

STORIES
FROM
VAASISHTA RAAMAAYANAM
(BRHATYOGAVAASISHTAM)
OF
VAALMIKI MAHARSHI

PART ONE

by
Narayanalakshmi

DEDICATED
TO
ALL THE SEEKERS OF TRUTH

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Narayanalakshmi

Narayanalakshmi (Shubhalakshmi), an ascetic spent most of her life in the Himalayan terrain, engaged in the penance of knowledge. She is well-versed in all philosophies and is a scholar in Sanskrit language. Her mission in life is to retrieve the lost knowledge of the ancient Rishis and offer it unblemished to all the seekers of the Truth. She is from Bangalore, Karnataka, India.

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INTRODUCTION

Given here are the brief versions of the stories selected from BrhatYogaVaasishtam composed by MaharshiVaalmiki. BrhatYogaVaasishtam contains a dilaouge that took place between Rama, the son of Dasharatha, and his preceptor Brahmarshi Vasishtha. The text can be called as the Fifth Veda, for it is the Knowledge taht descends directly from Brahmaa, the Creator ,and conatins the essence of all Upanishads in story-form. Stories given in theVaasishtam Grantha are intertwined with UpanishadTruths, and more elaborately discussed in the original Sanskrit version by the author. Here, just a vague mini-version of the stories has been presented, just to create some interest in the text, so that the student develops an interest to study the original version (containing 32,000 verses) with the required translation.

- *Narayanalakshmi*

STORIES WITHIN STORIES

STORY OF SUTEEKSHNA

Once there lived a Brahmin named Suteekshna. As his name itself suggested he was of a sharp mind. He thought a lot. He questioned a lot.

He had heard from his elders that liberation was the goal of all those who were born as humans; but nobody could give a clear-cut way of how to do it. Some said ‘you perform your daily rites and sacrifices without fail and you will enjoy pleasures of the heavens forever like the Devas.’

Some said that unless one attained the knowledge of oneself and the world, true liberation was not possible. Suteekshna was puzzled. He did not understand whose advice he should follow. So he went to Sage Agastya and presented his problem to him.

He asked the Sage, what was the right course to follow, Karma or Jnaana (Action (rites) or Knowledge). Should he work as if nothing was amiss, or should he stop working and think?

Agastya then related to him the story of a Brahmin named Kaarunya.

STORY OF KAARUNYA

Once there lived a Brahmin named AgniVeshya. He had a son named Kaarunya.

Kaarunya was very intelligent and mastered all the sciences under a Guru. He was well-versed in all the Vedas. After completing the studies he returned home; but he never performed any rites or actions as ordained by the Scriptures, and remained doing nothing. His father was irritated by his strange conduct, and asked him as to why he was behaving like this when Scriptures proclaim that ‘(fire-) rites’ (Karma) alone bestowed the fulfillment of life. Kaarunya answered that the Scriptures on the one hand advised that a man should do his daily duties as ordained by them which was known as the path of Pravritti, involvement with the world. On the other hand, it was mentioned in the Scriptures that liberation was not possible through any action (rites), or begetting children or earning wealth; and that one should renounce everything; and attain the eternal state. Since both statements were contradictory to each other, he was confused and had abstained from all ordained actions.

Agniveshya related to him the story of Suruchi, a divine damsel.

STORY OF SURUCHI

Suruchi was an apsaraa (divine damsel) residing in the heavens. Though surrounded by various types of pleasures, she felt disinterested in them. She never missed an opportunity to listen to the profound teachings of Great Sage s and spent her time in analyzing their statements.

Once ,she had come to the Earth along with her friends and all of them were sporting in the beautiful forests situated in the Himalayan Mountains. Suruchi as usual had wandered off alone lost in some profound thoughts and was sitting on the peak of the mountain in solitude.

At that time she saw a messenger of Indra moving in the sky and called him to her side.

She questioned him as to where he was going in such a hurry, and for what purpose.

The messenger of Indra related to her the story of King ArishtaNemi.

STORY OF KING ARISHTANEMI

There was a king named ArishtaNemi who was well-known as a Rishi among kings (Raajarshi). He had no attachment to the world and desired only the liberation from worldly existence (Samsaara). When his sons came of age, he left the kingdom in their charge and went to the forest to perform penance.

At present he was living in the GandhaMaadana Mountain and was performing severe penance.

The messenger told Suruchi that he had gone to meet ArishtaNemi as ordered by Indra the king of Devas.

Indra had been slightly apprehensive about the penance performed by the king.

Before ArishtaNemi had acquired merits enough to dethrone him, he had hurriedly sent the messenger along with a huge retinue of pretty damsels, ‘Gandharvas’ and ‘Kinnaras’, accompanied the wondrous orchestra group of the heavens, to invite the king to enjoy the pleasures of the heaven unlimitedly.

The idea was that if the king succumbed to the temptation he would spend off all his merits in the heaven; fall back into the earth again and get lost in the worldly attachments.

However, his the mission had failed. The king was not an ordinary person to fall for Indra’s tricks.

He had asked the messenger straight away what were the advantages and disadvantages of a life in heaven.

The honest messenger had told him that there were various levels of heavenly enjoyments and only the men of excellent merits had the fortune to enjoy the excellent pleasures, and he had also explained to the king that merits were like measures of enjoyments and the meritorious souls retained all their vices and virtues of their mortal identities and that they were pushed back to earthly-existence once the merits were over with.

The mortal king had then refused the invitation offered by the immortal king of the heavens and had stated that he will continue the penance and give up the body like some dirty skin discarded by a snake. He politely but firmly had sent the messenger back disregarding all his pleadings to come to heaven.

The messenger had gone back to Indra and reported the king's refusal to enjoy the heavenly pleasures.

Indra had been surprised and pondered for a while about his next course of action. If the king did not want heaven well and good! So he decided to offer some help to the king who was after the 'liberation from the Samsaara'.

Indra had again sent the messenger to the king to inform him that he should immediately leave for the hermitage of Sage Vaalmiki and request the renowned Sage to impart knowledge leading towards liberation.

The king had likewise gone to the hermitage of the Great Sage and told him that he had come there at the behest of Indra and requested the Sage to impart him the 'Knowledge Supreme' so he could escape from the suffering of the worldly-existence.

The ever-compassionate Vaalmiki told him to listen to the Great Ramayana where Rama was instructed by Sage Vasishta about the same topic. The king had asked him who that Rama was. Vaalmiki told him that Rama was Lord Vishnu born on the earth because of a curse.

STORY OF LORD VISHNU'S CURSE

One of the four sons of Brahmaa, Sage SanatKumaara the desire-less one, lived in Brahmaa's abode.

Lord Vishnu once visited BrahmaLoka. He was worshipped by all the residents of SatyaLoka and also by Brahmaa. SanatKumaara did not even move from his seat, and disrespected Vishnu, because of his arrogance.

Lord Vishnu cursed him to be born on the earth as SharaJanma and live a life succumbing to passion. SanatKumaara cursed him back saying that if he was an all-knower, it was better that he lost his knowledge for sometime and lived as an ignorant man on earth.

Bhrgu had also cursed Vishnu once seeing his wife fallen dead, that Vishnu should also suffer the pain of separation from his wife taking birth as a human being on earth.

Jalandhara's wife Vrindaa had cursed Vishnu that he will be separated from his wife as he had used deceit to have her company.

Devadatta's wife who had died, being stuck by fear by looking at the terrifying form of NaraSimha had cursed Vishnu that he should be separated from his wife for sometime.

All these curses made Vishnu take birth as Rama on the earth and he was born as the eldest son of DashaRatha the king of Ayodhya.

STORY OF BHARADVAAJA

Sage Vaalmiki recounted the conversation that took place between Sage Vasishta and Rama to his close disciple Bharadvaaja; Bharadvaaja recounted that again to Lord Brahmaa in the Meru Mountain; Brahmaa was pleased and told him to ask for a boon. Bharadvaaja the noble one asked Brahmaa for some easily accessible knowledge by which ordinary people could free themselves from all sufferings; Brahmaa told him to request his Guru Vaalmiki to compose the entire conversation that took place between Rama and Sage Vasishta in the form of a Scripture and spread it all over the world; and that the unique nature of the stories in that Scripture will liberate any one who heard them with sincerity and devotion.

Brahmaa accompanied Bharadvaaja and went to the hermitage of the Great Sage . He instructed the Sage to compose the same in the form of a Scripture and help the world by guiding the ignorant beings towards liberation.

He vanished immediately.

Later Bharadvaaja told Vaalmiki about the boon he had asked from Brahmaa.

He requested his Master to write the second Raamaayana as a Scripture imparting Supreme Knowledge.

He sat at his Master's feet and asked him to explain as to how Rama attained liberation after being born in this world as a human being.

Maharshi Vaalmiki recounted to him the entire conversation that took place between Rama and Vasishta, and told him how Rama attained the Supreme state of the Self just by understanding the truth through Vasishta's words without undergoing any hardships of penance or austerities.

RAMA'S DEPRESSION AND DISPASSION

Rama completed his education and returned home.

Though the days in palace were spent in various sports befitting his royal status, his mind longed for a visit to all the sacred resorts and hermitages in the country. He expressed his desire to his affectionate father and permitted by him went on a long tour along with his brothers Bharata, Shatrughna and Lakshmana accompanied by a huge retinue. After returning from that journey there was a noticeable change in Rama's behavior. He became very morose; avoided all enjoyments; talked less; sought solitude; ate almost nothing; uttered words decrying his royal status and wealth; paid no attention to the masters when they taught administrative sciences; became emaciated; did not bathe; did not do his daily duties; kept his face stone-like without any expression.

He just withered away slowly pining away for some unknown unattainable thing.

His brothers observed all these changes and they also were depressed.

His mothers observed all these changes and they also were depressed.

His servants observed all these changes and they also were depressed.

The harem where the young princes stayed wore a gloomy look as if a great calamity was waiting at the corner.

Dasharatha also heard about all this and he consulted Sage Vasishtha, his preceptor about this.

Vasishtha brushed away the topic as if it was not of much importance and told the king not to worry about it so much.

Rama was sitting alone. His eyes were wet. His lotus-like face looked pale and life-less.

He bit his teeth in frustration. The pale lips trembled trying to dam his flooding emotions.

Rama was angry; angry with himself; his body; his birth as a prince; his royal status; his duties; his future life as a king; in short, he did not want to be himself.

He wanted to run like mad towards some forest; fall at the feet of some kind Sage; serve him like an ordinary student; contemplate on the Supreme state whatever it was; be away from all the hustle bustle of the princely life and be a Sage doing penance!

Was it possible? Never!

Again a flood appeared at the threshold of his eyes. He held it back for fear of getting seen by his brothers in that awkward position.

(Yes! His brothers! He loved them a lot! If they knew what his thoughts were like, they will feel worried about his mental health. If they see his tears, they will have broken hearts.

His mothers were of course very concerned; but how could he confide to them, all his weird thoughts.

Yes! He had broken down once in front of his younger mother Kaikeyi, the wisest woman ever-born!

She had held him to her bosom and listened to all his outpourings.

She had melted like wax by just listening to his worries.

She was surprised that he wanted to live in a forest with matted locks wearing bark garments, the rest of his life.

She was shocked to learn that he despised the throne of Ayodhya waiting for him, which will be his on his forthcoming birth-day. She had also cried along with him and had hugged him to her bosom.

She knew that his tears were not the ordinary tears of a teenager bored of life. They were the tears of a trapped lion. She knew at that moment that he was not an ordinary soul born to rule a puny land but some great Rishi of the yore who was born to save the earth. She decided then and there that she would leave no leaf unturned till Rama's desire for a forest-life was fulfilled.

She had gently kissed his wet cheek; caressed his uncombed hair and gone off immediately lost in deep thoughts.

Rama wondered what her thoughts had been like.)

Rama sighed hard!

He decided there was no use in holding on to this body of a prince anymore!

He decided to kill it and be rid of the dirty bundle of elements labeled Rama, the son of an emperor!

What easy way to kill this fragile animal was there other than starving it to death!

Stop the food-intake and one day it will remain lifeless; better be a dead prince if he cannot live the life of a Sage

as an ordinary person! He quickly removed the delicacies from the plate left there next to him by his dear servant and threw them to the birds. The food vanished the moment it touched the ground. He threw a look of gratitude at the crows which unknowingly helped in hastening his journey towards the world of Yama!

May be in his next birth he will be born as an ordinary son of an ordinary Sage, and do penance in a forest!

His dried up lips widened in a smile!

VISHVAAMITRA, THE OCEAN OF COMPASSION

Sage Vishvaamitra's heart gave a jump. Some uneasy feeling swept through his body. He felt like crying. His dispassionate heart was melting suddenly with compassion. He dismissed the students who were listening to his discourse on Brahman and entered his private abode. He sat in contemplation and tried to find out the reason for the sudden sadness that had taken over him. A pale dark handsome face floated in his mind's eye. Rama! Dear Rama! Why was he crying? Why was he looking so forlorn? The Creator of the Gaayatri Mantra peeped into the young prince's heart and he was shocked! The poor child was ready to give up his life and nobody knew about it! Vishvaamitra felt as if a mountain was falling over him! The Supreme Lord Vishnu who had come here to save the world from ignorance was ready to give up life, because he was ignorant! And what Vasishta was doing, he wondered! Why was he not doing anything at all to alleviate Rama's suffering? 'No use in trying to fathom the mind of that great Brahmarshi! Better do something myself!', thought the Great Sage, and he started immediately for the city of Ayodhya!

DASHARATHA IS WORRIED

Dasharatha was sitting in the court room attending to his daily royal affairs. He felt disinterested in everything. The whole palace was gloomy in mood. Nobody talked much! Nobody laughed much! Play-grounds were silent! Dance arenas were gathering dust! Even food had become very simple as if prepared for namesake rather than for enjoying! All because of Rama! What had happened to him, he wondered! What did he lack that he should move about like an orphan deer lost in a forest full of lions and tigers! He as a father had tried all means of pacifying him! He had taken him to nearby forests to hunt wild boars and personally accompanied him to all places! But Rama never even lifted the bow! He even released some of the trapped animals shouting "Be free! Be free!" His behavior was very weird nowadays. He was always lost in some deep thinking! He would suddenly laugh for no reason; and again for no reason tears would well up inside his eyes! He refused to wear the royal garments woven with the excellent gems and wore the simple clothes of the ordinary people. When the king had tried to discuss about the future life of his as the crown prince, Rama had stared as if hit by a lightning, and yet laughed aloud mumbling "Ah the wealth and riches! They are ephemeral and bind one to the Samsaara!" He hugged the servants and sat with them in their lowly chambers! He looked at the varieties of delicacies offered to him like poison and moved away. He pitied the dancing girls as if they were slaves imprisoned in the palace.

How many times he had tried to drag him into his embrace and ask the reason for his odd behavior. Rama never said anything; just moved away saying nothing was the matter. Vasishta, his preceptor only gave an understanding smile when he had discussed about Rama to him.

Moreover, even his three prime wives were looking forlorn and depressed. Kaikeyi turned her face away as if she was very much in anger with him. Kousalyaa was always in tears, and had a lot to complain about Rama! Sumittraa was the only one who managed to handle everything efficiently. He sighed in relief as at least one normally acting person was there to handle things.

VISHVAAMITRA ARRIVES

Dasharatha was suddenly woken up from his reverie by the loud voice of the door-keeper who was announcing that Sage Vishvaamitra was waiting outside the palace gates. Dasharatha felt as if a million lightning had struck him. Why was that Sage here, now? What did he want? Was he there to curse? Had he done anything wrong? Dasharatha had no time to think! Vasishta was already there with his group of disciples and Sages. His ministers had already arranged for a grand welcome for the renowned Sage.

DashaRatha quickly made his steps towards the palace gates; saluted the Great Rishi, by falling on the ground the very moment he was sighted from far! He ran; fell at the feet; washed his feet; offered flowers at the feet; held the royal umbrella for the old Sage; brought him inside with all the auspicious ceremonies properly conducted; made him get seated on the most excellent golden throne; and poured out words in a torrent! “Hey Great Sage ! Why you took the trouble of coming here! One word from you and I would have come to your hermitage to fulfill your wishes! What cannot be done to please a Great Sage like you! You are Brahman in person! You are the blessing incarnate that has descended from the God-world! Tell me whatever you want! I will fulfill it in no time!”

And Vishvaamitra stuck him with another jolt of million lightning when he asked for Rama to be sent with him to fight the Daityas!

VISHVAAMITRA’S REQUEST

Vishvaamitra wanted to see Rama immediately!
He wanted to take him away to his hermitage; make him sit on his lap and teach him the Brahmaa-Jnaana and remove the pain in his heart. His heart was reciting the name ‘Rama’ ‘Rama’ continuously.
‘Where was his Rama?’ He suffered like a mother separated from the son!

And here was the king talking some meaningless words covering up all his fears and apprehensions of seeing him!
No wonder Rama feels lonely in a palace ruled by ignorance!
What plausible excuse to give this king to remove Rama from his palace?
Vishvaamitra wondered!
A few days of personal training and instruction; Rama would be normal and can handle the royal affairs in the future; but how can he explain the king what was going on in Rama’s mind?
How could he tell him that Rama was ready to give up his life itself, as a price for ignorance!
Vishvaamitra glanced at Vasishta!
That cunning Sage was just hiding a smile at all the dramas that were taking place in his presence!

Vishvaamitra suddenly found a reason to take away Rama with him!
He informed the king that he had to do some (Yajna-rites) Sacrifices for the good of the world (when did he take a respite from doing good to the others?) and that Daityas were disturbing the sacrifices (when did they not disturb?) and only Rama could fight them and destroy those Daityas (as if he himself had no powers to destroy those puny Daityas).

DASHARATHA BREAKS HIS PROMISE

Dasharatha refused outright!
What? Rama? Fight the Daityas! My poor child! Already weak and emaciated after his tour of sacred places! Couldn’t even kill a boar! And he to stand in front of the blood-thirsty Daityas? No! Never!
His voice choked as he blurted out to the Great Sage that he was not going to send Rama anywhere!
Rather he will bring his own army and fight the Daityas!

VISHVAAMITRA IS ANGRY

A volcano erupted!
Yes ,Vishvaamitra was unable to control his anger!
There the Lord of the universe was ready to give up his mortal coil and here a stupid king was blocking him from meeting his cherished deity!
Why wouldn’t he get angry! He felt like slicing the head of this king and rushing towards his Rama, who was withering away in the inner palace-harem! But he heard the soothing voice of Vasishta talking sense to the king.

Soon the king was pacified, and servants were sent to bring Rama there immediately; but the servants came without Rama and just reported his odd behavior and pleaded with the king to console their young master. However Rama, the ever-perfect one had been informed of the Sage’s arrival and came there with his brothers. He saluted the elders in the due manner.
Even as Dasharatha pulled him to his side affectionately, he avoided his hand and sat on the ground on a simple mat spread out by his servants.

DASHARATHA'S IRRITATION

Dasharatha was slightly shocked by Rama's behavior. He felt offended too.

Yet, looking at the emaciated body of his pet son he could not give vent to anger at his behavior. Instead he saved his own face just by advising Rama that it did not behoove a prince of Raghu's dynasty to pine away like this for no reason. Rama just had to take the advice of his elders and do what they said and he would soon achieve the meritorious states. He need not act so confused and worried and suffer unnecessarily like this.

What could that ignorant king who was given to the pleasures of senses and dreams of the heavenly life know of Rama's state of mind?

What did he know about liberation?

What did he know what a pain it was if one knew that he was bound yet had no means to escape?

What did he know the torment of a Jeeva which was searching for its source?

How could he understand that a wave which felt separated from the ocean had no rest till it became one with the ocean?!

He knew only heavens and tensions!

VASISHTA AND VISHVAAMITRA QUESTION RAMA

Vasishta looked at the king and signaled him to stop his stern speech. He looked at Rama with extreme affection and asked-

"My child! I know you are no more interested in the sense pleasures. You have succeeded in conquering your mind! Yet why do you suffer like this thinking that you are ignorant?

You are not what you think you are!"

Vishvaamitra had no patience for these round-about talks.

Poor child was suffering! And no one had the patience to ask what he was distressed about!

He interrupted Vasishta's calm speech and questioned Rama directly.

"Tell us Rama, what makes you feel so sad? What is gnawing your mind like a rat?

What worries can be there for a prince like you?

What do you want? What for are you pining like this?

Confide in us whatever thoughts you are having. We will see to it that you get what you want without any difficulty!

Never again shall you be tormented by worries any more! I promise you for sure!"

RAMA POURS OUT HIS PROBLEMS

Rama rised his eyes slightly and saw the Great Sage who was pleading like this!

What love, what affection poured out of those eyes, only Rama could understand it!

He felt hugged, caressed, consoled by the love oozing out of those eyes.

There was someone who could understand his feelings!

There was someone who would not laugh at his problems!

He felt reassured! He felt confident!

Like a child crying on the lap of the mother giving vent to all its pains, he poured out all his thoughts at once, in the benign presence of those two Sages!

He told them everything; every thought of his; how he had completed his education without a flaw; how he had gone on a tour of all sacred centers of the country; how he had visited many hermitages; how his thoughts had changed; how his life looked wasted away; how his very identity of a prince was disgusting; so on and on!

He talked about the ephemeral nature of the world.

He described the worthlessness of wealth.

He ridiculed the stupidity of the childhood; the insanity of the youth; the sufferings of the middle aged man with a family; the infirmities and helpless nature of the old age!

He described the desires which haunted every man and woman of the earth!

He tearfully explained his fear of this limited identity and death!

He confided his helplessness in front of the all-consuming deity of death!

He said that life was nothing but a hell-fire masked as happiness.

He had nothing to live for; all relations and friends were just unreal entities; life had no meaning; there was no use holding on to the ugly mass of flesh called the body.

And he finally concluded his detailed speech by announcing firmly that since nobody could change his identity or limitations; and since he will never find any answers to his questions he will abstain from food and water; not bathe; not do anything and remain stone-like till the body dies of itself and thus be free forever of bondage!

THE COURT WAS STUNNED

It was like the silence after a heavy thunder shower!

Dasharatha just sat there unable to understand the grief of his beloved son who did not want the emperorship of the kingdom! He felt puzzled! Maybe Rama had been poisoned in the mind by some wicked enemies and had lost his mind!

He looked again at his own son who looked a complete stranger to him!

He remained silent!

All the courtiers also remained silent!

The queens seated behind the screen also remained silent!

The birds in the garden also stopped their chirping.

It was as if the entire world was drowned in the ocean of dispassion.

A deathly silence prevailed.

Before anybody knew what was happening, a huge shower of extremely fragrant flowers from the sky rained in the open court-hall, filling all those assembled there in the court with exhilaration.

All the courtiers heard the voices of Siddhas who were enamored by the words of Rama and had come there to hear the answers for his questions. And immediately they descended down with forms and stood before the two Sages. *(Siddhas were realized beings with great powers with no identity as such. Unless they willed no one could see them with any form.)*

Rama saluted those noble Siddhas with reverence. They praised him with exquisite words and commended his beautiful words of dispassion.

After everybody was comfortably seated, Vishvaamitra spoke encouraging words to Rama with extreme affection, and told him the story of Shuka.

VISHVAAMITRA SPEAKS ENCOURAGING WORDS TO RAMA

Vishvaamitra said-

“My dear child! You are not an ordinary person! Everyone does not have the capacity to think in this manner. You already seem to know everything! You just need a little guidance; that is all! You must have heard of Sage Shuka, son of Vyaasa! He also was like you. He needed no Guru to guide him! He just sat in solitude; pondered in his mind about the reality of the world; and he knew the answers by himself. You are no less than that Shuka.

Listen I will tell you how he attained the Supreme state.”

STORY OF SHUKA

Great Sage Vyaasa, the black-hued Sage lived in the Himalayan mountain region.

He had a son named Shuka. Shuka was a Jnaani (KNOWER) from birth.

He was still a young lad of thirteen or fourteen years.

Sitting in solitude he by himself pondered about the reality of the world, about his birth, his identity as Shuka etc. Even as he analyzed all these questions, he realized the state of the Self and understood everything instantly. He needed no teacher to guide him to such a state.

By his own discriminative power, by himself, he analyzed about all these matters for long and understood the supremely subtle truth of the ‘Self’.

However, he could not verify the knowledge attained by his own enquiry with any one else.

He was doubtful of the validity of the knowledge attained without any hardship of a penance.

How could he attain such a supreme state extolled in Scriptures just by simple intellectual analysis?

He felt dissatisfied. He could not ascertain firmly that, what he had realized was the Ultimate Truth; but his mind was free of any wants and did not enjoy any pleasures of the world, like a Chaataka bird does not care for any waters on the earth but that which pours down from the clouds.

Shuka of taintless Knowledge approached his father Vyaasa who was performing penance on the Meru Mountain and questioned:

*“Revered father! How did this entire world of deluding character arise?
How can it be put an end to? Wherefore is it from, of whose, whence forth?”*

Vyaasa the ‘enlightened one’ explained everything he knew to his son in detail. But Shuka felt nothing new about it. He already knew what his father had told. He was disappointed by the whole discourse and remained silent with bent head. Vyaasa read the thoughts in his mind through his penance-power and understood his son’s predicament.

He said:

“My dear son! I do not know much about all this. You go down to the Earth. There lives a king of excellent wisdom named Janaka. He knows completely whatever is to be known. You will get whatever you want through him.”

Shuka went down to the Earth and reached the city of Videha, where King Janaka ruled as the king.

The guards with sticks standing at the gateway stopped him there itself. They went to the king and informed him that some young man named Shuka was waiting at the doors.

Janaka understood that Shuka was sent to him by Sage Vyaasa to get some lessons from him. He decided to test Shuka in many ways. So he nonchalantly replied the guards as if he did not care for the guest at all and said with a slight nod, “Let him be there” and went off to attend to his normal duties.

Seven days passed.

Shuka patiently stood at the gates without any annoyance or irritation.

Then Janaka ordered his guards to allow him just up to the courtyard and leave him alone there. Seven days passed this way. There was no perturbation in Shuka’s mind even then.

Then by the king’s order the guards took Shuka to the inner harem of the ladies and left him there saying that the King was still very busy in his administrative duties. Shuka spent the next seven days in the inner harem (Anthahpura). He was provided all sorts of royal entertainments; pretty girls surrounded him ready to fulfill any desire of his; foods of exotic taste were offered to him; pleasures equal to heaven were ready to be shown to him by the ladies residing there; but Shuka did not see anything or hear anything. He was like a mountain unmoved by the winds. He stayed in the bliss of his Self and did not waver in his mind by the pleasures surrounding him. Janaka who was observing the young Sage unknown to him, was highly pleased by the dispassionate state of Shuka. He ordered the guards to bring the young Sage to his private chambers.

He welcomed the Sage with proper rituals and said:

*“Young Sage! You do not seem to have any action left to be done in the world.
You seem to have attained whatever there is to be attained. What can I do for you?”*

Shuka said:

*“Hey Master! How does this delusion of the world- perception occur? How can it be removed?
Please explain to me everything as it is!”*

Janaka repeated to him everything exactly as his father had told him when questioned by him in the past.

Shuka said:

*“I already came to know all this by my own analytical thinking. My father told me the same thing.
You, wisest among men, are also repeating the same thing. Even the Scriptures speak the same thing.
I know for certain that this delusory world comes into existence by one’s own particular mental processes and disappears by the disappearance of those mental processes. This burnt up world-appearance is worthless; this is for sure! But tell me what is all this about? Put my puzzled mind to rest by ascertaining the truth which I have attained by my own enquiry.”*

Janaka said:

*“There is no other truth to be ascertained any more, hey Sage.
You comprehended it by your own efforts; you heard the same from your father.
There is only the Supreme Purusha (Conscious Principle), who is the undivided second less principle of awareness.
One is bound by one’s own volition; one becomes free by removing the volition.
You completely know that which is to be known.
You have no craving for any sort of pleasures of the world which are just appearances perceived by the mind.
Child! You are truly a person of courage; you have conquered your own mind and have attained disinterestedness towards all pleasures which are nothing but chronic ailments.
What else is there for you to listen to?*

*This sort of a complete realization has not been attained by your own father who is performing penance.
You are a great treasure-house of Knowledge.*

I am slightly better than Vyaasa; you are the disciple and son of Vyaasa; but you do not even have the least interest in enjoyments of any sort.

*By that, you have proved yourself as a greater Knower than me.
You are a fulfilled mind. You will never slip down by any perception of the world.
You are a liberated one. Throw away this apprehension of yours."*

Listening to the words of Janaka, the young Sage remained silent in the blissful state of the Supreme Reality. He was bereft of sorrows, fears and anxieties. Without any more desire in his heart, with his doubt cleared, he went to the peak of the Meru Mountain. He settled himself in a solitary place and was absorbed in Samadhi for ten thousand years. After that, he restfully stayed in his own Self like a lamp without oil. Being freed from the taint of the delusory world, bereft of any Vaasanaa (latent tendency), he became one with the Supreme state of the Sacred Self, like a water drop dissolving in the ocean.

VISHVAAMITRA REQUESTS VASISHTA

After cheering up Rama, Vishvaamitra turned towards Sage Vasishtha and said-
*"Lord Vasishtha! Don't you remember that in the past both of us were imparted the Supreme knowledge by Lord Brahmaa when we met him on the summit of Naishada Mountain?
Why don't you give the same instructions to Rama and guide him towards the state of Supreme rest?
He is already purified in the mind by the rise of dispassion and fit to receive such knowledge."*
 All the others seated there supported his words.
 Vasishtha agreed to what Vishvaamitra said and began his discourse!

VASISHTA'S DISCOURSE BEGINS

BRAHMAA

Brahmaa is the Lotus-born who lives in SatyaLoka. This Brahmaa is the Creator of the world and appears in the lotus coming out of Naaraayana's navel. This Brahmaa is the father of Sage Vasishtha. The first story is an account of how this Brahmaa created Vasishtha and how he imparted the knowledge to his son.

STORY OF BRAHMAA

From the Supreme principle of Chidaakaasha – the 'awareness-expanse', Vishnu appeared like a wave from the ever-vibrating ocean. From his heart-lotus arose the Supreme Lord Brahmaa, the Creator. He created all the perceived phenomenon of the world as per his ideas. He created all types of beings in the Bharata-Varsha, in a corner of the Jamboo Dveepa.

{According to Puraanas, the entire Cosmos is divided into seven concentric islands (Dveepa) separated by the seven encircling oceans, each double the size of the preceding one. Jamboo Dveepa is one of them. It has seven zones; bharata Varsha is one of them (not just the present India)}

Brahmaa observed all the created beings undergoing unending sufferings forced by Vaasanaas (latent tendencies or the wants related to the worldly-life). His heart melted in compassion like the father is pained when his children suffer. He started to ponder intensely about some means of alleviating their suffering. The Lord then created Tapas/Daana/Satya/Teertha (Penance/Charity/ Truth/Sacred places) so that the created beings could use them to gain merits and thus be rid of their sufferings. Even then, Brahmaa observed that the beings were not completely freed from their painful states of mortality. He again pondered for some time. He decided that by performing penance or any other meritorious act, men could not attain the final state of liberation. He knew that 'Knowledge of the Self' alone could cure their ignorance and bestow on them liberation. Other than Knowledge nothing could free the beings from their bondage. Having decided so, he created Vasishtha instantly, by a mere wish.

STORY OF VASISHTA

The moment a conception appeared in the mind of Brahmaa, Vasishtha stood in front of him like a wave suddenly appearing in an ocean. He looked almost like Brahmaa except for the mortal form he was endowed with. He held a Kamandalu (sacred water pot) in his hand like his father; he wore a Rudraaksha (rosary) garland on his neck like his father. He wore a deer-skin as his garment like his father. He too was an All-knower like his father.

Vasishta saluted his father with reverence.

Lord Brahmaa called him affectionately to his side; held his hand and made him get seated in the topmost petal of the lotus he was seated on.

Brahmaa said to his son-

“Son! For a second your mind will be covered by ignorance like the taint covering the moon and will be restless like that of a monkey.”

{A doctor can prescribe the medicine only by gauging at the level of the particular disease in a person who is actually diseased. He cannot experiment on a healthy person. Likewise, Brahmaa had to make Vasishta suffer like an ordinary man of the world and according to his mental aptitude impart the knowledge. So he had to make Vasishta ignorant first and then impart the suitable knowledge.}

Immediately Vasishta forgot everything he knew including his identity as the Self. He felt that he was limited to a form and attained a pathetic state. He was like a rich man who lost all his wealth in a second and owned nothing. He felt that he was suffering in a worldly-existence and no means of escaping the pains were there, ever. Sad and distressed he stood there silently.

Brahmaa asked him-

“Son! Why are you so sad? Whatever your trouble is, do confide in me; I will tell you how to get rid of it.”

Then Vasishta asked him for the cure for the disease of Samsaara.

He asked him-

“How did this Samsaara come into being? How does it ever disappear?”

Then Brahmaa taught him in detail the knowledge that will make one get freed of the bondage.

Vasishta now freed of his ignorance shone like another Brahmaa by the new knowledge imparted to him.

At that time Brahmaa told him –

“I purposely made you ignorant for a second so that I could impart this knowledge to you.

Now you are enlightened by me. You are now purified by the fire of knowledge like an impure gold burnt in fire. Now go to the Bhaarata Varsha situated in the Jamboo Dveepa and remain there performing actions (rites) and instruct the proper rites to the people. And to those filled with dispassion impart the knowledge I have given you so that they can easily attain liberation.”

From then onwards Vasishta remained in the Bhaarata-Varsha and gave this knowledge to any one qualified enough to receive it.

(The term Bhaarata means ‘Attraction towards Knowledge’ Bhaa- Knowledge/Light; Rata -one who is attracted)

RAAJA -VIDYAA

Like Vasishta many others were created and sent to the earth like Naarada, SanatKumaara etc. They instructed the men about the rites (actions) to be performed by a man and also the knowledge which will lead to the liberation. At the end of KritaYuga, as all the Sages left the earth, kings were appointed in particular regions to maintain law and order and guide the people towards their good.

Various Smritis, Yajnas were brought into vogue for the fulfillment of the four goals of life (Dharma, Artha, Kaama and Moksha). *(Keep righteousness as the foundation of all actions and thoughts; earn the needed wealth; pursue your ambitions; attain liberation.)*

As the wheel of time rotated, as people were intent only on eating and reproducing, the kings started to punish people who disobeyed the laws. As kings disagreed among themselves and were dominated by the greed for land and wealth, wars erupted everywhere for the least of the reasons. The kings also attained a pathetic state like the ordinary populace of their country.

The realized Sages then started instructing the ‘secret knowledge’ to all the Kings and tried to guide them in the right path. So this knowledge of the Self is known as RaajaVidyaa (Royal Science), Raaja-Guhyam (Secret Knowledge belonging to the kings).

The kings absorbed the Knowledge and became free of all sufferings.

Such a king was Raghu. And on his lineage was born Dasharatha. And Rama was the eldest son.

That is why, he was qualified to obtain this sacred knowledge because he was a prince.

One need not be born only in a Sage’s family to gain this knowledge.

THE DISCOURSE BEGINS

With such assurances, Vasishtha starts instructing Rama about the qualities to be developed by a person after liberation. Then he relates the story of Aakaashaja (Emptiness-born), the Brahmin who never experienced the results of his actions, though he performed all his allotted duties perfectly well.

Only when the idea of the limited 'I' is there, the 'mine-ness' can arise. Any action colored by an 'I' will give the result and the agent of the action enjoys the result of his action; but the Brahmin Aakaashaja had no 'I' sense. He had no 'mine-ness'. So he had no actions to his credit at all, though he is actually the Creator of the entire perceived phenomenon.

ABSTRACT THINKING

The first story of Vasishtha is the beginning of the abstract thought processes.

After recounting the story of Lord Brahmaa and how he himself was born of Brahmaa, Vasishtha starts breaking up the solid world perceived by Rama. The first thing that gets the hammer blow of Vasishtha is the concept of Lord Brahmaa as a person with a solid body sitting and creating worlds. Though such a Brahmaa exists playing around with his creative ability, how did he arise first of all from the changeless Brahman?

As an answer to this question Vasishtha relates the story of Aakaashaja.

STORY OF AAKAASHAJA

Once there lived a Brahmin of great virtues. Nobody knew who he was or when he was born. So he was known by the name of 'Emptiness-born'. He never moved out of his house. He always spent his time in contemplation. He always wished for the good of everyone.

Nobody knew how long he had been living like this.

Everyone wondered why he never succumbed to death like the rest of them.

Even the all consuming Death got worried about this. He felt it was a blemish on his successful career that one puny Brahmin kept on living presenting a challenge to his mighty powers. Of course Death had tried many a times to kill that harmless Sage. He had invented many a situations where that Brahmin could have died within seconds; but usually nothing happened; rather no 'situations' could be created in the Brahmin's lonely abode.

That Sage lived alone. He had no relatives to speak off; he seemed to have no possessions or properties.

He never made friends with anybody. He never talked; he never moved; he never ever opened his eyes.

He was always absorbed in deep meditation. Nothing could disturb him; nobody could wake him up.

Death wanted to report all this to his boss; but he wanted to have one last try before accepting defeat at the hands of this strange little Brahmin. He stealthily entered the Brahmin's house. The house was like a picture drawn on the sky. He could easily go through its walls. He saw in the centre, the vague outlines of a person sitting on a lotus-seat. The Brahmin did not appear to have any physical body. His entire person was aglow with light.

The light emanating from that lustrous form actually blinded Death; but undaunted he moved towards the Brahmin. Immediately he was surrounded by huge flames engulfing him on all sides.

Death himself should have died; but he did not lose his courage. His desire to kill that Brahmin was too strong.

With extreme courage, he tore open the fire wall and entered further inside the house. Now he could actually see the clear image of the Brahmin. Controlling his urge to fall at his feet in surrender, Death produced out of his person thousands of arms and tried to catch the meditating Sage; but his hands just passed through that figure and he could grasp nothing. He was surprised. He was seeing that Brahmin in front of him just a step away; but yet he could not even touch him. Death pinched himself. He knew that it was not a dream. His powerful hand went towards the Brahmin's neck to strangle it and break it; but there was nothing to hold. It was like empty space. Death tried and tried till his own limbs were completely tired out.

Death got really anxious. He decided to consult his boss DharmaRaaja, (King of Righteousness) or the Divinity commonly known as Lord Yama.

Lord Yama was the controller of all the events of who should die, when etc. and was rightly named the 'Right thinking Chief'. In the mortal world, everyone went on acting without a break and DharmaRaaja had to keep perfect calculations about every thought and every act of everyone and write down the judgments correctly. Nobody ever escaped his sharp scrutiny. His heart was not filled with compassion like other divinities and he could not afford to give way to any emotions in his work.

He was perfect in his job and perfect in his thoughts and actions. There was nothing he did not know.

He was aptly named DharmaRaaja; the king of Righteousness.

Death approached him with a forlorn look and reported his anguish. He asked his Master to teach him some tricks to catch that Brahmin.

Yama was amused! He said that Death had not the power to catch anybody and everybody and kill them.

The actions performed by them alone should lead to such a result. So, he told Death to find out whether the Brahmin had done even a tiniest act anytime in his life. If he had even breathed once, there was a chance of stopping that breath and killing him. 'Actions alone kill a man', he advised Death.

Death felt relieved and tried to analyze the whole life of Brahmin and see where he had performed an action even once. Whatever creations were approachable by him he searched them for any incident or thought connected to that Brahmin. He was shocked to find out that there was no information available anywhere about that Brahmin.

He wondered about the fact that the Brahmin never even thought about anything and he never ever desired for anything. Now, Death felt mentally exhausted. He returned with a forlorn face to his Boss and reported his failure. Lord Yama was also surprised. He closed his eyes and meditated for a while. He understood what was happening. He advised Death that there was not in the least a chance of killing that Brahmin.

The Brahmin never performed any action. He had no thoughts belonging to him. He did not even have a physical body which could be destroyed. He did not even breathe; the breathing act was observed by others only. He had no solid body which could be destroyed. He was made of empty space. He was like a lighted-up space; he was only 'Knowledge' in essence.

How can knowledge be destroyed ever? Knowledge has no form or solidity.

The Brahmin was an abstract entity. If at least he was an effect of some cause, even then there was a chance of killing him; but there seemed to be no cause for him.

'He was deathless', informed DharmaRaaja and advised Death to leave him alone.

Death had nothing to say. He had too much work on hand now; better get on with work than worry about one who never seemed to exist; so he decided and entered the mortal world to perform his duties.

Immediately the earth was alive with deaths; some volcano erupted somewhere; earth shivered somewhere; waters jumped elsewhere; fire danced somewhere; and of course mortals fought everywhere and killed each other.

Death felt relaxed and a smile lingered on his terrifying face. He will never go hungry for a long time he thought and got ready to fill his ever-hungry belly.

(Aakaashaja is the quiver of perception in the Reality; it never ends ever.)

THE TALE OF THE DOME

INTRODUCTION

This is the story of King Padma and Queen Leelaa.

Leelaa is a devotee of Goddess Sarasvati and prays for knowledge.

Goddess Sarasvati explains to her the illusory nature of time and space by giving Leelaa the actual experience of journeying to her dead husband's past and future lives.

The term 'Dome' or 'Mandapa' plays a very important role in the story.

Leelaa travels huge distances to visit the past and future worlds of her husband inside the tiny place of her bed-room dome. The tiny dome of her bed-room contains many domes of created worlds of enormous sizes and covers vast distances. This paradox is the main theme of the story.

The story is slightly mind-boggling and contains highly abstract truths.

[A BRIEFING OF THE STORY]

[Queen Leelaa is a devoted wife of King Padma.

She wants her husband to be with her even after his death; by the boon obtained from Goddess Jnapti (Sarasvati), she binds the subtle Jeeva of Padma inside the tiny space of her bed-dome.

That very night she visits by the grace of Sarasvati, her husband's 'future world' which Padma is experiencing as a Jeeva inside the bed-dome. In that life she sees him as a sixteen year old prince getting consecrated on the throne. He has a different form and different personality there. His name is Vidooratha in the new life.

That very night Sarasvati takes her again to another Creation-dome where Leelaa had lived and died as Arundhati, a Brahmin woman, the wife of Brahmin Vasishta.

There the sons are mourning the death of their parents.

Leelaa learns that she as Arundhati and her husband Vasishta (not Sage Vasishta) had died there in that Creation eight days back. Arundhati again by the boon obtained from Sarasvati had bound her husband Vasishta's Jeeva in that little room of that small cottage.

Leelaa is puzzled.

Inside the Brahmin's tiny cottage-room, Vasishta's Jeeva was stuck.

Vasishta's Jeeva experienced the life of Padma in that tiny cottage room-space itself.

And again as per Leelaa's wish the 'Jeeva of Padma' was stuck in the 'bed room dome' of Padma's palace. Padma was experiencing the life of Vidooratha in that 'bed room dome' which was really inside the 'tiny cottage-room' of the Brahmin.

The tiny cottage room-space of Vasishta's house contained within it the world of Padma and also the world of Vidooratha.

'Space' is the projection of the mind. It is just a measure that locates a physical object.

Space is always conjoint with the measure of time also.

There is no absolute solid world anywhere.

Anyone can dream a huge world inside a bed room space.

After death also, life is experienced in the very same point of the previous life.

If we go on searching for the original point where all the life experiences started, we will end up in Brahman, the point which contains all the manifest worlds within it like perturbations.

To simplify the story, we can say that the Brahmin Vasishta in his hut dreamed that he was King Padma.

And as he was dreaming as King Padma, he had another dream and thought that he was king Vidooratha.

All the dreams are experienced only in the hut-space by Vasishta.

A dream within a dream within a dream!

If we mark the 'dream-change junctions' with 'deaths', then we can say that Vasishta died to become Padma; Padma died to become Vidooratha.

But because of Arundhati's boon, Vasishta's Jeeva was stuck in the hut.

All the experiences of Padma and Vidooratha occur in the mind of the Brahmin Vasishta.

However, Vasishta's body has been cremated already and Padma's body is kept preserved and so the life-story of Padma alone continues in the end.

Time which is the counterpart of space also is a projection of the mind.

On the very night of Padma's death Leelaa visits Arundhati's world after some fifty or sixty years of living as Leelaa in Padma's world.

But, she as Arundhati, had died only eight days back in that world, along with her husband.

Within eight days, she had lived some sixty years as Leelaa in a palace!

Similarly on that very night of Padma's death, she visits Vidooratha's world two times.

In the first visit she sees Vidooratha (Padma's next life) as a youth of sixteen getting consecrated as the king.

In the second visit she sees him as an old man of seventy or so, ready to fight his enemy in a fierce battle.

She spends a night there watching the battle and its aftermath.

When she returns to her world of Leelaa, she finds that almost a month has elapsed in her world.

There does not seem to be any match between the clocks and calendars of all the three worlds – past, present and future worlds of Padma; nor is there a sense in the space measurements.

Leelaa understands the illusory nature of 'Time and Space'. She now knows all the worlds are just projections of the mind. She develops dispassion and goes off to SatyaLoka with her deity Jnapti.]

STORY OF LEELAA AND PADMA

SARASVATI'S TEMPLE

King Padma stood on the terrace garden. His eyes looked weary. A gentle wind rustled his unkempt hair and bathed him in the intoxicating fragrance of jasmine flowers. Melodious Veenaa music entered his ears from afar and soothed his tired mind. Far out in the garden a bluish moon was shining competing with the satellite floating in the sky; but this moon was a man made wonder constructed at the behest of Queen Leelaa as a temple for her favorite deity Goddess Sarasvati.

The building was a real architectural marvel. It was a huge circular arena open on all sides. An enormous dome covered the entire structure like the sky. Gigantic pillars clad with variously shaped Lapis lazuli flowers supported the structure like mighty Devas. Garlands strung with exquisite pearls decorated the roofs. Jasmine creepers of many varieties grew all around the temple and had been allowed to cover the dome on top. A small pond in the center of the hall was adorned with white lotuses and a few white swans swam in complete abandon in those cool waters.

On the eastern corner a huge statue of Goddess Sarasvati had been placed. The statue was carved meticulously in crystal opal. Instead of being adorned with Veenaa and other accessories, this Sarasvati was seated on a huge gem-studded throne which threw colorful panorama of lights all around it. The hands of the Goddess gently rested on both sides of the throne. The statue was of immense height with the head of the Goddess almost touching the roof. The Goddess was not adorned with a jewel crown. Her hair dropped down profusely all over her back. A simple garland made of giant pearls embraced her neck like the arms of a child. She seemed to smile at everyone who came before her. It felt almost like she was about to come down and hug her devotees. The sculptor had made the statue almost life-like and had worked hard to bring the required effect.

The hall was an arena for arts. It was a mini SatyaLoka, the abode of the Goddess in heaven. The place was always busy with crowds of highly talented people who came from far and near to exhibit their talents to the queen and get rewarded by her. Queen Leelaa, who though was a promoter of arts, mostly encouraged scholarly discussions which aimed at decoding the great truths contained in the Vedas and Upanishads.

Queen Leelaa herself was a great scholar. There was no art she did not master. And she surpassed even heavenly damsels in her beauty. From childhood, she was fascinated by the Goddess of Knowledge and worshipped her with extreme devotion. Her only desire in life was to know everything about the Creation and unravel the mysteries of Nature. No Scriptures were left unread by her; no language was left untouched by her. She was adept in the practice of Yogic meditations and breath-control also. There was nothing more on earth she could master anymore. Most of the days and nights she spent in her temple itself, contemplating on her deity and pondering about the mysteries of the Universe.

KING PADMA

King Padma sighed impatiently.

He knew that he was the most fortunate man on Earth for having Leelaa as his wife.

He could not ask for more; but he always felt that she did not deserve him.

Of course never had she shown any arrogance or vanity on her part.

He knew that she loved him more than her own life.

The time spent in her company was worthier than even the eternal post of Indra; but he could never ever forget the fact that she was far above him in learning and wisdom.

Moreover, she was not as interested in material pleasures as him.

Most of the nights were spent in her describing the various events that went on in her temple and the philosophical truths that were discussed on that day. It was long since the king ever had her as a companion in amorous sports. He even felt ashamed to even indirectly suggest that he entertained a wish to enjoy her company.

Though he felt blessed to own the most beautiful woman on earth as his life-mate, he never had the fortune to enjoy her company as he desired. She was an exotic fruit held in the hand of the Goddess of Knowledge and he never had the courage to grasp it and eat it. Of course countless maids of exquisite beauty served him day and night and satisfied his unending demands of passion; but his cherished wife did not even have the least inclination about his innermost fires of desires consuming him slowly.

Except for this flaw on her part for which no one but fate seemed responsible, she was the ideal companion for the king in other matters.

Leelaa attended to all his personal needs herself; she attended the court with him daily and helped in the administration affairs. Whenever the king was away on his amorous adventures with pretty maidens, she took care of the kingdom and handled the matters with extreme care. The ministers highly valued her advice on official matters and kept her busy. People loved her like their own mother. She was easily approachable by any ordinary member of the public and everyone adored her as Goddess Lakshmi incarnated on earth.

The king was just name sake. He never had enough of pleasures and left the charge of the kingdom to his ever wise wife and relaxed in sheer luxuries the post of the king had offered him. Since the queen handled the chiefs of the neighboring states also with extreme friendliness and goodness, battles and wars were mere words in the minds of the people. Swords and spears were just toys used for sports of bravery and never ever were stained by the blood of the enemies, because there existed no enemies for Padma under the rule of the wise queen Leelaa. Moreover her family deity Jnapti, Goddess of Knowledge kept her devotee's world under her care and no calamity or tragedy struck the kingdom at any time.

King Padma had nothing to complain about. He entrusted all the affairs of the kingdom to his ever affectionate wife and spent all his time in seeking various pleasures his royal status could provide; but he missed her company.

'If only such a beauty had passion also inbuilt in it!'

His heart cried like a child whose toy was securely locked in the safe.

LEELAA, THE DEVOTED WIFE

Today, King Padma had quickly got over all the urgent affairs of the State and had arrived earlier than usual to the palace of his wife; but Leelaa was not there. Of course he knew very well that she would be in the temple of Jnapti discussing some Scripture or other with some scholars. He tightened his lips in frustration.

What was there to know about the world, he wondered. When God had provided all that one could ask for, why go after worthless query about some abstract things, he asked himself.

He dismissed away with a frustrated look, all the girls waiting to serve him. He collapsed on the bed tired and angry. The soft cool bed soothed his burning body. He closed his weary eyes and entered his world of imagination. He pictured his wife without her wisdom; pretty, passionate, a perfect company in love sports. The thought brought a smile on his lips. The music from the Veenaa lulled him to a blissful drowsiness.

He relaxed on the bed and his eye-lids shut the world out of his mind.

When he woke up he saw his lovely queen fanning him gently. He smiled with complete satisfaction.

Leelaa smiled too! Was not she his reflection always!

HOW TO BECOME IMMORTAL?

The temple of the Jnapti was buzzing with activity hitherto unknown. Scholars and learned men from various parts of the country had arrived there being specially invited for the occasion. The temple which always shone like a recluse lady attired in white, today wore the look of a colorful bride. Flowers of various hues decorated each and every corner of the sacred premises. Another thing that made all the difference was a huge jewel box placed at the feet of the Goddess.

The box itself was studded all over with diamonds and gems of various hues. More diamonds filled the box unto the brim. Any one who could answer the query of the Queen today would be the proud owner of that treasure box. The crowd eagerly awaited the arrival of their beloved queen.

Soon Leelaa adorned the court like a full moon shining amidst stars. She sat on the white marble throne kept at the feet of the Goddess. She bent her head slightly revering all the learned men who had assembled there at her behest. The crowd hailed her with respect. The queen smiled back graciously; but her eyes couldn't hide her apprehension. Without much delay she placed her question before the assembly and asked them to present a perfect solution for her problem.

The query she presented was whether immortality could be attained by humans.

Was there any drug, or hymn, or austerity or penance which could make a man immortal, she wanted to know and she warned the crowd that any false claim or an attempt to cheat would be met with severe punishment immediately.

The queen was well known for her compassion but she never spared anyone who acted the wrong way.

Especially those who slighted women were ruthlessly sent to the dungeons.

She requested the assembly to find the answer at least by the end of the day and returned to her private chambers.

LEELAA IS WORRIED

Leelaa took her favorite Veena and placed it lovingly on her lap. As her fingers magically produced heavenly melodies from that inert instrument, her mind was absorbed in serious thinking.

The king was not looking so healthy nowadays. He seemed to be disturbed by some unexpressed grief, and mostly spent his time relaxing on the bed. Since his sons were all well-trained in the affairs of the kingdom, he could afford the long-awaited rest now. He knew his ministers will guide his sons in the correct course always. He preferred to stay in the bed most of the time. Leelaa also sat with him relaxing him with her melodious songs or played music from her Veena; but nothing could soothe the disturbed heart of her husband. His days were filled with anxieties and he never had restful sleep at nights.

His behavior towards others also had changed.

He was irritated with everybody; shouted at his subordinates; got angered for the smallest mishaps.

He drowned his depression in wine and intoxicating drugs. When senseless, he blabbered about a daughter whom he never got, about his wife who always stole the show, about his life which was just wasted away without enjoying anything.

He was not like this always. He was a king of blemishless character in his youth. There was no one equal to him in courage, bravery and wisdom. The first few years of their life were not less joyous than the life of Indra and Shachi in heaven; but slowly he had lost his cheerful bubbly nature. He seemed to purposely avoid her company.

When alone, he spent his time brooding on something. Maybe he was disappointed that he had no daughter, Leelaa thought. He always had desired a female child and unfortunately had only five sons to carry on his name but no daughter; but now it appeared that he had lost control over himself. All his suppressed desires and wants were bursting out as anger and irritation. The unexpressed grief had led him to seek solace in intoxicating drugs and pretty maidens. His unhealthy habits soon forced him to be a bed ridden patient.

Leelaa served him with complete devotion and humility. She felt apprehensive that he may soon meet his death if he continued to live like this. She tried her best to console him, but to no avail. If she could have given her own health and life to her husband to make him happy she would have done so. She had no regrets about her death. After all, any one who is born must die. It was a certainty enjoined by the cruel fate; but she could not bear the thought of her husband dying. The king was her soul and life. Without him she would be nothing. She had no identity bereft of him.

If he lived, she lived; if he died...?

She felt that she would not be alive the next second; but may be there were some Siddhis or magical powers which make a dead one alive or keep the body from dying. Maybe some potions had the power to ward off the decay of the body cells. Then she would make her husband live for a long time and serve him always with devotion.

She desired nothing but his welfare.

Her reverie was broken by the arrival of a maid who announced that the scholars were ready to meet her now.

She wiped the tear drops that were forming at the end of her lotus like eyes.

With renewed hope she walked towards the abode of Knowledge.

NO ONE HAS THE REMEDY FOR DEATH

The noise subsided as the queen entered the arena of the temple.

The queen sat on her throne and looked at the crowd eagerly.

One old Brahmin stood up and saluted her. He explained the various methods suggested by many learned men to attain many Siddhis and powers; but he woefully explained that immortality was a thing never fated for the humans.

Anyone born must die. Nobody can escape death whether he is a Sage or a king.

One could even live for long with some intake of chemical solutions, but death cannot be avoided by any one.

No penance, no austerities, no hymns had the power to bestow immortality.

The queen's face faded like a lotus hit by a snow fall. She thanked the scholars for the trouble they had taken to answer her query. She instructed her personal maid to distribute the gems in the treasure box to all the scholars assembled there equally, and walked out in a pensive mood.

PADMA'S WOES

The moon was hiding behind the clouds.

The lamps in the room flickered by the sudden wind which blew from the window.

The king was fast asleep on his bed; before he slept he had cried like a child on her lap and confided in her all his suppressed feelings.

He had told her everything; how he felt inferior in her presence; how he strived hard to develop interest in intellectual pursuits but was inadvertently drawn towards sense objects always; how he craved for a daughter to console his troubled heart and so on.

As she caressed his unkempt hair soothingly, he had fallen asleep on her lap like a child. Now he was sleeping on his own bed freed of his burden. He knew Leelaa would find a way out of this depression for him. He knew she will somehow raise him to her level of intelligence and make him reach the spiritual goal of liberation. He smiled in his sleep.

DOME

Leelaa did not sleep. She was sitting on her bed still thinking about immortality. She did not want her husband to die. Of course all learned men of the country had admitted their incapacity to give her a solution; but she did not give up. She decided to think it out.

'A human being is not just the body. Atman is the embodied Purusha.

Atman is the Self without any thought processes or particular identities connected with it; but this husband of mine with the identity of Padma is the embodied Atman.

He is the Jeeva. After death, this Jeeva may be whisked off to heaven or hell and I will lose him forever. Even if he takes any other birth, I will never know of it.

He loves me so much. I should be his wife in all his future lives and serve him.'

Leelaa thought this much and looked up as if some God will help her out.

All she saw was the golden dome studded with various gems covering their sleeping area.

Curtains made of exotic pearls hung all around from the roof of the dome blocking the bed from the vision of others. On the four corners of the room huge golden lamps emitted light continuously and acted as guards keeping the eerie darkness away. The bed looked like a solid rainbow risen on earth colored by the reflection of the rays emanating from the gems adorning the dome. Soft winds blew from the window filling the room with exquisite scent of various fragrant flowers from the outside garden.

Leelaa took a deep breath and closed her eyes enjoying the peaceful security of the dome.

She wondered, how long will they both sleep under this sparkling dome? One day these beds will be empty without them.

'But of course we both will not die at the same time' she said to herself.

'If I die first, it would not matter; I will wait for him as a Jeeva wherever I am.

As a practitioner of yoga and meditation, I can wait in this very space for him to die and guide him in the after-worlds. But if he dies first, lacking spiritual wisdom he will be lost in some future birth and I may not be able to locate his Jeeva. The best solution is to block his Jeeva from leaving this very dome above our beds.

If he is kept bound here, then after I die I will take care of his future births and will be his wife in the next birth also. I can go on repeating this process, so forever we both will live as husband and wife pair. I will somehow guide him in the spiritual path and we both will together attain the goal of liberation mentioned in the Scriptures.'

LEELAA DECIDES TO PLEASE GODDESS JNAPTI

Leelaa smiled. She felt like laughing aloud. She had found a way to cheat this cruel fate which made death inevitable to mortals; but how this can get achieved, she again wondered.

As if in answer she heard the temple bells ringing from far.

'Of course, her deity would help her out. All these days she had worshipped Goddess Jnapti with devotion; but now she will perform more difficult austerities and gain her favor.'

She thought within herself again.

'For that this husband of mine will prove an obstacle and may force me to give up such hardships as I undertake for his welfare. Therefore, I will advise him in the morning to leave for a pilgrimage to all the temples and hermitages all over the country. Let him be accompanied by a few of his favorite friends and some men of medicine. It will take him a year or so to complete the tour.

By that time I will make Jnapti appear before me and make her give the required boon '

Leelaa smiled satisfactorily.

She lay down next to her husband wondering what austerities were hard enough to please Jnapti. Padma turned towards her and embraced her even as he slept. Leelaa patted his hand affectionately.

She felt that she was responsible for his future. She will not forsake him whatever happens. She will get that Jnapti to appear before her somehow or other, she said to herself in a determined way.

The dome bathed her in its golden rays as if pleased by her decision.
Leelaa nestled closer to the cherished Lord of her heart. Soon her eyes closed in deep slumber.
She slept peacefully within her husband's strong arms, under the protective shelter of the dome.

Next morning, she called for the meeting of the ministers and her sons. He explained to them that the king should without delay leave for the sacred tour accompanied by a small retinue and her sons should take care of the affairs of the State till he returned. She told them also firmly that she will be busy worshipping the family deity till he came back and that she should not be disturbed in any way.

Soon, the king left on his tour with his trusted friends.

GODDESS JNAPTI APPEARS BEFORE LEELAA

"What boon do you want my dear daughter?"

some soft wishper entered the ears of Leela who was absorbed in her contemplation-state.

Leelaa woke up with a start.

A golden light had flooded the entire room.

A huge form made of lustre only, stood before her covering the region of the entire earth and heaven.

Leelaa was dumbfounded.

'Oh, the Goddess herself in person!'

She could hear her own heart beats. Was she dreaming, she wondered.

On that very morning after the decision was made, she had managed to send the king away on the sacred pilgrimage. She did not want even a day's delay in starting her austerities. The king raised no objection for the pilgrimage plan. He was ready to do whatever she advised. He felt that it would create a change in his mood and he would be forced to give up all the bad habits he had developed. Simple food and the company of the wise would bring a turning point in his life, he thought.

The day after he left, she consulted some aged Brahmins, and as per their advice took to pleasing her deity with various types of austerities, and chose to do ChaandraayanaVrata.

{Chaandraayana Vrata- a religious observance – fifteen mouthfuls at the full moon; diminishing one mouthful everyday during the dark fortnight; zero mouthfuls on the new moon; increased again in the next fortnight}

She cleared a place in her bed room itself and got it ready for contemplation practices. She instructed the maids not to allow anyone inside the room when she was engaged in meditation.

Every morning she took a ritualistic bath and sat reciting the Mantra (sacred chant) meant for Jnapti without a break for three days continuously. She fasted on all those three days. On the third day she went to the temple and fed thousands of people. After everyone left she made a meal of whatever was left over, and spent the whole night in the contemplation of the Goddess. Next morning she again started the recitation of the Mantra after the ritualistic bath in her bedroom. In this manner, she performed penance for hundred threefold nights. On the last night of the penance, she sat in her bedroom contemplating on the form of the Goddess. Suddenly she had heard a soft voice beckoning to her.

LEELAA ASKS FOR TWO BOONS

"What boon do you want my dear daughter?"

Leelaa felt as if she was drowning in the ocean of nectar. Her eyes became the fountainhead of tears.

Her entire body shivered in excitement. No sound came out of her mouth.

Her lips trembled like lotus buds swayed by winds.

She did not know how to react to such a benign presence. She just fell flat on the feet of the Goddess crying.

Two tender hands lifted her up gently.

Leelaa saw Jnapti's form now reduced to the room size.

She somehow blurted out-

"O Mother! What can I ask you for except knowledge!

Though I would like to sit at your feet and forever keep learning from you all that has to be learnt, at this moment my husband's welfare is of foremost importance to me. ..."

Leelaa halted midway in her talks and quickly calculated within her mind.

'If I ask for a boon and Jnapti disappears, then I will never be able to get another chance to get any knowledge out of her. This Goddess must be kept as a constant guide for me.'

So thinking, she spoke to the Goddess.

"Devi, O compassionate One! Kindly grant me two boons.

The first one is that my husband's Jeeva should not go away from the dome of the bedroom in this harem, after he dies. The second one is that you should bless me with your vision whenever I want the boon."

Jnapti's eyes twinkled knowingly at the cleverness exhibited by her devotee.

She smiled graciously and said, *"Let it be so"* and vanished.

Leelaa blinked her eyes with disbelief. Did she really see the Goddess in person she asked herself.

An unearthly fragrance filling that room confirmed the visit of a Supreme divinity. Leelaa laughed aloud.

She had achieved her goal; her husband was now safe.

She completed the formal worship in the temple ending her austerities.

Soon the king returned from his pilgrimage. His face was radiant and flushed. His eyes sparkled with some unknown joy. He had met many a learned sage on his tour and had developed a keen interest in spiritual topics. He was eager to meet his dearest wife and tell her all that he had seen and learnt. Leelaa came to meet him like the Ganges rushing towards the ocean; both melted into each other.

DEATH OF KING PADMA

The king consecrated all his sons as heirs of the royal throne and gave them equal positions in ruling the country.

All had equal rights but decisions on anything had to be made together under the guidance of the wise ministers.

The sons were unblemished in their character and promised their father that they will rule the kingdom, united as one.

The king and the queen spent most of their time in the temple premises nowadays.

The king started taking part in all the discussions and debates held at the temple arena.

He felt that had wasted all his life in worthless sense pleasures and tried hard to master everything to the best of his ability in the last few days of his life. But his body succumbed to ill health as a result of the sensuous life he had lived in the past. Soon he was bed-ridden.

Leelaa was heart broken.

She served the king day and night attending to every personal need of his like a maid.

Time rolled on unmindful of anyone's joys or sorrows.

Death got ready to snatch the king's life away.

That fatal night was pitch-black. Icy winds blew chilling even brave hearts.

Dark Clouds covered the sky darkening the terrain even more. It was past midnight.

In the bedroom, Leelaa was seated next to the king massaging his chest gently. The king was struggling hard to breathe. His breath came in bursts. His weak hands tightly held Leelaa's wrist as if afraid to let go. Fear lurked in his eyes. It was as if someone was pulling him forcefully away from her. Leelaa stroked his head lovingly and consoled him with soothing words. The king's cheeks puffed. He let out a cry *"Leelaa...."*

And that was all; he was no more.

His body lay motionless on the bed.

The hand that held her wrist hung lifelessly.

Leelaa touched his face as if her touch could change the things; but his face was slowly turning icy cold.

Leelaa sat stunned. Her eyes were fixed on the king's frozen face. The hand that held her felt cold.

The body was like a log covered in sheets. A few minutes passed in silence.

Even the wind had stopped its movement.

A scream pierced her throat echoing all over the palace.

JNAPTI APPEARS

Leelaa cried; fainted; wept; rolled on the floor; held on to the pillar; embraced the dead body again and again; called him back to life ...!

Her maids, ministers, family, all consoled her in many ways; but Leelaa was not to be consoled. She cried and cried, and requested them to leave her with the dead body alone that night and conduct the funeral rites in the morning.

Everyone obliged her and left her alone with her dead spouse. She locked the door from inside.

She sat in the seat reserved in the corner for contemplation and begged for the Goddess to appear. Jnapti was instantly by her side. This time she had a physical body of utmost charms. She was fair hued. Like the statue in the temple she was adorned with just simple ordinary white garments. A garland of pearls hung loosely from her neck. Two pearl ear rings danced on her lovely ears. She appeared to be slightly taller than Leelaa and more lustrous. She looked like a Yoginee just coming out of her penance.

She sat next to Leelaa and embraced her affectionately and kissed her on the forehead like a mother. She silently led her towards the dead body. She stroked the head of the king affectionately. The body immediately brimmed with the lustre of life. She asked Leelaa to arrange for a huge amount of flowers to be fetched from the garden. When they were brought, they both covered the body with the flowers up to the dome. Then Jnapti made her seated on the meditation mat and sat next to her. She tenderly touched her face and said, "My dear daughter! Do not worry any more. Your husband's Jeeva is safely bound in the space of the dome and his body will not decay for long. In some future event he will rise up again healthy and young and rule the kingdom as before."

WHERE WAS PADMA?

Before Leelaa could talk back, Jnapti vanished from sight. Leelaa returned to her bed and sat on the small throne next to the bed. The king's face was now bright and alive as if his body was kept in a suspended state. His Jeeva must be hovering inside the dome as Jnapti promised, Leelaa thought. She observed carefully every point of space below that dome. May be a streak of light, or a ghostly figure of the husband should be seen, she felt.

'Nothing is here; nothing but the empty space under this dome.'
'Where is his Jeeva? It is neither inside the body nor outside.'
Where is my husband hidden?
I do not even feel the vibration of his thoughts.
Everything is just empty space! Pure void!'

She got up from her seat; walked to and fro inside the room for a while; touched the face of her husband; again walked for a while; again peeped inside the dome-space; nothing, no sign of any Jeeva. She sat on her meditation seat and called out to her divine guide. Jnapti was instantly beside her. Leelaa held her hands and asked, "Where is the Jeeva of my husband? What is he doing now? Show me where he is! I cannot live even a second without him. Please take me to him".

THE SILENCE BETWEEN TWO THOUGHT PROCESSES

Jnapti looked at her compassionately and said:
 "If you want to see him, you have to contemplate on the source of all the Jeevas."

L: "What is the source of all Jeevas?"

J: "Empty space!"

L: "Space?"

J: "Yes; but not the ordinary gross space which contains all these various objects around you; not even the space of the mind which contains all the conceptions of this world; but that 'Supreme Space' in which the 'gross space' and 'mind-space' both exist undifferentiated."

L: "How do I find it?"

J: "Very easy! Just concentrate on that silence which is in between two cognitions."

L: "Explain a little more."

Jnapti explained to her patiently everything.

"The mind does not continuously perceive objects. Perception of any object contains successive states of cognitions which the mind later co-joins as one single perception process. If you can concentrate in between these successive states and remain without cognizing anything, you will reach the state of the Supreme Space.

Anyhow, do not worry. Just try your best to concentrate on what I said; by my grace you will easily attain that state soon. For other beings it is attained only after practicing for a long time."

Jnapti vanished.

LEELAA ENTERS HER HUSBAND'S FUTURE LIFE

Leelaa closed her eyes and practiced contemplating on what Jnapti pointed out. She soon lost the sense of her physical body. She felt she was floating out of the body.

Instantly she was in a huge city surrounded by mountains and rivers. She had no physical form and floated like mist everywhere. The people who lived in that city never were aware of her presence. As she watched the roads, houses, and gardens, she felt that she was in familiar grounds. She was certain that she was in her own city; but she soon found out that she was not. She crossed the well-known streets and entered the palace premises.

The palace was huger than the one she lived in. It was surrounded on all sides by huge stone walls which rose high like hills. On one side were kept the retinue of horses, elephants and soldiers. All men were training vigorously in various fighting strategies.

It was as if they were preparing themselves for any unexpected enemy attack. On another side huge crowds of people thronged the inner hall to get the glimpse of the king who was getting consecrated that day. The inner hall was filled with crowds of kings and chieftains who had arrived there from various parts of the country to participate in the ceremony. On another side groups of women in dressed in exquisite garments and diamonds were busy commenting on everything excitedly.

Leelaa felt very curious. Maybe her husband would be sitting on the throne and may be she had only dreamt of his death. As she floated towards the throne, she saw all the ministers and courtiers of her own kingdom. She rushed towards the throne almost crying out in joy; but lo; that was not her husband Padma. The person who was sitting on the throne was just a sixteen year old youth; and, by the shouts of the people there, she understood his name to be Vidooratha. She floated closer to him and observed him closely. He looked so unfamiliar; but if what Jnapti said was correct this was her husband Padma who was in this another world ruling as a king. Her head reeled. She returned back to her own body in the harem-bedroom feeling, confused about her whole adventure.

WERE ALL IN HER CITY DEAD?

Leelaa got up from her meditation seat. Not even a second had passed in this world. Everything was as before. The king's body hidden under the flowers remained motionless. She looked out of the window. Everything was absolutely quiet.

Maybe all the citizens, courtiers, ministers had died along with their king and gone to the next life with him, she thought. A chill ran through her body. She felt that she was all alone in that city. She had to personally see whether everyone was alive, she decided.

She opened the door of her bedroom and called out to her trusted maids. Seeing them alive she felt relieved. She instructed them that the court will meet within a few minutes and all the ministers, courtiers and citizens should assemble there without delay. All of them were highly sympathetic to their queen who had lost her husband and were ready to oblige any sudden whim of hers.

Soon the paths were lighted up with rows of gem-lamps; the court-hall was swept and decorated; all those who were sleeping got out of their beds, dressed up neatly and arrived at the court without delay. The queen entered the courtroom, sat on her throne and observed everyone carefully. Everyone was fully alive. None had died, for sure. She looked at the throne where her husband used to sit. Tears brimmed in her eyes. She thanked the court in gestures and returned to her own chambers.

WHICH WORLD IS REAL- THAT OR THIS?

Leelaa again locked herself in the bedroom; sat on her seat and started thinking about her visions.
*'Which world was real? Both were so identical! Except for the king!
 Was she in a dream or were they in a dream?'*

She remembered her friend Jnapti. The Goddess appeared the next instant and sat next to her.

Leelaa asked:

*"Dear Mother of all! What did I see? Where is that world situated?
 Was that young prince, another form of my husband? Why are all the people identical in both the worlds?
 Which one is real - mine or his?"*

J: "First tell me what you mean by 'real'!"

L: *"Well, I and you are sitting here and conversing. This is the real world!
 The other one must be a dream-like vision!"*

J: "But did you not feel that world as solid and real when you visited it?"

L: *"Yes but it is different! It is not real! It is just a mirror image of this world. It cannot be real."*

J: "How can you say so?"

If that world is a copy of this world then it must have risen out of this world only.

So this world is the cause of that world.

If this is real, that is real too! If this is unreal then that is unreal too!

The effect always has the same qualities as the cause.

Since you saw by yourself that your husband was ruling that world, that world exists as much real as this world. Tell me now, how that world could have been caused?"

L: *"Well, I believe he must have carried the thoughts of this world as memory and a world might have been created to suit his ideas like in a dream!"*

J: "Exactly! Then what do you think about this world?"

L: *"If I apply the same logic, this world must also be a product of someone's memory!
 It all looks so confusing; tell me why and how all these things occur."*

J: "Since you are so much interested, let me explain everything to you in detail. Come with me."

THE DOME OF CREATION

Jnapti held her hand and Leelaa again floated out of her body.

They both crossed just the miniscule space-point of the dome, and yet travelled huge distances that connected two Creations.

They both flew up into the sky like birds.

They crossed the clouds, the solar system, galaxies, horizons and soon entered a layer of dense darkness so dense that a needle could pierce through it.

There was nothing there; just empty space or rather spacelessness.

Leelaa could not understand whether they were moving or not moving. There was no change at all. It was just darkness, darkness all around. Leelaa held Jnapti's hand tightly.

Soon, Jnapti pointed out to a tiny flicker of light at the farthest distance like a ray of knowledge in the world of ignorance. They both floated towards it quickly.

When they approached the flicker, Leelaa observed that, that one tiny flicker was actually a lustrous point containing infinite number of flickers.

Jnapti took her hand and entered that tiny flicker of light like a streak of wind.

As they traveled further inside, the flickers just moved further and further away making it appear like a star-studded world. Jnapti just randomly selected one lustrous point, and entered it. Leelaa now found herself inside a huge domed structure like the ruins of an old fortress.

But it covered the entire sky and the floors stretched beyond the horizons.

Leelaa could not find the end or beginning of that huge ancient dome structure. It was stuffy and dusty all over.

Cobwebs hung loosely everywhere. Jnapti told her to look around the place.

The roof of the dome had many small pores on its sides through which swarms of flying insects whizzed out and in making strange buzzing noises. Leelaa went very close to them and found out that they were not insects but Siddhas (realized sages with highly miraculous powers) flying all over.

Amazed at the sight, Leelaa descended down slowly watching every tiny thing carefully.

Gigantic pillars with faded statues inbuilt in them supported the dome-structure. Jnapti came near her and explained to Leelaa that they were the statues of the wives of Devas.

As they descended down to the floor area, Leelaa heard a lot of commotion where many unruly boys were chasing each other and fighting madly. Jnapti explained that they were Devas and Daityas fighting eternally.

From the innermost part of the domed structure there arose a droning noise which went on without a break. Leelaa quickly floated inside to find a very old man huddled in a corner. He looked very ancient. His beard spread out all over the place like a river. His eyes were closed in deep thinking. His voice went on murmuring something. Jnapti who had followed Leelaa told her that he was the owner of that particular dome and had been here from the very beginning from when the dome arose. He was uttering the rules to be followed inside the dome which were called by the humans as Vedas; and when he vanished, the dome with all its contents would vanish forever.

Leelaa came out not believing her own eyes. She observed the ground to see what went on there.

The floor was muddy and tiny streams of water were flowing here and there, creating mires all over. Worms were crawling in those mires. Somewhere, all the waters collected at some low lying area and had formed a pool. Leelaa understood that those streams were rivers and the pool was the ocean.

The corners were all covered with variously shaped anthills. Ants crawled all over the place. Jnapti explained saying that the worms were the highly ignorant beings always stuck in the mires of foolishness, and the ants were various Jeevas filling the Creation.

Leelaa hovered around for some time viewing more amazing things in that dome. After she had enough of all, she requested Jnapti to take her back home.

LEELAA'S PAST LIFE

Jnapti took Leelaa's hand and soon they were back in the harem instantly.

Jnapti said:

“What you saw is just one Creation of one Creator. Actually the flicker of light we saw in the beginning is just one slight perturbation in the Supreme State of Reality, which gives rise to infinite number of perturbations called Creations.

The dome you saw was just one tiny Creation.

Countless such domes exist there, and nobody has the capacity to visualize all of them.

All domes are not of the same type. Some are very small like an anthill; some bigger than what you saw; some are gigantic. Some do not have the old Brahmin at all; some do not have those kids playing around. Some are completely empty. Some contain many smaller domes inside them.

Anything that is possible, exists as domes in that one tiny flicker of lustre.”

L: “*What was the dark region we went through?*”

J: “The dark region is the state of ignorance where all possible Creations remain sleeping as it were. When some perturbation arises as it were, all these possibilities become realities.”

L: “*Why you took me there?*”

J: “The dome which we both visited is the dome of your past life.

In one tiny corner of that dome, in a small anthill, in one of its pores, inside a tiny cavity in that hole, there is a range of hills. Many villages are situated at the base of those hills.

One of the villages is named GiriGraama (Hill-Village).

In that village lived a Brahmin named Vasishta. His wife was Arundhati.

They had many milk-yielding cows and lived in a small house surrounded by some trees and plants.

They had a few sons and also a daughter whom the Brahmin loved with utmost affection.

The Brahmin couple was well respected in their own circles.

Once the Brahmin was collecting grass on top of the hill and he happened to see below, the king traveling on the road with his huge retinue towards the hunting grounds at the outskirts of the village.

The sight of the grandeur of the procession and the wealth and luxuries enjoyed by the king somehow had a deep effect on the mind of the Brahmin.

He, from that moment, longed for the life of the king and slowly withered away in depression. He pined away the rest of his life, only with that one thought of desiring royal pleasures, and soon died due to ill health. The wife was a devotee of mine. She had worshipped me and had asked for a boon that her husband's Jeeva should not leave the house-space and should remain there only. I had granted her that boon. The Brahmin's Jeeva remains in that 'house-space' only, in that village, at the base of the hill, in that Creation! It is eight days since that Brahmin died. Arundhati also died the very instant the husband breathed his last. You are that Arundhati and your husband Padma was that Brahmin named Vasishtha."

LEELAA WANTS TO VISIT HER 'PAST-LIFE WORLD'

Leelaa sat up with a jerk. She looked at her friend accusingly and asked,
"Is this a joke you are playing on me?"

Jnapti laughed aloud. She said:

"No, not at all! Why should I entertain myself with such cheap gimmicks?

What I am telling you is the truth.

The Jeeva of Vasishtha is bound in that 'house-space' in that small village.

This 'world of yours' exists in 'his mind' in that very 'house-space' of the Brahmin.

Your husband Padma is dreaming another world similar to this world inside the 'harem space' of your bedroom.

But both these worlds are inside the 'house-space' of that village only."

Leelaa's curiosity was kindled. She requested Jnapti to take her to that village so she could find out for herself the truth of all these events.

J: "But you cannot go with your physical body there.

You have to completely get rid of the identity with your body, your family and yourself too.

You must be ready to act without any form at all when you visit those places. Can you?"

Leelaa was thoughtful.

She asked:

"Suppose I remove my identity with my body and it vanishes off?"

J: "So what? You can recreate it later on if necessary.

After all forms and shapes are creations of the mind. They are not real.

At each and every second, the mind draws pictures in the empty space and believes it to be a solid object.

So, do not bother. Forget the body and come with me."

JNAPTI AND LEELAA TRAVEL IN THE SUBTLE MIND-SPACE

Leelaa again sat off in meditation as instructed by Jnapti. Soon she was in the state of the Self. She discarded the body, like a snake slithering out of its dry skin.

Immediately, without delay, both the maidens ascended higher and higher in the sky as formless entities, holding hands like two friends.

This time, Jnapti and Leelaa entered a space which was highly lustrous.

Unlike the dark region they had encountered last time, this region was dense with lustre.

Jnapti explained to her that the lustrous region was the state of Knowledge.

Again, Leelaa did not feel any movement in space.

Soon, they saw a dark black point in the farthest region. Jnapti held Leelaa's hand tightly and entered that dark point.

They were immediately caught in a giant whirlpool and soon ended at the very bottom of that dark hole.

Leelaa saw many tunnels like apertures there. Jnapti randomly entered one tunnel holding Leelaa's hand tightly.

Instantly the scenario had changed. Soft winds blew from somewhere.

The space itself was soft and tender as they moved.

Now, they were in a huge region of sky from where they could see everything that existed in that space.

Somewhere, Leelaa saw Siddhas hurrying fast.
 At yet another corner, she saw weird creatures with animal-faces dancing in glee.
 Somewhere, she saw divine damsels floating in their air vehicles.
 She saw suddenly Sage Naarada crossing their path and disappearing into the dense wall of the space.
 Somewhere, fragrant winds blew making her extremely joyous.
 Somewhere, she heard screams and yells of pain, sending a shiver through her heart.
 Somewhere else, melodious music lulled her to peace.
 There was no end to the things she saw, the worlds she passed through, the diverse people she met on her journey.

LEELAA SEES HER SON OF THE PAST LIFE

Soon, Jnapti and Leelaa entered a region filled with huge mountains.
 They descended down, till they reached a tiny hillock in some remote corner of that mountain range.
 At the base, many tiny villages surrounded the hill.

Jnapti took her to one village close to the hill, and entered a small house with thatched roof.
 Leelaa saw that the people in the house were very sad and seemed to be mourning for some one's death.
 She was curious to know the facts, and willed that they both should be seen by the people in the house as ordinary maidens.

Suddenly, the people in the house saw in front of them two ladies of lustrous beauty.
 One middle aged Brahmin got up from their midst; offered some flowers at their feet and saluted the ladies.
 Others all stood up with respect.
 Leelaa asked him why were they all in such depressed moods.

The Brahmin explained that about a week back ,both his parents had died at the same time and all of them were mourning their loss.
 Leelaa touched his forehead and uttered words of blessing.
 She said, "*May you all live long and happy.*"

Instantly, all the people in that house felt light hearted and were filled with indescribable joy.
 All of them saluted the ladies with reverence.
 They all believed that the two maidens must be deities of the forests, come around to bless them.

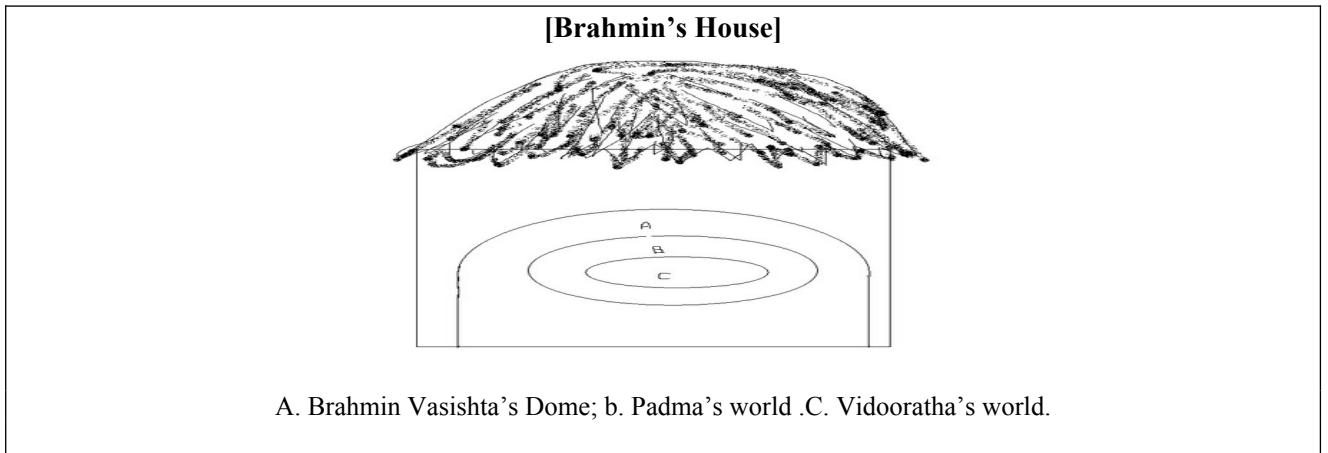
LEELAA HAS MANY QUESTIONS TO ASK

Leelaa and Jnapti vanished from their midst and came out of the house.
 They entered a wild garden that was at the back of the house, and sat under a tree for a rest.

J: "Now are you convinced?
 In that very 'house-space' of this tiny cottage, your husband's Jeeva is contained.
 There alone exists 'your world' which contains 'your harem' and the 'dead body of Padma'.
 There alone exists the 'world of king Vidooratha'.
 Though others who live in that house have no idea of anything that has happened, and see nothing but empty space around them, that 'house-space' alone is the 'dome of your world and Vidooratha's world'."

Leelaa was sitting silently.
 Her head rested on Jnapti's shoulder. Jnapti's arm held her close to her like a mother.
 Jnapti did not say anything. She left her devotee to think it out all by herself.
 A few minutes elapsed.
 Leelaa released herself from Jnapti's arms and sat facing her.
 She said:

"Mother! Let us not waste time. Since all the three worlds connected to me exist in this very house, come on; let us go and see my husband now. It will not take much time to jump into other worlds. It is just inside the house space!"



J: "No! We can't jump like that.

Though it appears that all the worlds are inside that small 'house-space', they all exist unconnected to each other at enormous distances. Each world has its own space-time boundaries. Every atom-point of space contains countless universes inside it. But, this space is not the gross space but the 'space of awareness'.

Though they seem to exist at the same point of Consciousness, they all exist entirely un-connected to each other.

Moreover, you mentioned that you wanted to meet your husband!

Which husband did you mean?

Eight days has passed since one (Brahmin Vasishtha) died; a few hours have elapsed after another (King Padma) died; the other one (King Vidooratha) may be getting ready to die!

All three have different forms; different mentalities; different personalities!

The last one (Vidooratha) is highly ignorant and is immersed in the worldly affairs like the frog in the mire.

There are other life-experiences you had previously where you were yourself a husband to someone, and you also lived as wives to many others in different lives.

Which one do you choose to call as your life partner?"

Jnapti lightly touched the forehead of her devotee.

Immediately the life experiences of all her previous incarnations passed before Leelaa's mental eye.

Leelaa exclaimed:

"So many lives! Some good; some bad; some evil; some noble; sometimes as an animal; sometimes as a plant; sometimes as an insect; sometimes inert like a rock; sometimes as a female; sometimes as a male!

So many painful existences; so many joyous experiences!

Which one is real, which one is false? Who is a relative and who is not?

And, all these worlds where I experienced pain and pleasure, still exist now in different time modes!

Which one shall I call my own?"

ARUNDHATI'S LIFE

Jnapti got up from the garden seat and told Leelaa to discard the form conceived for the sake of Vasishtha's family.

As a couple of misty waves, they both floated through the village grounds.

Leelaa remembered the entire life she had led as Arundhati from birth to death.

She wandered all over the place identifying every object she had touched and every piece of ground she had walked on as Arundhati.

She understood that she was just an ordinary Brahmin woman in her previous life.

She had spent all her lifetime just performing various house chores serving her husband and children.

Except for a few minutes spent in praying to Goddess Sarasvati, she had not much to boast about any spiritual practice. She as Arundhati had requested the Goddess that her husband's Jeeva should not move out of the 'house-space'. As Leelaa also, (in her next birth) she had repeated the same request.

The Jeeva of Vasishtha, after his death, was experiencing the life of Padma as per his cherished desire for royal life, in that very 'house-space'; and there itself dying again as Padma, he was experiencing the life of Vidooratha now. All the worlds existed inside the tiny space of the Brahmin's house.

Leelaa was lost in deep thoughts.

'As Arundhati she had died and followed him to the next world of Padma; but she had not followed him to Vidooratha's world.

Who would be his wife there, she wondered.

And how many lives would he keep on experiencing in that 'house-space' itself?

If everyone who died were experiencing worlds after worlds repeatedly as per the desires of the heart, then where was the end? As a wife of Vasishtha or as the wife of Padma, should she also accompany him as his wife and suffer endlessly? Since she has understood the dream-like nature of lives now, would she be able to again go through the delusory life of a wife and love him as before?'

LEELAA VISITS VIDOORATHA'S WORLD

Leelaa saluted Jnapti and asked her to guide her from now on. Jnapti understood that now Leelaa was full of dispassion and suggested-

"Come on, now we will see what Vidooratha is doing".

Leelaa now felt lighter and like an experienced traveler she flew up as a misty-form away into the sky. After crossing many a wind tunnels, dark holes, universes, Deva-worlds, dark regions, lustrous regions, at last they both descended down into the world where Vidooratha ruled.

Leelaa was surprised to see that the king had now turned almost seventy years, and looked worn out and tired. Jnapti told her that the king was not an efficient ruler but had spent his time mostly with his dear wife; had now become a target for an enemy king who was conquering all the lands that he could lay his hands on; and he was now getting ready to battle Vidooratha. Vidooratha's army was in a bad shape as he was not prepared for this war and he had no hopes of winning.

Jnapti took Leelaa to the place where the battle was getting fought. They both watched the gory battle from above, seated in a beautiful air vehicle conceived by Jnapti.

In the evening, the battle was stopped as per the rules set for the war and Vidooratha returned to his palace. Tired and worn out, he collapsed on his bed and closed his eyes in sheer exhaustion. Soon his eyelids became heavy and he fell asleep forgetting everything.

Jnapti and Leelaa passed through the solid wall of the house easily, and entered the room where the king slept and stood before the sleeping king.

VIDOORATHA IS OLD AND BATTLING AN ENEMY

Leelaa observed the king closely.

She felt slightly odd seeing him. He looked so different; so unlike Padma. He looked more aged than he actually was. He was almost bald and whatever hair was there had completely turned white. His face was creased with anxiety lines. The body was slightly plump and proved the lethargic life he had led as a king. Too much of sexual indulgence had left him a physically unfit man, she understood.

Jnapti woke him up.

Vidooratha got up and was surprised to see two Goddesses in front of him in the middle of the night.

He saluted them with reverence.

Jnapti called out to his minister who was sleeping next to him and asked him about the identity of the king. The minister dutifully reported the ancestry of the king and explained that Vidooratha's father had left the kingdom in Vidooratha's hand when he was just ten years old, and had gone off to perform penance.

Since then, Vidooratha had ruled the kingdom, he informed Jnapti.

Jnapti dismissed the minister and explained to Vidooratha his past life as king Padma. She informed him that he will die in the battle and his Jeeva will re-enter Padma's body after his death in the battle field.

The king was rather happy that his life as a king would continue as Padma.

Even as they were conversing, a soldier rushed inside and informed that the enemies had set fire to the city, and the entire city was burning. They could hear the screams of people getting burnt and the sound of blazing fire swallowing the city fast. The king rose up in anger and got ready to face the enemy in the battle.

As he was leaving, a group of womenfolk belonging to the palace entered there hurriedly. One maid informed the king that the enemy soldiers had entered the palace and were ruthlessly attacking all the ladies. Some trusted soldiers had fought them bravely and rescued the queen and his daughter. A few maids including herself had managed to bring the queen there with utmost difficulty. The king had no time to console them. He saluted Jnapti and requested her to take care of his family and rushed out to face the enemy. A chariot was waiting for him outside. Gathering whatever army was left, he made his way to the battle-ground.

LEELAA SEES ANOTHER LEELAA

Leelaa who was watching everything silently looked at the anxious crowd of women who were huddling in that room. The maids had meanwhile made the queen rest on the bed where the king had been sleeping. Her daughter who was still a child of tender age, clung to the neck of the queen and had fainted in her arms. The child was placed comfortably on the bed. The queen was crying silently. She did not see the divine maidens. But Leelaa saw her and was in for a shock. The queen of Vidooratha was her own image. It was like seeing herself in a mirror. It was as if she was standing herself as a queen there. She turned towards Jnapti for an explanation.

{Vasishta as a Brahmin had a desire to become a king and enjoy royal pleasures. So he lived as king Padma in his next life. But he had developed more desires now. He wanted a passionate wife, a daughter, and more pleasures. So after he died as Padma, he was again a king in his next life. Since he loved the form of his wife Leelaa, but not her character, he got a wife exactly looking like Leelaa but completely different in character.}

LEELAA QUESTIONS JNAPTI

L: *“Mother! What is this? Who is this? Is it me standing there? Have I split into two?”*

Jnapti smiled and answered.

J: *“That is not you my child. It is a different person looking exactly like you. When your husband Padma died, he was thinking of you so much that the very next instant after death, he was standing next to an image of you created by his mind as per his conception.*

This Leelaa is more passionate and not spiritually inclined. She is not very keen on any learning, and is only interested in serving her husband and child.

Infatuation for her beauty alone has landed the king now in such a sad state.

Whereas in Padma’s world, you took care of the kingdom wisely and kept it safe from enemies, here in Vidooratha’s world, his wife has kept him bound by passion and has led to his downfall.

The desires which arose in Vasishta’s mind are only fructifying still. The king still has not fully satisfied his desires. But for your boon, he would still be experiencing many more worlds seeking sense pleasures and will be forever caught in the wheel of births and deaths.

His present wife also being an ignorant woman will have to go through many lives with him or without him, till her ignorance gets destroyed which may not be very soon.”

L: *“You told me that the very next instant of death as Padma, king Vidooratha in his new incarnation, stood as a young man next to a recreated image of mine as another Leelaa. How is it possible?*

Did he not get born, grow in his other life? You yourself heard the minister saying that the king had an ancestry line, was born, grew up, and from the tenth year itself he is ruling the kingdom.”

J: *“My dear daughter, understand that time is an illusion.*

What you think as past is just a collection of few ideas arising in the mind.

Whichever dominant Vaasanaa (latent tendency) is manifesting through the Jeeva; it instantly creates a field of experience (Kshetra) with a suitable past at that very instant.

At the time of death, king Padma’s dominant Vaasanaa was for a life with you who was not spiritually inclined but who would be a suitable partner in sense pleasures.

Accordingly he woke up after the death-swoon as a young man with an image of you as his wife. She was a newly arisen Jeeva whose only thought was to make her husband happy. As a Jeeva conceived for that purpose she exactly acted as he wished for. She also instantly had the idea of her past with her birth, growth, marriage etc.

The whole life of any Jeeva takes only an instant; but always it is deluded by the idea of the passage of time, and it imagines its life as long and eventful.

At each and every moment, a Vaasanaa-manifestation occurs with its own space-time boundaries with a past as already happened and with a future to be unfolded.

Every Jeeva is a 'conception-point' in the Supreme state with all the past, present and future fused as one experience of a lifetime.

Just like you can see the whole river from its place of origin to its joining the ocean as one whole, yet visit different points of the same river and say that here it originates; here it runs; here it joins the ocean and so on; similarly you visited different points of Vidooratha's life experience at different points; one at his sixteenth year and one at his seventieth year; whereas for him, his mind alone experiences the company of his wife always, from the moment he died as Padma till now. The rest of the narratives are just conceived ideas of his mind.

As Arundhati, your Vaasanaa at death-time was to accompany your husband and you instantly were with him as a queen with your own past as if already occurred. But when king Padma died, your Vaasanaa for unraveling the mysteries of the universe was more dominant and you did not accompany him to his next life by dying as Leelaa. Instead you were seeking my company always, so as to have your doubts cleared.

That is why King Padma in his next life had a wife who looked exactly like you, but who is in no way comparable to you in wisdom!"

L: *"Even all the events where I spent my time with you are illusions of the mind?"*

J: "Yes! I am just the wish fulfilling power of a Jeeva. What the Jeeva desires, I see to it that it gets fructified at a suitable time. I am the Jeeva-Shakti, the power of Brahman, concealed within each Jeeva as his own essence.

The events you spent with me are also just ideas of your mind.

The knowledge alone which you craved for and have attained is the truth.

For the attainment of knowledge, the narratives are coined by your mind to make it appear as if it occurred over a long span of time." Leelaa remained thoughtful and silent.

JNAPTI AND ENLIGHTENED LEELAA APPEAR BEFORE VIDOORATHA'S LEELAA

Jnapti willed that the new Leelaa should see them both.

The new Leelaa was surprised to see two divine damsels in front of her and she saluted them with reverence.

The enlightened Leelaa now had a different form and was shining lustrous like a Goddess.

Jnapti briefly explained to the new Leelaa that her husband was going to die in the battle-field and his Jeeva will enter Padma's body of the previous life.

The new Leelaa was shocked. She was also a devotee of Sarasvati and had prayed that she should never become a widow. Now she fell at the feet of Sarasvati and begged that she should accompany her husband in his next life and the daughter also should be taken there as her father could not live even a moment without her. Leelaa also begged that she should go there with the same physical body. Jnapti agreed.

The enlightened Leelaa was silent. She had no likes or dislikes now. She just let the life take its own course.

Her friend Jnapti knows best. She watched everything as if she was witnessing a drama on stage.

She was just curious about everything that happened and got her doubts cleared from Jnapti again and again.

THE BATTLE

All the three now saw what was happening in the battlefield from there itself by the power of Jnapti.

Vidooratha and his enemy king named Sindhu were fighting a fierce battle.

The enlightened Leelaa asked,

"Mother! Vidooratha is also your devotee; but why would he lose the battle and die?"

Jnapti laughed. Jasmine bloomed all over the earth.

She said,

"Because the enemy king Sindhu prayed that he should win; but Vidooratha wanted to somehow raise above all the worldly passions and get liberated (as a lingering Vaasanaa of the past life) and did not pray for victory in the battle."

Leelaa again became silent and thoughtful. She watched the proceedings of the battle with amusement.

Sindhu was a ruthless killer. His hatred for Vidooratha was burning like a fire in his heart. Many a times he had attacked the city and had returned home a loser; but this time Sindhu had decided to make a surprise attack on Vidooratha's country.

Vidooratha was not at all prepared for the enemy, and now the battle was on the losing side for his army. Sindhu meanwhile, had entered the city at night with his trusted followers and had set fire to the buildings and houses. He had watched the people burning like a drama getting played for his entertainment. He was disappointed that the queen had escaped with her daughter. He would find them somehow and chop them to pieces he had vowed; but now he had to first kill this foolish king who had always managed to safeguard his city against his attacks. He wanted to cut the king into pieces and smear his blood all over himself. He was fuming with rage.

Vidooratha was fighting desperately. His chariot, horses, driver were all in pieces. A new chariot arrived to help him. As he climbed it, Sindhu stuck at his knees violently. Vidooratha's legs were broken and he started to fall out of the chariot, like a tree felled by an axe. The charioteer quickly held him back from falling and tried to take the king away from the battlefield. Sindhu ran madly behind the chariot and hit at Vidooratha's neck; but the sword missed and could only slice half of Vidooratha's neck. Vidooratha's head hung from the body like a fruit ready to fall; blood flowed profusely.

The charioteer made high speed and quickly entered the palace grounds. Sindhu chased him in another chariot; but he was blocked at the entrance by the divine-shield provided by the Goddess all around the palace.

The charioteer carried the body to the presence of the queen, and left immediately.

The new Leelaa, seeing the horrible condition of the king, let-out a piercing scream; and fell lifeless next to her husband's body. The daughter who was lying unconscious on the bed also breathed her last at the same instant her mother died. Vidooratha was suffering immense pain but had not died yet. He was in a painful swoon.

LEELAA AGAIN QUESTIONS JNAPTI

The enlightened Leelaa watched all this.

She felt pity for the king and asked the Goddess was there anyway to reduce his pains.

Jnapti explained to her,

J: "My dear daughter, I fully understand what you are feeling; but who can do what!

This is a dream of king Padma who is in the dream of Vasishta.

You are also a dream-character. Even I am a dream-character.

The war is an illusion. This city is an illusion. This Leelaa is also an illusion.

What exists is only the state of unperturbed Reality-state which is covered by the illusory scenes of the world. It is the sum total of knowledge, bliss and existence.

All that we see here are, just conceptions of our minds only."

L: "*Is there not a God or divinity that controls all our lives?*"

J: "My dear daughter!

Nothing exists but the state of Supreme Reality, in which all these delusions occur as it were.

Even if you believe that these narratives are real and one should strive for liberation, then sincere efforts alone can lead one towards the goal; not any unseen fate or divinity.

Jeeva projects his own mind to create a divinity to take care of him or performs penance or austerities and terms the results as the power of those rituals.

Nothing gives results except one's own effort.

There is no second person as a divinity or unseen fate which controls the lives of beings. When nothing but the Supreme-state exists undifferentiated, how can a second person arise as a god or fate?"

L: "*If everything is a conception of the mind, then what caused these restrictions that humans or animals should be of such and such height; one should grow and become old; one should get born, die etc.?*"

J: "At the beginning of each Creation of any particular Creator or Brahmaa, that Creator himself sets the rules for his Creation and till the dissolution-time these rules control the system. These rules cannot be transgressed by anyone; not even Devas can disobey these rules. Even if one believes in death or god or fate, even those belief-systems are there because of the rules set at the beginning of Creation.

Fire should burn, water should flow etc. are all there because of the rules ordained by the Creator of that particular Creation. In different Creations rules may differ.

But these Creations do not ever affect the state of the Supreme Brahman. It remains the same whether Creations occur or not. Each Jeeva conceives and projects its own world like a dream."

L: *“You are saying that this world of Vidooratha is a dream of Padma.*

If, as you suggest everything is dream-like in nature, then are all these people here in this city ruled by Vidooratha unreal?”

J: “What is real, what is not real?”

When you dream, this waking state is unreal for you; when you are awake, dream is unreal for you.

Everyone dreams of the other, and a network of dream characters arise confirming the reality of each other.

They all believe that they are living in a solid world hard as diamond; but the elements, hardness, forms, names are all conceptions of the mind and are not real.

I am in your dream as the Goddess guiding you; you are in my dream as a student learning from me.

We are both real for each other; but in truth we both are delusory appearances only.”

Leelaa remained silent for some time.

Then she asked what happened to the other Leelaa.

Jnapti explained to her that the other Leelaa had imagined that a daughter of Jnapti will guide her and so she had the vision of a young divine maiden who guided her towards the mind-world of Padma.

L: *“She had prayed that she must go to Padma’s world with her physical body of this world in tact; did she really go with her physical body through all these strange paths?”*

J: “How can she?”

Physical body is a picture drawn by the mind. As per the rules ordained at the beginning of the Creation by Brahmaa, the bodies of one dream-world cannot enter another person’s dream-world. They vanish by the logical process of death as it were.

See her body lying here lifeless next to her husband’s body. But after the swoon of death, she woke up outside of it, and instantly was endowed with a beautiful body as pictured by her mind.

She believes that it is the same body of hers as before, and is happily waiting there in your world for her husband to become alive in Padma’s body.”

L: *“What happened to her daughter?”*

J: “The daughter’s Jeeva is now in a suspended state. She will join her parents after Vidooratha wakes up in Padma’s body.”

As they were conversing like this, the king groaned slightly. He breathed very hard once and immediately became lifeless.

Leelaa wanted to know what his Jeeva would do. They both followed that Jeeva without his knowledge.

(A Jeeva is not a streak of light or a ghostly form, it is just some nothingness with some data stored by the mind, the processor of information. It is like a point drawn on emptiness, imagined but not really real.

Jnapti just creates the illusion of a Jeeva and its journey, just to satisfy Leelaa’s curiosity.)

ENLIGHTENED LEELAA’S BODY GETS CREMATED AWAY IN HER ABSENCE

King Vidooratha had his own after-death experiences according to the belief systems he had cultivated in his mind.

{Belief systems are not truths. Truth is something which does not disappear when you stop believing in it.

Everyone experiences what they believe. Ghosts are real for a person who believes in them; but they are not absolute things existing outside of one’s mind.

Vidooratha believed in Yama and his world. So he experiences Yama’s world as an after-death experience.

Ignorant Leelaa believed that a daughter of Jnapti will appear and guide her in after-death experience.

The daughter experienced the same as her reality. (Jnapti had no daughter!)

Enlightened Leelaa wanted only knowledge and she got it from the ‘Goddess of Knowledge’ herself. }

Vidooratha had the vision of his body getting cremated; the funeral rites getting performed; he getting a form because of all these religious rites; Lord Yama’s men carrying him off to Yama’s presence; Yama checking his merits and demerits and letting him go as he was blessed by Jnapti.

Immediately he left Yama’s world and entered his previous world of Padma; but before he could enter the body, Jnapti held his Jeeva back by her power.

She descended down to the harem of Leelaa’s palace with her dear devotee Leelaa. They both entered the room where Padma’s body was kept covered in flowers.

The other Leelaa was sitting there next to the body and fanning it affectionately. She decided that the sleeping one was her husband Vidooratha’s next incarnation and waited patiently for him to wake up.

Enlightened Leelaa asked Jnapti where her own physical body which was left contemplating in the room.

Jnapti flashed a smile.

J: “Oh that? When you left the body you forgot its existence completely. After fifteen days, the body just rotted and fell dead. So everyone cried for you and burnt the body with ghee and sandalwood.”

Leelaa remained silent! Should she feel happy or sad; she did not know!

Leelaa did not mind the death of her physical body. Actually she felt relieved.

A life on earth with another husband-like character was unthinkable now.

She smiled back at Jnapti, and asked how would the people around react to all this?

J: “People? Mostly all are ignorant including the ministers. They will just think that you have come back from the world of dead, and worship this Leelaa as their Goddess. The story of this miracle will spread all over the country and this Leelaa is going to be famous. She would not mind it though!”

DEAD PADMA BECOMES ALIVE

Now Jnapti released the Jeeva of the king. The streak of vibration named Vidooratha, who was just a collection of ideas, thoughts and beliefs, entered the body of Padma. Immediately the body of Padma became filled with rushing blood and he started breathing normally. He got up as if from sleep, pushing away all the flowers.

He did not remember anything, neither Padma’s life or Vidooratha’s life.

The enlightened Leelaa wished herself to be seen as the previous Leelaa and stood next to the ignorant Leelaa.

The king was puzzled by two identical images standing in front of him. He asked them who they were.

Enlightened Leelaa briefly explained to him her own identity and new Leelaa’s identity as much as he could grasp.

She said that as she was now a personal maid of Jnapti, the king now can live happily in the company of the other Leelaa and rule the kingdom with her as the queen.

She requested Jnapti also to appear before the king. The king and his new queen saluted the Goddess humbly.

Jnapti blessed them both and vanished from sight.

Enlightened Leelaa took leave of the new king and queen. She said that she would be available any time they wished for her guidance and floated up.

A VAASANAA FOR KNOWLEDGE NEVER CAN GET FULFILLED

The new Leelaa looked at the vanishing Leelaa.

Why was she not like her, she wondered.

Can I also aspire for a state like hers; she thought ruefully; but she could not think for long.

Two strong arms were tightening their grip around her shapely body. She closed her eyes enjoying the warmth of the closeness of her husband.

It will be many births before they both could even remember a word like liberation; but one day, they will surely develop dispassion and get liberated. The other Leelaa will see to it. In every one of their dream-life she will be there trying her best to teach them knowledge. She was not a person who will ever accept defeat.

She looked down at the two passionate figures seated under the bed-room dome of her harem.

What all had happened within a night!

Almost a month had elapsed in this world since the king had died here. So Jnapti had informed.

There, Vidooratha had died just now. In another world, BrahminVasishta had died eight days back.

She laughed.

What time, what space? Everything was just a dream of a mind.

What was mind? It was just a vibration in the Supreme state.

Who was real? Who was not real? There was nobody actually.

From a worm to a god all were just appearances only.

Everything was just a wave in the Chit, the Supreme state of pure awareness.

Death was a myth; birth was a myth. Form and name were myths.

What was she? She was just a vibration; a Vaasanaa for knowledge.

And as long as she wanted to learn, Jnapti would be always there teaching her.

Knowledge had no end. She was eternal in some way. Her Jnapti was also eternal.

She will be always asking questions. Jnapti will always be answering her.

What more joy can be there other than learning?

She smiled.

JNAPTI AND LEELAA BECOME CLOSE FRIENDS

As she floated up Leelaa saw a lustrous air-chariot waiting for her at the outskirts of the sky.
Jnapti was humming some melody happily.
Leelaa climbed aboard the chariot and sat next to Jnapti. Jnapti embraced her affectionately.
The chariot flew away into empty space.
People in Padma's city saw a streak of light flashing across the sky.
They said some noble soul has left this world and saluted the sky.
Jnapti smiled.
Jasmines bloomed all over the earth suddenly.

END?

THE STORY OF KARKATEE THE GIANT RAAKSHASI

INTRODUCTION

This is the story of a demoness who was mindless, animal-like and cruel. When performing penance to satiate her basic needs, she realizes the Self as a natural process. She becomes so good that she is revered by all as an auspicious Goddess. Self-realization is not the sole property of Sages and well-versed Yogis. Even the worst category of people can attain the Supreme State of the Self, through sincere effort.

CRAB-LIKE DEMONESS

Long long ago, upon the Himalayan Mountains covered with dense forests, various kinds of creatures and Daityas had made their home. These Daityas always kept watch for unwary humans to cross the jungles and fed on them ruthlessly. This meat-eating clan came in various colours and shapes. One of them, shaped like a giant crab was known as Karkata (crab). He had a daughter who exactly looked like him, (crablike) and she was known as Karkatee. Karkatee was extremely black in color, so black that she looked like a huge statue carved out of a mountain of collirium. She wandered like a black mountain come alive. Her eyes were red and glaring like lightning. When she stood up, clouds got entangled in her matted black hair. Her legs were like palm trees. Her body was hard like a rocky mountain. Her nails were huge like winnowing baskets, and sharp like diamonds. When hungry, she walked through any region inhabited by humans and made a hearty meal of them. She strung their skeletons and wore them like a garland. She decorated her body with the limbs and parts of the corpses. She chilled the hearts of people like a vampire. Terrified of her, people residing in those mountain regions fled to the plains. The mountain-region had become empty and deserted.

KARKATEE IS HUNGRY

Poor Karkatee had to go food-less for many days. She was forced to hunt for rabbits and lions now. Soon, the mountain-forests were empty of animals too. The mountains were silent like the dead. No living being moved there except Karkatee. Hunger gnawed the demoness like a rat. Her belly was burning fiercely for want of food. She could not bear the pain any more. She decided to invade the cities in the plains and eat off the entire human-clan and satiate her hunger; but she knew it was impossible. People had their own way of warding her off. They propitiated Devas, performed penance, recited sacred chants and kept her away. Her huge body was a hindrance in achieving her goal, she thought in despondence. Even when she was miles away, people saw her and hid themselves in caves and underground tunnels, away from her reach. She wished she was small, so small that she should be invisible to one and all; so small that people would never even know if she ate their flesh and sucked their blood; so small like a needle; a living needle; but not a metallic needle; she should be non-metallic yet be sturdy like a metal.

KARKATEE MEETS A YOGI

She nodded her head in appreciation of her own intelligence.
'If she was like a living needle, then she would make a meal out of all the bodies that exist on the earth and be happy forever. Nobody would escape her deadly presence. In this manner, she could always keep her belly filled up. She will never go hungry again. People will never know of her existence.'
She chuckled within herself; but the problem was in getting such a body.

She, who had never thought so much in her life felt her head reeling. She would have almost fallen out of the mountain, drilling a hole through the entire earth and got up on the other side, but for the pleasant smell of some food moving in that mountain. Her heart beat in excitement. She peered across the trees and rocks, to observe her delicacy properly. She could not believe herself. Her food was walking towards her. She waited patiently. Her body became motionless like a rock. She even stopped breathing, lest the stormy winds coming out of her nose cast the food afar. The food walking towards the demoness was a handsome young recluse. He was attired in just an animal skin. His whole body was covered with ashes. He looked like a young Shiva descended from the Kailaasa Mountain. He saw a huge black rock blocking his path suddenly. He just let out a scornful laugh and started walking around the rock to climb the mountain. The rock moved. A huge hand descended down like a serpent trying to grasp the Yogi (adept in ascetic practices); but it was hit by an invisible wall as it were, which shielded the Yogi from all the sides. After failing in repeated attempts to grab him, the demoness felt defeated. She assumed a normal female form and blocked the path of the Yogi. The Yogi stood there watching her silently. Mischief gleamed in his eyes. Karkatee observed his calm disposition and somehow felt that the solution to her problem would be found in him. She saluted him and cried out her troubles to him. She told him about her hunger; lack of food; and her desire to assume a needle-form. The Yogi listened patiently to all that she said. He just asked her whether she would be happy being a needle. She nodded her head in the affirmative. The Yogi looked at her pityingly. However he explained to her that she should perform penance to achieve such a goal. Only the Creator was capable of granting her wish. He told her not to break her penance whatever happens, and instructed her, the Sacred Chant which she should repeat till the Creator appeared before her. Karkatee could not believe her good fortune. She fell at his feet in gratitude. The next instant the Yogi was gone.

KARKATEE PERFORMS PENANCE

Karkatee became her original self. She could only appear like a human for a few minutes on rare occasions; but she could not retain such forms for long. She cursed her huge form and wondered what to do next. She had to find a place for penance now. It had to be unapproachable to any humans or animals. No one should harm her body in any way when she was absorbed in penance she thought. She decided to climb the highest mountain there and do penance on its peak. Like a black mountain climbing a white mountain, she slowly dragged her gigantic form up the icy paths. At last, she found a rocky ground on the peak. The place was too dangerous for any human or animal to wander about. She somehow managed to bathe her gigantic form in some huge waterfall there. Then she climbed a rock in the middle of the mountain-river. She stood on a single foot; lifted her two serpent-like arms in salutation and started repeating the 'Mantra' (Magical chant) taught by the Yogi. She had not much trouble in controlling her thoughts. After all there was only one thought in her mind i.e., food. She suppressed it and concentrated on the Mantra. Days, weeks, months, years passed. From far away, people heard the humming sound from the mountain. The whole mountain trembled as it were, with the continuous sound rising from its top. Everyone kept away from it thinking that the mountain itself had become an evil ghost. Karkatee never moved even a little. Her mouth continuously chanted the Mantra. Her hair spread all over the sky keeping the Sun hidden. Clouds rested on her head as if on the top of a dark mountain. But this dark mountain slowly became thinner and thinner for lack of food. The skin covering the body became loose and hung like a cloth with many folds, and fluttered in the stormy winds blowing across her. Thousands of years passed.

LORD BRAHMAAA GIVES THE BOON

Eight Thousand years had passed. Lord Brahmaa appeared in front of her. He addressed her in a thunder-like voice louder than hers so that she could hear his words. He asked her compassionately what boon she desired for. The demoness without opening her eyes calculated in her mind as to what sort of boon she should ask for. She worded her request carefully.

She said, *“O Lord! Make me a living needle, a SOOCHEE; but I should not be metallic like an iron needle. I should at the same time be hard like a metal so I don’t get crushed by anything. I should have two types of needles as my body. I should be a living needle and enter all the people’s hearts through the medium of winds; should be able to suck their blood and flesh; and satiate my hunger. I should also be able to pierce through every body as a non-metallic, yet metallic needle and enter their insides; then I would be able to eat off their flesh continuously without a break and fill my stomach.”*

Brahmaa granted her the boon she requested for; but he put forth a condition that she should attack only wicked people, people living in unhygienic conditions, people who always took to sinful paths, people who ate improper food, people who were foolish etc. He told her that she will become a needle spreading deadly diseases and will be known as cholera, the VISHOOCHIKAA. He also created a magical hymn for the sake of the good people to ward off her attack. He gave that Mantra to the Siddhas who wandered all over the earth and ordered them to protect the good people from the disease brought about by the ‘living needle’ namely Karkatee. Lord Brahmaa vanished from sight.

KARKATEE BECOMES A ‘LIVE-NEEDLE’

Karkatee instantly reduced from her mountain sized body to a needle of an atomic size. She was completely invisible; but she did not lose her own thoughts about her identity. She, though miniature in size, had all the body parts as before, but was shaped like a needle. *Among so many conceptions, she was just another shape newly conceived in the state of Brahman.* Karkatee was the same demoness (in her mind) appearing in the form of a needle. She joyously floated through the sky and entered the well populated areas. She mixed with the wind; entered the bodies of all the people; became a disease virus sucking their blood and flesh. As a needle, she pierced people walking on unclean grounds and afflicted them with cholera. When thinking, she glistened like a needle of gem. When in sunlight, she shone like a diamond. When carried by the wind, she was like a creeper of a cloud dense with blackness. Subtle holes acted as her eyes. She had a subtle soft tail at the end. She had obtained the needle-shaped body through penance, and was satisfied fully. Yet again, it was as if she took the vow of silence now to fulfill the one and only mission of her life - that of satiating her enormous hunger; for, she had no ability to produce sounds in her new form. How can a needle have a throat? Anyhow she was invisible to the naked eye of others, as she had wished for. She happily took to enjoying her new life. She hunted men and women everywhere; she spared no one if they were negligent in hygiene. Piercing the humans as a sharp needle on the one hand and afflicting them as a cholera virus on the other hand, she passed many years trying to satiate her hunger.

KARKATEE SUFFERS AS A NEEDLE

But the foolish demoness soon found out the futility of her boon. She was the same demoness with the same enormous hunger pangs but with the shape of the needle. She had actually reduced her consumption-rate to a minimum, and what she sucked out of humans was negligent compared to her hunger rate. She would have met a better fate as dead, than trying to fill her demonic belly with the subtle hole of the mouth of the needle; there was no belly at all in the needle form. Whatever she sucked seemed to vanish into nothing. There was no satisfaction at all after years of her life as a ‘living needle’! She missed her old form. She remembered every part of her old body and cried out for the lost limbs. She compared the enormous amount of flesh she ate as a demoness and the micro-drops of liquid she sucked now, as a needle. She cursed herself for being so foolish. She felt that it was better to die than live such a horrid life. Instead of wandering in the great mountains she was now wandering in stinking places, dirty mires, and diseased crowds. She felt disgusted with herself. She stopped herself forcefully from eating anymore. Karkatee decided to go back to the Himalayan Mountain peak to perform penance again; but lo!

She had no date-tree-like legs now which could transport her body within a few steps to the mountain region. She had no way of seeing her own needle form. She was now only the 'form of wind and life'. She entered the body of a young vulture through the air it inhaled. Affected by her presence and diseased as a result, the vulture helplessly did what her mind commanded. That vulture brought her to the mountain-peak as she desired, and fell on the ground. Soochee, the needle came out of its body. The vulture was suddenly freed of the disease and flew away.

KARKATEE PERFORMS PENANCE AGAIN

Karkatee had high hopes of getting back her original form of the demoness through penance. She chose an area burnt by a heavy forest fire. No insect or animal moved there. The ground was very hard. The place was covered with dust. Not even a blade of grass grew there. She floated down and tried to stand on the ground. Stand on what? How? She somehow managed to fix the edge of her body on the ground disturbing just a single dust-particle there. She looked like a dried-up grass edge suddenly sprouting on the desert lands. She stood there on the edge of her body. As she could not stand on one leg for lack of two legs, she imagined herself as standing on one leg and performed penance. She removed her glance from all the sides and kept staring upward. She avoided even taking in any dust-particle or pollen dust that chanced to float near her. She was not to be moved by the pouring rains or the stormy winds or the blazing fires or the sinking mires or the hail stone-showers or the lightning strikes or the thundering clouds. Even after thousands of years she stood just like that, un-moving in her body or mind. As she had destroyed all the thoughts about the outside world, 'Knowledge of the Supreme' dawned on her naturally. She became taintless and supremely sacred in her mind. When all the results of her sinful actions vanished by the severe penance, she knew what was to be known through her own intellect. She now had realized her own Self and was in the Nirvikalpa Samaadhi. She performed penance like this for another thousand years. The fourteen worlds trembled by the severity of her penance. The whole mountain was set on fire as it were by the heat of her penance. The entire world was affected by the terrible heat rising out of her penance. The snakes struggled to breathe; the mountains melted; the airborne creatures fell to the ground; the clouds became dry; all the space was filled with smoke which covered even the sun.

INDRA IS WORRIED

God Indra became anxious about the fate of the three worlds and asked Sage Naarada about the cause for such a heat. Naarada explained to him that Soochee has been doing the penance for the past seven thousand years; but now she had the essence of the Supreme as her nature, and that fact only caused the heat in all the three worlds. He advised Indra that he should somehow get her desire fulfilled or the three worlds were sure to burn away, by the heat of her penance. Indra was curious about all this, and sent for his trusted friend Vaayu, the Lord of the Winds. He requested him to visit the place where the penance was going on, and asked him to find out the true facts. Vaayu immediately left on his errand. He reached the snow peak where Soochee was performing penance. He was amazed by what he saw. No animal or insect moved there. The place was as empty as the void sky. Nothing grew there because of the burning heat pervading the area. It was as if the sun had left the sky and was residing there on that peak. The whole area was covered with hot dust. Vaayu took the form of a bee and after searching for a long time reached the exact point where Soochee was contemplating. Exhausted, he sat down and saw her, the invisible needle point, absorbed in contemplation and shaking the entire creation! He was awe-stuck! He observed Soochee's needle-form like another sharp tiny peak poking out of the centre of the Mountain peak. He saw her as some tiny thing standing on one leg; her entire face dried up by the heat rising from her head portion; the skin on her stomach dried up because of her not eating anything; her body dried up by the sun and shattered by the winds; her not moving even a little from her place. The Wind-god was highly surprised and saluted her from far. Though he was curious about why she was performing the penance, he was afraid of disturbing her. He just kept wondering about her and returned to Indra's palace. Indra embraced him with affection and questioned him about what he had seen.

The wind god said,

“In the Jamboo Dveepa, there’s the Himalayan Mountain.

On the northern side on the highest peak, Soochee, with a needle-like form performs very severe penance.

She has stopped even the cool air from entering inside her by blocking her mouth with a dust atom; by her penance, the snow mountain no more is covered with snow but is like a blazing fire.

Therefore, let us all join together and go to Lord Brahmaa and request him to fulfill her wishes.

Or, her penance will destroy all the worlds.”

All the Devas then went to the Lotus-born and prayed; Brahmaa promised all of them that he will immediately attend to their request. They all returned to their own worlds.

BRAHMAA APPEARS

Lord Brahmaa descended down to the earth. He saw there on that peak, three needles - the needle of heat, needle of her shadow and the needle of her ‘Self’.

The very dust particles in that place were sanctified by her presence.

Lord Brahmaa asked her- *“My daughter, what boon do you want?”*

Soochee did not reply.

She thought within herself-

‘I am complete now. I have no doubts now.

What will I do with the boon? I feel peaceful. I am unattached to everything around me.

I am in a blissful state. Whatever is to be known has been known.

All doubts have been completely cleared up. My understanding is in full blossom.

What use do I have for anything else? I will remain as I am.

I have known the Supreme state of reality. What do I need anything else for? All these days I was foolish.’

Deciding thus, she remained silent.

Brahmaa himself spoke:

“Dear daughter. Accept this boon. Enjoy the world for some more time and later on, after the death of the body, you will reach the ‘Body-less Supreme state’.

You have to live out the life ordained for you. This is the restriction imposed in this Creation.

Your wish will be fulfilled. You will get back your original gigantic form. Wander in the forests as a demoness.

Eat to satiate your hunger. Live the rest of your life as a liberated person.”

So saying, he vanished from sight.

KARKATEE HAS NO DESIRES ANYMORE

Soochee immediately became demoness Karkatee.

Remaining in the state of the bliss of her own Self, she had lost all the characteristics of a demoness.

She sat there itself in the lotus-posture, for some more time. After six months, she woke up from her trance.

Immediately she felt the pangs of hunger. Observing that the body never loses its own nature, she wondered what to do about her food.

She thought,

‘How can I eat other beings? How can it be justified!

If I do not consume these beings and death results, what does it matter? What does death or life mean to me? I am now in the state of the mind only. The physical body is an illusion.

Even changing from the needle body to the giant form is an illusion.’

She remained silent and was getting ready to again enter the trance state.

Then a voice spoke from the sky. It was the Wind-God!

He said-

“Karkatee, go from here and enlighten the fools of this world. The great ones should help the ignorant to evolve.

He, who does not get enlightened by you, deserves to be destroyed; so it is fully justified that he becomes your food.”

Hearing this, Karkatee said- *“I am blessed indeed”.*

She got up from her seat and climbed down the mountain. She reached the base of the mountain where the hunter- clan lived. She decided to live there, and eat any idiot who passed her way. and settled down there itself, making it her permanent home.

KARKATEE SEES TWO MEN IN THE FOREST

The night was completely black with densely packed darkness. At that time, the king of the hunter clan began his night-patrol accompanied by his trusted minister. It was his duty as a king to take a walk now and then, to hunt for any vicious creature or demon hiding in the forest to ensure the safety of his people.

Karkatee, who was waiting for some food to walk towards her, saw those two men wandering in the forest. She was happy and thought-

'Two fools are coming my way only to satiate my hunger.

Body is a burden for the ignorant. The fool lives always suffering, with destruction awaiting him here and hereafter.

So, it is better that he perishes for his own good.

One who does not realize his own self is dead though alive. If he dies at least, he will not commit more sins.

The Lotus-born has made the rule at the beginning of the Creation that a non realized fool should become the food for people like us.

These two are to be indeed eaten by me now.

I will be an idiot if I forego an object easily fallen on my lap.

I do not trust these two to be of noble characters; but if they are really endowed with noble qualities, then it is not right for me to eat them.

I rather will test them and find out the level of their wisdom. I will never hurt good men.

The noble ones should always be served with all humility and respect.

Even if I die of hunger, I do not care; I will not kill anyone with good character.

The noble ones who have realized the Self are a boon to the world. They spread happiness to one and all.

I would rather give up my life, if I have to save their lives. I do not have any botheration about death.

I would be happy if I can converse with the noble souls for a few minutes.

Let me test them with some questions and see what they are like.

If they are foolish and ignorant I will punish them by death; but if they are good, they should not be hurt in any manner.'

KARKATEE TRIES TO FRIGHTEN THE TWO MEN

Karkatee first just made a thundering noise, echoing all over the forest.

The king and his minister stopped midway in their journey.

Their wooden torches did not reveal much of anything.

The night was too dark and the black-form of the demoness was not seen by them.

They just looked upwards surprised at that noise.

Immediately they heard the sounds of a harsh voice hitting them like rocks falling from the sky.

The voice said-

"HOHOHOHO! Who are you both? Are you both Sun and moon visiting the Earth, or some worms crawling on the ground? Good or bad? Whoever you both are, you are fated to be my food; get ready to die, you fools".

The king and the minister did not waver.

The king shouted with his full voice,

"HOHOHOHO Ghost! What are you? Where are you standing? Show yourself.

Are you frightened of us? You cannot fool us with your humming noise.

Do not make a big show of threatening us.

If you want anything, tell us, we will fulfill it. Instead do not try in vain to frighten us.

Or I think you are afraid of meeting us. Quickly make us see your form. Delay never does good to anyone."

The demoness was pleased by their reaction; but still she made frightening noises and laughed aloud.

Her sound echoed all over the mountains.

They saw her teeth glittering bright, lighting up the whole region; her eyes shining like stabilized lightning streaks; the black neck shivering as the thunderous noise came out of it; her teeth making a weird unearthly noise; her legs filling up the entire sky; the hair on the head scattered all over; the breath from her nostrils creating stormy winds; on the whole, she was like the dark night appearing with a body filled with flesh.

But the king and the minister were not in the least affected by her sight.

The minister spoke this time.

"O great demoness! Stop this comical show. You are either making an exaggeration of your own might or just hiding your worthlessness behind this great show. It does not suit you. The wise do not waste their time in advertising their actions. If you are intent on frightening us only, then do not bother, we have crushed mosquitoes like you in countless numbers. Stop all these weird noises and tell us what your intention is. We have never sent a beggar empty-handed any time in our lives, not even in our dreams."

KARKATEE TESTS THE TWO MEN

The demoness started thinking,

'These two men do not appear to be ordinary. Their faces and speech show their inner determination. May be they already have an idea about my true nature, like I have understood their character. These two might be realized souls. They are imperishable as the Self. I will not kill them. I will anyhow ask them a few questions and get them to answer me.'

She stopped all her demonic actions and asked-

"Who are you both? You both are very brave. I am of the opinion that you will act friendly and talk to me properly."

The minister replied,

"This one is the king of the hunter-clan. I am his minister. We both are patrolling the forest at night to destroy creatures like you who harass our people."

The demoness first chided the minister for his arrogant answer and said-

"You both seem made for each other. A good minister only can make a good king. A good king and a good minister make the citizens also good.

But, of all the qualities a king should cultivate, the Knowledge of Brahman is the best.

A Knower of Brahman alone can perform his duties well, be it a minister or a king.

Only who is adept in this royal learning (Self-realization) can have good administrating power and have equal concern for all. If you both are like that, then it is good for you. Otherwise you will have to meet dire consequences.

As my nature impels, I will have to eat you both. Stand on one side of me and answer my questions.

I hope you kids can at least have the ability to understand my questions.

There is no other way to escape the fate of being my food.

This is what I want from you O king! O minister! Answer my questions.

I hope you will not break your promise and refrain from answering them.

A person who breaks his promise never can escape destruction."

The king said, *"Ask any question you like."*

The demoness shot forth then, highly abstract questions about the Self and Brahmaan.

The minister and the king answered them all without a single flaw.

As she was absorbed in listening to their talk on the Supreme Reality, her mind was cleansed of all restlessness and envy. She was filled with a unique sort of bliss.

KARKATEE TELLS HER STORY TO THE KING

As her questions could not be answered well by just quoting texts but only through sheer experience, the demoness understood them to be realized souls.

She was extremely pleased and asked them what they wanted of her.

The king explained to her that the people in his country were afflicted by heart trouble and affected by cholera.

He said, *"I am now in search of the sacred chant which will cure the patients when the ordinary medicines fail to cure them."* He continued: *"My job is to kill people like you who afflict the innocent. Promise me that you won't hurt anybody anymore."*

The demoness promised him that she will do likewise and will never hurt any living being from that very moment.

The king understood what her words amounted to. Her very nature was to eat raw flesh of humans. If she withheld herself from eating humans then she would indeed starve to death, he thought. Overwhelmed with compassion, he asked her what she will eat in future. The demoness replied that she was in 'perturbation-less trance' all these years. When she woke up she had felt hungry as a natural requirement of her body.

She informed him that she will now return to the very same peak where she performed penance and spend the rest of her life in contemplation of the Self like a living statue. The king wanted to know more about her past life, and she told him all her life events briefly. She recounted to him her whole life-story where she had troubled people in the past as a live-needle foolishly. She said that she knew the Mantra given by Lord Brahmaa to cure the cholera. She took them both to a nearby river-bank and instructed the Mantra to both of them through the performance of appropriate rites.

THE KING OFFERS TO HELP KARKATEE

Then the demoness took leave of them and started to move away.

The king stopped her and said,

“You have taught us the sacred chant and become our Guru. You are our dear friend now. Moreover, you are a realized person. O beautiful one! Come and have food in our house. Do not disregard this invitation. Do not ignore our affection. Change yourself into a form of a pretty young woman and accompany us. Live with us happily.

The demoness asked,

“You can feed the pretty woman’s form; but how can the real demoness be satiated with such ordinary food?”

“Do not worry”, the king said in an assuring voice;

“I have a plan. You come with us as I suggested earlier, changing your demonic form into a human form.

Appear to others like a pretty lady well decked in gold and diamonds. You stay with the other women-folk of my palace, as long as you wish.

I will leave tomorrow itself, for hunting all the wicked and sinful people of the country.

I will collect them all and give them to you. Then you discard your human form, change back into a demoness, carry them to your familiar snow peak, and eat your fill.

Sleep awhile and be in the trance state of the Self for some time.

When you wake up, come here immediately. Take another batch of prisoners with you.

This will not be considered as a sin.

Those prisoners will be wicked enough to be punished by death. So, you will not be doing an unrighteous act.”

The demoness was happy to hear of his plan. She agreed to his words. She instantly changed herself into a beautiful woman adorned with many types of gold and diamond ornaments.

KARKATEE EATS HER FILL

All three of them went to the palace of the king.

The night was spent happily as they conversed about many interesting topics sitting together like close friends.

In the morning, the king left her in the company of the womenfolk of the palace and went away in search of thieves and murderers; by the sixth day, he had collected three thousand people from his own and other cities belonging to other kings. He delivered them to her promptly.

In the middle of the night, when everyone slept, the demoness donned her own original form, took leave of the king, carried the prisoners on her shoulder and went back to the snow peak. She made a hearty meal of those people, slept for three days. When she woke up, she remained in the trance state of the Self. Waking up in the third or fourth year, she went to the king’s palace again. She spent some time conversing on many intelligent topics with the king, then again took the next batch of prisoners to the mountain peak and ate them all. She had no more desires.

With the help offered from the compassionate king she had enough food to fill her belly.

Living as a JeevanMuktaa, even now she can be seen wandering in that mountain or absorbed in contemplation on the peak.

KARKATEE BECOMES A GODDESS

Of course, Karkatee had a longer life-span than her human friends.

She maintained the same friendship with the kings, as new ones became rulers and died.

All other evil spirits and wicked Daityas kept away from their region fearing Karkatee’s wrath.

Karkatee also had the power to cure diseases of any kind being a Yoginee of the highest sort.

She was offered by the kings, all the punishable humans as food regularly.

She was worshipped as a goddess by one and all.

Her statue with the name of Goddess KANDARAA and MANGALAA was installed in temples in all the villages surrounding the mountain, and she was revered by all.

Every king who ascended the throne of the hunter-clan installed the statue of Kandaraa Devi and worshipped her as the family-goddess. Those foolish kings, who did not do so, never ruled for long and became victims of the people’s anger. The people attained whatever they wanted by her worship. If any one did not worship her, he always met with calamities led by his own evil tendencies.

She was worshipped by offering wicked people as food to be consumed by her.

Even now her statue can be seen in those regions fulfilling the wishes of her devotees.

STORY OF AEINDAVAS

BRAHMAA

Lord Brahmaa woke up!

What is 'waking up' for one who was 'always awake'!

But the beings created by him had their own way of describing him.

They even had a life-span calculated for him.

They tried to understand him through their own limited viewpoints.

They had nights and days; so they believed that all others, be it Devas or Daityas had days and nights too. They slept exhausted at nights; so they believed that their Creator also had to feel exhausted after his work, and sleep at night.

These humans seemed to be unaware of the fact that sleep was just one of the steps invented by Nature to safeguard the species from predators. The earth-beings had even invented terminologies for his day and night.

They called it a 'Kalpa'. They said that the beginning of the Kalpa was the dawn for the Creator.

The dissolution of the Creation was termed as the end of his day.

Later, he was supposed to sleep like them, exhausted and tired!

Brahmaa smiled!

He did not mind all these vague words surrounding his life. He had learnt to live with the ignorance of his own created beings. Ignorance was the clay he used in making the pot of the Cosmic egg!

If everyone was realized, how could the Creation go on?

What was Creation actually?

He himself had no words to describe it!

He knew that his very identity was the 'Desire to create'. Why? There was no answer!

He was a 'thought' of the 'Supreme state of Consciousness' (Chit), which just wanted to create!

Actually, there was no process involved at all!

He was there; instantly all the worlds were there!

It was as if he became at once every being and every object of the created world, and had the experience of existing as everything.

He existed as all; experienced as all; was all!

The Sages had coined a name for his existence; they called him 'HIRANYA-GARBHA', the 'Golden-wombed'!

He contained the entire Creation within himself!

Again what was he? Just a 'thought' in Para Brahman which wanted to create as if!

Instantly as the thought rose up randomly, he was there as everything, experiencing everything!

The world was a dream he experienced. He knew that very well.

But, he was awake in his dream and watched his dream as an amusement only.

It was a dream which was fully under his control.

At the very instant of his existence, he just knew what rules should govern his world.

A vague memory of elements and objects from deep inside him arose, immediately manifesting as the entire world of Creation.

It was natural for him to know everything.

Like the fire knows how to burn, he knew the rules and characteristics of the world he created.

He also knew that he was just a tiny vibration in the Supreme Consciousness, CHIT!

(The term Chit refers to the 'awareness of existence' that is concealed within each living thing, from a worm to a Brahmaa, is the common essence in all, yet is lost in the delusion of the body-self as oneself.)

He wondered how many Brahmaas existed in that vast ocean of CHIT in which he was just one tiny bubble!

He had no way of knowing other worlds. His vision was centered to his own world.

He sometimes took part in his own 'dream world drama' as Lord Brahmaa (Lotus-born) and instructed people about the Knowledge of the Supreme! In reality, he had no form; but the people pictured him as a four-faced God seated on a huge lotus with countless petals. They usually mixed up the identities of the god-world resident Brahmaa with him, and called that tiny god also as the Creator.

He did not mind what form he had! Whatever his creature-denizens wanted him to look like, he appeared to them as that. They named him the 'Lotus-born', because the 'Brahmaa of the God world' was born out of the lotus appearing from the navel of Lord Naaraayana, who had the function of maintaining the Creation.

Brahmaa, the first perturbation of the CHIT, the Space-born (AAKAASHAJA) did not mind by what name he was known as! What does it matter, which modification of sound waves as a name, referred to him! Actually, he had no name, no form; he was just a tiny wavelet of CHIT, the Supreme Consciousness.

Brahmaa was a 'perturbation in the Chit' accompanied by so many 'unfulfilled mind signals' (SMRITIS) or 'incomplete thoughts' or 'possibilities' or 'potentialities' which randomly became his. He dreamt their fulfillment. That dream was known as 'Creation' by his dream characters.

The world was a 'dream'! Brahmaa knew that!

But he enjoyed his dream, like an author enjoys the life of the characters in his book.

And like an author, he wanted his Creation to be perfect. After all, he was the father of all the beings in his Creation.

He created 'sons' (Naarada, SanatKumaara and others) to increase the population.

He created Knowledge (Vedas) to guide the populace.

Feeling apprehensive about the ignorance pervading the Creation, he created Sage Vasishtha to spread the 'Knowledge of the Self' to one and all.

Of course, it was all just a game. No one was real including himself.

There was only a mixed state of all conscious states and the potential perceptions.

There was no real individual. His identity itself, had no meaning.

He was there for an instant with the creative instinct; in an instant countless mind-signals reached their fulfillment, and he was no more. His life was just a streak of lightning that was flashing across the cloud-line of CHIT.

He was just a rising wave containing some random water drops of possibilities; as soon as they became realities in his dream and poured out as rains, his identity was finished.

Another thought with another collection of possibilities rose as another Creator and dreamed its own dream for an instant.

There were no successions of Brahmaas; there was no 'Time factor' in CHIT.

At the same instant, simultaneously all the possibilities existed as realities.

The 'channeling process' for changing all the 'Possibilities' into 'Realities' was called 'Brahmaa'.

The infinite ocean of CHIT contained countless Brahmaas as waves and wavelets.

[The created beings of any particular Creation were bound by their own time/space ideas. They never had the capacity to think beyond space and time.

In this creation, these beings believed that they had physical forms and they identified themselves with those forms.

They believed that their Creator also should have a form and had made him a 'Four-faced God' with hands and feet!

They believed that one single Brahmaa continued forever creating and dissolving Creations.

They called the beginning of the Creation as the morning of Brahmaa, and the dissolution-time as the night of Brahmaa. They said that Brahmaa slept through the night in exhaustion!

What beginning, what end? (Nonsense!)

The 'beginning' itself began only at the 'beginning of the Creation'.

The 'end' itself ended when there was no one to dream the world-dream.

But how could the ignorant creatures, who identified themselves with forms, ever understand the formless state of their Creator?!

For these beings, the 'instant-dream' of Brahmaa was of a very long duration.

Their minds could not even imagine how long that 'long time' lasted!

How will they ever understand that all that they called as a day of Brahmaa, was just an instant flash in the 'CHIT-computer'; and they themselves did not even last as much time as a flash of lightning in the cloudy sky!

They were all just 'continuously changing patterns' in the 'instant flash of the mind' called Brahmaa! Life was just an on-flow of change (Samsaara)! Nothing was there as anything!

Brahmaa sighed; if you can imagine a 'thought' as sighing!]

That ‘thought called Brahmaa’ woke up.
 Before the instantaneous world appearances began appearing, the ‘thought’ detected some disparity.
 The void arena where the dream of Creation had to occur was not completely void.
 The ‘thought named Brahmaa’ looked all over and detected some created-worlds already existing as some one else’s dream! By observing closely, this Brahmaa-thought discovered ten Creations of ten Lotus-born Brahmaas already going on, in full-fledged manner.
 Like a programme in the computer getting stuck with some bug, this ‘Brahmaa-thought’ was stuck, unable to proceed in its Creation-work. There was only one way to find out the origin of the ‘bug’.
 The ‘Brahmaa-thought’ wished for one of the Suns from those new created worlds to appear in front of it.
 The ‘thought-Brahmaa’ now had a form. He was seated on a lotus and had a lustrous body.
 Immediately the Sun-god stood before him. He saluted and praised the ‘Lotus-born Brahmaa’.
 Brahmaa questioned him about the ten Creations which were going on without a break even before he himself had started the real Creation process.
 The Sun explained everything about the AEINDAVAAS, the ten sons of INDU.

AEINDAVAS

In some Creation, as usual there was a Kailaasa mountain.
 At its base was the Jamboo Dveepa.
 In that Dveepa was a city named SUVARNA JATA, (Golden Locks); it was also known by the name of SUVARNA TATA, (Golden Bank). It overflowed with riches and prosperities.
 The fortunate people of the city lacked nothing. Everyone was happy; everyone except a Brahmin named Indu. He had a wife who served her husband with complete devotion. The couple was respected by one and all for their good character; but they were not happy in the least. They had no children. They felt their lives were wasted. What use were their bodies, if they could not produce children to carry their name to posterity!
 They decided to perform penance; please Lord Shiva; and get their wish fulfilled through him.
 They bid farewell to all their well-wishers and climbed the Kailaasa Mountain.
 Reaching the peak, they selected a place filled with trees and bushes. They took their purificatory bath and stood in the midst of trees with their hands raised in salutatory posture. They both chanted the sacred Mantra of Shiva continuously without a break. They had taken the vow to perform the penance living like ‘trees’.
 In the evening after sunset, they drank just a handful of water and continued their penance undaunted.
 Three Yugas passed.
 Lord Shiva blessed them with his vision pleased by their penance.
 Shiva asked them what boon they wanted.
 Indu the Brahmin was very clever. He knew the story of Maarkandeya!
 Maarkandeya’s father had asked for one son who was intelligent but short-lived.
 Indu carefully coined his words and requested Shiva that he should be blessed with ten sons, who would be highly intelligent, long-lived and would never be the cause of grievance to the parents in any manner.
 Shiva said, “*Let it be so*” and vanished.

Aeindavas, the ten sons of Indu were highly intelligent.
 By their seventh year they had mastered all that was there to be learnt; but being born many Yugas after their parents’ birth, they had no relatives or friends in their vicinity.
 They were highly attached to their parents and devotedly served them with affection. There was no happier couple than Indu and his wife. They both enjoyed every second of their life with their dear sons. They always advised them to achieve the highest state in life, facing any challenge that stood in their paths. The sons promised them that they would make the name of Indu eternal.
 Years passed.
 Indu and his wife knew that they had to leave the mortal coils and attain liberation by meditating on their Self. Satisfied that they had given the world ten worthy sons who will make their name eternal, Indu and his wife gave up their bodies through Yoga and were liberated.
 Aeindavas suddenly found themselves all alone in the friendless world. The ten sons of Indu were shocked. Death of course was a myth they knew; but they missed their parents. Each and every corner of the house reminded them of their parents. They did not want to live there anymore. They decided to go to the peak of the Kailaasa Mountain, where their parents had performed penance. They slowly ascended the Mountain with heavy hearts. Cold winds blew as if reflecting their sadness.

The ten Brahmin youths walked all over the mountain as if their parents' foot steps had sanctified the entire area. After wandering aimlessly for some time in the mountain-forest, they sat down exhausted.

They started speaking out their minds to each other.

One of them reminded that their parents had wanted to make their names eternal in the world.

Another said that, that target could be achieved only by attaining the most exalted state in the world.

Now the discussion turned towards the most exalted position in the world.

"Maybe we can use our learning abilities and become rich", one said.

"No, whatever we earn, that is nothing compared to the wealth a king accumulates", another objected.

"Even a king offers tributes to an emperor", announced one.

"Leave out the human world; Indra is the King of Devas!" proclaimed another one.

"Even Devas are created by Brahmaa! So the Creator's state is the most exalted state" concluded the eldest.

Yes, they had found the answer to their problem.

If they achieved the position of the Creator, they could 'create' riches, not just own them!

They could 'create' their parents and Aeindavas in their own Creation and make them 'deathless'.

All agreed unanimously to the wise words uttered by the eldest.

"But how to become a Creator?" they asked the eldest one.

He thought for some time, and suggested a plan.

He told them all to sit in solitary places and contemplate on themselves as Brahmaas.

He told them that since Brahmaa was seated on a lotus, they must each imagine themselves as a four-faced God seated on a huge thousand-petal lotus and perform the process of Creation. They must never entertain any doubt about their identities as Brahmaas, and must forget their human identities completely.

The younger brothers agreed.

They all chose some solitary places and sat on the straw mats.

They meditated with single mindedness on their identities as Lord Brahmaa, the Lotus-born, seated on the lotus.

Soon they forgot their human identities.

Each one was now a Brahmaa creating a world.

Thought by thought they carefully selected and created slowly each and every thing.

They followed the exact course of Creation mentioned in the Vedas.

They created Marichi and others as their sons.

They created Devas, Daityas, snakes, humans etc. exactly as they had studied in the Scriptures.

Their worlds had their own Yugas, years, months, weeks and days.

Kalpas came and went.

They slept at the end of the Kalpa and woke up at the beginning of the Kalpa.

That is what they had heard Brahmaa did and they imitated Brahmaa in all their thoughts.

Their bodies were completely forgotten by them. Their physical attires withered away without food; dried up and decayed; and became food for some birds and animals.

But the ten Brahmin boys were never aware of all that had happened to their physical bodies.

They had now become Brahmaas in their minds and were fully absorbed in their play of Creation.

TEN BRAHMAAS

The Sun God continued:

"The worlds you see in your mental-space are the Creations of these ten Aeindavas acting as Brahmaas.

They are so firmly established as Brahmaas, that in every wave of CHIT that appears as Brahmaa, they also continue to exist as Brahmaas in the real Brahmaa's mind-space and perform their work of Creation.

Like all the Creations have Devas, elements etc as their ingredients, these Aeindavas also have become a part of every Creator's mind. I am one of the Suns from their worlds."

Brahmaa was amazed. He asked innocently,

"When already worlds exist created by these Brahmaas, why should I create any more?"

The Sun replied:

"O Lord! You know everything, yet you ask me to tell you everything.

My Lord! Creation is just a game for you.

These Aeindavas are not 'beings' existing outside your mind-space.

They are in your own mind as part of you. You are the one who dreams the existence of these Aeindavas.

How can they exist without you?

They have become eternal parts of the Creation process of any Brahmaa who arises in the CHIT with the 'desire to create'.

They are 'desires to create' existing inside the 'desire to create' which is 'you'!

It is akin to creating dolls which create dolls.

You must be proud of them. You must be pleased by their existence.

They are a wonder adorning your mind-space.

Their worlds cannot be seen by any one but you, because they are part of your own mind."

Brahmaa had to accept the truth in his statements.

The Sun continued:

"O Lord!

Mind alone is the Creator.

Mind alone is the destroyer.

Mind alone is the real doer.

Body is an inert mechanism; it is not bound by any action.

I will relate to you another narrative explaining the power of mind to you."

Sun narrated the story of Ahalyaa (not the wife of Sage Gautama) and Indra (not the king of Devas) to Brahmaa.

INDRA AND AHALYAA

Indra and Ahalyaa!

Who does not know them?

Every one who has studied Ramayana has a vague idea that there was a small rock on the road where Rama was walking with his brother Lakshmana and the revered Guru Vishvaamitra; his foot touched the rock; immediately the rock turned into a beautiful lady; and she was redeemed of a curse given by her husband for her unfaithful act. But what were the real events that happened?

'Ahalyaa' means one without any deformation.

Once, Brahmaa wanted to create a perfect female form. He remembered every beautiful object conceived by him in his Creation and joining all the conceptions together, he created a lovely figure of a young girl.

She was a perfect beauty with all the goodness of his Creation personified as if.

All the Sages, Devas and humans coveted her; Brahmaa was in a dilemma.

He cleverly put forth a condition that anyone who went round all the three worlds fast, could own her.

Only Indra, the king of Devas could do that and he finished his task in no time; but he was thoroughly disappointed when he found out that Ahalyaa had been given off to Sage Gautama as he had walked around a 'cow giving birth to a calf', which amounted to going round the three worlds.

Indra went back fuming, but he could never forget the lovely form of Ahalyaa.

Maybe Ahalyaa would have been happy married to a king of Devas, but she took to her new life without complaints. However, married to a Sage who had time only for penance and austerities, she felt her beauty wasted; yet, she served her husband with complete devotion.

Indra could not bear the agony of passion which burnt him like blazing fire.

Ahalyaa's beautiful form pierced his heart like a spear.

He could wait no more.

He came down to the earth and observed the routine followed by Sage Gautama. He understood that Sage Gautama went off to bathe in the mornings when a cock in the hermitage crowed.

Next morning, Indra mimicked the crowing of the cock in the morning earlier than usual. Sage Gautama got up and went off to bathe in the river. Indra took the form of the Sage and appeared before Ahalyaa.

Ahalyaa immediately knew that it was not her husband, and moved away.

But Indra would not give up. He appeared before her in his original form.

Ahalyaa was awe-struck by his handsomeness. For a moment her mind wavered. She felt gratified that her beauty could attract even the king of Devas. She did not know what happened afterwards. She succumbed to Indra's passionate pleadings.

Sage Gautama had understood that the cock had crowed at the wrong time.

Feeling apprehensive, he hurried home and found out what had happened.

He cursed Indra to have marks of the female sexual organ (vulva) all over his body. That was a fit punishment for coveting a wife of another person he thought.

He felt compassionate towards his wife who had erred in the vanity of her beauty. He instructed her to perform penance for a long time and get rid of her sin. He told her that since she had committed a passionate act as an adoration of her own beautiful body, she should keep a vow of not appearing before anybody during the penance. Ahalyaa begged him to make her look like a rock to every one who chanced to see her. Gautama granted her request and told her that when she would be seen in her original form by someone, her curse would be redeemed. Ahalyaa thanked him in gratitude. Gautama went off to far away mountains to perform penance.

Ahalyaa began her penance.

She sat on a straw mat and remained absorbed in the contemplation of her husband, her real God. She appeared like a rock to one and all; and people pitied her saying that the Sage had cursed her to become a rock; but invisible to others, Ahalyaa performed penance waiting for the magic touch of a God.

When Rama accompanied Sage Vishvaamitra with his brother Lakshmana, the Sage took him to the hermitage of Sage Gautama and pointed out to him a rock in the corner of the hermitage; but Rama did not see a rock; he saw a beautiful lady seated in the lotus-posture absorbed in contemplation. He saluted the lady in reverence. After all, she was the wife of the Great Sage Gautama.

Ahalyaa was redeemed of her curse. Purified in mind and body, she rejoined her husband and became renowned as one of the PATIVRATAAS, the acclaimed devotees of their husbands.

Indra meanwhile went through a shameful period of remorse. Unable to show his ugly body to anyone, and burning with shame, he performed penance on Shiva. Shiva confessed his inability to nullify the curse of the Sage and instead turned all the vulva marks on his body into eyes. Indra returned home with eyes spread out all over his body.

He was known as SAHASRAAKSHA, the 'Thousand-eyed' god.

Even before getting cursed, he was praised as SAHASRAAKSHA in the Vedic hymns, a God having thousand eyes which carefully watched over the citizens, guarding them; but unfortunately, the very term eulogizing him became a term embarrassing him forever. He never dared look at any other female other than his wife with eyes of passion.

Indra became a warning sign to erring Devas and humans not to covet women who belonged to others.

(Indra is the term referring to the king of Devas. There are countless meritorious Jeevas who ruled the Devas as Indras. This is one story of one Indra of one Raamaayana.)

AHALYAA AND INDRA

The story related by Sun-God to Brahmaa is also about another handsome Indra coveting another's wife; but here it is not a story of passion but of love unsurpassed.

This Indra was a Brahmin youth.

He was extremely handsome and all the girls were inadvertently drawn to him because of his magnetic personality. A girl felt herself fortunate if he even flashed a side-glance at her.

He was not king of Devas but a king of flirts.

He took life easy and enjoyed every moment of his life in sensuous pleasures.

He had no high goals set for him and wasted his youth in meaningless pursuit of sense pleasures.

He would have gone on in his life like a street dog searching for nothing, if he had not seen 'her'.

From the moment he saw 'her', he had changed.

Her name was Ahalyaa. She was the wife of king Indradyumna.

Indradyumna was a noble king. He was a devotee of Lord Vishnu.

He was highly respected for his righteous ways and strict moral values. He never swerved from the path of Dharma and expected his family members and even citizens to be chaste in their behavior.

And, he thought that all his merits of previous lives had resulted in giving him a wife like Ahalyaa.

He felt that his wife was a storehouse of all good qualities, and was proud to be the husband of such a beautiful damsel.

Ahalyaa was very beautiful. It was as if the Creator had made her out of filtered moonlight.

So blemish-less was her beauty that the king, afraid of her beauty getting tainted by the passion-filled glances of other men, had banned her from going out of the harem itself. When Ahalyaa complained about this, the king had related to her the mythical story of Ahalyaa and Indra of the Puranas.

He confessed to her, that he did not want to lose her to any Indra.

Ahalyaa had laughed aloud and had made fun of his fears. However, she did not strictly adhere to the rules set by the king. Without his knowledge, she managed to skip out of the harem now and then, and wandered the streets disguised as an ordinary woman. She had even wondered whether she would also be met with the same fate of the mythical Ahalyaa and be seduced by another handsome Indra. And she met her Indra soon.

VASANTOTSAVA! Spring Festival!

The whole city wore a festival mood! It shone like Indra's Amaraavati, city of Devas!

The king as usual was never interested in such juvenile pastimes and had gone off to visit some renowned Sages residing in the Sacred Mountains, accompanied by his Preceptor Sage Bharata.

Left alone, the queen entered the city dressed as a common citizen and participated in the festivities conducted at the temple of 'God Manmatha' (God of love).

Without disclosing her married status, she joined the group of young girls and boys, dancing and singing to her heart's content. In that group of youthful men, Indra was also present shining like a moon in the midst of stars. Ahalyaa chanced to see him. Instantly her heart was lost to him.

Unable to express her feeling outwardly, she had returned to her palace with a heavy heart.

The beautiful palace, the diamonds and gems adorning every corner of her harem appeared to be mocking at her loneliness. She felt disgusted with her royal life. She felt she was just a doll decorating the palatial grounds.

The king had visited her only on rare occasions to enquire about her welfare like a kind guardian.

He never had enough time for the simple pleasures of the family-life and was busy attending to the administrative matters of the city or improving his own spiritual state. He had tried to drag Ahalyaa too towards spiritual pursuits, but had given up after a few tries.

Now the unattended creeper of his palace was searching for a tree to hold on to.

Ahalyaa's mind was at present, filled with the thought of the handsome Indra. Her entire body was burning in passion. She felt herself as if set on fire. She withered on her bed like a fish thrown on embers.

She cried, wept, rolled on the floor and was even ready to give up her life.

'What was her life without attaining the company of the handsome Indra! What use was her beauty if she did not unite with the man who had stolen her heart in one glance!'

Her maid who was her trusted companion in all her hidden exploits consoled her, and told her that she would somehow get that Indra to meet her that very night. She went out of the palace-gates unseen by anybody and met Indra at his house.

Even that young man Indra was in a similar condition as Ahalyaa. He had met hundreds of girls in his life; but never had he seen such a lovely woman like Ahalyaa. He felt his life was a waste if he did not enjoy the company of that heavenly beauty born on earth. He did not even know who she was.

His eyes had met her eyes just for an instant as the crowd was dancing in full abandon.

He had seen so much thirst and love in those deep dark eyes; he had rushed towards her unable to control himself; but she had vanished like a streak of lightning.

He had left the crowded arena immediately and had gone back dejected.

The whole world had changed for him. He had forgotten all his friends, all pleasures and all other beautiful girls who hovered around him begging for his attention. His mind was now fully occupied by the beautiful form of that lovely lady. He sat alone in his house suffering as if his whole being was set on fire.

However, his suffering did not last long.

Like a shower of nectar from heaven, the maid arrived to report to him the condition of her queen.

Though surprised at first when getting informed about the marital status and her queenly position, Indra brushed aside all those factors as meaningless. What was important was a meeting with her!

Who cares who she is! He did not love her because of her name and form. It was a unique attraction that drew him towards her. He loved Ahalyaa for what she was.

He just loved her more than his own life. That was all that mattered.

Indra followed the maid without further delay to a pre-planned place.

Ahalyaa was waiting for him like a chaataka bird longing for the heavenly waters.

The river rushed towards the ocean and all the waters became one.

Like ghee increasing the intensity of the HOMA fire, the fire of passion between Indra and Ahalyaa grew with every meeting. They met for the first few times secretly; but soon they were bold enough to meet even in public places. Ahalyaa had lost all sense of shame and modesty; she did not bother about the ridicule attached to her behavior. She spent most of her time in Indra's company in his house itself. She did not care for the comments of her people or family.

Soon the news of their illicit affair reached the ears of the king. He tried his best to instill sense into the infatuated mind of his wayward wife; but Ahalyaa was adamant in her behavior. She continued meeting her lover despite the warnings of the king. The king was extremely hurt by her behavior. He became worried about the public scandal and decided to take firm action against the erring lovers to safeguard his own honor.

Ahalyaa and Indra were chained and dragged to the court in full view of the public.

They were made to stand in front of the king for judgment. They both were accused of carrying on an affair condemned by the Scriptures.

The king stared at his pretty wife standing accused along with a worthless son of a Brahmin.

Her face did not show any remorse.

A scornful smile played on her rosy lips as if defying the entire world with its moral codes and ethics.

Indra appeared as if absorbed in some deep thoughts. He did not seem to notice the courtiers or the king.

The king felt humiliated by their arrogant stand.

Embarrassed by the whole thing, he somehow managed to control his rage and said-

"Throw them into the lake."

The order was carried out without delay. They were thrown into a lake filled with icy waters.

The two were happily smiling when they were thrown into the lake; they were still smiling when they were taken out of the lake.

The king was visibly irritated. His eyes fiery with anger he asked them both.

"Did not the freezing waters of the lake hurt you both, in any way?"

They both answered in unison;

"We carry in our minds the taintless faces of each other at all times.

Never for a second do we forget each other.

Every moment the thought of the beloved brings us immense joy.

We are not aware of our physical bodies at all.

There is only one unbroken flow of thought in us; that is the thought of the lover.

No other thought disturbs us. We do not have any sensation of the body at all.

We are together even in punishments; that is enough for us.

We do not care how you punish us.

Slice our limbs with swords if you like; but we will never be hurt in the least!"

The king fumed!

He would make them cry and fall at his feet somehow, he vowed in his mind.

'How dare these morally corrupt worms defy him, the greatest devotee of Vishnu,' he said to himself in anger.

He made a list of punishments and told his servants, not to stop their tortures till those two wicked souls cried out in pain. The servants dragged the prisoners away to fulfill the order given by the king.

The lovers were thrown into heated frying pans. Their smile did not fade.

The lovers were tied to the feet of the elephants. Their smile did not fade.

The lovers were whipped hard. Their smile did not fade.

The king invented more and more punishments and got them tortured; but their smile did not fade.

The king felt defeated! He stood silently before them not knowing how to make them suffer.

Indra and Ahalyaa were lying at his feet, their bodies bleeding, limbs broken, mutilated in all their body parts; but they were smiling still absorbed in some indescribable joy.

He again asked in an irritated voice-

"How do you both manage to remain happy though you have been tortured in so many ways?"

Indra laughed aloud even in that shattered condition and answered in a feeble but arrogant voice-
*“O king! The whole world is filled with my beloved.
 She sees me filling the entire world. Nothing else exists for us.
 We see every person, every object as each other. We are never aware of anything else.
 We do not even know what punishments you order for us.
 I only remember her; she remembers me.
 We are always experiencing the pleasure of union continuously.
 You can break our bodies; but you cannot break our minds. You have no control over what we think.
 My beloved is my goddess seated in the sanctum sanctorum of my heart.
 She wards off all pains by her presence. We both are not the bodies as you think.
 Ahalyaa is a mind; Indra is a mind; both minds are joined together and looped into each other.
 She exists because of my thinking about her; I exist because she is thinking of me; we both are deathless.
 We will live as eternal minds just thinking of each other in love.
 O king! There is nothing in the world that gives happiness like love.
 You boast that you are a devotee of god. Do you think of your beloved god similar to how we think of each other?
 With so many worldly thoughts, anxieties running in your mind, how can you call yourself as a great devotee?
 We have no pretensions of morality and ethics. We are not bound by the rules of the world. For us, love is enough.
 You can do whatever with our so called bodies. As far as we are concerned, we do not have bodies at all.
 You do not have the power to control one single thought that rises in our minds.”*
 Indra laughed again and embraced the shattered body of his beloved with extreme affection.

The king fumed hearing his words. He could not inflict any more torture, for their bodies were almost breathing their last. He looked at his preceptor and requested him to throw curses on them. The preceptor just cursed them to die and released them from the bondage of the bodies. The bodies rested on the ground like two fallen leaves. The king walked away in frustration.

Indra and Ahalyaa went through many lives later on; bodies were many; but their love never changed. They cherished the same love for each other. Sometimes they wandered the forest as deer; another time as birds; later they united in another life as a Brahmin couple. They performed penance and attained the state of self- realization. Now freed of any bondage, they both exist together eternally just experiencing the joy of love; by their yogic powers, they take on any form and make love to each other. They live as minds alone.
Mind alone is the real doer; not the inert body.
{The subtle Brahman-Knowledge concealed in this story is explained in the original Sanskrit version of the book. Each term used here refers to the state of Brahman as a JeevanMukta; and cannot be given here, in thois story-version. A Jeeva who is in love with its Self-state can never be hurt by the meaningless events of the life-story produced by the mind. This is the true essence of the story, and is not an idiotic love-story.}

MANU

The Sun Continued-

*“O Lord, so you cannot destroy the Aeindavas in any way. Their bodies exist no more.
 They remain now only as the Creation-Vaasanaas.
 You even as Brahmaa do not have the power to annihilate them. They will go on creating worlds forever.
 They existed in the previous Creation of the Brahmaa. They are in your mind also now. They will continue to exist in the mind of every Brahmaa who rises in the Chit.
 They have become part of the Chit as the ever-existing Vaasanaas of Creation.
 Why do you bother about them? You do your Creation work as you like.
 They are no hindrances to you in any way.”*

{NOTES: In Hindu traditions, Manu is a title accorded to the originator of mankind, the ‘Maanavas’.

Brahmaa had to agree to the wise words of Sun. Having continued in many Creations of Aeindavas, the Sun seemed to be extremely intelligent and wise; Brahmaa did not want to lose him. He decided to make him a part of his real Creation he was about to do. He requested the Sun to be the ‘Manu’, first person in his Creation and create the world as per his liking. Sun agreed. He split himself into two. One half of him remained as the Sun and went back to the Creation of Aeindavas. The other half changed into the form of Manu and created wonderful worlds under the supervision of Brahmaa.

END

TWO TALES

FIRST STORY

FOREST

A forest! A Very huge one! You can never find the beginning or end of it. It is so huge that even if you walk thousands of miles there, you would not even manage to cross over a single point in it.

All sorts of trees grow there. Name it and it is there! Banyan tree, Neem tree, Pongam tree, Mango tree, Coconut tree, Banana tree, Bodhi tree, Peepul tree, Jack fruit tree ...; List is too long!

Just think that any tree you can think of is found in that forest.

Moreover, all these multifarious trees do not grow there, hither and thither as a sample; but each and every variety is a wild grove growing like weeds covering huge areas of the forest. With such uncontrolled growth, the forest always looks as if it is in eternal night. Sun's rays never can penetrate inside and light up anything. The forest indeed is a 'black hole' which can never absorb any light at any time.

And you guessed right! No living thing dares enter that forest for fear of getting lost.

I ENTER THE FOREST

Uph! So many trees, so many branches, so many roots; never could you see the end of it!

But I am going to visit that forest now. I am not a cowardly chap like you!

I know what is right and what is wrong!

I have X-Ray eyes which can penetrate through any darkness!

I can see through any deceit, any magical feat, and any miraculous power!

At my very sight, fools tremble and give up their life at my feet.

I have busted so many religious rackets, miracle mania and terrorizing ghosts!

Great, you say! But you will be surprised to know that no one wants my services though it is free!

People wrinkle their noses when I enter any crowd.

They even beat me up and throw me out like unwanted garbage!

All I do is telling people how to find things in darkness; but nobody wants to know what is where! Idiots all!

Now I am searching for a job here in this dark black hole of a forest!

Ah! The cruel fate!

(For your ears only – Fate does not exist at all; it is just a myth! I know it as a fact.

Don't tell others, they will nail me on a cross!)

THE WEIRD CREATURE

Anyhow I have decided to enter this forest and try my luck here.

Fearless, I go inside, find my way easily through all those thorny bushes and sit under a Bodhi tree and close my eyes. It feels really good to be under this tree. You can try it some time.

I relax fully. An unknown joy fills my being. My eyelids close by themselves.

I am almost slipping off into a blissful slumber; but something suddenly jerks me out of my peaceful state.

I hear some screams and shouts. 'Someone in danger'!

I am up on my feet immediately. I quickly reach the place where the sound was heard.

And what do I see? I am shocked!

I stop halfway and hide behind a tree lest I get attacked by that creature!

Yes it was a creature! Of course it looked human enough to have a face and body like a man; but wonder of wonders! It had thousands of arms and thousands of eyes!

You ask me, how such a thing can exist? I do not know!

The creature was for real; believe my words; I never lie! Trust me! I always see through lies!

Its face was full of eyes and it had arms all over.

Surely their number should exceed thousand, I know! I never make a mistake, be sure!

And in all those thousand hands it held heavy spiked clubs.

It was beating itself with those clubs and screaming in pain.

Before I could bring some sense to its mad mind, the creature started running in panic.

DEEP HOLE

The Creature was beating itself, screaming in pain and running away from itself!
 I wanted to shout, "Stop beating! Stop running!"
 But before the sound reached its ears, it was thousands of miles away!
 I was not a weakling. No body could outrun me in a race.
 I ran behind it, wanting to catch my first customer!
 Business is business; mad or foolish, a customer is a God in person!
 I ran behind him keeping him in my view always.
 Suddenly there was no sound! That creature had vanished! I was shocked!
 Where did it hide so soon? I searched the area thoroughly inch by inch!
 And I found the place where it had disappeared!
 Hidden under the foliage of trees, there was a deep hole in the ground and surely that creature must have slipped into it! I looked down inside it carefully. It was too dark as if draped with a black cloth.
 I dropped a stone to find out how deep it was.
 I waited for hours; no sound of the stone reaching the ground was heard.
 I did not lose heart. With thousand arms and clubs the creature must surely come out of that deep dark well somehow. I decided to wait, and sat under a close-by tree.
 Many hours passed! I must have dozed off.
 Because when I heard some sound, the creature was running away at a distance.
 He looked uglier now. His whole body was covered with slime and dirt; but he had not stopped beating himself yet.
 His screams echoed all over the forest. Poor guy!

THE THORNY BUSHES

I wanted to stop his mad act.
 But when I was close to him, I saw him entering a grove of thorny trees.
 I stopped outside and peered into the dark areas of that grove.
 I saw that creature running through thorny bushes.
 He was falling on the thorny bushes; sometimes hugging the thorny trees; sometimes plucking even thorny sticks to beat himself. The screams were more painful now.
 I waited outside the grove trying not to sleep off. I had to save him somehow I decided. Soon he came out.
 His whole body was now full of scratches and cuts. He was bleeding all over.
 I politely addressed him, "*Sir, if you will please spare me a few minutes...*"
 I did not complete my sentence. He was gone. I followed him undaunted.

PLANTAIN GROVE

He had crossed thousands of miles again, still beating himself, still screaming!
 My eyes were wet actually, though in business matters you are not supposed to show your emotions to others. I followed him now with more concern for his health than for the profit I was after.
 This time he was in a different part of the forest.
 Some cool winds blew from the nearby grove; by the smell I understood it to be the plantain grove.
 The creature-fellow entered inside and was gone. I could not resist the temptation.
 I ate some fruits and sat under the cool shade of those tall banana trees.
 I knew the fool will soon come out; banana or thorn meant the same to him.
 He did not stay anywhere long. His only mission in life was to hurt himself and scream in pain.

I ADVISE HIM

When he came out, I was ready. I pounced on him, held him tightly in my strong arms and asked him,
 "*Wait, Sir, Wait! Why are you acting like this? Listen to me. I will tell you how to escape from pain. First drop those clubs off...*"
 Again I did not complete my sales talk. He removed my hand forcibly and looked at me with disgust and ran away only to fall into a deep well again. Anyhow after many tries from me, he at last spared a few minutes to speak to me. I asked him what made him act that way. He stood there quietly and observed his own limbs one by one.
 His body was bleeding and wounded all over.

He said-

“What am I doing? Nothing! What has happened to my body?”

You...you have done something to me! You are an enemy out to destroy me.

Ah! Ah! You idiot! You have seen me!

You have made me lose everything. I cannot feel any pain now! Nor can I feel happy! What shall I do!

I was happily beating myself. Now you have spoiled my life!”

He looked at his body again. He saw the horrible state it was in. He broke down completely and started to cry.

He went on lamenting-

“Ah! I am ruined! Where will I go now? I cannot feel any pain. Why did I meet you?”

He wept, rolled on the floor, even managed to make a small stream with his tears.

I was watching helplessly, not knowing what to say.

I was thinking that he would be happy if he did not beat himself; but here he was crying because he could not feel the pain.

But to my good fortune, he stopped crying soon. He got up and laughed aloud.

He jumped in joy; let out screams of joy.

And wonder of wonders! His limbs were all falling off one by one.

First to fall was his head; then his arms; then the chest; then the stomach.

At last, he vanished from sight.

SO MANY CREATURES!

I was shedding joyous tears. Wiping my face, I walked away from that place.

But soon I found that the forest was full of such mad creatures.

I decided my mission in life was here. Profit or no profit, I will remain in this forest and cure their madness.

Many I could catch and question about their actions; and many lucky ones discarded their limbs and vanished off as the first one had done.

But not everyone was so lucky.

Some creatures that had fallen into the dark deep well, never ever came out, though I waited months for them to come out.

Some other creatures when stopped by me almost got ready to hit me with their clubs. They shouted back saying, *“You wicked man! Keep away!”* and ran away from me.

They did not understand even a word I uttered!

Some creatures which entered the banana grove also never came out. I believe the cool medicinal effect of those trees should have cured their madness and they must have vanished there itself, without my help.

Some creatures were lost in the thorny groves and never found their way out.

Poor things! Rivers of blood must be flowing there! I wiped my tears!

Why are you laughing?

Do you think it is a tall tale I am weaving? I am not a person given to imagination and lies.

Really there is a forest like that and countless mad creatures wander there beating themselves with clubs.

You must also have seen it! Even from the time you were a baby learning to say “mama” or “papa” you must have seen it. You do not remember? You must have forgotten!

Well, wait a second! Let me see your face properly.

Ah! What is this? This is that forest! And you...?

Oh! Oh! You are that mad....!

I barely heard a ‘thump’ before I blacked out!

WHAT IS THIS ALL ABOUT?

Who am I?

The power to discriminate between Right and Wrong; the power to discriminate between real and unreal; the so-called VIVEKA accompanied by VICHAARA, Proper Enquiry.

What is the forest?

This world, the Jagat taht is made only of flowing sense-patterns, creating an illusion of solid objects and people.

What are the dark deep wells?

Hells, or tragic situations where ignorant minds end up in.

What are the thorny groves?

Worldly life and attachments!

What are the banana groves?

Heavens or happy situations, where meritorious minds end up in!

Who is the mad creature?

Mind! It reaches everywhere with its countless arms and sees everything as if with countless eyes.

It continuously goes after anything and everything and ends up always in painful situations.

To escape from pains it goes after harmful pleasures, or family and friends, and tries to gain merits through acts like charity, religion etc.

Why did the creature shout at me and cry?

Because his interest in pleasures was disappearing!

Why did he laugh and lose his limbs?

He lost his head –Ego!

He lost his arms – stopped reaching for outside pleasures.

He lost his chest – lost his attachments.

He lost his stomach – he stopped enjoying anything other than his self.

He vanished – he was now a JeevanMukta and the physical body ceased to exist for him.

He laughed because of the bliss of the Self.

Who pushed me away and ran off?

Those fools, who did not know that they needed my help, rejected my services and continued their suffering.

These fools avoid rational thinking and suffer like the stupid deer rolling in the hot sands, by going after the mirage river seen in the desert-land.

ANOTHER STORY

THE CHILD WANTS A STORY

“Mummy, tell me a story!” A child was pestering its mother.

Mother smiled patiently at the child and asked:

“Shall I tell you about Rama and the ten headed demon?”

“No! I have heard it umpteen times”

“Krishna?”

“I have my picture story book about Krishna!”

“Demon?”

“I know already”

Mummy was silent.

“Tell me a new new story which I have never heard before.” pleaded the child.

Mummy had no more stories to tell, so she invented a story.

MOTHER TELLS THE STORY

“Once upon a time there were three princes in a city”, mummy looked at her child.

“Hmm”. A bored expression lingered in the eyes of the child.

“But you know what!

The city was not there at all.”

“Oh!” The child’s eyes glowed with sudden interest!

Mummy now knew what the tale had to be like.

She continued.

“Yes! There were these three princes, brave, handsome and noble.

But they lived in a city which was not there at all. It was empty like the sky you see above.

But you know what?

Of the three princes, two of them never got born at all. One of them never even lived in a womb like you did!”

The child opened its eyes wide.

“They were very unhappy being alone in that city.

They had no friends, no relatives, and no people. Not even dogs and cats lived there in that city.

The princes decided to leave that city and go elsewhere to seek their fortune.
 They had no horses and no chariots. So they walked on the muddy road.
 The sun was hot and there were no trees anywhere.
 Their bodies were burnt in the heat. Their feet got blisters. Their mouth dried up.
 Poor princes! Their bodies were so delicate that they almost cried in pain.
 They were soon covered by dust and dirt.
 They walked the whole day, and at last found three huge trees on the roadside.
 The trees were filled with fruits, flowers and birds.

But you know what?

Two of the trees never ever grew out of their sprouts. One of them did not even have a seed to sprout from.
 They ate the fruits as many as possible. They made juice out of the remaining fruits and drank them again and again.
 They plucked the flowers; made garlands and wore them happily. Again they started on their journey.
 But since they had packed some fruits for the journey, they did not feel so tired.
 Soon they reached an area where three rivers were flowing with great noise.

But you know what?

Two of the rivers had no waters at all and one was completely dry.
 They bathed in the dried up river and washed away the dirt from their bodies.
 They played in the waters to their heart's content, drank the water till they could drink no more and again started on their journey. Soon they reached a city.

But, you know what?

The city was not at all built. It was supposed to be built in the future.
 They heard the citizens conversing inside the city.
 The three princes felt excited for they knew that this city would be the best place to live.
 They entered the city and looked around. They saw three beautiful mansions.
 The mansions were made of gold and decorated all over with diamonds and gems.

But you know what?

Two were not built at all and one had neither walls nor pillars!
 The three princes entered the mansion without walls.
 They rested there for a while; but they were feeling hungry and decided to explore the house a little.
 After some search, they found the kitchen.
 They saw three pots made of burnt gold kept there.

But you know what?

Two pots had big holes in them and the third one was broken into pieces.
 They took the broken pot and cooked a variety of dishes.
 They found hundred freshly made leaf cups in the store room.

But you know what?

The leaf cups were short of a hundred and had many holes on them.
 They prepared many tasty dishes and filled the cups with them.
 Since they were good princes, they invited three Brahmins to eat the food prepared by them.

But you know what?

Two of the Brahmins had no bodies at all and the third one had no face.
 The three Brahmins ate all the food kept in the leaf cups.
 After they left, the princes ate off the left-over food.
 Since they were so good they were made the rulers of that city.
 The three princes lived happily ever after in that city which was to be built in the future.
 Even now that city is there. The princes daily go out for hunting in the forests. Some day I will take you there.”
 The child was very much satisfied with the story. It exclaimed “Super”; hurriedly placed a kiss on the mother's cheek and ran away to share the story with its friends.

WHAT IS ALL THIS ABOUT?

Our life narratives are not less foolish than this story related to a child!

Look around.

What do you see? Buildings, roads, trees?

You know what?

There are only atoms floating in and out and no objects at all!

The buildings, roads, trees etc. are just pictures projected by the mind.

Who are all sitting around you? Mother, father, brother etc.?

You know what?

If you never shared some chromosomes with these, you would not share even a cup of water with those beings!

You believe that you live inside a huge solid world?

You know what?

Unless light rays fall on your eyes and draw lines of objects, you will see no world at all.

All the shapes you see around you are supported by light rays with a fixed speed!

A slight disparity in its speed, you will have a cartoon world around you.

You see a pictorial colorful world with countless objects around you with your eyes and believe that a Great God gifted these two holes to you?

You know what?

The eye which is just an evolutionary gimmick captures a very minute point of an object in one instant, and the mind alone manages to concoct a complete picture of the object and prove the reality of the pictures for you.

(Mind is not a limb hidden within your body; it is the power of information-processing that belongs to all, from a worm to a Brahmaa.)

You hear sounds, you see colors?

You know what?

Mind alone codes the air pressure as sounds and electromagnetic wave-frequencies as colors.

In truth, there exist no color, no sound outside of the mind.

All is in the mind!

Whatever exists is whizzing electric charge!

Whatever exists is a pattern in the void, including your body!

The cherished 'I' is just a label for the moving 'atom pile connection' or the 'cell colony' which you call your body.

The adored 'I' is just a point of self-awareness, an assessment we make of all the data that is collected in the store-house of the 'mind'.

We move, eat, shout, scream, reproduce, because the chemicals oozing in the mind make us do those things.

These minds again follow the command of the genes.

Gene is nothing but a chemical traveling through our bodies towards eternity.

As servants of that inert chemical, we love, hate, kill, and so we survive, or rather help the 'gene' survive.

You place an objection that you always think independently and you are always above the chemical commands?!

You? Independent? Free? (Never ever!)

See a cake inside a shop window; your saliva starts leaking.

Smell the fragrance of a delicacy; you want to rush to the dining table.

See the opposite sex -young and beautiful; your reproductive system gets ready to act.

Let someone make a derogatory comment, your eyes become red, your mouth throws out dirty words even before you know it.

See even a shining car-window pane; you adjust your looks immediately.

Is there any moment in your life where you act beyond the level of chemicals?

You are a slave to the chemicals!

Do you ever think before you act?

Like an earthworm, you react to the object in front of you even before you know what you are doing.

Earthworm has no intellect, true! It cannot think!

But 'you, the human', never use your intellect, the reasoning tool that is rotting inside you!

How much do you differ from that worm?!

If evolutionary rules suggest that the limbs not used fall away, surely the future generation of humans would revert back to the inert state of plants and trees!

No harm in saying that you are just a tiny part of the chemical scum spreading all over the earth!

A chemical fungus covering the land-scape!

Where is the precious 'I'?

Like the princes 'you' were not born at all.

It is the gene which commands the mind to produce chemicals to suit its survival.

Where are 'you' in this 'chemistry' lab?

It is the whizzing electrons appearing here and there.

Where are 'you' in this 'Physics' lab?

It is the cell colony which takes the label of your name and walks about.

Where are 'you' in this 'Biology' lab?

Signals appear in the mind randomly and actions occur.

Where are 'you' in this 'Neuroscience' lab?

Every thought that appears in your mind is there because of chemistry, physics, biology and psychology.

You are Consciousness?!

What is Consciousness?

Have you spared even five minutes a day to enquire who you are?

Have you even analyzed what is 'Consciousness'?

Have you read Dennett or Hofstadter to find out what is the meaning of the word 'Consciousness'?

Have you tried to stop the flow of thoughts even for a minute as Ramana instructs?

Have you tried to love God as Ramakrishna shows?

You never have time for anything, and keep the discrimination or enquiring power away.

You run after million things and have made anxiety and apprehension as your innate parts.

You cannot breathe a moment without worrying about something.

If nothing is there, you worry about fictitious characters of unreal stories.

Our life stories are also unreal and invented by the mind.

Lest we know about the unreality of our own existence and the world, we keep the enquiring power away and keep beating ourselves with clubs and try to forget our pains in cheap and harmful entertainments.

What do you know?

Neither am I real, nor you, nor this world.

Only a sum total of all mind signals or perturbations or Vaasanaas exist painting the picture of the world.

Or even they do not exist, for who is there to see what?

Only Silence exists watching itself!

॥ नेह नानास्ति किञ्चन ॥

NO DIFFERENTIATION EXISTS WHATSOEVER.

STORY OF KING LAVANA

INTRODUCTION

Lavana's story tells again about the illusory nature of the space/time phenomenon. King Lavana experiences a life of sixty years as a Chaandaala within an hour or so in his mind, as he is seated on his throne. He also sees the people connected to his Chaandaala life real and living. This paradox is explained by Sage Vasishtha.

KING LAVANA AND THE SORCERER

VISITOR TO THE COURT

King Lavana looked at the visitor skeptically. The visitor was boasting too much about his magical abilities and his power to create illusions of any sort. Lavana's face was expressionless. He smiled within himself. *'He, the terror of the enemy kings, the mighty Lavana, as if could be deceived by the illusory power of this weird looking man!'* Lavana, the emperor of UttaraPaandava kingdom was well known for his courage and valor all over the earth. As much as he was a terror to the wicked ones, he was overly compassionate to the needy and poor. People had nothing to fear under the shelter of his mighty arms. He had mastered all the Scriptures under the guidance of Sage Vasishtha and even practiced the contemplative methods of Self-realization. His character was blemish-less; his actions were perfect; his thoughts were noble! On the whole, there was nothing in the world that could un-stabilize his calm disposition and disturb his tranquil state. He had nothing to fear from any illusory power of any creature from heaven or hell. King Lavana smiled within himself.

SORCERER

Lavana looked at the faces of the people seated in his court. His ministers also had the same skeptical look in their eyes; but others seated in the court reacted in different ways to the sorcerer's presence. Some trembled and recited the names of their favorite deities; some laughed to hide their fears; some closed their eyes; some looked at the king for support. The king again looked at the weird looking man with scorn. The sorcerer had requested permission to present his talent before the king. He wore a head-dress made of colorful feathers. His face was painted red as if to hide his identity. A black moustache covered half the face. The eyes were red and glared with abnormal brightness. His whole body from the neck to the toes was covered by a long skirt woven with many colored feathers. A talking parrot of fine colors sat on his shoulder and repeated the last word of whatever sentence he uttered in a screeching voice, adding more abnormality to the scene. The sorcerer held a bunch of peacock feathers tightly in both of his hands as if afraid that the slightest movement of those feathers could prove dangerous to one and all.

King Lavana at last broke his silence and addressed the sorcerer. *"So you think I can be deceived by you through some illusion...?"* A scornful smile peeped from the corner of his mouth as if challenging the man and his bunch of peacock feathers.

The sorcerer was unaffected by the critical look of the king and smiled at the king with more disdain and said, *"Would you dare give me permission...?"*

The king looked at his ministers as if asking for their opinion. They also showed disbelief in the words of the sorcerer, and flashed knowing smiles at the king. The king decided to amuse the common populace seated in his court. Any entertainment like this from a road-side vagabond would not harm anybody he decided, and nodded his agreement to the magical show that the weird man promised to present.

THE MAGIC

The sorcerer saluted the king with a great show of pretentious humbleness. He passed his eyes all round the court throwing fiery glances at any one who dared to think low of his talents. Then, he walked forward a few steps and stood close to the steps which led towards the throne placed on a high pedestal. The king was comfortably seated on a huge golden throne decorated with the choicest gems available in the world. The sorcerer fixed his eyes on the king's face for a few moments. The king also returned the stare without batting an eye lid. He had decided to humor the poor creature playing with the bunch of peacock feathers. The people in the court watched every action of the sorcerer carefully so as not to miss any amazing magical feat that he might produce. The court was silent. Only the humming noise from the sorcerer's mouth filled the quarters. There was an eerie atmosphere all around. Some with weak hearts trembled as if expecting the entire world to vanish the next second. The sorcerer was uttering some strange sounds in a very low voice. The pretty maidens who waved the chowries on both sides of the king shivered a little as if some cold wind had passed through them. They closed their eyes in some unknown fear. The sorcerer suddenly lifted the bunch of peacock feathers and waved it violently in front of the king. Immediately the whole place was filled with colorful sparks of light all over. Nothing could be seen except the colored light drops floating everywhere. A few silent apprehensive minutes passed. The sparks vanished all at once suddenly bringing a normal vision to all the courtiers. The sorcerer was nowhere to be seen. The people sighed with relief. Nothing notable had happened really. Only a spectacular sight of colorful lights! That is all! And the sorcerer had been acting as if he had the entire world under his control. A smile lit up all the troubled faces in the court; but smiles did not last long. They were all shocked at what had happened to their dear king. The king..?

THE KING...?

The king had become frozen like a statue on the throne. His eyes were open and staring at some invisible thing in front of him. He never even blinked. The eyes were fixed like the eyes of a portrait. The old minister who had known the king from when he was a child ran up the throne and touched him with alarm. The king was alive. The heart-beats had not stopped; the breathing was deep and slow; but the body did not move even slightly. The minister shook the king hard and called out his name many times. The king did not respond in any way. He looked as if he was lost in some deep thoughts. The minister came down the steps of the throne slowly, unable to fathom the events of the day. He lifted his hands and gestured the common populace to keep quiet. All the "OOH"s and "AH"s of the people stopped instantly. The court was silent. Everyone kept watching the king. The ministers discussed something in low voices and sat on their chairs helpless to do anything. All of them waited anxiously. Some ten minutes or so passed this way. Suddenly the king moved, and his whole body shivered a little. It was as if he was trying to get up and jump into something. His unconscious body was falling out of the throne. The body-guards who were watching the king with all alertness, jumped forward and held the king in their mighty arms. They slowly seated the king on his throne. The king gradually regained consciousness. His eyes looked all around as if searching for something. He did not seem to recognize anybody there. His face was creased with worry. He looked confused and bewildered. He was sweating profusely. All the ministers stood around him anxious about the king's well-being. Some courtiers even got ready to hunt that evil sorcerer and slice him into pieces. The king mumbled something incoherently. He looked slightly frightened of all the people surrounding him. The old minister understood the confusion in the king's mind and sent away all but two or three very close friends of the king. The king asked the kind old minister- *"Who are you all? Where am I? Whose court this is? Where are my wife and children? What have you people done to them?"*

The minister consoled him with kind words.

He got the maid to bring a mirror to the court. He made the king see his face in the mirror.

The king at first was shocked by the handsome face that stared at him from the mirror; but suddenly his eyes shone with understanding and he started laughing aloud uncontrollably. He was his own self now.

THE KING PRAISES THE SORCERER

The king was sitting in his own private chambers.

He had taken some refreshments and felt at ease now. His close friends and ministers were seated at their respective places. They were eagerly looking at the face of the king waiting for an account of his experiences.

The sorcerer was sitting on a special golden chair provided for him as a respectful gesture from the king.

He had appeared in the court room as soon as the king had woken up fully.

Now, he was sitting silently and was observing the king with amusement.

His red-hued eyes smiled with hidden mischief.

The king addressed him directly!

“Well done my dear friend! I do appreciate your power of delusion.

You are not less than Lord Naaraayana himself in deluding others. Your magic is indeed great.”

He signaled his minister with a slight nod of his head.

Next moment, hundred maids came into that room with huge golden plates filled with precious gems and diamonds.

They placed all the plates in front of the sorcerer and retired to the corner of the room.

The king addressed the sorcerer again-

“Sir, your act deserves more than these gifts. Please accept them as my humble offerings.

Ask me for anything that you desire for. I will try my best to fulfill your wish.”

The sorcerer stood up. He saluted the king and said-

“Lord, I do not need all these. I have performed only my duty. Now please permit me to go”.

So saying, he waved his bunch of peacock feathers once more.

A blazing light arose where he stood, and he was gone.

THE KING TELLS HIS STORY

The minister seated next to the king asked-

“Lord, what is all this? What happened to you? Please be kind and tell us everything.”

The king, who was staring at the place where the sorcerer stood with surprise, turned his face towards the anxious friends. He closed his eyes for a few moments as if trying to remember everything that had happened at the time of his swoon.

Then he opened his eyes and said-

“You all must have seen the sorcerer waving his bunch of peacock feathers and the colorful sparks filling the court room. After the mist of colorful light-drops cleared, I saw myself standing next to a very beautiful horse. It had all the qualities that Indra’s horse ‘Uccheishravas’ is said to have. It was so tempting that I decided to ride the horse for some distance and come back.

I had no other thought in my mind.

The court room, sorcerer, country, everything was forgotten. I just wanted to ride that magnificent horse.

The moment I sat on it, I understood that I had made a mistake in trusting that horse.

It immediately sped with the speed of lightning and I had to hang on to it for life.

I could not control it in any way. I do not know where it went or how much time elapsed.

I was feeling tired and hungry; but the horse kept on running as if set on fire.

I could not even know which cities or villages I was passing through.

Only when the heat of the Sun dried me up and hot sand hit my face, I understood that I was in a huge desert land. It had no end or beginning. I felt I was riding the fiery Sun across the sky and felt scorched by the heat of the land. After some eternity, I felt suddenly very cold.

I understood that I was in a wild forest-region filled with giant trees and countless shrubberies.

‘It was now or never’, I thought and jumped on to a branch under which the horse went through.

As I hung with both my hands to a creeper covering the huge branch, the horse disappeared into the dark interiors of the forest. It was already becoming dark. I could not even see my own hand in the enveloping darkness.

I somehow managed to climb on to the upper side of the branch and held on to the creeper tightly, for fear of falling down. I heard some hissing sound and felt something cold as some rope like thing moved close to me.

I even stopped breathing to avoid dangers and remained like a statue for the rest of the night. It was the longest night I had ever lived. Each moment was equal to a Brahmaa's day. The cold wind froze my limbs already frozen in fear. I had completely forgotten who I was. My head was blank. I was filled with fear like a deer lost in the lion's dominion. My teeth were chattering in the cold wind. Various types of insects were biting all the open places of my body. I was hungry, tired and exhausted. My mouth had dried up. All I needed was some food and water. I would have done anything for a morsel of food. Forgotten were all my hard acquired knowledge; forgotten were my warring abilities. I did not even remember my name or family or country. I was like a human animal, only wanting to survive.

THE KING IS LOST IN A FOREST-LAND

After the never ending night vanished at the sight of the Sun, I could see where I was. The ground was very near and the tree was a huge Jamboo tree spreading its branches all over that area like a spider spreading out its legs. I saw also many huge snakes sheltering in the hollows of the tree. I quickly jumped out of the tree. My clothes were in bits. I somehow managed to cover my lower part of the body properly; the sense of decency was still alive somewhere in my heart. I had scratches all over my body; some parts were bleeding; some parts were swollen. One of my eyes was closed and swollen. Some passing branch might have poked the eye, I thought. I slowly got up and started walking! Walk where? There were only thorny bushes and giant trees everywhere. Somewhere far above I heard some birds chirping. Insects hovered around my wounds trying to suck the blood out of me. I took a thorny branch and waved them away as I walked. I had only one thought in my mind- 'food'. I tried eating some leaves and found them horribly bitter and irritating to the mouth. My tongue got swollen by their poisonous juice. I had no tears to cry even. Thorns pricked my feet; creepers got in my way; snakes rushed past me. I walked and walked. I would fall down exhausted and swoon. Then I would be frightened that some wild animal may eat me alive and I would get up and walk again.

THE CHAANDAALA MAIDEN

How long I went through the forest, I have no idea. I decided to walk till death. There was no goal other than death now. Food was an impossible thing that never could be found in that forest. I did not even pray to the Devas; I had no idea of the Devas or heavens then. I was just an animal in human shape. At some point I think I sat down under a huge tree and had fallen into a swoon like sleep. Some noise nearby woke me up. I peeped through the bushes. Wonder of wonders! I saw a girl walking on a forest path. I did not see her dark black skin. I did not see her short fat body. I did not smell the horrifying stink coming out of her body. I did not see that the pupils of her eyes were continuously moving making her look more grotesque. I saw only the basket in her hand, and inhaled the smell of food coming from it. I pounced like an animal and stood in front of her. Shocked by my sudden appearance she let out a scream. I gestured to the food and begged her like a dog pleading at the master. She scrutinized me from top to bottom. She even pinched my cheeks hard to see whether I was real. I screamed in pain and yet went on begging for food, touching her feet covered with dust. She just laughed, kicked me away and started walking away. I followed her like her shadow and begged for food wherever she stopped. She now eyed me differently. Her face was red and made her look more devilish. She turned towards me and said that she was taking the food for her father working in the fields. She could not dare give it to anyone else. I don't know how, but I understood all her words as if I belonged to the same village where she was born and brought up. I showed her my shrunken stomach and begged her again. She looked at me now with pity and said-
"Look! I can share this food only with my husband! Will you be the father for my future children?"
 I hesitated a little.
 She again said-
"My father is the chief of the Chaandaala (despised group of outcastes) village I belong to. If you marry me, you can have three times a day as much food as you can eat. You will live like a prince with me."

The talk of so much food made my mouth wet again. I felt I was reborn. I wanted at that time only 'food'. I did not care about anything else then. I nodded my head in agreement. She took a little bit of the raw meat from her basket and fed me like feeding a pet dog. I gulped it in one mouthful and looked at her for more. She laughed and dragged me with her fat hand like a prize-catch, towards the field where her father was ploughing the field. She now and then threw a piece of meat towards me as if playing a game. I caught it instantly and swallowed it like a delicacy from heaven. I followed her obediently, only intent on eating food from her hand.

THE MARRIAGE

The father who was like a dark devil risen from hells saw me; he approved the fair hued human animal; he patted my back; I was given more food; we three went to the village at the base of the mountain; the whole village was stinking; meat pieces were strewn everywhere; sliced flesh parts of pigs, crows, dogs, horses and monkeys were spread out on the ground for drying in front of the huts; dirt-covered children with devilish faces were sucking blood from freshly cut meat pieces and oozing blood from their mouths; all the black-hued villagers looked at the fair-hued catch that followed their chieftain's daughter obediently like a dog; many young maidens were envious of her good fortune; some stroked me like petting an animal and laughed at my uncomfortable-ness; my future wife saved me from all those ugly maidens and took me inside a house; I was given more food; I was placed in the special hut of the chieftain; I was introduced to my future mother-in-law who was squint-eyed; she also gave me some food; next day I was married to the chieftain's daughter in all grandeur; wine and meat were abundantly consumed; I was now the official husband of a Chaandaala girl; I was pampered with lot of food; I ate and ate and became a fat fair hued Chaandaala in no time; within five years I was the father of a girl and two sons.

THE FAT CHAANDAALA

I learnt to hunt animals; I learnt to cut the fleshy limbs of the animals; I learnt to take care of goats and sheep; I learnt to be dirty and stinking like all others; I learnt to drink intoxicating drinks and shout; I learnt to fight for the smallest piece of flesh or land; I learnt to scream at my family; I learnt to walk out in anger and live far from my family; I learnt to return and apologize desiring the company of my wife; I learnt to love her ugly looks; I learnt to treasure my children like my lives; I learnt to get frozen in winter; I learnt to get drenched in rains; I learnt to get scorched in the hot sun; I learnt to eat live-snakes; I learnt to suffer the mosquito bites. In short I had turned into a perfect Chaandaala (the dullest intellects living like animals).

THE FAMINE

The 'Wheel of the Time' moved on. I grew old; I was nearing my sixties; white beard covered my dried up chin; my face became creased with worries and anxieties; I was irritated with everyone; I fought with everyone; I was beaten up and wounded; I beat others and wounded them.

Life went on.

And a famine stuck; all animals died; all plants dried up; a forest fire destroyed the forest region in its entirety; the ground became hot like embers; there was no food anywhere; there was no water anywhere; many died; many committed suicide by jumping into fires; many left the village and died elsewhere; I too left my old parents-in-law and went away from that village accompanied by wife and three children.

THE DEATH

We walked and walked; I carried my younger sons on my shoulders.

There was only dry land everywhere. At last at the end of the day we reached the borders of the mountain-region and found a few Palmyra trees. My wife and daughter fell down there exhausted.

I dropped my sons down and sat down to rest.

I did not know what to do or where to go; I knew death was the final destination waiting for us; already my wife was struggling for breath and had fallen into a painful swoon; my daughter was sleeping like a dried creeper fallen on the ground; my eldest son lied down next to me hugging my legs; his eyes were dry and unseeing; my youngest son somehow crawled towards me and pleaded "*Give me meat! Give me meat. I want blood to drink*".

I consoled him; I reasoned with him; he would not stop his crying; I got wild and told him to eat my flesh and drink my blood; he said "*Give it now, I am hungry*".

I decided to die and give them my fried body as food; I lighted a fire with the dried leaves fallen there; and as the fire blazed high, I jumped into it....”

The king paused for a second.
Deathly silence filled the room.

“.... *then I fell here out of the throne*”.

Then the king laughed aloud and walked out of that room still laughing.

The ministers and friends of the king who were listening to the story intently, were sitting like statues made of flesh. They could hear the king’s loud laughter from far.

They got up slowly and walked out of the room. They did not even feel like discussing anything anymore.

LAVANA VISITS THE CHAANDAALA COLONY

The next day the king announced that he was going to the Vindhya Mountains. He wanted to visit the Chaandaala colony if it ever existed.

Why would not it exist? He had experienced the life in the mountains second by second, minute by minute. He knew every stone that stood there; he knew every particle of sand that rolled there. He dismissed the advice of his ministers who tried to convince him that he had dreamt the whole thing and it could not have happened in reality.

He had only asked permission from his Guru Vasishtha. The wise Sage had nodded his agreement.

‘No harm in searching for truth; no attempt goes waste when in search of facts’, he had said.

Now the king was on his way to the Vindhya Mountains with his retinue.

He searched far and wide in that wilderness, till he reached a place he recognized as burnt by the forest fire.

He saw some old women rolling on those ashes. One very old woman was crying and weeping loudly.

She was lamenting for her fair-hued son-in law and her dark hued daughter; she was calling for her grandsons and grand daughter.

The king got down from his horse and approached her. He enquired her about her family.

Amidst her weeping and crying sessions she managed to tell the whole story of the fat Chaandaala son-in law, which the king had experienced in the court room as an illusion.

The king was amazed; he arranged for their comfortable living till death, and moved away.

He wandered for some more time visiting all the places he had seen as a Chaandaala in his illusory experience. Thinking deeply about all that had happened he returned home with many questions burning his mind.

THE RAAJASOOYA SACRIFICE

The king was seated on the ground on a deer skin spread for him. A pair of white cotton garments covered his handsome body. He had not worn any ornaments. He was now in the hermitage of Sage Vasishtha.

His Master Vasishtha was seated on a wooden seat placed slightly high above the ground. His eyes were closed in contemplation. He was thinking about the questions asked by his royal disciple.

“Who was that sorcerer? Why did he create this illusion?

Why I had to suffer like this even in a dream, when I have not performed any wrong action in thought, word or deed? How did the illusion in my mind become a reality?

How could my experience of few minutes be equal to many years of life in a Chaandaala colony?”

The king was waiting like a chaataka bird to get answers to his questions. He knew only Vasishtha the son of the Creator could have answers to all these paradoxes. He need not have to wait long.

The Sage broke the silence, to silence the mind of his dear disciple.

“My dear Lavana! Do you remember the RAAJASOOYA YAJNA performed by you in your mind long back?”

Lavana thought back.

Yes, he remembered that incident very well. He had heard that his ancestor Yudhishtira had performed the Raajasooya Sacrifice (a sacrifice performed by a monarch as a mark of his subduing all other Kings) and attained heavens.

He also decided to do the same; but he did it in the arena of his mind.

Yes! He had the power to concentrate on anything for a long time. So he sat in his meditation-room and performed the Sacrifice in his own mind. Without forgetting even a smallest detail he had enacted the Sacrifice mentally. He had collected all the materials in his mind; invited the Sages and Brahmins in his mind; had offered a lot of charity in his mind; by the time the Sun set, he had gone through a year's experience. After getting up he had forgotten all about it thinking it as an amusement enjoyed by the mind.'

He answered politely, *"Yes Lord! I had done so!"*

The Sage smiled and said-

"Don't you know that one who performs the Sacrifice undergoes a lot of suffering in his mortal life? Since you had performed the Sacrifice in the mind, you experienced the suffering in your mind alone. Indra, the Lord of Devas sent his messenger here in the guise of a sorcerer to give you that suffering in your own mental arena. That is all!"

Lavana smiled sheepishly and bent his head down.

'TIME' IS IN THE MIND

The Sage continued his talk.

"And you have the doubt about the 'Time factor' too!

What is 'Time' after all? There is no absolute 'Time and Space' in the world, inside which events occur.

Every event has its own 'Space-Time' boundaries.

You yourself said that when you clung to the branch and spent the night in that jungle, every second passed for you as a 'Kalpa', Brahma's day! But if the same had been a pleasant experience even a 'Kalpa' would have passed off in a second! Long and short spans of 'Time' are just the measures concocted by the mind as per its whim and fancy.

Every one lives in his own 'Space-Time' arena in this world; when met together, the ideas of the mind are exchanged, and an illusion of an 'Absolute Time' which is similar to one and all, is ascertained as a fact.

In the courtroom the courtiers watched you frozen on your throne for a few minutes, or so they say; but each person who watched you would have experienced the 'Time-span' differently. Those who loved you most, for them each second would have been like a year. They would have suffered a lot in their minds worried about your safety. If a child had been there which was engaged in some game, those few minutes would be just two seconds for it. All is in the mind, Lavana!

What the mind decides that alone becomes the experienced 'Time-span'.

The measures we use for 'Time' and decide the hours are for the sake of conducting our daily affairs in a united way. It is just a practical solution to avoid confusions; but in reality there is nothing called 'Time'.

The experience alone is real.

The mind itself stretches the 'Time' or contracts it based on the quality of the experience.

The Chaandaala Lavana's experience was a period of extreme suffering and your mind measured it as many years.

King Lavana's experience was just an amusement as concocted by the sorcerer. So the 'Time' in the court was decided by those assembled there as some few minutes.

But in truth – 'years, months, days' are all just demarcations invented by the society for conducting their daily affairs. 'Time' as such is an illusion and is not real!"

'LIFE' IS JUST AN EXPERIENCE IN THE MIND

Lavana was absorbing the words of his Guru like nectar.

Vasishta continued:

"And before analyzing the amazing fact of whether the illusion experienced by you in the court had really occurred in the Chaandaala village, first tell me what is real and what is not real?"

When you dream, you experience so many events within a span of few seconds, but still if questioned, you will give a very detailed account of the events in the dream as if it had happened for years.

This is because the mind is capable of concocting stories as per its whim.

It can remember what has not happened as happened, or it can remember what has happened as not happened. Its job is to present a coherent story to you so you will feel comfortable in your life and feel certain that your life is an occurrence in 'Absolute Time and Space'.

All this is because of the ‘ignorance factor’.

If you had attained higher states of realization like many Great Sages, you would have dismissed any life narrative as unreal. You would have looked at both Lavana’s kingly experiences and Chaandaala experiences as just concoctions of the mind and dismissed them away; but you wanted it to be true in the waking world also. Your own mind fulfilled that wish by presenting to you the village of Chaandaalas where you are supposed to have lived.

Or if this answer does not satisfy you, then still it is reasonable to say that when you went to the Vindhya Mountain, your own thoughts reflected in the minds of the Chaandaalas and they all felt that a king had lived in their midst as one of them .

Or, a story like that could have happened there with some other king who had gone through those experiences and your mind reflected that story in your mind with you as that king.

Or, the sorcerer could have equally affected both you and the Chaandaala people by his illusory powers; and their minds and your mind both experienced the same thing.

My dear Lavana, know one thing –

As long as you do not realize your true identity as the Self Supreme, you will be affected by the ‘sense-patterns’ around you.

You as king Lavana are not a solitary person. Your ‘Atman or essence’ as Lavana includes your body, your family, your friends, your country, your palace and so many countless things that go to make a king Lavana. You are a totality of all that. Even if one ‘pattern’ is slightly altered you will feel lost and troubled in mind.

But look at the illusion you experienced. You as Lavana lost all your surrounding patterns in an instant and lost your identity completely. You became a different person and lived as a Chaandaala. You never ever thought of your other lost identity because in the mountain village, your pattern of the dark wife, children, hunting, all became your identity. When you woke up again as a king you were not happy to be king Lavana; you were again confused.

As long as you identify yourself as a ‘pattern’ bound by ‘other patterns’, you will be fooled by the events of the world; but once you detach yourself from the surrounding patterns of body, family, house, country etc, and realize your true nature as Brahman, the delusory power can never make a fool out of you.

The Supreme Brahman alone exists as the individual self and suffers, like you the king Lavana suffered as a Chaandaala. Like the Chaandaala who forgot his true identity of King Lavana, the individual self has forgotten its true identity of Brahman. This worldly-existence is the village of Chaandaalas. Every unenlightened creature is a fat Chaandaala here who has forgotten his royal status.

Lavana! Even your identity as Lavana is false. This very royal life you are living also is an illusion.

Here, the sorcerer is not Indra’s messenger but the delusory power of Brahman.

The horse that took you far, is like the Vaasanaa (lingering desire) which blindly takes us away from the Truth, and throws us into illusory life experiences.

Come on, wake up Lavana and understand the illusory power of the mind.”

King Lavana saluted the Sage with reverence and returned to his palace.

He pondered well over the facts mentioned by his Guru and soon realized the Supreme state of Brahman through proper methods.

END