

YOGAVASISTHA AND ITS PHILOSOPHY

LECTURES

Delivered under the auspices of the Kashi Tattwa Sabha,
Theosophical Society, Benares.

(First Series I – V.)

By

B. L. ATREYA, M. A., D. LITT.

Asst. Professor of Philosophy,

THE BENARES HINDU UNIVERSITY.

Reprinted from The *Theosophy* in India.

1932.

TO
SWAMI RAMA TIRTHA, M.A.

PREFACE

The appearance of this little book before the English-knowing public is mainly to the encouragement of Dr. S. C. Das, Secretary of the Kashi Tattwa Sabha, who almost compelled me to deliver a series of lectures on *Yogavasistha*, and also of Mr. D. K. Telang, General Secretary of the Theosophical Society, Indian Section, who kindly published the first five of them in the *Theosophy in India*. The present booklet is but a reprint of these lectures. I am, therefore, very thankful to them both. If this little book finds appreciation from those for whom it is meant, I will bring out later on a larger edition of it giving the full course of the 10 lectures I have delivered at the Sabha.

The reader, having gone through these pages, will agree with me, I think, that the system of thought outlined here is a unique and important contribution of the author of *Yogavasistha*, not only to Indian Wisdom, but to the Thought of the world as well. Its doctrines are being echoed in the contemporary scientific and philosophic thought of the West. Passage after passage can be quoted from modern and contemporary writers (as we have shown in some of the lectures of the series) which would appear to be rather translation of the verses from *Yogavasistha*. Yet it is very strange, and the responsibility lies with the modern exponents of Indian Thought, that this system is little known to the world. I really consider it a great privilege of mine to have been the first to draw the attention of modern scholars to the unique position of *Yogavasistha*. It was in December 1925 that I read my first paper on the "Philosophy of *Yogavasistha*" in the first meeting of the Indian Philosophical Congress at Calcutta. Since then I have been almost every year dealing with some aspect or other of its philosophy before the same body of learned thinkers. I am, however, very glad to note that Volume II of Dr. Dasgupta's *History of Indian Philosophy*, which has quite recently been published, contains a chapter of about 50 pages on this system of Philosophy. It is now hoped that *Yogavasistha* will be soon brought out of oblivion and will enjoy the place it deserves in the world of philosophical thought.

Benares Hindu University }
September 5th, 1932

B. L. Atreya

FOREWORD

I am very glad to write these few lines on the high value of this little book presenting in a simple and systematic way the essence of the philosophical thought contained in the extensive work of 32,000 slokas which generally goes by the name of *Yogavasistha*. The author, my esteemed colleague, Dr. B. L. Atreya, M. A., D. Litt (B.H.U), has really rendered a very valuable service, by this booklet, to those who would feel interested to know and understand the actual philosophical position of a reputed system of thought, unique of its kind, which forms a valuable heritage from the hoary past of this land, but have not the time nor leisure to go through the original voluminous work. The author has already produced a big volume on the subject, with the name of *Philosophy of Yogavasistha*, which formed the thesis of his Degree of Doctor of Letters under the Benares Hindu University. This work, the result of years of intensive study and labour covers an extensive ground in connection with the system of thought, presenting it in a manner in which no scholar, Indian or foreign, has done it hitherto. This book is not in print yet, and so not available to the reading public just now. When published later on, it would, I think, be regarded as a valuable contribution to the growing literature on the ancient Thought of India. In the meanwhile the author has done well by publishing this little book consisting of the five lectures he recently delivered on the subject at the Kashi Tattwa Sabha, Theosophical Society, Benares, which I understand, were much appreciated by those who happened to be present at them. This booklet would thus be a sort of introduction to the larger work, of which it forms but a brief outline, and as such it would create a desirable interest in further study of a system of thought of eminent and unique value from the larger work when it is published. The author has taken care to annex, even in this little work, a short Appendix giving an appropriate selection of the original Sanskrit texts on which the substance of the lectures was based. This forms but a small part of the larger Appendix of such slokas, classified in a systematic form, clearing on the subjects treated of in the bigger work by the author. It is hoped that even this little book would find the appreciation it deserves and serve the noble purpose for which it is being published.

Benares Hindu University }
September 5th, 1932 }

P. B. ADHIKARI,
Professor of Philosophy
& Head of the Department,
Benares Hindu University.

CONTENTS

Page

LECTURE I

Yogavasistha

The place of Yogavasistha in the philosophical literature of India; Uniqueness of the work; opinion of Swami Ram Tirtha and Dr. Bhagwan Das; opinion of the author of the work; authoritativeness of *Yogavasistha*. *Yogavasistha* a source of a number of Minor Upanishads, neglect and misunderstanding of the work. The method of teaching in *Yogavasistha*; its fault; *Vasistha-darshana*; Published literature on *Yogavasistha*.

LECTURE II

The probable date of composition of Yogavasistha

The orthodox view – The view current among modern scholars – Why it is not acceptable – Winteritz's view and its criticism – Why it is not regarded as a post-Shankara work – Why it is not to be regarded as a post-Gaudapada work – A pre-Gaudapada work – An objection answered – Why earlier than Bhartrihari – The current *Yogavasistha* not a work of Valmiki – Must have been written after Kalidasa and after the spread of Idealism and Nihilism of the Mahayana Buddhism – The probable date of its composition.

LECTURE III

The Type of person for whom Yogavasistha is meant

Consciousness of suffering – The cause and remedy of suffering – Self-effort versus destiny – Preliminary qualifications of the aspirant.

LECTURE IV

The Metaphysics of Yogavasistha

The source of knowledge – The chief feature of Vasistha's philosophy – Knowledge presupposes Idealistic Monism – Idealism – Similarity between waking and dream experience – Subjective Idealism – Objective Idealism – Worlds within Worlds – Variety of world experience – The general law of manifestation of objective world – Individuality – Thought power – Secret of supernormal powers – The Self – Death and after – The Cosmic Mind – The Creative Impulse – The Absolute Reality – Everything is Brahman – The world as unreal appearance – Acosmism.

LECTURE V

Realisation of the Absolute point of view

Philosophy and life – The ultimate source of Happiness – Bondage and liberation – The way of attaining liberation – Practical Self-realisation – Seven stages on the path of Self-realisation – The life of liberation – Nirvana or the final liberation from the world experience.

YOGAVASISTHA AND ITS PHILOSOPHY

PROF. B. L. ATREYA, M.A., D. LITT.

Benares Hindu University.

1. THE PLACE OF YOGAVASISTHA IN THE PHILOSOPHICAL LITERATURE OF INDIA.

YOGAVASISTHA, known also as *Maharamayana*, *Arsaramayana*, *Jnavasistha*, *Vasistha-ramayana*, or simply Vasistha (Winternitz: *Geschichte der Indischen Litteratur*, p. 443, Note) is a voluminous Samskrit work which is very widely read, in the original as well as in Vernacular translation throughout India. It is the Bible of those who seek for Self-Knowledge and Liberation, as *Ramayana* of Tulsidasa and *Bhagavata* are for devotees and *Bhagawad Geeta* for men of action. Thousands of men and women, from the lowest to the highest grade of culture, find solace in the study of this wonderful work, which contains many stories, in which even children may find pleasure, and philosophical speculations, which the brightest intellect may find difficult to comprehend. It is one of the greatest productions of the Indian mind, and surely the best companion for one anxious to realise Cosmic Consciousness and to live on the height of spiritual peace, where the best and noblest men of India have always aspired to stay.

Swami Rama Tirtha, one of the greatest saints of modern India, said, in one of his American Lectures: "One of the greatest books, and the most wonderful according to me ever written under the sun, is *Yogavasistha*, which nobody on earth can read without God-Consciousness" (*In Woods of God-Realisation*, Delhi Edn, Vol., III, o. 259). Dr. Bhagwan Das, an erudite scholar of Indian thought, writes in the Prefatory Note to his *Mystic Experiences*: "The *Yogavasistha*, a Samskrit work, in thirty-two thousand slokas, or sixty-four thousand lines; is highly honoured among Indian *Vedantins*, for its philosophy and its hints on practical mysticism, as also for its literary beauty and poetry. The saying about it, among Vedantins, is that it is a work of the *Siddhavastha*; i.e., for the philosopher-yogi, who, having mastered the theory, is passing on to the practice of it, while the other well known works, even the *Gita*, the *Upanishads*, and the *Brahmasutras* are works of the *Sadhanavastha*, i.e., for those who are yet trying to master the theory." Late Lala Baijnath, in his Introduction to the Hindi Translation of *Yogavasistha*, writes: "On the Vedanta philosophy there has not up to this time, been written any other work so big, and expounding the doctrines with so many stories, illustrations and arguments, as *Yogavasistha*. All will agree, when it is remarked, that by the study of this work alone even the most passionate and worldly-minded will become dispassionate and will gradually realise peace within" (*Yogavasistha Bhasatika*, Vol.II, p.7). And: "It is the crest-jewel of all the works on the Vedanta, and no aspirant of liberation can afford to neglect it" (Ibid. Vol. I, p.4).

The author of *Yogavasistha* himself was quite confident of the uniqueness, greatness, beauty and effectiveness of his own composition, and has given expression to his own

Yogavasistha and its Philosophy

opinion in several places of the work. Here are some of his statements: “It is a composition of thirty-two thousand verses containing beautiful similes and metaphors” (II. 17. 6). “It is written in a very intelligible style, ornamented with literary beauties, and full of illustrations in support of the doctrines expounded” (II. 16. 33). “Having studied, understood and realised its philosophy, one does not stand in need of any other performance for liberation” (II. 18. 35). “Having learnt the method of liberation expounded in this work even a child comes to realise the Self” (VIh. 215. 6). “It bring all sufferings to an end, and gives a unique consolation to the heart” (II. 10. 9). “It takes one to the state of the highest bliss which is beyond pleasure and pain.” (II. 10. 7). “He who studies it daily comes to realise God-consciousness” (III. 8. 13), and “becomes liberated even while living, in this life” (III. 8. 15). “With the help of this work one crosses over the ocean of the misery of Existence” (I. 2. 4). “It is really a store of wisdom, and contains all that is best anywhere” (III. 8. 12).

The greatness, authoritativeness and value of *Yogavasistha* may also be evinced from the influence it has had in the history of Indian thought. A comparative study of *Yogavasistha* with *Vairagyashataka* and *Vakyapadiya* of *Bhartihari*, with the *Mandukyakarikas* of Gaudapada, with *Vivekachuddamani* of Shankaracharya, and with *Manasollasa* of *Sureshwaracharya*, will clearly reveal the influence which *Yogavasistha* exercised over these illustrious thinkers of the *Advaita* school of thought. About ten centuries ago, in the first half of the 9th century A. D., when the great Shankaracharya had succeeded in creating a widespread interest in the *Advaita* Philosophy, the huge work, *Yogavasistha*, which on account of its size was available to the few only, was summarised into *Laghu Yogavasistha* by Abhinanda, a Gauda Brahmana of Kashmir (See Winternitz: *Geschichte der Indischen Litteratur*, Vol. III. P. 443, and Konow: HOS, *Karpuramanjari*, p. 197). Since then it has become a very popular work, and has inspired many writers and schools of thought. A careful study of the Minor-Upanishads will reveal that many of them are wholly or partially composed of *slokas* selected verbatim from *Yogavasistha*. All the six chapters, of *Maha Upanishad* except the first, all the five chapters, but the introductory portion, of *Annapurna Upanishad*, the whole of *Akshi Upanishad*, the second, which is the main, chapter of *Muktika Upanishad*, the fourth chapter of *Varaha Upanishad*, 50 *slokas* *Brahat Sannyasa Upanishad*, 18 *slokas* of *Shandilya Upanishad*, 10 *slokas* of *Yajnavalkya Upanishad*, 3 *slokas* of *Yoga-Kundali Upanishad*, and one *sloka* of *Pingala Upanishad* are taken verbatim from *Yogavasistha*. The section on Samadhi in *Jabaladarshan Upanishad*, the whole of *Tejovidu Upanishad*, 1 to 11 stanzas of the fourth section of *Yogashikha Upanishad*, 1 to 9 stanzas of *Tirupura Tapini Upanishad*, and 12 to 16 *slokas* of the second part of *Saubhagyalakshmi Upanishad*, when compared with *Yogavasistha*, clearly reveal its influence, if not direct borrowing from it, as in the case of the former group of *Upanishads*. Vidyananda (Madhavacharya), a well known writer of the first half of the *fourteenth* century, must have considered *Yogavasistha* as a book of high authority, for he quotes it several times in his famous work, *Panchadashi*, and his *Jivamuktiviveka* is chiefly based upon it, quoting no less than 23 *slokas* from it to support of its thesis. He also seems to have summarised *Yogavasistha* into *Yogavasistha-sara sangraha* in 2300 stanzas, a manuscript of which is reported by Hall (*Hall Bibliography Vedanta*, MS, CXLVIII) to be existing in the Government Sanskrit College Library, Benares. *Yogavasistha* is also quoted in the

Yogavasistha and its Philosophy

Bhaktisagara of *Narayanabhatta* (Winternitz Vol. III, p. 443 note), in *Hathayoga pradipika* (IV 15, 22, 23, 56, and 61), and in *Ramagita* (e.g., *Samadhi*, 17, 23, 31, 32, etc.) *Prakashatman*, the author of *Vedantamuktavali* (1565) also quotes *Yogavasistha* as an authority in support of his views. All these facts clearly indicate that *Yogavasistha* is one of the most important works on Indian Philosophy, and that, in the history of Indian thought; it has stood on an equal footing with *Upanishads* and *Bhagwad Geeta*, for the last one thousand years at least.

Yet it is very strange that it has not received the attention it deserves from the contemporary scholars of Indian Philosophy, by whom its study seems to have been conspicuously neglected. There is, for example, no mention of even the name of *Yogavasistha* in the Volume I of Dr. Das Gupta's *History of Indian Philosophy*, in which he devotes a big chapter to the philosophy of *Advaita Vedanta* of Gaudapada and Shankara and the school started by them. There is not a single paragraph on the philosophy of *Yogavasistha* in the two volumes of Prof. Radhakrishnan's *Indian Philosophy*, not to say of the previous works on Indian Philosophy by other writers. Even more surprising is the omission of the name of *Yogavasistha* from the excellent bibliography of Samskrit works on Indian Philosophy prepared by Prof. Abhyankar and appended to *Sarva darshana sangraha* edited by him and published in the Bombay Government Oriental (Hindu) Series.

Yogavasistha has not only been thus neglected by the present day writers on Indian Philosophy, but has also been misunderstood by some eminent writers Dr. Winternitz (*Geschichte der Indischen Litteratur*, Vol. III. P. 443) considers *Yogavasistha* to be more of a religious work than philosophical Dr. Farquhar writes in the same way *The Yogavasistha Ramayana* is one of the many Samskrit poems written in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries to popularise a philosophy or theology of a sect' (*An Outline of Religious Literature of India*, p. 228) Prof. Radhakrishnan also dismisses *Yogavasistha* as a religious work in a footnote on page, 452 of Vol. II of his *Indian Philosophy*. A careful study of the work, however, will convince one that it does not belong to any sect or religion, but is a purely philosophical work written in a popular but literary style. It is in no way inferior to many works which are usually accepted as philosophical, as distinguished from the sectarian ones.

2. THE METHOD OF TEACHING IN YOGAVASISTHA

The main reason, probably, why *Yogavasistha* is not considered a philosophical work is the manner in which it is written and the method which the author employs to impress his doctrines. One does not often find in this work terseness of Gaudapada, the hair splitting quibbles of the Neo Naayayikas and the Neo Vedantins, the authority obsession of Shankara, and the stereotyped terminology of the latter Shankarites. Nor do we find any influence of Vatsyayana or Dignaga on the author of *Yogavasistha*, as he does not attempt to put his doctrines in inferential form. He merely states in simple and unequivocal manner what he has to say, and makes it clear by way of similes, analogies and illustrations, and impresses the truth of what he feels as true through stories. He hates obscurity, brevity and vagueness. He knows that it is very difficult to make others realise that of which he has the direct intuition, and that it can be made intelligible only through illustrations and analogies. He

Yogavasistha and its Philosophy

avoids the method of abstract disquisition and dry argumentation. He goes back to the method of *Upanishads*, *Mahabharata* and *Jatakas*, which carried the truths advocated by them to the very heart of their readers. He also felt that works written in sweet and literary style were more read and appreciated by the laity than those written in the cold philosophical style, and probably thought that the *kavya* style might well be utilized for philosophy to make it popular and effective. All this is evident from what he says: “All that is expressed in sweet and graceful words and with easily intelligible arguments, similes and illustrations, goes directly to the heart of the listener, and expands there, just as a little drop of oil expands on the surface of water; whereas, all that is said without suitable illustrations and arguments intelligible to the hearer; in confused and obscure language, does not enter the heart of the hearer, and is a mere waste of words, like the butter poured on the burnt ashes of oblation. It is only through appropriate similes and illustrations that subtle, yet worthy of being known, themes can be made popular in the world, as it has been done so in all the famous works.” (III. 84. 45-47).

Moved by such considerations and by the desire of making his philosophy popular, he yoked the literary art of story-telling to his philosophy, which contained all that was best in Indian thought at the time he lived. How far he succeeded in his efforts only those who are gifted with the double fold genius in philosophy and literature can judge. We may only point out that his work has been a success in so far as it has been ever since, enjoying popularity in all grades of people, even though many do not grasp its entire philosophy. The reader feels that he is in the living presence of a saintly personality speaking from direct experience in simple and beautiful language. He is his own authority, and does not frighten and bore the reader with quotation after quotation from Upanishads, and other authoritative texts, as is done by the later writers on the Advaita philosophy. He has imbibed all that was best in the Indian thought that existed before him – Hindu, Buddhist and Jaina – and speaks from his own stand point, very often in words which might be mistaken as quotations from other books and teachers which he had thoroughly imbibed and made his own. It is in this way that some expressions of *Upanishads* and *Bhagwad Geeta* and some Buddhist works may be identified in *Yogavasistha*.

In his attempt to be clear and impressive, the author of *Yogavasistha* has, however, committed the fault of too much of repetition and sacrificed systematic arrangement of the contents of his work. The main divisions of the work into the six *prakaranas* – Vairagya (Dissatisfaction), *Mumukshu vyavahara* (Conduct of the Aspirant), *Utpatti* (Evolution of the World), *Stithi* (Continuation of the World) *Upashama* (Dissolution of the World-Experience) and *Nirvana* (the Cessation of Finite Existence) have not even been kept fully in view. Everything has been treated of in every *prakaranas*, and also in many chapters of the *prakaranas*. No scientific or logical classification has been kept in view with regard to the topics dealt with. This defect of the work is very much felt by the modern reader who expects everything properly arranged and classified and exhaustively, but tersely, treated in its own place. The same defect characterises all the abridgements or epitomes of *Yogavasistha* – *Yogavasistha sara* (225 slokas), *Laghu Yogavasistha* (4829 slokas, the tradition, however, says, 6000), *Mahopanishad* (5829 slokas), *Annapurnopanishad* (337 slokas).

Yogavasistha and its Philosophy

It is from the consideration of putting the philosophy of *Yogavasistha* in a systematic and terse form and thus to save the time and energy of the present day reader, who does not want to remain ignorant of the philosophy of *Yogavasistha*, yet at the same time, has no leisure to go through the unsystematic but important work of no less than 27,687 stanzas (at present available) that we have ventured to compile our *Vasistha darshana*, in which we have collected stanzas from the voluminous work, dealing with almost all the aspects of the philosophy taught in the work, and arranged them so as to present in a systematic form the tenets of the philosophy. It is the first attempt of its kind to put the entire philosophy of *Yogavasistha* in a terse systematic and intelligible form, inspired by the zeal of introducing a so far neglected, but important, system of thought to the modern scholars of Indian thought. The main thing that the reader, however, will miss is the stories which we have deliberately excluded from our epitome to win for Vasistha (or the author of *Yogavasistha*) a worthy place in the world of philosophy, where the naked truth is more appreciated than the garb in which and the accompaniments with which, it appears.

3. PUBLISHED LITERATURE ON YOGAVASISTHA

There is hardly any book or paper printed in English language in which any serious attempt has been made to study the philosophy or literary beauty of *Yogavasistha*. The following is the entire printed literature known to us in connection with *Yogavasistha* in English, Hindi, Urdu, and Samskrit.

A. On the probable Date of *Yogavasistha*

1. A paragraph in Winternitz: *Geschichte der Indischen Litteratur* (Vol. III. P. 443-44). Placing it in the 9th Century A. D.
2. A few lines in *An Outline of the Religious Literature of India* (by Farquhar) on page 228, placing it in the 13th or 14th century.
3. A paper on the date of *Yogavasistha* by Prof. Shiva Prasad Bhattacharya, published in the Proceedings of the Third Oriental Conference, Madras, p. 545 ff., placing it in the 12th century A.D.

B. Dealing with the Philosophy of *Yogavasistha*

1. Lala Baij Nath: Introduction (Hindi) to the Hindi Translation of *Yogavasistha*, published by Jnana Sagar Press, Bombay. It gives a brief analysis of the contents of the work, according to the different *prakaranas*.
2. K. Narayanaswami Aiyar: Introduction to the *English Translation of the Laghu Yogavasistha*, giving a very brief analysis of the contents of *Laghu Yogavasistha*.
3. B. L. Atreya: *Philosophy of Vasistha*, a paper published in the Proceedings of the First Indian Philosophical Congress, Calcutta, 1925,.

Yogavasistha and its Philosophy

4. B. L. Atreya: *Divine Imaginism of Vasistha*, a paper published in the Proceedings of the 2nd Indian Philosophical Congress, Benares, 1926.
5. B. L. Atreya: *Gaudapada and Vasistha*. A Comparative Survey of Their Philosophy, a paper printed in the Proceedings of the third Indian Philosophical Congress, Bombay, 1927.

C. On the Stories of Yogavasistha

1. English

1. *English Translation of Yogavasistha Maharamayana* by Vihari Lala Mitra, complete in four volumes, Calcutta, 1891. It is a translation of the whole work which is praiseworthy only as an effort, and not as a translation. It is not reliable being wrong inexact and misleading at numberless places. It is altogether useless for a student of philosophy.
2. *A translation of Yogavasistha (Laghu)* by K. Narayanaswami Aiyer, Madras 1896. It is more reliable than the above. Unfortunately it is a translation of a summary of Yogavasistha. It does not mention the numbers of the verses translated and is wrong in many places.

2. Hindi

1. *Yogavasistha Bhasha Tika* by Thakur Prasad published at the Jnana Sagar Press Bombay Samvat 1960 containing the original text as well as the Hindi translation of each sloka. It follows the interpretation of the text given by the Samskrit commentator, Anandabodhendra Saraswati who has read the ideas of the later *Advaita Vedanta* into the philosophy of *Yogavasistha*. One therefore often misses the real and original meaning of the text in many places while reading this translation.
2. *Yogavasistha Bhasha* published at the Naval Kishore Press, Lucknow, 1914 and also at the Venkateshwara Press Bombay. This translation, without the original Samskrit text is the most popular and widely read books on philosophy in Hindi. It does not contain the translation of some chapters of the original which are mere descriptions and are not of any philosophical interest. This translation appears to us quite a reliable rendering of the ideas of Yogavasistha.
3. *Yogavasistha Bhasha – Vairagya and Mukukshu Prakaranas*, published at the Venkateshwara Press Bombay. It contains only the first two chapters of the above mentioned translation, and is a very popular book.

3. Urdu

1. *Yogavasisthasara*, a translation of Laghu Yogavasistha by Munshi Suraj Narayan Mehra of Delhi, 1913. It is a quite reliable Urdu translation of Laghu Yogavasistha.
2. *Yogavasisthayana*, a translation of the same, by Shiva Brat Lal, Lahore. It is also very reliable, and better than the above one, in so far as we find the contents of the paragraphs noted on their margin, giving facility to the reader in understanding them.

Yogavasistha and its Philosophy

E. 1. The Original Samskrit Text

1. Complete, with the Commentary of Anandabodhendra Saraswati-1. Published at the Ganpat Krishnaji Press, Bombay, Samvat, 1936. It is published in Patra form, and all its verses are in continuation, hence very inconvenient to read.
2. Published at the Nirnaya Sagar Press, Bombay, 1918. In two volumes, edited by Vasudeva Lakshman Shastri Pansikar. Its printing is very good and reliable.

II. The Abridged Text

1. *Laghu Yogavasistha* of Abhinanda, published by the Nirnaya Sagar Press, Bombay, in Samvat, 1644, in unbound leaves, with two Samskrit Commentaries, one on the first three and the other on the last three chapters.
2. *Yogavasisthasara*, by an anonymous author, in ten chapters of 200 verses, without any commentary, published by the Lakshmi Narayana Press, Moradabad.

Note – There is an excellent chapter on *Yogavasistha* in Dasgupta's *History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. II, which has appeared recently. It came to our notice after these lectures had been delivered, and hence no mention of it could be made at the proper place.

LECTURE II

4. THE PROBABLE DATE OF COMPOSITION OF YOGAVASISTHA

It is very difficult to come to a definite conclusion about the date of many Samskrit works. In the case of works like *Yogavasistha*, the difficulty is not only that the author of the work does not say anything about himself or his time and place, but also the orthodox belief that the ancient Rishis could have an experience of future events as in the immediate present. The doctrine that the events of all the four *yugas* or cycles are repeated in each round of manifestation of the universe, very much stands in the way of modern historical method. What appear to be anachronisms are, according to this belief, explained as being due to the super sensuous vision of the author. Such an explanation is attempted in connection with *Yogavasistha* by K. Narayanaswami "The events recorded herein (*i.e.*, the teachings of Vasistha to Ramachandra) should have occurred in the *Treta Yuga* when Ramachandra incarnated. But in the initiation of Ramachandra by Vasistha, as recorded in the work, we find the story of Arjuna introduced herein. Is it not an anachronism? Some may ask. We shall find the objection to vanish into the air if we hear in mind the fact that nature is cycling round and round and is not a sealed book to our ancient Rishis. Every recurrence of the *yugas* beings with it its own Vyasas, Ramas and others. Therefore, before the divine vision of our ancient Rishis all the events of past as well as future, march in procession as recorded in the tablets of Chitrugupta (*A Translation of Laghu Yogavasistha*, Introduction p. Xxii)

Yogavasistha and its Philosophy

On the other hand, the few modern scholars who have turned their attention to *Yogavasistha* commit the mistake of putting it at a very late date. J. N. Farquhar, for example, writes ‘*The Yogavasistha Ramayana* is one of the many Samskrit poems written in the thirteenth and the fourteenth centuries’ (*Religious Literature of India* p. 228). Prof. Shiva Prasad Bhattacharya in a paper entitled ‘*The Yogavasistha Ramayana, Its Probable Date and Place of Inception*’ read at the Third Oriental Conference, Madras (1924), concludes “All this points out to the 10th to 12th century as the probable date (*Proceedings* p. 554 ff)

These and such other views which place *Yogavasistha* at a very late date cannot be accepted, mainly for two reasons.

1. By the time of Vidyaranya (the first half of the 14th century A.D) *Yogavasistha* had become an authoritative work. He quotes it in several places in *Panchadashi* and bases his *Jivanmuktiviveka* mainly on *Yogavasistha* (quoting no less than 253 slokas from it in support of his views). Prof. Bhattacharya seems to be ignorant of this fact. He believes “No writer and scholars on Philosophy earlier than Vijñānabhikṣu seems to use it as an authority’ (Ibid, p 549) Vijñānabhikṣu we must remember, is believed to have lived in the 16th century.

2. By the middle of the 9th century the huge work, *Yogavasistha*, was summarised into *Yogavasisthasara* or *Laghu Yogavasistha* of some 6000 stanzas by Gauda Abhinanda of Kashmir (see Konow: *HOS Karupuramanjari*, p. 197; Keith: *Catalogue*, Bodleian Library, MS 840; Winternitz: *Geschichte der Indischen Litterature*, Vol. III. P. 444). Prof. Bhattacharya is not aware of this fact even, as he says: “*The Laghu Yogavasistha* or *Mokshopayasana*, which presupposes the bigger work...is a work in 92 verses by a Bengali writer...named Abhinanda...who is thus to be distinguished from the famous Gauda Abhinanda of Kashmir” (Proceedings of the Madras Oriental Conference, p. 553 footnote).

Dr. Winternitz argues: “There is an abbreviated edition, *Yogavasisthasara* of Gauda Abhinanda who lived in the middle of the 9th century. The *Yogavasistha* must be older. As Shankara does not mention the work, it is probably written by one of his contemporaries” (G.I.L. Vol. III, p. 444). There is no logic in the argument. It is fallacious. This view fails to see how it could be possible for such a huge work to have been composed, become famous, studied, and summarised within a few decades only, for, the date of Shankara accepted by modern scholars is 788 to 820 A.D., and Gauda Abhinanda lived “about the middle of the 9th century” (Konow: *Karupuramanjari*)

Is there any strong reason why the work should not be believed to be a pre-Shankara one? Prof. Bhattacharya has argued: “The reference to the school of Vedanta philosophy as the “Vedantins” or “Vedantavadins” would take us to the time not earlier than that of the great Shankaracharya” (Proceedings. P. 552). This argument fails to prove the point, as the word *Vedanta* for *Upanishads* is very old (See *Mundaka Upanishad* III. 2. 6; and *Svetasvatara Upanishad* VI. 22), and there is sufficient indication in *Mandukya-Karikas* of Gaudapada, the teacher of Shankara’s teacher, that even before Gaudapada there must have existed a school of thinkers who expounded the philosophy of Vedanta (See *Karika* II. 31). There is no reason why they should not have been called by the name of *Vedantins* or

Yogavasistha and its Philosophy

Vedanataavadins. In *Yogavasistha* we do not find any other indication against its priority to Shankara. There are, on the other hand, some grounds in its favour:

1. The terminology of Shankara is quite unknown to the author of *Yogavasistha*. It could not have been so, had the author been a writer posterior to Shankara. Some important concepts of Shankara are conspicuous by their absence in *Yogavasistha*.¹

¹ E.g. Adhyasa, Sadhana chatushtaya consisting of works, viraga, shatsampat (i.e., shama, dama, titiksha, uparati, shraddha and samadhana) and mumukshutva Saguna and Nirguna Brahma, Savishesha and Nirvishesha Brahma Ishwara as distinguished from Brahma, Upadhi, Prarabdha karma, Sanchita karma, Krama mukti, Badha beginninglessness of Avidya and karma, Evolutionary process of the world as different from that suggested by the Sankhya system, etc, etc.

३ संप्रमाणसत्ताना पदमन्धिरपानिव ।
प्रमाणमेकमेवेह प्रत्यक्षं तदत श्यु ॥ (Y V II 19 16)
वर्गत्रयोपदेशो हि शास्त्रादिष्वस्ति राधव ।
ब्रह्मप्राप्तिस्त्ववाच्यत्वात्तस्मिन् तच्छ्रवणेऽपि ॥ (Y V VIb 197 15)

2. In *Yogavasistha Advaita Vada* is not found in a finished and conceptualised form, but in a cloud like vague and unfinished form, and without any fixed meaning in the terms used.

3. The author of *Yogavasistha* does neither try to defend his own position by arguments or by quotations from the *Upanishads*, nor does he vehemently criticise others, as is the tendency of Shankara and his school.³

³ Compare the following two verses of *Vivekachudamani* with those of *Yogavasistha* –

शान्तसंसारकलन कलावानपि निष्कल ।
यस्य चित्तं विनिश्चितं स जावन्मुक्त इष्यते ॥ (V. C. 430)

लीनधीरपि जागर्ति जाग्रदूर्ध्वविर्जितः ।
बोधो निर्वासनो यस्य स जीवन्मुक्त इष्यते ॥ (V. C. 429)

शान्तसंसारकलनः कलावानपि निष्कलः ।
यः सचित्तोऽपि निश्चितः स जीवन्मुक्त उच्यते ॥ (Y. V. III. 9. 11)

यो जागर्ति सुषुप्तस्थो यस्य जाग्रन्न विद्यते ।
यस्य निर्वासनो बोधः स जीवन्मुक्त उच्यते ॥ (Y. V. III. 9. 4)

Other very strikingly similar verses: -

<i>Vivekachudamani</i>	<i>Yogavasistha</i>	<i>Vivekachudamani</i>	<i>Yogavasistha</i>
6	VIb. 197. 18	171	VIb. 21. 11
62	III. 8. 15; III. 6. 6; VIb. 118. 4	172	III. 100. 39
129	VIa. 9. 32	172	IV. 27. 18 VIa. 8. 10
145	V. 91. 8	180	III. 116. 8
169	IV. 47. 48	183	VIb. 190. 25
169	2. 2. 5	193	III. 11. 4
170	IV. 57. 50	197	III. 42. 1; III. 21.69

Yogavasistha and its Philosophy

<i>Vivekachudamani</i>	<i>Yogavasistha</i>	<i>Vivekachudamani</i>	<i>Yogavasistha</i>
208	Vla. 128. 25	398	V. 21. 26; III. 111. 25 Vla. 2. 41
301 & 304	IV. 33. 28; V. 13. 17	407	IV. 17. 19; III. 98. 2
317	III. 22. 28	463	V. 35. 81
335	III. 7. 17	555	III. 96. 43
235	III. 61. 4	572	VIb. 53. 9
386	V. 27. 3	573	III. 3. 39
398	Vla. 29.7-8		

Compare also the following slokas from other Minor works of Shankara with those from *Yogavasistha*: -

(i)	<i>Svatmanirupana</i>	<i>Yogavasistha</i>
	97	Vla, 49, 1; VI, 40, 1; Vla, 9, 17
(ii)	<i>Atmabodha:</i>	<i>Yogavasistha</i>
	17	V, 71, 39
(iii)	<i>Satasloki</i>	<i>Yogavasistha</i>
	6	IV, 45, 7; Vla, 28, 4
	10	Vla, 33, 4; III, 10, 14
	15	Vla, 108, 20
	36	VIb, 210, 11
	81	III, 114, 56
(iv)	<i>Dakshinamurti Stotra</i>	<i>Yogavasistha</i>
	1	VIb, 22, 27; III, 44, 20
(v)	<i>Aparokshanubhuti</i>	<i>Yogavasistha</i>
	7	V, 5, 6
	12	V, 58, 32
	60	III, 7, 29
	61	III, 7, 42 & 43
	62	III, 7, 44; III, 3, 30; III, 66, 7
	70	II, 17, 9
	72	III, 21, 65
	73	IV, 1, 7
	79	III, 62, 4
	140	Vla, 28, 37; IV, 11, 29; IV, 17, 4

Compare also the following slokas from Suresvara's *Manasollasa* (a commentary on *Dakshinamurti Stotra* by one of Shankara's disciples) with those from *Yogavasistha*: -

<i>Manasollasa</i>	<i>Yogavasistha</i>	<i>Manasollasa</i>	<i>Yogavasistha</i>
1, 8	III, 64, 7; IV, 48, 49; VIb, 51, 8	VIII, 13	Vla, 95, 9
1, 9	VIb, 56, 3	VIII, 12	III, 44, 33
1, 11	VIb, 176, 5	VIII, 24	IV, 27, 28
1, 12	VIb, 49, 18	VIII, 26	V, 50, 34
1, 18	IV, 47, 41	VIII, 30	III, 21, 76; III, 21, 78
1, 28	VIb, 210, 11	VIII, 31	Vla, 69, 27 & 21 & 40
11, 31	III, 1, 20		
11, 48	Vla, 37, 16; IV, 44, 14		
IV, 3	IV, 45, 45		
VIII, 5 & 6	IV, 1, 36; VIb, 107, 13		
VIII, 10	IV, 47, 41		

Yogavasistha and its Philosophy

4. From the time of Gaudapada and Shankara the *Shruti* has been considered as the supreme, final and unquestionable of the *Advaita* philosophy, but we do not find this tenet in *Yogavasistha*, where “Experience is the Ultimate Proof of Knowledge.”

5. A careful and comparative study of the poetical works of Shankara particularly *Vivekachudamani*, *Aprokshanubhuti*, and *Shatasloki*, with *Yogavasistha* will clearly show that Shankara was not only influenced by *Yogavasistha*, but also thoroughly imbibed its teachings, and in many places composed almost literally identical verses and gave expression to almost the same ideas. We have been able to collect more than a hundred such extracts from the poetical works of Shankara as are almost identical with stanzas from *Yogavasistha*. *Yogavasistha* is not the borrower of the two, as the technical terms of Shankara used in his works are conspicuous by their absence in *Yogavasistha*.

A comparative study of *Mandukyakarikas* of Gaudapada and *Yogavasistha* will show that the *Advaita* philosophy that existed before the advent of Shankara was more akin to the philosophy of *Yogavasistha* than to that of Shankara and his followers. There is much common between *Karikas* and *Yogavasistha* not only in thought, but also in language⁴. The problem before us now is which is earlier of the two? There are certain reasons for the priority of *Yogavasistha*.

⁴ Compare e.g., the following *Karikas* of Gaudapada with the slokas of *Yogavasistha* mentioned against them: -

M K	<i>Yogavasistha</i>	M K	<i>Yogavasistha</i>
II. 14	VIa. 110. 11	II. 6	IV. 45. 45
II. 15	III. 101. 35	III. 48	VIa. 146. 18
III	IV. 11. 23	IV. 7	VIb. 195. 14; IV. 40..34
IV. 47	III. 9. 58	IV. 20	IV.1.21
II. 31	III. 54	IV. 82	IV. 27. 22
II. 5	IV. 19. 11	II. 18	II. 17. 9
II. 29	III. 91. 16. 11	III. 31	IV. 17. 19
II	VIb. 33. 45	III. 40	IV. 35. 2

Vide B. L. Atreya “Gaudapada and Vasistha” a paper in the *Bombay Philosophical Congress* (1927) Report p. 197 -210.

1. The *Karikas* are not written as an independent treatise on the *Advaita* philosophy, they are offered as a sort of commentary on the *Mandukya Upanishad*. Gaudapada interprets the *Upanishad* from the stand point of a previously existing school of thought, the leaders of which are referred to as ‘*Vedantesha vachakshana*’ (II, 31), ‘*tattvadah*’ (II, 34), ‘*nayaksh*’ (IV, 98), and as ‘*buddhah*’ (IV, 88). The views attributed to them and upheld in *Karikas* are identical with some of the views of *Yogavasistha*.

2. On the other hand, the philosopher Vasistha claims to have received his doctrines directly from the Cosmic Mind (Brahma) and to have realised their truth in his own experience (Y. V. II, 83). The philosophy of Vasistha includes almost all the views held by Gaudapada.

Yogavasistha and its Philosophy

3. *Gaudapada-Karikas* represent a later phase of the Advaita philosophy, when it tended to become critical, hostile and polemical towards other contemporary schools of thought, whereas *Yogavasistha* represents the earlier phase, when the *Advaita* philosophy existed in harmony with its sister philosophies, looking at them all from a higher point of view, in which all contradictions are harmonised and differences neglected (Vide VIb. 38. 4, III. 96. 49-53, VIb. 130.2, V. 18. 20). In this respect *Yogavasistha* is nearer to the *Upanishads* and the *Bhagwad Geeta* than *Karikas* and the works of Shankara.

Prof. Bhattacharya in this connection believes that this type of mentality could not be possible in Buddhist India 'before the days of the Pal Kings of Bengal' (*Proceedings*, p. 551). A study of *Harshacharita*, however, will convince us that in the first half of the 7th century such views could possibly be held in the *Madhyadesha*, now called the U. P. Bana describes a visit paid by King Harsha to the hermitage of a Buddhistic recluse, Diwakara Mitra, where representatives of various religious and philosophical schools were studying in perfect tolerance and harmony (Vide Carpenter *Theism in Medieval India* p. 111, 112). We need not, therefore go to the reign of Pal Kings of Bengal in the tenth century for the purpose.

There is a positive evidence also to the effect that a philosophy like that of *Yogavasistha* existed in India before the time of Shankara and Gaudapada. If there had not existed such a monistic philosophy before Gaudapada, whence did Bhavabhuti learn the views alluded to in *Uttara-Ramacharitra* (III, 47, and VI. 6)? The term "vivarta" is neither found in the Upanishads nor in the Bhagawad Geeta Bhavabhuti could not have borrowed it from Shankara, as modern scholars place him at the end of the 7th century A.D. All that Bhavabhuti says in connection with the idea of "vivarta" by way of a simile occurs at a number of places in *Yogavasistha* (VIa. 11. 40, V. 72. 23, III. 100. 28, VIa. 11. 18. 19, VIa. 93. 46, VIb. 54. 17, VII. 12. 30, III. 114, 6, 9, VIb. 49, 112). There seems to be no reason against *Yogavasistha* having been in existence before Bhavabhuti.

This belief is very much strengthened by a comparative study of *Yogavasistha* with *Vakyapadiya* of Bhartrihari. There are many stanzas common in the two works *Sloka*, III. 7. 41 of *Vakyapadiya*, for example, is almost the same as sloka, VI. 56. 35 of *Yogavasistha*.⁵ Some stanzas of *Yogavasistha*, or their imitation, are also found in Vairagyashataka of Bhartrihari, e.g., compare sloka 54th of the latter with the 33rd of VIb. 136 of the former, and the 78th of the latter with the 31st and 33rd of V.22 of the former. The chief reason why we believe that Bhartrihari is the borrower of the two is that the doctrine of "Shabda Brahma", which is the main doctrine of *Vakyapadiya* of Bhartrihari, is unknown to the author of *Yogavasistha*. It must therefore, have been written before Bhartrihari, who is believed to have died in 650 A. D.

5

धौ क्षमा वायुरादित्य सागर सरितो दिश ।
अन्त करणतत्वस्य भागा बहिरवस्थिता ॥ (V P III 7 41)
धौ क्षमा वायुराकाश एवैता सरितो दिश ।
अन्त करणतत्वस्य भागा बहिरवस्थिता ॥ (Y V V 56 35)

Yogavasistha and its Philosophy

Compare also the following slokas of Bhartrihari's *Vakyapadiya* with those of *Yogavasistha* mentioned against them: -

<i>Vakyapadiya</i>	<i>Yogavasistha</i>	<i>Vakyapadiya</i>	<i>Yogavasistha</i>
I. 1. 1	VIa. 93. 46	III. 1. 22	III. 67. 2
III. 1. 41	V. 56. 35	III. 3. 70	III. 121. 53
III. 6. 28	VIa. 33. 45	III. 3. 70	III. 121. 53
III. 6. 23	VIb. 51. 8: V. 48. 49	I. 1. 131	III. 9. 58
III. 101. 35	III. 1. 22	IV. 2. 12	VIb. 31. 36

On the other side, we have no hesitation in saying that the existing work, *Yogavasistha*, cannot be regarded to be the work of Valmiki in the present form, for the following reasons:

1. The first chapter of the current *Yogavasistha*, which tells us that the teachings embodied in the work have been repeated several times, indicates that it must have been written much later than Valmiki's composition even it there existed any to form the nucleus of the present work⁶. From the *Mahabharata*, *Amushasana Parva* II.5.9, of course it appears that there may have existed even before the composition of the present *Mahabharata*, some work containing the views of Vasistha, which he had learnt from Brahma (See. Y.V. II.10). Nothing more than this can be said in favour of the orthodox opinion.

⁶ The first Chapter summarised: -

There was a Brahmo Sutiksh a by name. He had a philosophical doubt in his mind. To solve his problem he approached one Agasti. The latter, having answered his questions told him the following story. Once Agniveshya saw his son sitting idle with a doubt in his mind as to whether action or its renunciation led one to moksha. In order to show him the right path he told his son the following story. Once a fairy named Suruchi while sitting on one of the peaks of the Himalayas, happened to see a messenger of Indra passing alone that way. She asked him where he was coming from. In reply the messenger told her that he came from the hermitage of the sage Valmiki, where he had escorted, by the order of his master Indra, a king, Arishtanemi who was desirous of knowing the way of liberation. The sage Valmiki recited to him an old composition of his, in which he had recorded the teachings of Vasistha to his pupil Ramachandra, and which was, immediately after its composition, recited to Bharadwaja. The messenger repeated to the fairy all that the sage had taught to the king.

2. The present *Yogavasistha* could not have been written before the spread and development of the Mahayana Buddhism in its *Madhyamika* and *Vijnanvada* forms, not only because their names are mentioned in *Yogavasistha* (V. 87. 18. 20 and III. 5. 6 etc.), but also because their doctrines are nicely and irremovably incorporated in the philosophy of Vasistha. This brings *Yogavasistha* to the close of the 5th century A. D.

3. In *Yogavasistha* (VIb. 119. 23) we come across an idea of a "megh duta" (cloud-messenger) where the whole of Kalidasa's *Meghduta* is beautifully summarised in three stanzas. The date assigned to Kalidasa by modern scholars is the early part of the fifth century A. D. The author of *Yogavasistha*, therefore unless this portion is an interpolation, cannot be placed before the middle of the 5th century A.D. He probably lived at the time of the downfall of the glorious reign of the Gupta Kings, which conclusion is borne out by the

Yogavasistha and its Philosophy

nature of the philosophy of the work and by the description of wars and battles and the mention of the Hunas therein (III and VI books of *Yogavasistha*).

Our view, therefore, is that the present *Yogavasistha* must have been composed before the time of Bhartrihari and after that of Kalidasa i.e., in the sixth century A. D.

LECTURE III

THE TYPE OF PERSON FOR WHOM YOGAVASISTHA IS MEANT

CONSCIOUSNESS OF SUFFERING

THE next point in connection with this great work, *Yogavasistha*, is: For what kind of readers is the work meant? Who, in other words, is the *adhikari* of this *Shastra*? The author of the work himself has told us that he is the proper person to study this work who has become aware of his bondage and longs to be free; he who is no longer in utter ignorance, but has not yet attained wisdom (I. 2. 1). This, in other words, means that the philosophy of Vasistha is meant for those on whom the reflective consciousness has dawned and to whom it has been revealed that life, as it is usually lived, is characterised by bondage, evil and suffering. The author of the work has depicted the psychology of such persons in the mentality of Ramchandra, the pupil of Vasistha. Rama begins to reflect over the nature of life and finds it characterised by evil, bondage and suffering. He says: What happiness can there be in this world, where everyone is born to die (I. 12. 7)? Everything comes into existence only to pass away (I. 12. 8). The joys of life are tantalising; prosperity is another kind of misery; pleasures are harbingers of pain (VIb. 93. 73). How great fools we are! Although sold to none, we act as if we are bound and sold slaves. Knowing the vanity of the affairs of life even, we continue to be whole-heartedly engaged in them like fools (I. 12. 12). Even knowing well that there cannot be real and lasting joy realised in our life, we foolishly stick to the hope of having it (I. 12. 13), accumulation of wealth does not make us happy but miserable, on the other hand. It hides within it the possibility of our ruin (I. 13. 10). Life is as evanescent as autumnal clouds, as the light of an oil less lamp, and as ripples on the surface of water (I. 14. 6). Like a caged lion, our mind is always restless (I. 16. 10). Desire is as fickle as a monkey. It is never satisfied with the objects already in hand, but jumps to other unattained ones. The more it is satisfied the more intense it grows (I. 17. 29). Of all the evils of the world, (the unsatisfied) desire is the most painful. It brings to trouble even the safest people (I. 17. 32). There is nothing good in the body. It is an abode of disease, a receptacle of all kinds of agonies, and subject to decay (I. 18. 34). Childhood is characterised by weakness cravings, incapacity to speak, lack of knowledge, longings for unattainable things, fickleness of mind and helplessness (I. 19. 2). What delight can we have in the portion of our life called youth, which comes like a flash of lightning, soon to be inevitably followed by the roaring of clouds of the agonies of old age (I. 20. 8)? Women appear charming only for some time and only to an unreflective mind. In reality, there is hardly any beauty in their beauty; it is due to our ignorance alone that we regard them as beautiful (I. 21. 8). This false and illusory beauty

Yogavasistha and its Philosophy

binds a man as strongly as a spell binds a snake (I. 21. 21). What is the good in living a life which is ever under the subjection of old age and death (I. 28. 38)? Old age spares none. It overcomes even those heroes who never knew defeat in battles catches hold of even those who may hide themselves in caves (I. 22. 38). Of what value is the body, the pleasures the wealth and the kingdom we may have, when, early or late, death shall put an end to all (I. 18. 8)? Life is as unstable as the flame of a lamp placed in open air and the splendour of all objects is as momentary as a flash of lightning (I. 28. 11). We never find ourselves to be the same as in the previous moment (I. 28. 32). Everything is under the sway of death and decay, all relations are chains of bondage, enjoyments are our fatal diseases, and desires are a tantalising mirage (I. 26. 10). Our senses are our enemies. What is believed to be true is soon discovered to be otherwise. All beings are mixed with non-being. All thinking is selfish and egoistic (I. 26. 14). All human beings are self deluded to be entrapped into the snares of desires and thereby to be afflicted with the troubles of birth and death (I. 26. 41). What direction is there from which cries of suffering are not heard (I. 27. 31)?

These are some of the reflections of Rama, and of all those who begin to think of life seriously. Man longs for happiness, but finds it at no time of his life. Rama therefore, asks his teacher certain questions which are the questions of every thinking man. Is there any better state of existence which may be free from suffering ignorance and grief and he full or unconditional joy (I. 30. 11)? What is the spell by which the disease of worldliness – the source of all kinds of sufferings – can be cured (I. 30. 24)? How can one experience unchanging and perpetual happiness (I. 30. 25)? What is the method, what is the science, what is the art of saving this life from undesirable occurrences (I. 31. 6)? In what way should a man live in this world without being bound in it (I. 30. 17)? “Let me know the best possible secret of becoming free from the sufferings of life” (I. 31. 17)

Yogavasistha is thus meant for people who are so keenly alive to the undesirable aspects of life and so eager to know the secret of freeing it from them.

THE CAUSE AND REMEDY OF SUFFERING

The cause of all suffering, according to *Yogavasistha* is trisna or desire for worldly objects. “It stings one like a venomous serpent, cuts like a sword pierces like a lance, binds like a rope burns like fire, blinds like a dark night and grinds down its helpless victim like a heavy stone. It destroys his wisdom and upsets the balance of his mind, and throws him into the deep and dark well of infatuation (II. 12. 14). Our longing for worldly objects is due to our ignorance of the true nature of ourselves and the world. Ignorance is therefore the root, cause of all suffering. The fountain head of all evils is the lack of Knowledge (VIa. 88. 2). The best and the most effective remedy for all sufferings is the attainment of wisdom (*Jnana*). Sorrows do not approach the wise man who has come to know what ought to be known, and has the right attitude towards all things (II. 11. 41). Wisdom is the only way to cross over the ocean of the world (II. 10. 22).

SELF EFFORT VERSUS DESTINY

Wisdom or true knowledge which is the ultimate remedy of all sufferings of life can be attained only by making efforts for its attainment. It does not come of itself nor does any agency like destiny bring it unto ourselves. We have to make ceaseless and earnest efforts not only to acquire wisdom, but also to obtain anything else in life. There is nothing like fate or destiny making us miserable or happy in spite of ourselves. We are the makers of our own destiny by our own efforts. There is no other way to bring about the end of all misery than one's own efforts (*purushartha*) (III. 6. 14). There is hardly anything in existence which is not attainable through right and earnest exertion (III. 4. 8). One gets only what one has striven for, nothing is ever achieved by sitting idle (II. 7. 19). Everyone is his own friend or enemy, if one does not save oneself, nobody else can save him (VIb. 162. 18)

Those who depend upon fate for getting their desired objects and do not exert themselves are their own enemy. They depend upon a thing which neither does exist nor does bring about anything. There is none among the brave, the successful, the learned and the wise, whoever wants for destiny (II. 8. 17). They who always depend on fate, lose all their merit, wealth and enjoyments (II. 7. 3). The fools who believe that everything is in the hands of destiny are utterly ruined (II. 5. 29).

Fate (*dana*) is a nonentity. There does not exist anything like fate (II. 5. 18). It is absolutely unreal (II. 9. 3). Fate does not do anything; it exists only in imagination (II. 9. 3). Apart from a consolatory contrivance fate has no reality of its own (II. 9. 15).

Our fate or destiny is nothing but the inevitable consequences of our own already accomplished efforts. Expression such as, 'It shall be so' and 'It is thus determined,' in cases where results of our efforts are completely and surely predictable have given rise to the concept of destiny (II. 8. 2). Ignorant people have, on the basis of such expressions, come to believe in the reality of fate as a self subsisting entity, in the same way as one perceives a snake in place of a rope, where there is none (II. 8, 3). The real fact is that there is no other destiny than our own past efforts now fructifying in good or bad results (II. 6. 4). Our (previous) actions alone constitute our destiny (II. 6. 35).

This being the true meaning of fate it can be overcome by our present efforts as easily as a child by a grown up man (II. 6. 4). The efforts already made in some direction (now our destiny) and the efforts now being made in a contrary or opposite direction oppose each other like two contesting rams, and those which are stronger in force will surely overcome the others (II. 6. 10). Just as wrong acts of yesterday can be rectified today so the present efforts can rectify the previous ones (VIb. 157. 29). It is the stronger of the two – the past and the present efforts – which subdues the result of the other. In either case, however, it is our own effort that succeeds (II. 6. 18). Further it is quite evident that, of the two – the past and the present – the present effort can be more powerful, and can succeed against the other, as a youth can vanquish a child (II. 6. 19). For the past has already been determined, but the present is still undetermined.

Yogavasistha and its Philosophy

One should, therefore, set to overcome one's undesirable fate by taking recourse to greater effort with unflinching and strong determination (II. 5. 9). Everyone should exert himself to the extent of completely eradicating the evil efforts of his previous acts (II. 5. 11). There is hardly any doubt that the evils which are the legacy of the past can be absolutely destroyed by efforts in the living present (II. 5. 12).

One must also remember that all efforts are not productive of a particular result. There are some which are the most appropriate for the purpose and others which are not so. It will be a mere waste of energy and its dissipation in wrong directions, if wrong efforts are made. One should take resort to the appropriate methods alone (II. 6. 24).

PRELIMINARY QUALIFICATIONS OF THE ASPIRANT

Wisdom – the remedy of all suffering – dawns upon that mind alone which has been already prepared for it. It requires a peculiar temperament and training which have to be acquired and undergone. Unless one is already prepared, intellectually and morally, for it the teaching of a teacher falls flat upon him. The words of a teacher settle down in one's mind only when it is calm and free from craving for objects of pleasure, and when attachment of the objects of sense is given up (VIa. 101. 10. 11). When the mind is purified by casting off the impurities of worldly desires everything heard from the teacher is grasped quite easily (VIa. 101. 12). In *Yogavasistha* however we do not find any elaborate scheme of preliminary requirements of the aspirant, as in later times we find in the school of Shankara under the name of *Sadhana chatushtaya* (the four requirements viz., *viveka*, *vairagya*, *shatsampatti*, *mumuksha*) but there is only a statement of four preliminary qualifications required by one who wants to be liberated. The author calls them “The four gate keepers of Liberation. (*Mokshadwarapalah*). They are Tranquillity, Contentment, Company of the Wise and Reflection. ‘There are four methods of crossing over the ocean of worldly existence namely, tranquillity, contentment, company of the wise (or the good) and reflection (II. 16. 18). They are so related to one another that if one of them is fully attained others will inevitably accompany it. One should, therefore, make effort in acquiring any one of them thoroughly (II. 16. 22).”

“Truth dawns by itself upon the mind of the tranquil, who are equally good and friendly to all beings (II. 13. 60). He is said to be tranquil whose mind is impartial to all creatures, who neither desires nor denounces any object, and remains a master of his senses (II. 13. 75); whose mind is unruffled even in the midst of death, festivities or war (II. 13. 77); and who is not cast down even during unending troubles and ravages of time” (II. 13. 78).

“Wisdom never dawns upon the mind which is under the control, and at the mercy, of desires and expectations, and is destitute of contentment (II.15.9). He is said to be contented who is not desirous of what he has not got, is quite unaffected by what he has got, and is free from elation and dejection” (II. 15. 6).

“Association with the wise removes the darkness of the heart; leads one to the right way, and causes the sun of wisdom to shine in one's mind (II. 16. 9). He who bathes in the

Yogavasistha and its Philosophy

cool and holy Ganges of the company of the wise, does not stand in need of penances, pilgrimage, charity or sacrifices” (II. 16. 10).

“Truth cannot be known without thinking (II. 1. 52). Thinking leads one to the attainment of peace (II. 14. 53). Thinking consists in logical investigation into the problems: “What am I” and “How has this world evil come into existence?” (II. 14. 50).

The teachings of Vasistha are intelligible to and are meant for those who have cultivated some of these qualifications.

LECTURE IV

THE METAPHYSICS OF YOGAVASISTHA

THE SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE

According to *Yogavasistha* Direct Cognition (*Pratyaksha* or *Anubhava*) is the only and the ultimate source of all our knowledge, be it of an external object, Self or God. Experience is the final test of all our knowledge or beliefs. Its author does not believe in any other Pramana as the source of new knowledge (III. 42. 15; II. 19. 16; VIb. 52. 29). If anything is not directly experienced, it can never be made known by any description of it by others. “The taste of sugar can never be made known to one who has not himself tasted it” (V. 64. 53).

This being the case with all our knowledge, it is really difficult to impart any knowledge to a person of anything of which he has had no direct experience. Who can, for example, make anybody understand what toothache is if the latter has never experienced toothache himself? But, if it were absolutely impossible, our knowledge would not advance, and we could not have become conscious of many aspects of our experience, of which we are reminded by those who have already become aware of them. Vasistha, therefore, thinks that a hint or partial knowledge of things not already known, can be given through similes and analogies (*drishtanta* and *upamana*), for the similarity thus pointed out helps one in cognising directly the thing suggested (II. 18. 51).

THE CHIEF FEATURE OF VASISTHA’S PHILOSOPHY

The chief and the most important aspect of the philosophy of *Yogavasistha* is its Idealism. It is the keystone of the entire structure of its philosophy, the basic principle from which everything else follows. For Vasistha, idealism is the key which unlocks all the enigmas of life, and the explanation of all the riddles of existence.

KNOWLEDGE PRESUPPOSES IDEALISTIC MONISM

A little reflection, says Vasistha, on the nature of our knowledge and experience, will reveal that the plurality and variety perceived in the world have behind them an all comprehending and all embracing Unity Action and reaction between things presupposes

Yogavasistha and its Philosophy

identity behind them. Two things, having no common substance immanent in both, cannot be related, either as cause and effect, or as subject and object. The perception of things around us, therefore, leads us to monism. The fact of our knowledge further presupposes that the object of our knowledge cannot but be a modification of consciousness itself, *i.e.*, an idea or *kalpana*. For, knowledge can have for its object only that which is homogeneous in nature with it. All objects, therefore, along with the perceiving subject, are ideas in our mind and nothing outside and beyond the mind. These considerations lead us not to Monism alone, but to Idealistic Monism, namely, that there is One Reality, Consciousness or Mind, which is both the subject and the object and the relation of knowledge between them (III. 121. 37; III. 121. 42; VIb. 25. 14; VIb. 38.9; III. 121. 53; VIb. 25. 17; VIb. 101. 54).

IDEALISM

The world of experience, according to Yogavasistha, therefore, with its Things, Time, Space, and Natural Laws whose knowledge we have, is a manifestation of mind, *i.e.*, ideas or *kalpana*. Everything is coined by mind, just in the same way as our dream-experiences are. That *things* are merely the ideas of mind is also evident from the fact that yogis, who have acquired power over their mind, and are able to stop its activity of manufacturing ideas, which is incessant and beyond control in our case, do not experience anything at all when they have brought their mind to rest. What we call *time* is only a relation of succession of one idea after another. It is also mind's imagination, and is relative to the flow of its ideas. An age can be experienced as a moment, and so a moment can be experienced as a long age, in accordance with the different moods of mind. The night is experienced as a long age by the suffering man, while it passes away as a moment in the revels of the merry. A moment becomes an age in the dream state and an age passes off as a moment in the state of insensibility. It is said that a moment of Brahma is the life-time of Manu, and a day of Vishnu constitutes the long period of the life-time of Brahma. The whole age of Vishnu is said to be only a day of the sedate Shiva. So, apart from the succession of ideas in mind, duration of time has no meaning.

Space is also a relation of co-existence of ideas and is relative to the mind's activity, for mind can have the experience of a mile in a span, and vice versa, by its own imagination (*kalpana* and *bhavana*), as is evident from the cases of fancy and dream. There is no perception or consciousness of space in the mind of a *yogi*, when he stops the flow of ideas in his mind. His experience is a peculiar experience which is free from the knowledge of things, time and space. What we call a Law of Nature (*niyati*) is also nothing but the idea of sameness in the order of precedence and sequence between two or more ideas, and holds good only so long as the ideas are manufactured in the furnace of the mind in that very order. It is not an order introduced from without, but is only imagined to exist from the fact of their existence itself, and there is no reason why it cannot be otherwise. The stability and persistence of the world are also the ideas of the dream world (VIb. 210. 11, IV. 47. 48, IV. 47. 59, V. 48. 49, VIb. 42. 16, VIb. 56. 16, VIb. 56. 3, III. 5. 37, VIb. 73. 19. 20, III. 13. 36, III. 60. 20, 21, 22, 23, 26, III. 103. 13, VIa. 61, 29, VIa. 37. 21, VIa. 148. 21)

SIMILARITY BETWEEN WAKING AND DREAM EXPERIENCE

But then what is the difference between our dreams and the wide awake experience of the world, of the latter too is like the former, which, of course, we all know to be a system of ideas in the mind? The answer of Vasistha is: There is little or no difference at all. Both are alike in their nature, and so long as each lasts, it gives the same sense of reality and stability as the other. And from the stand point of a higher realisation no difference is felt between the two. The difference, however, exists from the stand point of each other. The waking man considers the dream experiences unreal and visionary, while to the subject of the dream its own world is really real, and the waking experience is regarded as unreal and nonexistent. One may, for example, undergo in a dream excruciating pains of separation, while sleeping in the arms of his beloved. What we know as a moment is dream may have within it an experience of eternity, of centuries and of the world having a long history behind it. When a man is on the death-bed, soon to breathe his last, to him the whole life experience of years appears to have passed away as a moment's dream. Moreover, as hundreds of dreams are experienced within the waking age of our experience, hundreds and thousands of waking dreams are experienced by the Self in its transmigration journey. And as we can recollect the many dreams that we have experienced throughout our life, so the enlightened ones (Siddhas) can remember the many waking dreams experienced by them during their past career (IV. 29. 11, 12, VIb. 161. 24, 25, 30, IV. 18. 47).

SUBJECTIVE IDEALISM

But, then, it may be pointed out that there is one clear and outstanding difference between the two states, namely, that the one (dream) is one's own private experience shared by none else, while the other (the waking experience) is the experience of things that everybody perceives and regards as real. Are the objects of the waking experience also manufactured in the furnace of my own mind? Yes, according to *Yogavasistha*, the individual perceives and cognises only what is within his own experience; no mind perceives aught but its own ideas. The world-experience has arisen individually to every mind and every mind has the power to manufacture its own universe. Thus the idealism accepted here seems to be thoroughly subjective (III. 40. 29; III. 55. 61; VIb. 13. 4).

OBJECTIVE IDEALISM

Yet the very statement that there are individual minds and that they are countless assumes an extra-individual reality in the form of other individuals, who, of course, must, likewise, have their own world-experience. Vasistha is alive to this difficulty and admits a plurality of minds and a common world-experience also, which in its original form is a system of ideas, or imagination (*kalpana*) of a Cosmic Mind, which he calls *Brahma*. *Brahma* imagines the Universe as well as all the individuals within it in the beginning of the Creation, and they continue to exist as long as *Brahma* continues to exist (III. 55. 47). The experience of a common world by many individuals is thus due to the fact that over and above these individuals, there exists a Common Mind, the Cosmic Mind, in which all the common contents of the world as well as all the individuals themselves exist as ideas, and are

Yogavasistha and its Philosophy

represented in every individual mind within the Cosmic Mind. The ideas imagined by Brahma are the common objects of experience of us all, although in our own mind they enter as our own. Or, it might also be said that they are the reals (*bimba*) which our minds imitate or copy (*pratibimba*). And as every mind is only a manifestation of the same Cosmic Mind, it is capable of representing within itself other individual minds also as its own ideas. One is an idea in the mind of others as much as others are ideas in that of the one. And although nobody knows anything except his own ideas – the perception of other individuals and common things being our own ideas – yet they are believed as existing to a common universe, for they are the common ideas of all alike. As it is possible that several men may see the same dream, so, in the same way, it is also a fact that we all experience the same objects. As the same form of a woman may be imagined individually by all, so also in every mind the world-experience is imagined in the same way as it has arisen in the Cosmic Mind (VIb. 20. 7, III. 55. 48, V. 49. 10, VIb. 151. 10, VIb. 154. 11, III. 53. 25, VIb. 38. 4).

WORLDS WITHIN WORLDS

The terms Cosmic and individual are to be understood only in a relative sense. That which is considered as an individual in relation to a wider Cosmic Mind and its contents, may, in its own turn, be considered as cosmic in relation to the entities within its own objective experience. For, according to Vasistha, every object has a subjective aspect, *i.e.*, is a mind in which is experienced a world peculiar to itself, as in a dream. Every idea is a monad in itself and has a world within its experience, every ideal content of which, again, is to itself, in its turn, an individual monad having another world within itself. There is no end to this process of worlds within worlds “Just as in the summer season insects are born from the perspiration of men and live their independent individual lives, to the same way, whatever is thought by the mind, be it cosmic or individual, in its own turn, becomes a mind’ (IV. 19. 3). In this way, says Vasistha, numberless minds were born, are being born, and will be born, from the mind of the Creator and they in their own turn, become creators of their respective worlds. In every universe there are contained millions of other universes, and this process goes on ad infinitum. All this is unknown and unreal to us, but it is clearly experienced by those to whom their worlds are restless as dream visions are hard realities to those who see them, but are mere void and nothing to others Purity of mind and similarity of pragmatic interests can open for us the gateway to the worlds of other minds, and Vasistha himself was in possession of such a power (IV. 18. 16, 27, IV. 19. 1, III. 52. 20, III. 44. 34, 35, VIb. 59. 33, 34).

VARIETY OF WORLD EXPERIENCES

One need not, however, believe that all the worlds which thus arise successively or simultaneously are of the same kind or are governed by the same laws, or are evolved in the same way as our own world. There is no such law of uniformity having under its sway all the worlds, actual or possible. Some of them may be similar in their entire nature others similar only in some respects, others quite different from one another. So is the case with the individuals to the different worlds. And the theories of Creation given in various *Shastras* are idle fancies and false fabrications of mind. They are like simple tales for children to engage

Yogavasistha and its Philosophy

them. The Divine Mind is not bound by any particular laws of creation to be followed always and everywhere. (IV. 47. 14, VIa. 66. 23, 24; IV. 47. 47).

THE GENERAL LAW OF MANIFESTATION OF OBJECTIVE WORLD

The manifestation of an objective world within a mind proceeds by way of materialisation and externalisation of ideas in the form of things, body and senses, consequent upon the craving or wish to enjoy the particular objects, the process of which can be studied in the phenomena of dreams, for the law of evolution or rise of an objective world is the same in the case of a dream, of an after death vision, or of the rise of a cosmos. The dynamic force behind the manifestation of all objects in one's experience is the craving, desire or wish to be something, or to have something, which the creative imagination forthwith supplies in the form of the object that would satisfy the craving. Desire fulfilment is the principle that is working behind the world experience as well as the dream experience (III. 12. 2, VIb. 22. 37, VIa. 114. 17, III. 4. 79).

INDIVIDUALITY

Individuality, according to Vasistha, does not consist in being something like a simple, undecomposable spiritual entity, called soul. It consists on the other hand, in being a mind, *manas*, which mean a peculiar mode of the Ultimate Reality determined by a peculiar movement, tendency, desire, or will to imagine. The form is in perpetual change. It is called by various names on account of its different functional forms. It is called *Buddhi*, when it knows something definitely. *Ahankara* (ego), when it assumes for itself a distinct existence, *Chitta*, when it displays fickleness, *Karma* (action), when it moves towards a desire end, *Kalpana* (imagination) when it thinks of some desired end, *Vasana* (desire) when it attaches itself to something not in our possession, *Indriyas* (sense organs) when it reveals to the Self external objects and *Prakriti* (root matter) when it creates objects out of itself. In fact, everything that we know is, according to Yogavasistha, a mode of mind (III. 96. 3, V. 13. 80, V. 13. 54, III. 46. 43, III. 96. 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 28, 29, 27, VIa. 50. 17). Mind is not anything different and separate from the Absolute Brahman, it is the Brahman itself manifesting itself as a creative agent. It is the whole looked at from a particular point of view (IV. 42. 18, V. 13. 24, V. 13. 53, VIa. 96. 19). From the point of view of grossness and limitations there may be distinguished three grades in the manifestation of mind, namely, the monad (*jiva*), the ego (*ahankara*) and the body (*deha*). *Jiva* or monad is that aspect of mind in which it originates as a ray from the Absolute Consciousness and is yet very subtle in character. The ego is *jiva* in a grosser and more limited form in which objectivity acquires a greater degree. The body is the grossest form of the mind (III. 64. 12, 14, III. 13. 15, 22, 24, 28, 29). There is no limit to the number of monads in the world. The universe is full of monads all around (III. 43. 1. IV. 43.2, 3). And monads are of various kinds.

THOUGHT POWER

We as minds have got a tremendous power at our command. Thought is the most potent force in the world. Mind, according to Yogavasistha, is omnipotent (III. 11. 16). It is endowed with creative power (VIb. 139. 1). In creating a world for itself, the mind is absolutely free (III. 4. 79). We all attain what we aspire for. All that we intensely desire comes to us early or late in accordance with the effort we put in to acquire it. Our own efforts guided by our own aspirations are the warp and woof of our destiny (III. 45. 12, III. 54. 48). The nature of things around us is as we think it to be. Our lives are what we make them by our thought. Thoughts are the bricks with which we build the mansion of our personality. Thought is our destiny. We become what we wish, desire and imagine to become. The world around us is the reflex of our thought. It changes its appearance as we change. The extent of space and the duration of time are relative to our thoughts and emotions (III. 56. 28, 30, III. 60. 16, 17, 20, 21, 22, 28, VIb. 148. 33, VIb. 100. 3, IV. 23. 13). Faith intense belief or *bhavana* is the secret of all achievements. Our perceptions are coloured by our beliefs (IV. 21. 56. 58, IV. 21, 20, 21, 22, IV. 17.4, VIa. 51. 3). Our mind is also the maker of our happiness and misery. Even bondage and freedom are the states of our mind and are wrought by our thought (III. 98.3, III. 99. 43, III. 115. 24). Our objective world is but the projection of our own imagination and the realisation of our own desires (III. 96. 8. 10). The body is also a creation of mind and can be changed by it into any condition. Most of the diseases of the body originate in the disturbances of mind, and can be cured by right thinking and re-education of the mind (IV. 45. 7, IV. 11. 19, IV. 21. 16, VIa. 28. 34). It is in the power of everyone to continue well and young as long as one likes. For whatever the mind determines to experience no agency can obstruct (III. 91. 4, III. 92. 14). If we never allow the balance of the mind to be overthrown by ambitions, cares, anxieties and worries, etc, there is no reason why disease should ever lodge in the temple of our body (VIa. 26. 10. 35). Happiness is another name for the harmony of mind, right culture of mind is the secret of joyful living (V. 21. 12, 14). Suffering is due to our wrong belief that we are finite beings.

SECRET OF SUPERNORMAL POWERS

The secret of attaining supernormal powers, according to *Yogavasistha*, is to deny one's identity with the physical body, which is another name for limitation, imperfection and incapacity of affecting great things and to affirm one's being spiritual in nature and therefore full of higher capacities. Through this process of constant denial of the actual limitations and thoughtful auto suggestion and affirmation of the ideal perfection, very extraordinary capacities are evolved in us (III. 57. 30. 33, via. 82. 26). Transcendental powers can also be realised through the control of *Kundalini Shakti* residing in the solar plexus of the body. To realise higher powers, the power in the solar plexus has to be aroused and directed to the brain. It is done through the control over the movements of *Prana* with the help of a teacher. When one has mastered *Kundalini* Force, one can easily see the invisible *siddhas* can leave his body at will and enter another body, can have a vision of distant events and things, and can become abnormally small or large in size, whenever desired (VIa. 24, VIa. 80, VIa. 81, VIa. 82).

THE SELF

The concept of Self is different from that of individuality. The search after the Self is the search after that within us which never changes in spite of perpetual change in the personality. It is the search after the essence of the subjective aspect of the universe. Vasistha, therefore, tries to find out what aspect of us endures throughout all the levels of experience, namely, waking, dream, sleep and the “fourth,” in which all these are transcended. The subject cannot be an object. He, therefore, tries to find out also what aspects of our being can be made objects of our experience and, therefore, cannot be regarded as the Self, which must be the ultimate Subject within us. He also tries to discover the prime mover within us which sets all other aspects of our personality in motion. The prime mover, the subject, and the permanent reality in us is the Self, according to *Yogavasistha*. It evidently follows that the body, the senses, the mind, the intellect, the ego and the individuality, etc., cannot be the Self, as all of them can be transcended on one or the other level of experience, as all of them are objects of consciousness, and as all of them are moved to activity by something else from the deep within. Further, there cannot be duality between the subject and the object ultimately, otherwise knowledge would not be possible. Therefore, Vasistha thinks that the Self in the subject should be identical in essence with the ultimate substance of the object, the Ultimate Essence of the Universe. The Self, according to him, is the Reality that is at the root of the Universe which manifests itself in all things of the world (VIa. 78. 18-29, VIa. 6. 15-16, V. 73. 4, IV. 22. 33, V. 26. 12, V. 34. 52).

DEATH AND AFTER

The individuality, however changing and impermanent it may be is not dissolved with the decay of the physical body and its total dissolution by death. The body is only an external manifestation of the inner will to be, which with countless desires and hopes persists to continue as an individual mind and shall, as a consequence of the unfulfilled desires, surely experience another body and another world. What the loss of the physical body does is only that it shuts the individual from the experience of this world, which is relative to these senses. It would be wrong to believe that the individual is totally extinguished or effaced out of existence from all worlds. Death brings about only a change in the kind of the objective world of the individual. It shuts from us the world with which we are no longer *en rapport*. It is not a passage of the individual to any distant place but an experience, after temporary insensibility consequent upon the shock of losing the vision of this body and this world, of a new objective world *in this very place*, if the expression can be used rightly and seriously in this connection. This new experience is, of course, not accidentally determined. It is what “the dead ones” morally deserved, although coloured by and imagined in accordance with their long cherished beliefs. Having thus enjoyed the joys of heaven or suffered the torments of hell, according to their desires, beliefs and merits, they again experience the life of this world, if any desire for the objects of this world remained potential in them. For the chain that binds us to only thing or world is desire. It is only those persons who have become absolutely free from desire, who have realised their identity with the absolute, and thus have realised living liberation (*Jivanmukti*) that, having given up their physical bodies, do not undergo any further

Yogavasistha and its Philosophy

experience of any world, because of their desires having been given up, they have no desires to fructify. They attain, offer the death of the physical body, the state of *Nirvana*, by which is meant here the total extinction of separate and individual existence. They merge in Brahman, the Absolute Reality, which is the Self of us all. It is also possible according to *Yogavasistha* for us to conquer death to a great extent. Death does not easily overcome those who keep themselves above sorrows, cares and anxieties those who are not slaves to their changing moods and passions. Those who are pure in heart and character can live as long as they like *Kakabhushunda* is an example of one who has conquered death (VIb. 18. 1, V. 71. 67, VIb. 105. 24, 29, 30, III. 55. 9, III. 40. 31. 43, III. 55, VIa. 51. 39, IV. 43. 22, IV. 42. 13. 15, VIa. 23. 5. 12).

THE COSMIC MIND

Most of us, the individuals within a world system, receive the world idea or find it represented in us, but do not create it in the real sense of the word. Most of the minds are reproductive rather than creative actually, although potentially all are capable of the greatest creative power. But there is a mind which *really* creates ideas in his consciousness, which for us are the real things of the external world like mountains, rivers and oceans etc., which are regarded as facts and things unalterable by our thought. We may or may not experience them, but they are there. The mind which creates the objects real for us is called Brahma in *Yogavasistha*. It is the Cosmic Mind which has imagined the world idea. Brahma creates this world through his imaginative activity with the freedom and skill of an artist. He does not follow any previously existing plan, for there is none in existence or in memory. Brahma being a fresh wavy in the ocean of the Absolute Consciousness. He is the Lord of our Cosmos. We and the world around us are his thoughts in the literal sense of the term, and live, move and have our being in his mind. The world continues as long as his imagination is at work and will collapse or dissolve when he ceases from his play of imagination. Then the Cosmic Mind too merges back into the ever-existing Reality, for individuality and activity are identical. The rise of Brahma in the ocean of Brahman is the most mysterious fact. He is like a serpent coming out from the seed of the Absolute when it tends to evolve objects out of itself. The Absolute in its creative aspect or power, by its own will, in a merely playful overflow, comes to self-forgetfulness of the Whole, and on account of intensity there, begins to vibrate, agitate or pulsate, in the form of thinking or imagining activity, and finally assumes a separate and distinct existence for itself as apart from the whole whose one aspect it is in reality (III. 55. 47, III. 3. 35, VIb. 208. 27-28; IV. 44. 14, IV. 42. 4, 5; VIa. 114. 15. 16; VIa. 33. 21; III. 114. 10, III. 114. 20, VIa. 1. 37.).

THE CREATIVE IMPULSE

Brahma is regarded by Vasistha to be a wave of mentation in the ocean of the Absolute Consciousness, Brahman. The cause of the rise of this wave is not an external or quasi-external force or influence. It is the Creative Impulse (*Spanda Shakti*), an inherent energy, a power of movement, a will to manifest in finite forms, of the Reality Itself, which is ever present in the Reality, either as in actual operation or in potential rest. The Absolute and Its Creative Power are not two realities. The Power is ever identical with the Absolute. When

Yogavasistha and its Philosophy

the Power is active, it may falsely assume a separate and distinct reality for itself, but when it ceases to work, it turns back to its source, and, merging therein, becomes undifferentiated. In that state there is no names, such as *Spanda-shakti*, *Samkalpa-shakti*, *Jaganmaya* and *Prakriti* (VIa. 84. 6; VIa. 83. 16; VIa. 85. 14; VIb. 84. 3; VIb. 34. 2; VIb. 84. 26-27; VIb. 82. 6, 7, 9; VIb. 83. 14; VIb. 85. 15, 16, 17, 18, 19).

THE ABSOLUTE REALITY

It is very difficult to say anything about the essential nature of the Absolute. What can one say of the Ultimate Reality which is the Substance of all things, the Unity behind the subject and the objects of Experience, the Essence of all forms, the Ocean in which we all live and move, from which we, down from the Logos to the tiniest vermin, originate, in which we are tossed up and down by the force of our own desires; and in which we break as bubbles when the force of will to be is spent up? Words fail to describe it, for they are all but linguistic symbols for things of the manifested world, and the Reality is much more than its manifested aspects. The categories of our experience are, one and all, incapable to express the Reality which is in and beyond the world experience. No aspect of the Whole can be equated with the Whole. All our concepts – matter, mind, subject, object, one, many, self, not self, being, non-being, bondage, liberation, ignorance, knowledge, light, darkness, etc, etc, - comprehend one or the other aspect of Reality, but not the Absolute Reality as such. They prove unsatisfactory when applied to the Reality which is inherent in everything denoted by a concept as well as its opposite – its other, in contradistinction to which it is this thing. All conceptual moulds crack under the weight of Reality. All the grooves created by philosophy to fit the reality in are unsatisfactory, for there always remains much of the reality that “cannot be fitted into a groove” The Reality, therefore, if to be described at all, should be described in all terms, positive and negative, and not in any one of the opposite terms. Either affirm everything of It, or deny everything to It, if you have to speak of It at all. Otherwise, keep silent, if you have already arrived intellectually at the synthesis of all affirmation and negation in the silent realisation of the Absolute Calm, the Blissful Nirvana, of which all the joys of the world are but insignificant fractions (VIa. 33. 35, Via. 53. 9, VIb. 52. 9; III. 10. 7. 14, 36, VIa. 9. 18, 23, III. 10. 14. 18, III. 5. 5, V. 73. 19, III.91. 36, VIb. 10. 14, III. 1. 12, III. 5. 6. 7, V. 87. 20, VIb. 61. 6, 10, VIa. 48. 10, VIb. 52. 36, VIb. 52. 27, VIb. 8. 10, III. 5. 22, III. 7. 20, 21, 22, 23, III. 9. 50, 55, 58, 89, III. 10. 39, 40, 41, 47, 52, 33, 40, 41, 47, 52, 33, 46, III. VIa. 37. 12)

EVERYTHING IS BRAHMAN

Every form in the world is a manifestation of the Absolute Reality, Brahman, the Ultimate Conscious Blissful Existence, through Its Power to manifest. There is nothing here or anywhere, which is not a mode of the Reality, which, in spite of being differentiated in countless forms, keeps Its unity intact, because It in itself is the continuous medium in which all forms, which are such only in relation to each other, persist temporarily. One form may be separate and distinct from another form as such, but can never be separate and distinct from another form as such, but can never be separate and distinct from the Reality of which it is a form. An ornament of gold is never separate from gold with which it is ever one and

Yogavasistha and its Philosophy

identical. Bubbles, ripples, waves, etc, are never different from water of which they are forms, and abstracted from which they will cease to be anything at all. Everything, in the same way in this Universe, no matter whether it is physical, mental or spiritual, no matter whether it be great or small, no matter whether it persists for a moment or centuries, is *identical* with the Reality, the Whole present behind every one of Its differentiations. Everything in this Universe, thus, is Brahman. We are Brahman 'Thou art That' It is a fact here and now, and the conscious realisation of this fact gives us unbounded power and joy (VIa. 49. 29, 30, 31, 32, III. 100. 17, 23, III. 1. 17, V. 57. 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, III. 100. 30, VIb. 60. 28).

THE WORLD AS UNREAL APPEARANCE

The test or definition of reality is eternal persistence, according to *Yogavasistha*. All forms persist only temporarily, their essence is the only persisting reality. They, as forms come into existence and pass out of it. There was a time when they did not exist as such, and, evidently, there will be a time when they, as such, will not be in existence, no matter whether that time comes after a moment or after aeons. How can, therefore, any form or thing be said to be real in the true sense of the term? But they undoubtedly are also not unreal in the true sense of the term, for they partake of reality, however little it may be, because they persist for some time at least. They may not be absolutely real, but they are not totally unreal at present. A new category is required to comprehend this fact of the forms being neither absolutely real nor unreal, but persisting temporarily Vasistha calls such things *mathya* (not true), *avidya* (that which exists not), *maya* (that which is not) and *bhrama* (delusion), etc. *Appearance* may be the best philosophical term to express these ideas. There is another sense also in which Vasistha considers the objective forms not as realities but as appearance. As we already know, he is an idealist of a thorough-going type, and believes that the objects of experience are nothing apart from their appearance in the mind. There is nothing real in the sense of being self-subsistent independently of mind. The reality of everything consists in its appearance as an idea in some mind. The existence of every world and every object is only relative to its *experiencer*. It is naught to another who has not got the same or similar content in his own experience, like the vision of a ghost; like things in the experience of a hypnotised person, who actually experiences things suggested to him by the hypnotiser in an empty void, where others see nothing at all, or see quite different things. The world and all the objects in it are appearances in this sense. They are only relatively real but unreal in the absolute sense of the term (V. 5. 9, IV. 45. 46, III. 4. 62, III. 65. 5, III. 44. 27, VIa. 114. 20, III. 54. 21. IV. 1. 2. 7, 12, III. 67. 76, IV. 41. 15).

ACCOSMISM

IN Itself the Absolute Reality is, according to *Yogavasistha*, above all changes, above all distinctions and differentiations, and above all relations. All distinctions are within it, yet in Itself, as a Whole, It is the distinction less and homogeneous Substance. All the opposites – Self and not self, subject and object, being and non being, one and many, consciousness and unconsciousness, rise and fall of individuals and world-processes, etc – negate each other, balance each other, fuse with each other, neutralise each other into a zero, void (*shunya*), a

Yogavasistha and its Philosophy

total blankness in the Ultimate Reality, which is at the heart of both the opposites, neither of which as such forms the content of this Timeless and Spaceless Reality. Thus the *sansara*, creation, world, individuals, objects, bondage and freedom etc, all, as such, are absent in the Absolute as considered from Its own point of view, because their existence as forms is relative to some particular kind of consciousness apart from and outside which they are *nothing*. They are all like dream objects which have no existence apart from their being perceived or imagined by some mind. Production or origination of anything is meaningless for the Absolute and from the Absolute point of view, for in the Absolute everything ever is *negated*. The Absolute is everything as well as its opposite and so nothing as such. There is no individuality, no world, no creation, no movement, no bondage from the Absolute point of view. Accosmism is the Ultimate and the highest Truth, which can be realised by everyone, when he ceases to be interested in the relative, particular and finite appearances. It is the central doctrine of Yogavasistha (VIa. 2. 30. 35, VIb. 160. 8, VIb. 2. 36-41, IV. 40. 30, VIa. 125. 1, III. 144. 14, III. 84. 26, III. 114. 16, VIa. 95. 13, VIb. 49. 2, 4, 8, 9, IV. 40. 26, 34, VIa. 49. 5, VIa. 94. 54, VIb. 54. 17, III. 100. 4).

LECTURE V

REALISATION OF THE ABSOLUTE POINT OF VIEW

PHILOSOPHY AND LIFE

IN India, philosophy has never been *only* an intellectual investigation into the nature of the Ultimate Reality or a disinterested pursuit of knowledge. The task of a philosopher, here, is not over with his having constructed a metaphysical system, which may satisfy the intellect. The intellect is not the whole man, and probably not the most important aspect of man. He has other aspects, equally, or probably more, alive in him which also seek for satisfaction. The questions of Ramachandra, in answer to which the sage Vasistha is said to have given his philosophy, are not intellectual difficulties so much as an enquiry into how suffering can be allayed. It is really doubtful whether man would have philosophised at all if he were absolutely happy. If the Self satisfied and Perfect Absolute is ever free from want and is Blissful in Itself, what is that to us? It will be like an enormous treasure of wealth existing somewhere, which we cannot use. We would not even care to talk of such a thing. We want to discover something that we can enjoy, some eternal Joy or Bliss in which *we can* participate. "Everything is dear to us for our own sake" is an eternal truth declared by Yajnavalkya. An important part of the task of a philosopher, therefore, is to show how far his philosophy is practically useful in life. How it allays human misery? How final satisfaction can be attained with the help of his philosophy? How can his philosophy be lived? How can the sublimest concepts of his metaphysics be made actual in life? How can the human point of view which is characterised by suffering be transcended and the Absolute point of view be realised? In this lecture, we shall learn from Vasistha how, in order to save ourselves from the bondage and misery of finitude, we can actually realise the Absolute point of view, in which alone there is Peace and abiding Happiness.

THE ULTIMATE SOURCE OF HAPPINESS

“All creatures,” says the author of *Yogavasistha*, “strive for happiness” (VIa. 108. 20). But they seek for it in wrong places. We are under a delusion that we can be happy by being worldly prosperous. All kinds of sense pleasures and worldly joys have the seeds of pain and sorrow hidden within them (V. 49. 67, V. 9. 41, VIb. 93. 39, 73, 75, 78; V. 9. 52). The sum total of all pains and pleasures of life is probably no positive addition to the Self, it is a blank zero. When you think that you are actually gaining in the world, you will probably find that you have really gained nothing. “On reflection, the entire activity of life will be revealed to be unsubstantial (*asara*)” (VIa. 78. 8). No increase in our wealth, possessions and objects of enjoyment ever increases the chances of our thirst for happiness being satisfied. Even a flood in a mirage river will not quench the thirst of a thirsty man. No amount of dream wealth will ever allay the suffering of a poor man (IV. 46. 3. 4). Things as such, according to Vasistha, are neither pleasant nor painful, agreeable nor disagreeable. It is our own attitude towards them that makes them appear so. The same object may be pleasant, painful or indifferent to different persons and to the same person at different times. If we hanker for some object, contact with it is a pleasant, and the pleasure decreases in proportion as our hankering for it diminishes in intensity. The contact with an object which is not desired by us is felt indifferently, whereas it will be felt as positively painful in case we have an aversion for it. From this he concludes that pleasure, pain, agreeableness or disagreeableness of objects depends on *our desire* and not on the objects themselves (VIa. 44. 2, VIa. 120. 18. 20, VIa. 44. 4). Really speaking, the rise of a desire in us for something and its persistence for some time are themselves a painful experience, and our obtaining the desired object is pleasant only because it relieves us from the pain of an unfulfilled desire by removing the desire. So enjoyment of the objects of desire is only negatively pleasant. In reality, therefore, presence and absence of desire are our pain and pleasure (VIb. 36. 24, VIb. 68. 31). But if desire is permanently and absolutely eradicated from mind, there will not only be freedom from pain, but there will also be an experience of a peculiar and abiding Joy or Bliss which cannot be enjoyed as long as hankering for objects continues (V. 74. 24. 50). “The joy of desirelessness is much greater than and superior to that of ruling over an empire, of the company of one’s beloved, of Heaven, and that experienced by Vishnu” (V. 74. 44). This Joy is really the Bliss inherent in the Absolute Reality, which is our very Self. The Absolute is the real home of abiding Happiness. It is the Bliss itself, for which all of us are consciously or unconsciously seeking (V. 54. 70, 72, 69). A glimpse of this Joy can be had when the mind is at peace, when it is not functioning in its usual way of thinking of this or that object, but is calm and quiet (VIa. 44. 26, 27).

BONDAGE AND LIBERATION

In spite of, thus, ever living in the ocean of Bliss, we are at the mercy of external objects for happiness. In spite of our own Self being the fountain head of Joy, we are seeking for it in the objective world. This is our trouble. This is what is called bondage (*bandha*) by Vasistha (II. 2. 5, V. 13. 20, III. 1. 22). This, however, is only one aspect of our bondage, which assumes different forms in our intellectual, emotional and volitional nature. When we

Yogavasistha and its Philosophy

are bound we are bound in all aspects of our being. In fact, we are ever one with the Infinite and Absolute Reality, yet at the present stage of our evolution we *do not know that* (IV. 12. 2), we are in reality unlimited and omnipotent, yet we *feel to be finite*, limited and weak (IV. 27. 22, 23, 25), Bliss is the very being of us, yet we *desire* (IV. 27. 18, VIa. 10. 8) this or that object, *thinking wrongly* (IV. 12. 2) that it will bring happiness to us. Our abiding and enduring essence is the Self, the Reality behind everything yet we take it to be the *ego* (VIa. 99. 11), everything is within my Self and my Self is within everything yet I limit my *interest* (IV. 27. 25) to this or that object, *prefer* this over that, *attach* myself to particular things and actions *possess* something and *reject* another. No form is real, yet we take everything to be real. All these are so many aspects of our *bondage*, release from which is called *Liberation* (*moksha*), which consists in our *conscious realisation* of our being identical with the Absolute and freedom from limitations of all kinds. It is the same as the *dissolution of mind* or individuality (IV. 73. 39), as *indifference* to objects of enjoyment and *desirelessness* (VIb. 38. 32), as *dropping down of the world* from consciousness (III. 21. 11), as freedom from ignorance about the Self (VIb. 20. 17). This experience (*moksha*) can be realised even while one is alive in this body, for, we are one with the Absolute *here and now*.

THE WAY OF ATTAINING LIBERATION

According to *Yogavasistha*, there is no other way to attain Liberation than *Self-knowledge*, as bondage is due to ignorance of the fact that we are here and now the Absolute. Liberation cannot be attained by living in a forest, undergoing penances (VIb. 199. 30), performance or renunciation of any kind of actions, undergoing any disciplinary practices (VIb. 199. 31), pilgrimages, distribution of alms, bath in the sacred rivers, learning, meditation on anything, yoga, sacrifices (VIb. 174. 24), fate, performance of duties, riches, friends (V. 3. 8), fasting (III. 6. 4), Scripture, words of a teacher, worship of any god (VIb. 174. 26), etc. Some of these things may take one to heaven, but not to Liberation (VIb. 174. 26). Knowledge alone is the means of Liberation (II. 11. 36, V. 83. 18, III. 7. 17, V. 13. 89). The saving knowledge consists in the conviction that Brahman is the only reality, that everything is Brahman, that nothing other than Brahman is real, that Brahman is the very Self of us (V. 79. 2, 3, VIb. 190. 5). This right knowledge can be acquired only through one's own thinking and effort. Nothing else will bring right knowledge home to anybody (III. 6. 9, VIa. 118. 4, V. 12. 18, V. 5. 6). To think correctly mind is to be purified, purification of mind is effected through the study of philosophical works. Association with the wise and cultivation of virtue (V. 5. 5, V. 21. 11). No *Shastra*, we must also remember, can make us realise the Self, if we do not make our own attempts along the right interpretation of our Experience, and thereby, have the direct intuition of the Self (VIb. 197. 18, VIa. 41. 15). The Scripture and the words of great teachers have value only so far as they suggest to us the existence of the Self, the Absolute, of which we, at the present stage of our knowledge and experience, are not aware (VIb. 197. 19, 20, 21, 25, 29).

Bhakti or devotion to any god is not required, and is not of much use in attaining Liberation. Nobody can confer Liberation as a boon on anybody, unless the latter deserves it by his own right. No other agency than our own, than that of our own purified mind can show us the Absolute, which is our very Self. One's own direct realisation of the Self through one's

Yogavasistha and its Philosophy

own efforts is what is required to experience Liberation, and not devotion to any external god however strong or powerful he may be (V. 44. 1, V. 43. 17, 10, 13, 15). “One is one’s own friend or enemy. If one does not save oneself, there is no other remedy (VIb. 162. 18). What is not attained through one’s own constant efforts, *vairagya* and control over senses, cannot be attained through anything else in the three worlds (IV. 43. 18). Vishnu, however long propitiated and however pleased, cannot bestow Self Knowledge on one who does not think himself (V. 43. 10). Nothing great is ever achieved through any god, teacher or wealth (V. 43. 17). If a spiritual preceptor (teacher) could raise one to liberation without one’s own efforts, why can he not raise a bull, an elephant or a camel to Liberation” (V. 43. 16)? God is not to be sought for elsewhere, according to *Yogavasistha*. He resides within everyone (III. 7. 2). One’s own body is as good a temple of God as, and probably better than, any ever built by man. The God residing within this temple is the same that is immanent to Shiva, Vishnu, Sun and Brahma (III. 7. 4). Those who, leaving the God residing within their own heart, go to other gods are like those fools who, having thrown away the precious gem they had in their hands, run after ordinary glass pieces (V. 8. 14). It is through knowledge alone that the God residing within the heart can be found out and attained, and not through the pains of other performances (III. 6. 12). The artificial and showy ways of worshipping God are only for the ignorant and for those whose minds are not fully grown and are restless (VIa. 30. 5). Knowledge is the only thing required to worship Him (VIa. 38. 24. 25). A wise man always worships God by thinking of Him in spite of his being busy in the activities of life that have fallen to his share. Every moment a living presence of God is felt by the wise man, whatever he might be doing. He worships God by offering Him all that he does gets or enjoys. His work itself is the worship of God, as he offers everything to him (VIa. 39. 30. 48).

According to *Yogavasistha*, performing or giving up any kind of action whether it be religious, moral or worldly is immaterial for attaining liberation. It is foolish to believe that action can be given up. Life is action, thought is action. Individuality is action. As long as one is an individual, is thinking and living, one is action. Renunciation of physical and worldly activities is impossible and is not required for the attainment of Liberation (VIa. 28. 8, 6, VIb. 2. 34, 31, 35, 42, 43). The root of action is desire or will. That is to be cut off Personal desire and willing are to be given up and not actions (VIa. 2. 44, IV. 38. 4). “They who give up actions without giving up desire for them, effect a renunciation which is no renunciation at all” (VIa. 34). For Self-realisation, one has not to go to a forest renouncing the worldly duties and activities. The busy home-life is no bar to Self-realisation. Renouncing the activities of life and residing in a forest do not in the least help one whose mind is not already at peace (VIb. 3. 26, 38). The story of the queen Chudala and her husband Shikhidhwaja is a beautiful illustration of this fact. The queen attained Liberation while living a busy home-life and ruling over a kingdom, whereas the king could not, even when he had left home, kingdom and society, unless helped by his wife in attaining Self-realisation through right thinking.

PRACTICAL SELF-REALISATION

Knowledge for Vasistha is not a mere satisfaction of the natural craving to know, nor is it a means to worldly gains, like money, name and honour, as it is generally regarded at the present time. People who acquire knowledge for these purposes are mere sellers of knowledge, rather than true lovers and liverers of knowledge, which only the truly wise men are (VIb. 21. 3. 8). We have not only to *know*, but also to *be* and to *feel* – for all these aspects are at the root one – and to *expand pari pasu*. To know truly the Absolute, we have to expand into the Absolute (VIb. 22. 1. 5). How actually to effect this expansion is therefore as important a problem of our life as to know the nature of Reality. It is called *Yoga* by Vasistha (VIa. 13. 3, VIa. 128. 50. 51) Yoga or Self-realisation must be a process along two lines, which are in fact one and the same, namely, *denial of the individuality*, which is but the same as limitation and imperfection etc, and *affirmation of the Self*, which is perfection and universality. As our individuality does not consist only of *intellect* but also of *emotion* and *activity*, which are identically the same at the root, and as the Self is not only the Absolute Consciousness, but also the Absolute Rest and Absolute Bliss, the practice of Self-realisation may proceed along three ways, or along any one of them, for they are only the three aspects of the same process, namely (1) Intellectual conviction of not being an individual, but of being the Infinite Absolute, (2) Negation of desire, attachment, likes and dislikes, imagining to gain this or that, possessing this or that, and feeling to be an individual, etc all of which are the various aspects of our emotional nature. Along with this negative process, we require the positive cultivation of equanimity, universal brotherhood, cosmic feeling of oneness with all beings, and love of the Self, verging on ecstasy; and (3) Practice in stopping the perpetual activity of life manifesting itself in the constant rising and setting of the vital breath (*prana*), which is an external symbol of our internally being in perpetual flux, along with lengthening the usually unnoticed moments of rest which occur when one current of the vital breath has set in and the other has not taken its rise. This moment of rest in the breathing activity corresponds to that experience of rest in consciousness, however fugitive it may be in our ordinary life, when one idea has ceased to occupy the field of consciousness and another has not yet appeared. This, in brief, is the practical method of Self-realisation according to *Yogavasistha*. It embodies in itself all the best that has been discovered in India. (VIa. 69. 48; IV. 11. 59; VIa. 69. 49; VIa. 69. 52; III. 7. 27-28, 30; III. 21. 78, III. 21. 12, III. 4. 53-56, VIa. 69. 41, V. 78. 15, V. 13. 83; V. 78. 16; VIa. 69. 44; VIa. 25. 13-19, 50, 51; VIa. 26. 36-37, V. 78, 18-39; V. 43. 40, VIa. 29. 7-8; V. 24. 15; III. 112. 9; IV. 11. 27; V. 13. 80, III. 53. 3; V. 17. 8; VIb. 15. 2; VIb. 8. 2; VIb. 116. 1-3; VIb. 28. 23; V. 13. 21, V. 18. 61; III. 95. 35; VIa. 93. 62, 69; V. 62. 7-12).

SEVEN STAGES ON THE PATH OF SELF-REALISATION

Although in reality the Self is ever realised and the individual ever identical with the Absolute, yet, from the point of view of the individual, it is a gradual process which may extend to any length of time or to several lives of the individual, in accordance with the intensity of his aspiration and earnestness of his efforts. Several stages may be marked on this progressive path of evolution of the individual consciousness into the Absolute. Vasistha

Yogavasistha and its Philosophy

marks them as seven. The first stage is when the individual, having come to the consciousness of the evils of individual living, aspires to transcend it (*Shubhechehha*). The Second, when he philosophises over and investigates into the nature of the Self and the world (*Vicharana*). The third, when on account of the knowledge of its ultimate unreality revealed by philosophical thinking, the individuality (mind) becomes less and less assertive and less felt (*Tanumanasa*). The fourth, when the aspirant begins to feel the being of the Real Self within him (*Sattinapatti*). The fifth, when clinging to the objects of the world is finally overcome through one's rising above all desires (*Asanshakti*). The sixth, when all things are realised to be unreal in the Absolute (*Padarthabhavana*), or (according to another reading) when the individual imagines himself to be the Ultimate Reality (*Padarthabhavana*). And the seventh, when the mystic experience of being one with the Reality is realised in consciousness (*Turya*). This is the last door which opens into the unspeakable *Nirvana*. Those who live on the 7th stage are called *Jivanmukta* (the liberated living). Beyond that is the condition called the Disembodied Liberation (III. 118. 2-16).

THE LIFE OF LIBERATION

The life in which a sage experiences the last stage of Self-realisation is the last life of individuality, which, from the stand-point of his subjective experience, has already been transcended and negated, but which, objectively, still continues as a material effect of his previous willing in the form of this life. It is a shadow in the material world, as it were, of the previous subjective individuality, which is no longer in existence. Thoughts, it seems, take time to be materialised in the objective world, like the light of distant stars in reaching our eyes. It is possible that a star, whose light is reaching us now, and so giving us the impression of its present existence, may have been long ago effaced out of existence, if it was distant enough. To us the existence of such a star is a fact, but in the world where the star actually was, it is no longer in existence and no longer perceived. So is the case with the individuality of a *Jivanmukta*, a sage who has totally dissolved his individuality and who actually does not feel to be an individual in the world of Spirit and Thought, but who appears to be living, nay, actually lives in the physical world, as an effect, as a passing shadow, of the previous individuality. His life is a reality to others, but an appearance in his mind, and unreal for his Self in which he now has his conscious being. This, in brief, is the idea of *Jivanmukti*, the liberation of a man who is yet living according to *Yogavasistha*. A large number of verses is devoted to the description of such a life. We give below a brief description of how such a sage lives and behaves in the world.

Pleasures do not delight him; pains do not distress (VIb. 169. 1). There is no feeling of like or dislike produced in his mind even towards serious, violent and continued states of pleasure or pain (VIb. 197. 27). Although externally engaged in worldly actions, he has no attachment in his mind to any object whatsoever (VIb. 169. 8). His conduct does not annoy anybody, he behaves like very calm and quiet at heart (VIb. 98. 5). He is free from the restrictions of caste, creed, stage of life (*ashram*) custom and Scriptures (VIa. 122. 2). He rests unagitated in the Supreme Bliss (VIa. 122. 4). He does not work to get anything for himself. He is ever happy, and never hangs his joy on anything else (VIb. 122. 5). His face is never without the lustre of cheerfulness on it (VIa. 116. 3). He behaves with other fellow

Yogavasistha and its Philosophy

beings as the occasion and the status of the person demand, without the least stain on his mind. In the company of the humble, he is humble. To the knave he appears as a knave. He plays a child in the company of children, he is a youth among the young, and he acts as an old man in the company of the aged ones. He is full of courage in the party of courageous people and shares the misery of the miserable ones (V. 77. 13. 14). There is nothing which he has to achieve. He therefore performs and gives up actions without much concern like children (V. 77. 25). In spite of his being occupied with actions appropriate to the time, place and circumstances he is not touched by pleasure or pain arising from them (V. 27. 26). He never feels despondent, proud, agitated, cast down troubled or elated (V. 77. 32). He is full of mercy and magnanimity even when surrounded by enemies (V, 18. 6). He regards his activities as a part of the Cosmic Movement and performs them without any personal desire (V. 6. 1). He never hankers for the pleasures that are not in his hand but enjoys all those he has (IV. 46. 8). The idea of 'I' and 'mine', of something to be achieved and something to be avoided, has died within him (V. 16. 20). No purpose of the sage is served by any activity, nor by abstaining from activity. He therefore, does as the occasion suits him (VIb. 199. 4). Even doing all sorts of actions the liberated one is always in *samadhi* (V. 62. 6). He is *maha karta* (great worker). He works without any anxiety, egoistic feeling, pride or impurity of heart (VI. 115. 13). He is a *maha bhokta* (great enjoyer). He does not discard the pleasures that he has got nor desires the pleasures that he has not got (IV. 46. 8). He finds equal pleasure in old age death, misery, poverty and ruling over an empire (VIa. 115. 25). He eats with equal gusto the eatables of all tastes of ordinary and superior quality (VIa. 115. 28). He does not make any of the natural functions of his body paralyse for want of proper exercise. His body is a kingdom unto him, over which he rules wisely and well. He keeps it healthy and does not starve it of the appropriate requirements (IV. 23, 1-2, 18, 29, 45; VIa. 104, 40-44). So far as the external behaviour (*vyavahara*) is concerned, there is no difference between the liberated and the ignorant. The difference, however, consists in the presence of desire in the case of the latter which is totally absent in the former (IV. 15. 37). The life of a liberated sage is really the noblest and the happiest life. From him goodness is scattered all around (V. 39. 53). Having seen him, having heard about him, having met with him, and having remembered him all creatures feel delighted (V. 39. 54). He has no longer any struggle for livelihood. The guardian angels of the world protect any struggle for livelihood. The guardian angels of the world protect any struggle for livelihood. The guradrian angels of the world protect and support him, as they do the entire cosmos (Iv. 32. 38, 39).

NIRVANA OR THE FINAL LIBERATION FROM THE WORLD EXPERIENCE

Such a man or woman – for we must also remember that in *Yogavasistha* men and women have equal claims and equal rights in matters of spiritual attainments and Self-realisation, without any further distinction of caste or nationality – is no longer bound by the universal Law of Karma to undergo another birth or experience objective world as a consequence of his thoughts and activities in this life. He or she is outside the pale of the Law of Karma, because only those acts, mental or physical, have to germinate or fructify into future lives and experiences which are done with a *motive*, with a conscious desire to attain or

Yogavasistha and its Philosophy

avoid something. But the actions which are performed spontaneously, without any desire, motive or attachment, are above retribution, fructification and bondage (VIa. 87. 19, 21, VIb. 199. 7, 33, IV. 38. 16. 17). Thus the sage, who has transcended all desires, is free from attachment and is above all selfish willing, is beyond the pale of the Law of *Karmaphala*. He is not bound by any of his actions to experience its consequences in this or any other life. When all the previous actions have borne fruit, there is no more necessity; in the case of the wise, of undergoing the experience of any other life (VIa. 103. 31, VIa. 2. 43, V. 41. 14). His personality (mind, individuality, finitude, limitedness) will be dissolved in the Infinite Ocean of Bliss, when he has finished to experience the fruits of his previous desires *sankalpas* and *karmas*, previous to the rise of desirelessness. Free from limited or embodied existence, and free from the future vision of an unreal and illusory objective world, he shall be reinstated in the Absolute Experience (IV. 42. 13).
