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## About the book

The original *Yogavāsiṣṭha* records the dialogue between Sage *Vasiṣṭha* and the young *Śri Rāma*, which lasted for 18 days, beginning in the morning and terminating at dusk. *Vairāgya* (dispassion) is the first subject dealt with by the author. It is followed by the section on *mumuṅṣu* (the seeker of liberation) and his thoughts and attitude. Then comes the section on *utpatti* (evolution) of the universe, which is followed by the one on *sthiti* (preservation). *Upāśama Prakaraṇa* or the section on ‘Quietitude’, the subject matter of this book, comes next and is followed by the last section on *Nirvāṇa* or redemption and repose.

This book begins with the contents of the original text without giving any foregoing description or detail. This should not pose any problem to the readers, for they would already be familiar with the spiritual and Vedantic thoughts, either by reading or by listening to lectures. In fact, in our publications, this book comes only after *Vedantic Way of Living* and *Brahma Vidya Abhyasa*.

As the contents will reveal, the subjects discussed are designed to take the seeker towards greater and greater understanding and realization. The stress is always on the practical aspect of *sādhanā*, although adequate theoretical knowledge and exposition have been provided. Repetitions are a characteristic of all spiritual and philosophical treatises of this land. The critical reader may not appreciate them but the assiduous *sādhaka* will value them immensely. We have retained repetitions only where essential. When the seeker reflects repeatedly upon the final truth, the necessary clarity and *Quietitude* will emerge in his mind.

The whole of spiritual knowledge has only one aim. It is to make the mind of the thinking seeker absolutely free from constrictions and impurities, thereby enabling him to be himself, to be the Self in him.

The pursuit of the Self is unlike all other pursuits. It is not the pursuit of anything outside of us. On this ground it can be described as a pursuit of nothing and hence for the ardent seeker, the true Self-pursuit must ultimately lead to the cessation of all pursuits. When the Self-pursuit thus ceases, the so-called Self, which had remained unsensed all the while,

comes to be rightly apprehended, fully realized and constantly abided by. That marks a deep and unbroken sense of release, acceptance and equipoise, which is beyond description. It relieves man from all his bondage and gives him the redemption and reward he so lovingly seeks in this fleeting world.

Yogavāsiṣṭha impresses very strongly upon the seeker the supreme importance of the mind which is the seat of all experiences and understanding. Everything inheres only in the mind. Both experience and knowledge subsist on the mind, which is also their only cause. Even the thought of the Self, like any other thought, is the mind's own evolution. The mind is thus the first, the intermediate and the last. At the same time, the mind, as we perceive and understand it now, is not the Supreme Reality. The Supreme Reality is the Supreme Awareness or Consciousness, far greater in scope, power and presence. It exists by itself without giving rise to anything else whatsoever. The mind is but a trickling offshoot, a conjured up form of the Supreme Consciousness.

Although the mind is not what the Supreme Consciousness is, yet the latter can be apprehended and realized only in and through the mind. Thus the mind acts as a beautiful and sure pointer to the Supreme Reality.

Grasp the mind, learn to be in it as in an external abode, and then realize the Consciousness Supreme, which precedes the mind, and which also follows everything in the end. This is the delicate spiral which Yogavāsiṣṭha winds and holds for the seeker to pass through.

The discussions herewith lay great stress on the right pursuit of understanding as the real essence of spiritual sādhanā. But this pursuit is not to be a mere intellectual feat or indulgence. It should be a deep, sublime and most effective process of purification and refinement for the seeker – as Krishna says in the Bhagavad Geeta “There is no purifier greater than knowledge. It is directly experienceable and immensely pleasant to practise”. Therefore, to regard this text as a sheer intellectual exercise and a source of joy, is wrong. On the other hand, it is a very lofty treatise on Self-Knowledge and Liberation. By the study and contemplation on it, an earnest seeker is sure to gain purity, right understanding and realization in this very life.

Who is fit to read the book, is a question which the original text itself

poses in the beginning. It says in answer: "Whoever has the idea that he is bound, that he is in shackles, and therefore has the need for freedom, is qualified to read and make use of the text. He must be neither one who knows little nor one who knows all." This answer hardly needs further clarification.

In the past few decades, while speaking on spiritual subjects in various cities, towns and villages of our country, I quoted a great deal from Yogavāsiṣṭha. During the talks the Sanskrit verses I recited were primarily for my own joy. The explanation of their sublime contents, which were delighting and enlightening, brought forth a flood of enthusiasm in the listeners. Before long, many of the more ardent seekers sought a brief account of this splendid work in the current form.

In the year 1973, when I happened to be on a tour of Malaysia and Singapore, a devout listener succeeded in committing me to this laborious task through a timely gesture. The initial idea was to abridge the original text running into several hundred pages to a synopsis of about 200 pages, avoiding reproduction of the original verses. However, some of the students and seekers in our group desired that the original Sanskrit verses be included so that at least a part of the invaluable scripture of our ancient past would find the light of the present scientific age. That is how this book was begun and pursued to this extent.

On taking up the task, I found that it would take years to cover the whole of the original text, and this presented a fate of uncertainty in completing the mighty endeavour. Therefore, in order to serve the immediate needs of the assiduous seekers, I took up first the portion which has a direct bearing on their seeking. This gave birth to '*Quietitude of the Mind*', which is an abridgement and commentary on the Upaśama Prakaraṇa. This book contains all the necessary truths and advice from which a true seeker can derive fulfillment for himself.

The devoted but joyful way in which I was writing this book often met with interruptions and it had to be called off on several occasions. My life and functions are earmarked primarily for needs of the seekers who often arrive at the Ashram for personal and direct communication. This means a sudden cessation of what is being written and reflected upon. The Ashram routines and the incidental spells of engagement, sometimes lasting for



hours, and sometimes for days and months, are another source of interruption. The first edition of this book was published in 1975 with the objective to present with love, what was the best possible at that time. The writing took long hours of application on my part and also a good deal of assistance from Mother Sulabha Devi of the Ashram.

In the second edition published in 1997, my disciples Swami Nirvisheshananda Tirtha and Ma Gurupriya took the task of improving the content and presentation. The text was presented in 18 chapters, each chapter containing a number of sections. My elucidation and analyses were highlighted in shaded boxes, so that they stand distinct from the English meaning of the original verses. For precise rendering of the Sanskrit words and to facilitate their correct pronunciation, transliteration marks were used. References were also provided for the Sanskrit verses as they appear in the Upaśama Prakaraṇa of the original Yogavāsiṣṭha Mahārāmāyaṇa

Whenever intricate points in the treatment and revelation of the more subtle aspects of spiritual life and enlightenment came up, we had to put our minds and insights together. By a process of keen deliberation and reflection, the truths had to be perceived and exposed. In a refined pursuit like this, one should not commit himself to anything without the backing of his own direct realization of what he discusses and reveals. At the same time, every possible effort had to be made to complement the expositions with modern standards of reason, so that what is said can hold meaning and purpose even to the curious but tenacious readers and not only to the enlightened ones. On several occasions when reading the original Sanskrit verses and while rendering them in English, my being was thrown into scintillating waves of joy and ecstasy. This, coupled with the spontaneous love I have for both Sanskrit and English, is the best reward I can think of for having attempted this task.

Floating and tossing like a small bubble on the rippling surface of the evanescent waves of this mysterious universe, if during a short pause, I can cause this little sparkle, soothing perhaps to a handful, only Nature and Providence stand to be credited and honoured. What indeed is there in this world or anywhere else? It is only the unbridled play of the ceaseless tunes of Nature and the alluring display of the sovereign gracious Almighty!

The printing and release of the book has been possible only due to the cooperation – physical, mental and otherwise – of many dedicated souls. We at the Ashram are grateful to all who helped us in this humble endeavour.

May goodness and wisdom grace as many as possible on this earth and let the life of every one be led to its destined fulfillment.

Harih Om Tat Sat.

**Swamiji**

## No Advaita While at Work

भावाद्वैतमुपाश्रित्य सत्ताद्वैतमयात्मकः ।

कर्मद्वैतमनादृत्य द्वैताद्वैतमयो भव ॥

(17. 29)

Inwardly contemplate always upon the non-dual truth and realize your nature as the pure essence of being, called the Self, which is single and undifferentiated. But while acting, keep aside the *advaita* (non-dualness) and be attentive to the multiple objects rightly and well. Thus inwardly given to *advaita*, but outwardly to *dvaita*, behave as a combination of *dvaita* and *advaita*.

This is an important lesson. The entire talk of truth and wisdom is to make man's mind peaceful, quiet and free. It is not to destroy his worldly life or to rob from him any of the so-called gains and benefits. True spirituality does not interfere with life as such. It tries to remove the afflictions caused to life by the unbalanced mind and immature knowledge. Only when spiritual wisdom is acquired properly and to the ideal measure, our life will become true and bestow upon us unhindered peace and delight. These are the sure benefits that everyone looks for.

Again, spiritual wisdom does not mean the sudden renunciation of worldly life or bodily actions. As already mentioned, the *dhyeya vāsanā-tyāga* does not denote any such external renunciation. As the world prevails, so also will our activities. Like removing the fangs of a poisonous serpent, only the fangs of bondage need be removed from the serpent of the world. Once this is done, one can sport with the world.

There is one stage when all the worldly activities and the bodily ones, irresistibly cease. One need not bother so much about that eventuality. The aim must be to become illumined and thereby to get delivered from whatever bondage he now suffers from.

## Awareness alone everywhere

द्वैतं न सम्भवति चित्तमयं महात्मन्नात्मन्यथैक्यमपि न द्वितयोदितात्मा ।  
अद्वैतमैक्यरहितं सततोदितं सत्सर्वं न किञ्चिदपि चाहुरतः स्वरूपम् ॥  
नैवाहमस्ति न च नाम जगन्ति सन्ति सर्वं च विद्यत इदं ननु निर्विकारम् ।  
विज्ञानमात्रमवभासत एव शान्तं नासन्न सज्जगदिदं च सदेति विद्धि ॥

(17. 31, 32)

The perception of duals being born of the unreal mind, duality as such is not true. Because *Ātmā* does not give birth to anything, nor does it admit of any second entity, to speak of its oneness is fallacious. For oneness to become true, there must be a second factor, with respect to which it can be thought of. The *Ātmā* is hence devoid of both duality and oneness. Being ever-emerging and ever-persisting, it is the everything and all. At the same time, it is nothing at all. Thus has its nature been described.

The 'I' (*aham*) does not exist in truth. Nor do the things called 'the worlds', which are spoken of with different names. Viewed closely, put to the finest reason, is not all that is here devoid of basic changes? There exists only the 'One' thing. It is pure Omniscience, or subjective awareness, which is really subjective in nature. If any existence is traced on any account, it is merely as a pointer or revealer for this Supreme Awareness. On knowing this supreme truth, the world becomes neither *sat* nor *asat*, both concepts being relative and hence not independent. Indeed it becomes the pure state of being which is of the nature of supreme awareness, ever prevalent and ever the same.

The pinnacle of *jeevanmukti* and the nature of awareness and realization which adorn a *Jeevanmukta*, have been described here.

Whenever one refers to a thing using any expression, he is in fact characterising his awareness of that thing. Will a dead man ever think or speak of a thing, its presence or absence? When a living man speaks of any concept or observation, he first and last takes his stand upon himself. Existence is a word which he divulges in order to denote what his inner awareness comprehends, either inside or outside. Equally so, 'non-existence' is yet another word by which he denotes another idea which his own inner awareness gives forth. Suppose he were to speak

of a third or fourth kind of perception, calling it *supra-existence* or *infra-existence* and the like, that will be the description of yet another thing which his own inner awareness comprehends and assesses. Can anything be thought of which is not one's own personal and inner awareness?

The world here, the worlds beyond, the endless space, the massive earth, the expanse of air, the heavenly Gods – all that is gross and subtle are thus pointers and revealers of the One thing. It cannot even be called a thing. It is the **pure awareness**, which one can decipher and realize only within one's self.

Once the seeker becomes illumined to this final and wholesome truth, all other ideas lose their significance for him. Every perception, whether inner or outer, becomes an apparent bubble in his own inner consciousness. Objects, solid, liquid or gaseous, existences concrete or abstract – all turn to be mere knowledge and knowingness. Nothing different from awareness ever appears to him anywhere.

And so far as awareness is concerned, can he be anything more or less than what he already is? Neither gain nor loss can be for him; neither impurity nor the removal of it; neither promotion nor demotion.

All objectivity and existingness dissolving utterly, subjectivity and omniscience emerging in their place, he spontaneously becomes peaceful and quiet. It is redundant to say anything further when peacefulness and quietitude are both accomplished. So let me stop at this point here.

## Make Life a Sport

Sage Vasiṣṭha continued:

युक्ताशयानां महतामहतानां कुट्टुष्टिभिः ।

स्वभावोऽयं महाबाहो लीलया चरतामिह ॥

विहरन्नपि संसारे जीवन्मुक्तमना मुनिः ।

आदिमध्यान्तविरसा विहसेज्जागतीर्गतीः ॥

(18. 1,2)

This is the nature, O mighty-armed Rāma, of those exalted people whose thoughts are composed and who have identified themselves with the

Supreme Truth (*yukta*). Their vision is not smitten by the wrong inclinations common to mankind, and they conduct their activities sportfully in the world.

The Saint, whose mind has attained *jeevanmukti* (liberation), though given to the usual activities of the world, will only smile at the events and occurrences taking place in the world from time to time, neither the origin nor the end nor again the intermediate state of anything holding any serious charm for him.

सर्वातीतपदालंबी पूर्णेन्दुशिशिराशयः ।  
नोद्वेगी न च तुष्टात्मा संसारे नावसीदति ॥  
सर्वशत्रुषु मध्यस्थो दयादाक्षिण्यसंयुतः ।  
प्राप्तकर्मकरोऽग्राणां संसारे नावसीदति ॥  
सर्वस्याभिमतं वक्ता चोदितः पेशलोक्तिमान् ।  
आशयज्ञश्च भूतानां संसारे नावसीदति ॥ (18. 5, 6, 9)

He whose only refuge is the supreme transcendental Truth, whose mind is graced by the rays of illumination emanating from there as from the full bright moon, is not afflicted by the worldly life and activities. For, he never gets overwhelmed by either agitation or delight.

He who looks at all enemies with his characteristic impartialness, who is possessed of both compassion and forgiveness, who, despite his attainment, behaves with humility and obedience in front of his preceptors and elders, has no cause for affliction in the world. The workings of his mind and its apparent reactions are like the marks drawn on water.

He who knows at heart the different natures and tendencies of the people, but speaks what is best for each, only when specifically asked for, lives peacefully in the world, graced and blessed by his own inner calm and composure.

True spiritual attainment does not imply the cessation of activities or getting away from the world. The real spiritual lesson, which the man of the world needs for his progress and fulfilment, is the one by the merit of which he will be able to continue his normal life and functions without losing himself under their weight and pressure. The secret of

such a successful life lies in gaining enlightenment about the Soul of man, the nature of the world and the ultimate fate of everything seen and heard.

The descriptions given here may appear to be a *secret and a contradiction* to those who are not yet attempting to get at the inner realms of spiritual wisdom and attainment. But all these will become quite clear and precise to those whose mind and intellect are capable of grasping the subtle Soul-truths. The call is always for deepening one's vision and insight. In true wisdom all doubts will find their clarity and all problems their solutions.

युक्तायुक्तदृशा ग्रस्तमाशोपहतचेष्टितम् ।  
 जानाति लोकदृष्टान्तं करकोटरबिल्ववत् ॥  
 परं पदमुपारूढो भङ्गुरां जागतीं स्थितिम् ।  
 अन्तःशीतलया बुद्ध्या हसन्निव निरीक्षते ॥ (18. 10, 11)

This world is a unique mixture of various kinds of behaviour of men – behaviours which are governed by the sense of propriety and goodness, those vitiated by their opposites and those overpowered by selfishness and the desires born of it. Finding the world a glaring example of all these, the really illumined man will hold his peace and be ever calm, whatever befalls him or the world and people around him.

वयं तु वक्तुं मूर्खाणामजितात्मीयचेतसाम् ।  
 भोगकर्दममग्नानां न विद्मोऽभिमतं मतम् ॥  
 तेषामभिमता नायौ भावाभावविभूषिताः ।  
 ज्वालानरकवह्नीनां यास्ताः कनकरोचिषः ॥  
 अनर्थगहनाश्चार्था व्यर्थानर्थकदर्शनाः ।  
 दिशन्तो दुःखसंरंभमभितः प्रहितापदः ॥  
 फलसन्धीनि कर्माणि नानाचारमयानि च ।  
 सुखदुःखावपूर्णानि तानि वक्तुं न शक्नुमः ॥ (18. 13–16)

In contrast to the elevated conduct of the noble and liberated souls, is that of the fools and the wicked, whose hearts and minds, not being under their control, are steeped in passion and greed for external

enjoyments. Really I am, O Rāma, at a loss to describe their tendencies and habits.

Women who spend all their time and effort in enhancing their beauty by wearing gold and other ornaments, whose sole aim is to attract the eyes and minds of men, are the pet objects of worship for these fools.

They are deluded pitifully by the thought of wealth, which can at best only contaminate the mind and vision of men, drive them to a host of risks and afflictions and in the end turn their lives to utter loss and waste. Puffed up with the idea of opulence, power and possession, they resort to a number of rituals and ceremonies, which hold promises of various fruits (rewards) in the shape of enjoyments here and in the worlds beyond. But these verily have no power to transform the cycle of *sukha* and *duḥkha*, in which their lives are already steeped.

O Rāma, I have no words to describe the plight and ways of conduct of these low-witted and perverted people.

पूर्णा दृष्टिमवष्टभ्य ध्येयत्यागविलासिनीम् ।  
जीवन्मुक्ततया स्वस्थो लोके विहर राघव ॥  
अन्तः सन्त्यक्तसर्वाशो वीतरागो विवासनः ।  
बहिः सर्वसमाचारो लोके विहर राघव ॥  
प्रविचार्य दशाः सर्वा यदतुच्छं परं पदम् ।  
तदेव भावेनालम्ब्य लोके विहर राघव ॥ (18. 17, 18, 20)

Therefore, O Rāma, assuming the wholesome vision born out of the *dhya* order of renunciation (renunciation in thought) and getting liberated thereby, live sportfully in the world, seated stably in your own Self throughout.

At heart be free from all desires. Transcend all attachments and passions. But be observing all formalities and activities outwardly. Conduct yourself with ease in the world. Reflect well upon the superficial and fleeting nature of all states and situations. At the same time, see clearly the loftiness of the supreme abode of the inmost Self. Linking yourself to the Supreme through contemplation, conduct your life in the world as though it were a sport.



अन्तर्नेराश्यमादाय बहिराशोन्मुखेहितः ।  
बहिस्तप्तोऽन्तराशीतो लोके विहर राघव ॥  
बहिः कृत्रिमसंरंभो हृदि संरंभवर्जितः ।  
कर्ता बहिरकर्तान्तलोके विहर राघव ॥  
कृत्रिमोल्लासहर्षस्थः कृत्रिमोद्वेगगर्हणः ।  
कृत्रिमारंभसंरंभो लोके विहर राघव ॥  
त्यक्ताहंकृतिराश्वस्तमतिराकाशशोभनः ।  
अगृहीतकलङ्काङ्को लोके विहर राघव ॥  
आशापाशशतोन्मुक्तः समः सर्वासु वृत्तिषु ।  
बहिः प्रकृतिकार्यस्थो लोके विहर राघव ॥

(18. 21, 22, 24–26)

Be possessed of inward dispassion, but be doing everything outwardly as though with full concern and interest. Be affected and at times even agitated externally, but composed and cool inside. Sport then in the world with all your duties and activities well attended to.

Put on the *show of undertakings* outside, but be free of all undertakings and concerns internally, at heart. Though a confirmed *doer* outside, be a real *non-doer* inside. Being so, live sportfully in the world. Look as though you are intensely given to rejoicing and delight, to agitation and blaming. Pretend as if you have much concern and interest in all that you do. In this way, take to all activities of the world, but regard them as a mere sport.

Abandon egoism in full. Make the mind calm as in sleep. Be graceful and radiant like the clear sky and the pure space. Be devoid of the least tinge of either sin or virtue, while attending to all callings in time. Look to everything with benign equalness. Get freed from the ties of hundreds of desires. Yet dwell upon the effects of *Prakṛti* and its *Guṇas*. Live thus, treating the life and movements in the world as a long-living sport.

## Liberation Truly Redundant

न बन्धोऽस्ति न मोक्षोऽस्ति देहिनः परमार्थतः ।  
मिथ्येयमिन्द्रजालश्रीः संसारपरिवर्तिनी ॥