he went to his spiritual Master.

The Master advised him: “Ponder over this carefully: How many people buy this paper? How many of them may read the paper? How many of those who read it, will read that article? Of them, how many know you? And to those who know you well, what would it matter? – Think about what defamation means. It is just a stigma you attach in your own mind. The world is unreal, there is not an iota of truth in it. What else can you expect from it? You will waste all your energy trying to straighten the world. Just straighten your mind.”

3-4 Another Illustration came forth from Guruji:

The World – A Dream: Suppose I dream of various things – the mountains, the river, trees, the birds on the tree, the fruit they are eating, and so on. When I awake, can I say that the mountains and river and trees were unreal, but the fruit was real? No, either the *whole* dream is unreal, or the *whole* dream is real – one of the two. Thus did Guruji bring home to us, the bold Truth in this verse.

Verse 7.6: From Form to the Formless

साकारं भज तावत्त्वं , यावत्सत्त्वं प्रसीदति ।
निराकारे परे तत्त्वे , ततः स्थितिरकृत्रिमा

॥७.६॥

1	<i>saakaaram bhaja taavat tvam</i>	<i>So long should you worship the form (of God)</i>
2	<i>yaavat sattwam praseedati;</i>	<i>till the mind becomes pure.</i>
3	<i>niraakaare pare tattve</i>	<i>In the supreme, formless principle of Truth</i>
4	<i>tatah sthithi akritrimaa.</i>	<i>there will be spontaneous abidance thereafter.</i>

Going step by step has been emphasized in this text. The seven Bhumikas is a perfect example of this approach to one’s spiritual progress. One cannot jump a single step. One has to do the primary school before going to the secondary school. There is no “double promotion” on this path! This is the procedure advocated in this verse.

1-2 Worship With Form: To acquire purity, Saguna worship is prescribed. A form of God is chosen for worship. One may also keep in his mind the attributes or qualities of the Lord. After a long enough period of this type of worship, the seeker will find that he is able to abide for longer and longer periods in meditation on the Self.

There may be some people to whom thinking can bring purity. They should go ahead with that as their specific Sadhana. When closely analysed, we find that it is the Formless alone that appears as the form of the idol. An ice-block is solid and can have a form. When it melts into a liquid it cannot hold a fixed form. Liquid is more subtle than solid. Then when even the water evaporates into steam, it gets more subtle and occupies all the space available to it. The same principle is applied to one’s worship as we go from the gross level to the subtlest level.

One should not see the different levels of worship with an eye of inferiority or superiority. That would be an insult to the Truth, as God manifests at all levels. Levels are needed purely from a practical point of view. It is only a question of what we have the capacity to do.

3-4 Worship of the Formless: The rigorous enquiry needed on the path of Vedanta requires a very subtle, sharp and pure intellect. This is not easily acquired as it requires great purity of mind.

Guruji said Vedanta was something of a big challenge. A close equivalent of it at the sense level are the roller-coaster rides offered at some amusement parks, or the bungy-jumping from a bridge across a deep canyon. These provide thrills to those whose hearts are not timid, because if the person is not strong in mind he can get a heart attack instead of a thrill. Similarly, Vedanta is ‘not for the faint-hearted’.

Worship of the Formless, requires some training first on a Form or idol of God..

Verse 7.7: *The Essentials of Meditation*

अखिन्नं क्षणमासीनः , पश्य संसार-नाटकम् ।
चिदानन्दधनं स्वच्छम् , आत्मानं च विभावय ।
एवं स्थास्यसि नित्यं चेत् , तीर्णोऽसि भवसागरात् ॥७.७॥

1	<i>akhinnam kshanam aaseenah</i>	<i>Seated undejected for a moment,</i>
2	<i>pashya samsaara naatakam;</i>	<i>observe this drama of Samsara.</i>
3	<i>chidaanandam dhanam svacchham</i>	<i>On the wealth of consciousness and bliss</i>
4	<i>aatmaanam cha vibhaavaya;</i>	<i>of the pure Self – begin contemplating.</i>
5	<i>evam sthaasyasi nityam chet</i>	<i>If you remain in contemplation at all times,</i>
6	<i>teernah asi bhava saagaraat.</i>	<i>you eventually cross over the ocean of Samsara.</i>

In this verse, more details are given of the process of meditation by which one goes through the final phase of the spiritual journey. After Saguna worship on Form has been practised for a good period, the next step, contemplation on the Self, may be begun slowly as shown in this verse.

1-2 To begin with, one may simply sit quietly. Even by just sitting quietly with the spine erect, changes begin taking place in one’s mind – calmness sets in. The devotee is asked to spend more time in sitting quietly in a relaxed mood. The rest of the day, he can spend in just observing the drama of worldly life as it happens around him.

Guruji offered a few suggestions: One can sit at a bus-stand and watch people. That is quite an educational exercise. One learns to observe and remain detached.

“Inside Rama, outside Drama.”

Guruji coined this good slogan to practice the technique of observation. Keeping our mind fixed on Rama, we can observe all the external Drama. Even when we have a role to play in the Drama, we should do so without relinquishing our hold on Rama within. Thus we will avoid all further identification with the ego.

The Drama is essentially something that goes on within our own mind.

Observation in this manner can be practised in the home environment. We can just watch the drama that goes on around us at home. Then we begin to watch our own mind as the object of the drama. See all the silly things it gets up to. We may even learn to laugh at ourselves as we practice this step. That would be good; it means the ego is accepting its many weaknesses. The ego gets loosened up and weakens its hold over us.

3-4 When this is done for a good period, the next step is to begin to focus on the Self within. This is meditation proper. If this can be practised it will bring great peace and calmness. Gradually, it will grow deeper and deeper.

5 The final state of perfection is reached when this contemplation becomes permanently established. It is a very gradual ascent. We are talking here of the ascent from Bhumika 4 to Bhumika 7. This happens at a very advanced level of Sadhana.

6 Ultimately the fruit of this practice is obtained – “crossing the ocean of Samsara.” This is equivalent to saying, “One attains the goal of life – liberation from births and deaths.”

FROM DISCIPLE TO AVATARA

THE PLAN OF THE TEXT is to now cover the final lap of Sri Rama’s Sadhana. Entering this phase with the attainment of God-realisation, one may wonder what is there yet to be done by him. Yet, from hindsight we know of the gigantic work that Sri Rama accomplished in this world, which is described in the *Ramayana*. The critical event that determined his life’s direction after having realized the Ultimate Reality is now being examined closely.

Bharadvaja only happens to be the instrument in this text to usher in the last lap of the story. Sage Valmiki had obliged Bharadvaja with a summary of the whole Teaching in the last 3 verses. Now he has to oblige him further on the next logical question. This will take us to the end of the text.

Verse 7.8: *Bharadvaja’s Question*

भरद्वाज उवाच –

रामः प्राप्तः परं योगं , स्वात्मनात्मनि निष्ठितः ।

कथं वसिष्ठदेवेन , व्यवहारपरः कृतः

॥७.८॥

	<i>Bharadvaja uvaacha:</i>	<i>Bharadvaja asked:</i>
1	<i>raamah praaptah param yogam</i>	<i>Rama, having attained the Supreme Yoga,</i>
2	<i>swa-aatmanaa aatmani nishthitah</i>	<i>and absorbed by his own Self in the Self,</i>
3	<i>katham vasishtha devena</i>	<i>how did the venerable Sage Vasishtha</i>
4	<i>vyavahaara parah kritah.</i>	<i>manage to make him perform worldly duties?</i>

1-2 It is true that once the highest Goal is realized, the sage’s Karma is wiped clean. Only his Prarabdha works out till the end of his life. However, in true Indian tradition, the

final say rests with the Guru. Not that he demands it, but the disciple takes the greatest joy in submitting to the Guru's will. For Sri Rama, the perfect disciple, that is most likely.

3-4 By the wording of Bharadvaja's question, it appears that he is anticipating an answer in which Sage Vasishtha had to use a certain strategy, a persuasive appeal, perhaps even some manipulation, to make Sri Rama do his bidding. That is how we see it in worldly affairs. Management, wanting to get their workers to do something, entices them with perks, privileges, company cars, and a raise in their salary. That is what seems to get anyone to do anything in the world.

But in the case of Sri Rama, nothing of the kind was needed, nor contemplated.

Verse 7.9: How Rama Was Motivated to Act

वाल्मीकिरुवाच –

वसिष्ठः प्रोक्तवान् रामं , विश्वामित्रेण चोदितः ॥

वसिष्ठ उवाच – राम राम महाबाहो , महापुरुष चिन्मय ।

नायं विश्रान्तिकालो हि , लोकानन्दकरो भव ॥७.९॥

	<i>Vaalmeeki uvaacha:</i>	<i>Sage Valmiki replied:</i>
1	<i>vasishthah proktavaan raamam</i>	<i>Rama was told by the Sage Vasishtha,</i>
2	<i>vishvaamitreya choditah.</i>	<i>who did as directed by Sage Viswamitra:</i>
	<i>Vasishtha uvaacha:</i>	<i>Sage Vasishtha said to Rama:</i>
3	<i>raama raama mahaabaaho</i>	<i>O Rama, O Rama, O mighty-armed!</i>
4	<i>mahaapurusha chinmaya;</i>	<i>O Great Being, who art Pure Consciousness!</i>
5	<i>na ayam vishraanti kaalah hi</i>	<i>This indeed is not the time for repose.</i>
6	<i>loka aananda-karah bhava.</i>	<i>Be one who is the delighter of the world!</i>

The crucial event is traced back to its very beginnings, so that the world would know exactly how Sri Rama came to undertake such a huge responsibility.

1-2 Sage Viswamitra had the vision of what needed to be done. But since Sage Vasishtha was the official Guru of the Prince Rama, he discussed his thoughts with Sage Vasishtha, as per the protocol among spiritual Masters. Sage Vasishtha concurred with the idea, and then approached Sri Rama.

In Chapter Two we had a similar situation. When passing a remark on Sri Rama's spiritual attainment, Sage Viswamitra had his say, but referred Sri Rama to Sage Vasishtha for the final verdict (see 2.3).

3-4 The Sage Vasishtha addresses Sri Rama not as a disciple (as he did in 2.3) but as one who he is as a spiritual luminary in his own right. It is important for us to note this. The disciple may revere his Guru throughout life, but the Guru never plays the Guru beyond its need for discipleship. Once the student is accomplished, the Guru accepts him as an equal, if not higher than himself. This is part of the greatness of the spiritual tradition.

5-6 As briefed by Sage Viswamitra, Sage Vasishtha throws the hint as to the great role Sri Rama has to play in his life. There is a sense of urgency, as well as a great feeling of joy behind the appeal, but there is no resort to any coercion. This is the lesson.

Verse 7.10: Sri Rama's Obligation to the World

यावल्लोकपरामर्शो , निरूढोनास्ति योगिनः ।
तावदूढसमाधित्वं , न भवत्येव निर्मलम्

॥७.१०॥

1	<i>yaavat loka paraamarshah</i>	<i>As long as the obligations to the world</i>
2	<i>niroodhah na asti yoginah;</i>	<i>of a great Yogi (like you) have not been fulfilled,</i>
3	<i>taavat roodha samaadheetvam</i>	<i>till then the state of deep Samadhi –</i>
4	<i>na bhavati eva nirmalam.</i>	<i>that stainless state – is out of place for you.</i>

1-2 Sri Rama's obligations to the world are detailed in the next verse. Here it is sufficient to note that he has Nitya and Naimitika Karmas (duties) that he cannot avoid.

3-4 Until these responsibilities are fulfilled, he is not expected to enjoy the 'luxury' of remaining in the state of stainless Samadhi, which is fully capable and well worthy of.

Verse 7.11: The Duties Prescribed by Scriptures

तस्माद्राज्यादि कार्याणि , निवर्तय यथाक्रमम् ।
देवकार्यं यथा कृत्वा , ततस्त्यक्त्वा सुखी भव

॥७.११॥

1	<i>tasmaat raajya aadi kaaryaani</i>	<i>Therefore, the duties of the kingdom</i>
2	<i>nivartaya yathaa kramam;</i>	<i>should be performed. Then in due course of time,</i>
3	<i>deva kaaryam yathaa kritvaa</i>	<i>your religious responsibilities should also be done.</i>
4	<i>tatah tyaktvaa sukhee bhava.</i>	<i>Only then may you renounce and be happy!</i>

Here we see the precision of detail regarding the *priorities* of Sri Rama's duties as envisioned for him by Sage Viswamitra, who in this respect represents his destiny.

Sri Rama's whole life is planned for him. His obligations to the world are twofold:

1 i) Family Responsibilities: His duties towards his father is to take up the kingship of Ayodhya; included in this category is his duty to marry Sita and ensure the continuity of this kingship. This typifies a son's duty towards his parents and family. It is called Nitya Karma.

2-3 ii) Religious Responsibilities: Unknown to anyone except Sage Viswamitra through his universal vision, Sri Rama has obligatory duties called Naimitika Karma towards the holy men living in the Dandaka forest. He has to protect them from the Rakshasas. We may include under this duty the conquest over Ravana as well.

The whole of the Ramayana epic gives all the details of these two responsibilities.

The Sequence of Responsibilities

Rama's marriage to Sita when he was still a Prince. Then came the day when he was to be coronated the King of Ayodhya. The duties of the kingdom were about to become his lot. Circumstances then prevailed to change this course.

Sri Rama had to be banished to the Dandaka forest. There he fulfilled a substantial part of his religious duty to protect the sages. His duty of exterminating the Rakshasas is considered as his religious responsibility. Then followed the saga of Sita's abduction and the defeat over Ravana. This is the story of his Avatarahood and dominates the Ramayana.

Only after 14 years of exile did his Prarabdha Karma to rule Ayodhya bear fruit. The significance of this delay in his coronation is that Sri Rama did not need kingly authority in order to kill the Rakshasas; he only needed all his spiritual strength to succeed.

Then came the great dilemma of placing his role as king before his role as husband. He had to bow to the pressure of the people he ruled and send Sita away to the forest. In the present context, it is not all the details that are important, but the fact that he fulfilled all these duties by upholding the highest principles of Dharma. At every stage, he acted only out of a sense of duty. Never did he allow personal enjoyment to overrule his sense of duty.

4 Tyaktvaa Sukhee Bhava: “Renounce and be happy”. Under ideal conditions, when all his duties were fulfilled, the plan for Sri Rama was to relax and spend his remaining days in peaceful meditation and happiness.

Did this actually materialize in the life of Sri Rama, after his return to Ayodhya? We would never know. After his painful trial of sending Mother Seeta out of the kingdom to the Ashram of Sage Valmiki, it is doubtful whether he had the inclination to do so. Where was happiness in his life thereafter? However, the Ramayana leaves us with that question mark.

We are thus forced to interpret this “renounce and be happy” in a philosophical sense only. It is a mental state, experienced in the midst of the deepest trials of life. Life never guarantees any comfortable stage; it only guarantees a ‘comfortable mental attitude’ to those who have made the sacrifices for it.

Verse 7.12: *How Rama Responds*

वाल्मीकिरुवाच –

एवमुक्तो वसिष्ठेन , रामो दाशरथिस्तदा ।

सर्वेषणा-विनिर्मुक्तो, विनयादिदमब्रवीत्

॥७.१२॥

	<i>[Vaalmeeki uvaacha:]</i>	<i>[Valmiki concludes as follows:]</i>
1	<i>evam uktah vasishthena</i>	<i>Thus instructed by Sage Vasishtha,</i>
2	<i>raamah daasharathih tadaa;</i>	<i>Rama, the son of Dasaratha, then,</i>
3	<i>sarva eshanaa vinirmuktah</i>	<i>being free from all (personal) desires,</i>
4	<i>vinayaat idam abraveet.</i>	<i>gave the following reply, full of humility:</i>

1-2 Sri Rama was well acquainted with the duties of a disciple towards his Guru. Every decision he took in life was with the blessings of his Guru. In the lineage of his illustrious father, the Surya-Vamsha, the tradition of Guru and disciple was maintained with meticulous care. The Surya-Vamshis were ever alert to do their Guru’s bidding.

3 Sri Rama had no individual desire, because *he was never an individual*. He had surrendered everything at the feet of his Guru. He was well aware that he stood as the heir to the throne. Even then, his mind was not attracted by this honour. He had always wished to lead a hermit’s life in the forest.

4 Vinayaat: “full of humility”. This is a great power in Sri Rama. We know that he had the true knowledge and realisation of the Self. True knowledge made him humble; in contrast, those with university degrees often have heads that swell with pride.

Verse 7.13 & 14: Rama Accepts the Guru's Command

श्रीराम उवाच – विधिर्वा मे निषेधो वा , त्वत्प्रसादान्न विद्यते ।
 एवं सत्यपि वाक्यं ते , करणीयं मया सदा ॥७.१३॥
 वेदागम पुराणेषु , स्मृतिष्वपि महामुने ।
 गुरोर्वाक्यं विधिः प्रोक्तो, निषेधस्तद्विपर्ययः ॥७.१४॥

	<i>Shree Raama uvaacha:</i>	<i>Sri Rama responded:</i>
1	<i>vidhih vaa me nishedhah vaa</i>	Neither by rules (do's) nor by prohibitions (don'ts)
2	<i>tvat prasaadaat na vidyate;</i>	am I bound. This is due to your Grace.
3	<i>evam sati api vaakyam te</i>	Yet, despite the freedom I have (as king), thy word
4	<i>karaneeyam mayaa sadaa.</i>	always shall I accept to prevail over me.

5	<i>veda aagama puraanesu</i>	For in the Vedas, Agamas, Puranas,
6	<i>smritishu api mahaa-mune;</i>	and also in the Smritis, O great Sage,
7	<i>guroh vaakyam vidhih proktah</i>	the word of the Guru is declared to be the rule;
8	<i>nishedha tad viparyayah.</i>	that which is contrary to it is prohibited .

1-2 At the outset, Sri Rama ascribes his spiritual liberation to the Grace of his Guru. By virtue of his spiritual attainment, Sri Rama had reached the stage described in the scriptures whereby he was not obliged to follow the do's and don'ts of the scriptures. Spiritual realisation frees one from all the rules that normal society is bound by.

This independence of Sri Rama can be looked at even from an empirical point of view. He was the King of Ayodhya. As King, he had the full power to do as he wishes. He was not obligated or bound by the wishes of anyone else. This is the privilege granted to him by his position of authority.

3-4 Yet, what does Sri Rama choose to do? We now see the sheer greatness of the man whom the world today reveres as an Avatara. Despite his exemption from all rules and responsibilities, despite being completely free to do as he likes, he chooses not to exercise this right. Instead, without knowing what his Guru has in store for him, he declares his obedience to his Guru's command above his own freedom.

It may take time, but this decision of Sri Rama requires us to pause and ponder. It represents the great ideal which fired the hearts and minds of the heroes of India's past. It upholds the ideal that **administrators** are always to be guided by spiritual **visionaries**. Kshatriyas should always be ready to do the will of Brahmanas. That social order is what guarantees just and fair rulership among mankind.

5-6 Every scripture mentioned here uniformly upholds the same course of action. In submitting himself to this rule, Sri Rama proves himself to be true to the great Indian tradition that produced heroic kings coupled to wise and selfless Brahmanas, anchored in true knowledge.

7-8 What the Guru commands is law to the Indian disciple. What the wise declare becomes policy for strong administrators. This was the foundation of ancient Indian civilisation. To the extent we have departed from that ideal, we see an India that has fallen into slavery at the hands of powers wielding raw material might.

STORY ON FULFILLMENT OF DUTIES

Sant Jnaneshwar's father had taken Sannyas after having married and before having any children. When his (the father's) Guru came to know that he had not completely fulfilled his household duties, he withdrew the Sannyas and sent him back to do his duty. The point here is that the Guru's command can be different from the scriptures but it has to be obeyed. It was after this that four illustrious children were born to him, which included Sant Jnaneshwar. All four of them became great saints themselves.

Verse 7.15: *Rama Honours His Guru's Feet*

वाल्मीकिरुवाच –

इत्युक्त्वा चरणौ तस्य , वसिष्ठस्य महात्मनः ।

शिरस्याधाय सर्वात्मा , सर्वान्प्राह दयानिधिः

॥७.१५॥

	<i>[Vaalmeeeki uvaacha:]</i>	<i>[Sage Valmiki said:]</i>
1	<i>iti uktvaa charanau tasya</i>	<i>Having said thus, the feet of that</i>
2	<i>vasishthasya mahaatmanah;</i>	<i>noble soul, Sage Vasishtha,</i>
3	<i>shirasi aadhaaya sarvaatmaa</i>	<i>he placed on his head – he who was the Self of all!</i>
4	<i>dayaanidhih sarvaan praaha.</i>	<i>Then he, the treasure of compassion, addressed the assembled gathering as follows:</i>

1-3 The reverence and respect that a disciple should have for his Guru is exemplified in this verse by the disciple placing the Guru's feet on his head. This verse and the next, where Sri Rama addresses the Court Assembly, drew an emotional response from Gururji which is described in the box insert that follows the address to the Court.

Verse 7.16 & 17: *Rama's Address to the Assembly*

रामोवाच –

सर्वे शृणुत भद्रं वो, निश्चयेन सुनिश्चितम् ।

आत्मज्ञानात्परं नास्ति , गुरोरपि च तद्विदः

॥७.१६॥

राघवस्य तदा मूर्ध्नि , पुष्पवृष्टिः पपात ह

॥७.१७॥

	<i>[Raamah uvaacha:]</i>	<i>[Rama addresses the Court Assembly:]</i>
1	<i>sarve shrinuta bhadram vah</i>	<i>"Please listen, all of you, to the auspicious</i>
2	<i>nishchayena sunishchitam;</i>	<i>conclusion I have arrived at by due investigation.</i>
3	<i>aatma jnaanaat param na asti</i>	<i>Than Self-knowledge, there is nothing superior,</i>
4	<i>guroh api cha tad vidah.</i>	<i>and the same of the Guru who knows That."</i>
5	<i>raaghavasya tadaa moordheen</i>	<i>Then, on the head of Sri Rama,</i>
6	<i>pushpa-vrishtih papaata ha.</i>	<i>verily there fell a shower of flowers!</i>

THE INEXPLICABLE “SANDEEPANY” TOUCH

When Guruji spoke of this very touching scene depicting the disciple’s humility, he was close to being emotionally choked in giving the moving account. How much it must have reminded him of his beloved Pujya Gurudev!

A moment such as this added the special inexplicable touch to the Vedanta Course which filled our hearts with satisfaction. It lifted us out of our textbooks and placed us warmly into the caring arms of our Acharyas. It was the Gurukula spirit at work!

Then came Sri Rama’s Court Address. The class was in dead silence as Guruji spoke emotionally about the scene he was visualizing. Rama is speaking to the world of devotees the two things he holds dearest – the divine knowledge and the Guru.

When someone fulfills a small need of ours we are so grateful to him, and show it in so many ways. Why not when we have received the knowledge that matters most to us from the spiritual Master? Guruji could not believe how hard-hearted people must be who think of a disciple’s gratitude as being ‘slavish mentality’. He said, “They do not know what they are talking. What foolish people!”

It is unfortunately true that modern civilization cares little or nothing of the Guru’s contribution to society. They know no better who sneer at the Guru in arrogance.

The shower of flowers – the Pushpa-Vrithi – was the climax for the whole class. We all were in awe of how moved Guruji was in describing this very moving scene of the Gods blessing Sri Rama, who was to be revered as God Himself in due course.

. . . And then we realised that Guruji himself had hand-picked these verses out of a total of 32,000. They must have been the most precious verses to preserve in his pure mind!

We could have read them ourselves but that would not have had the same effect. Coming from Guruji himself, they were soaked in the same “preciousness” in which they were preserved!



Guruji with Sandeepany students

Verse 7.18: Valmiki Concludes the Message

वाल्मीकिरुवाच –

एतत्ते सर्वमाख्यातं , रमचन्द्र-कथानकम् ।

अनेन क्रमयोगेन , भरद्वाज सुखी भव

॥७.१८॥

	<i>Vaalmeeki uvaacha:</i>	<i>Sage Valmiki concluded:</i>
1	<i>etat te sarvam aakhyaatam</i>	<i>Completely narrated to you has been this</i>
2	<i>raamachandra kathaanakam;</i>	<i>story of Sri Rama.</i>
3	<i>anena kramayogena</i>	<i>By following it in due order,</i>
4	<i>bharadvaja sukhee bhava.</i>	<i>O Bharadwaja, be happy!</i>

1-2 The story refers to the Ramayana by Sage Valmiki, not the Yoga Vasishtha which contains the teachings to Sri Rama. This is a very simple concluding remark, but it has one very important point that needs to be highlighted:

3 The teaching has to be followed “in due order”. There is a sequence in which they have to be practised. Spiritual Sadhana cannot be done in a haphazard manner. It has to be done in a systematic order.

A man who is in hospital for a serious ailment is treated in a definite sequence of steps, with different treatments given at different stages of the illness. As he outgrows the need for one treatment, he takes up another treatment. It is the same with one’s spiritual Sadhana. This sequence has been taught to some extent in this text through the Bhumikas.

For instance Sri Rama followed the steps and attended to the basic realization of the Self first as directed by his Guru. At this time he did not mix much in society, but kept to himself, and just observed the sorrows in this world.

Only after realization was he asked, by the same Guru, to plunge into dynamic service of mankind and perform His duties as the Avatara of the Lord.

4 Then, one can be assured of good results.

Gurujī drove home the point of attaining happiness only through God and the Guru. No other way to blessedness exists. Then he wryly remarked that there was an Upanishad where a way was suggested which did not need either God or Guru. What happened to that Upanishad? – It was offered to one who was able to roll up the whole universe into his hands and fling it aside!

Verse 7.19: Liberation Available Even to Children

मोक्षोपायान् इमान्पुण्यान् , प्रत्यक्षानुभवार्थदान् ।

बालोऽप्याकर्ण्य तज्ज्ञत्वं , याति का त्वादृशे कथा

॥७.१९॥

1	<i>moksha upayaan imaan punyaan</i>	<i>These holy means to Liberation,</i>
2	<i>pratyaksha anubhava arthadaan;</i>	<i>that lead one to the direct experience (of Truth),</i>
3	<i>baalah api aakarnya tat jnatvam</i>	<i>even a child listening to it comes to know That;</i>
4	<i>yaati kaa tvaadrishe kathaa.</i>	<i>what to say about a person like YOU?</i>

1-2 Moksha Upayaan: “the holy means”. In this text the means held out begin with Dispassion. That is absolutely a must, and has been greatly emphasized in the earlier chapters. With that comes a strong faith in one’s Guru. This also stands out in this text, especially as we have seen in this chapter. With these two supports or legs, one can walk the spiritual path with great assurance.

3 Why should it be considered to be difficult to know the Self? Even small children like Prahlad and Dhruva have been known to succeed just by following the instructions they were given at very tender ages.

4 So Bharadwaja has no excuse. He now can plunge himself into Sadhana.

Guruji mentioned an interesting observation in life:

“An optimist is one who sees an opportunity in every difficulty. A pessimist is one who sees a difficulty in every opportunity.”

The experience of the bliss of the Self in this life itself is a very real possibility for a sincere aspirant. There is no chance in it; it is not a hit or miss situation. With effort, the results are guaranteed. On the contrary, the options of going to a heavenly world are doubtful – who knows whether such worlds even exist! Why go for something uncertain, when there is the certainty of liberation through this path?

Verse 7.20: *Daily Reading of this Dialogue*

संवादं शृणुयान्नित्यं , यदि राम-वसिष्ठयोः ।
सर्वावस्थोऽप्यसौ नूनं , मुक्तिमार्गं निगच्छति

॥७.२०॥

1	<i>samvaadam shrunuyaata nityam</i>	<i>By listening daily to this dialogue</i>
2	<i>yadi raama vasishthyoh;</i>	<i>between Rama and Sage Vasishtha,</i>
3	<i>sarva avasthah api asau noonam</i>	<i>then certainly under all circumstances, this</i>
4	<i>mukti-maargam nigacchhati.</i>	<i>path of Liberation is taken up by him.</i>

1-2 Shrunuyaata Nityam: “listening daily.” The meaning is that we should regularly reflect on the truths expounded in this dialogue. Each time we sit and reflect on the knowledge, it sinks in deeper into our mind, and our understanding broadens.

3-4 By greater understanding, we gain the confidence to tread the rigorous path of dispassion under all circumstances. Guruji gave us instances of how great men and women lived under very trying circumstances and yet were able to keep their mind on the Lord. Mother Kunti is an inspiring example of one who prayed to Lord Krishna for difficulties so that she would not forget Him.

Guruji added how one’s understanding is gained. There are four avenues by which knowledge comes to us. They are:

- i) **Tat Kathanam:** “speaking about it”. 25% is gained by listening to the teacher.
- ii) **Tat Anyonyam:** “discussing it with others”. 25% from fellow students.
- iii) **Tat Chintanam:** “reflecting on it”. 25% by self-reflection.
- iv) **Tat Prabodhanam:** “through time and experience”. 25% from experience.

Verse 7.21: Conclusion: Salutation to Brahman

यत्सर्वं खल्विदं ब्रह्म , तज्जलानिति च स्फुटम् ।
श्रुत्या ह्युदीर्यते साम्नि , तस्मै ब्रह्मात्मने नमः

॥७.२१॥

1	<i>yat sarvam khalu idam brahma</i>	<i>"All this is verily Brahman; from Him do all things</i>
2	<i>tat "ja-la-an" iti;</i>	<i>originate (Ja), into Him they dissolve (La), and by</i>
		<i>Him they are sustained (An)" – very clearly</i>
3	<i>cha sphutam shrutvaa hi</i> <i>udeeryate saamni</i>	<i>indeed do the Srutis (Chandogya Upanishad)</i> <i>indicate this in the Sama Mantras.</i>
4	<i>tasmai brahma aatmane namah</i>	<i>Salutations to that Brahman, (identical to) the Self.</i>

Verse 1.1 was not explained at the beginning because it pairs up with this final verse. Together, the two verses bring out a lesson:

1 We began with a salutation to the Truth, the Self; and close with a salutation to Brahman, the Self. The Truth is thus established to be both Brahman (Reality) in the macrocosm and Atman (Self) in the microcosm. There is no conflict between these two. They are identical.

2 The origin, sustenance and dissolution of the universe are all due to the Supreme Brahman. Thus the text's beginning (**Upakrama**) and its end (**Upasamhara**) contain the same message. This is in line with the practice prescribed for a well-written text.

3 Support for this statement is given from the Sama Veda, wherein in the Chandogya Upanishad, the same message is echoed. This is another indication of a good text which is supported by the original scriptures, the Srutis.

4 The salutation to the Supreme Reality is a reverential acknowledgement of the Grace of the Supreme behind all our spiritual exertions and success.

Om Tat Sat!

