

CANTO I : Not Sinking but Rising in Caste

Section 1

Summary : On a beautiful morning, the mute clay wakes up with a sense of being a sinner, living a worthless life. She with all her heart prays to her mother, the earth, for a way out. The earth soulfully assures her of her worth and tells her to strengthen her faith, cautioning her against slip-ups.

[1]* A blue tint fills the limitless void above, while here, down below, sheer silence prevails. The night is on its way out and the dawn is about to set in.

The sun has awoken but is still turning about in his mother's soft lap, his face covered with her sari-end.

The east is sporting a gentle smile. Her sari-end is off her head and she looks painted as if with flying vermilion dust. She looks charming, brother...

[2] The lotus keeps herself shyly veiled, wishing to ward off the touch of the sun's hand on its pollen. She covers up with her petals her enamoured look.

And look, here, a half-opened lotus cannot even see with her open eyes the light of the setting moon. Conquest of jealousy is not possible for everyone. In women it is particularly rare.

Evanescent stars – frail maidens all – are following their husband, the moon, like his own shadows. And lest the sun see them, they hide far away, where the directions end, moving after their lord.

A gentle, fragrant wind is blowing and saying, “Life is a flow [3] Hay, this is twilight, isn't it? A fragrance pervades all quarters from end to end. What opportunity more precious for me than this?”

There is no moon, nor night. No sun, nor day. The directions are blind. No outsiders can smell this secret development. How can they conceive an evil design?

And here, in front, the river which is fast sliding towards the boundless sea, cannot hear this news. For, a wayfarer on the holy path does not look back – neither bodily, nor mentally.

[4] And the hesitant riverside clay, bashful and beautiful, opens her heart to mother earth:

“I am a fallen maiden, crushed by others, and trampled upon by mean sinners. Mother, I've no joy, I'm all sorrow, I am abandoned by everyone with

* The square brackets refer to the page nos in the Hindi original, Bharatiya Jnanpith, New Delhi, 2003.

contempt. To whom shall I speak of this untold pain? I sit directionless. My fate-line is devoid of brave portents, it's weak, perverse.

“Oh these troubles and tortures! How many agonies do I suffer, and how many more are there to follow, and for how long? I don't know if they will ever terminate.

“With every breath, I close my nostrils and drink a draught in which pain is dissolved. And lest [5] others suffer on seeing me, I've drawn a veil over my face. That's how I hide my suffocation even if I drink dreadful draughts. I keep drinking them. I am living only in the name.

“When will I be relieved of this kind of life? When will this body be dissolved? Please tell her, mother.

“Will her life find elevation? Will it be humbled by an access of countless virtues? Find a solution, mother. Take away the malady, dear.

“And listen, don't take too long. Give me feet, give me a path, and the provision for journey, mother.”

Then silence rules for a few moments. The pair gaze at each other without batting their eyelids. [6] The earth gazes at the clay, and the clay at the earth. And their eyes are focused far, deep, deep inside, and there they are fixed.

Now the mother slowly breaks her silence. Her eyes become simpler, more compassionate, revealing a heart rich in emotion. On her large creaseless forehead that is free from any crookedness, solemn signs begin to appear.

On her rosy cheeks, tears of gathering joy rain ceaselessly. The empty feeling of separation, of want, of alienation, begins to recede gradually. Call it duty or call it initiative, [7] there simply develops a feeling of deep intimacy between the two.

And the courage-powered earth is drawn to say something, being attracted by the clay before her. See how she addresses the clay in warm words:

“Existence is imperishable, child. In every existence there are countless possibilities of rise and fall. Like the poppy seed, the seed of the banyan is also quite tiny.

“When sown in the right field, and nurtured by timely manure, wind, and waters, it sprouts; and within a brief time, assumes the gigantic form of a banyan tree.

“In this verily lies its greatness. Such is its quality. Existence is imperishable, it is resplendent, child. First of all you will have to inhale this mysterious scent [8]

with the nose of faith. Do you follow?

“And consider this scenario, too. What an obvious matter! The clear rain-water streaming down from the clouds becomes turbid when mingled with the dust on the earth, and turns into mud. If these streams come in contact with margosa roots, they turn into bitter juices. And when these very streams fall into the sea, they are termed salt-bearing, my child.

“Again, these same rain-drops, when enclosed in oysters during the asterism of aructurus, turn into glistering pearls. Such are the fates of the water from the skies.

“A person is moulded by the company she keeps. And as is one's mental mould, so are the bends of life all the way. This is the rule, age after age, creation after creation.

[9] “As such, when your life is regulated by faith, the path itself becomes your guide, gives you a call, and marches with you like a companion. The fingers of the seeker then play on the strings of faith, give meaning to his life, and produce a melody beyond the sum of the notes. Do you follow, child?

“What's more, the fact that you deem yourself fallen, the lowest of the low, is a never-before event. Because, you have certainly recognized the lord, the mightiest of all. Your farsight reflects the presence of the holy one.

“To recognize the false rightly, my child, is to have an awareness of the true.

[10] “A feel of the nether depths of fall is a tribute to sublime heights.

“But child, this is far from enough. To internalize faith, and to experience faith, you have to gladly mould your spirit.

“The tall mountain peak is visible even from the base, but it is impossible to touch it unless your feet climb that way.

“O yes, there is no way out without faith. Without the root, there is no top. But when have flowers bloomed from the root? The fruits swing only on the crest.

[11] “Indeed, that's so. Don't consider this to be a mere sport, my child, but the fruit of long, long labour.

“Your faith may be stable and firm, especially firm, yet in the early stages of spiritual practice – saadhanaa – you are much threatened by the possibility of a fall. A man may be healthy and mature, but he does slip on a rock covered with moss.

“Moreover, a fall is possible even after continuous practice. A master cook may have been making bread daily for years, but why is his first bread hard? So listen. Don't be afraid of effort, nor laze.

“In the course of your saadhanaa, you may dip into valleys; [12] even a minor adversity may, like a cobra's hiss, unbalance your sky-high evenness of mind. The wayfarer may lose her way, sigh and despair. In such circumstances, why won't the bird of good sense fly off? Why won't the crone of anger roar? What can develop except misery when you slip down from your saadhanaa?

“Hence you have to give up any thought of hitting back. You have to give up any designs of transgression. Or else both these misdeeds will, as time passes, come in the way of the nurture of faith.

“There is one more thing I wish to say. [13] To accomplish a plan, it is unmanly to await a propitious time. Because then you are still in the sphere of desires, which slows down your progress. Similarly, to avoid inauspiciousness is, indirectly, to invite hate and that makes the mind turbid.

“Sometimes, for want of pace and progress hope droops low; forbearance, courage and enthusiasm dip down; you grow sad. But, when a person is situated in faith, regulated by holy do's and don'ts, and he acts enterprising, then these things prove to be a boon, not a curse.

“And listen. Not only sweet curd but even sour curd [14] necessarily yields butter upon proper churning.

“What I have said proves only this, blessed child, that a struggling life, as a rule, results in joy. That is why I remind you time and again, my dear, that a child's early signs of character are seen in how far it obeys the dicta of holy men and women.”

And a silence prevails for some moments.



Inauguration of the 3rd School : Pratibhasthali at Ramtek
“Let the goodness spread - far and wide”

The clay feels lighter, and now the earth tells her that her guru, the potter will come the next morning and turn her into a saint. All she must do is surrender herself totally to him.

The silence is broken by the clay, who, moist with feeling, pronounces: "May my life be guided by what you've said. I feel overwhelmed, ma. I feel light, [15] and I have glimpsed something.

"I've sensed something that is invisible to the outward eye and not on display in the physical world, which touches the inside. Your moving words are unheard before.

"When nature – prakriti, and the supreme soul – purush, unite, and when deformity and sin combine, then the subtlest third element is born within the human soul. No telescope can sight it. One's farsight brings it into view. It is one's karmic burden, mother.

"The clustering of karmas, and their subsequent dissociation from the soul, with the feeling of mine and yours, [16] depends on whether you have a sense of attachment or evenness of mind. This is what you have told her and this she has registered. It amounts to a religious churning in her, mother.

"Who pays heed to this creativity of consciousness? Who is aware of the mutability of consciousness? Indeed, who takes interest in discussing it? Who listens to it whole-heartedly? Who has the time to devote to it? A life devoid of faith is a country covered with leather, mother."

"Wonderful! Thank you, child. The sense, the import of what I said has sunk into your soul. Now I don't worry at all. Tomorrow morning you have to inaugurate your journey. The potter will come in the morning to change you from a sinner to a saint, [17] you will have to bow at his comforting feet in self-surrender. You have to start your journey under his guiding care, your life to come will glitter like gold. You are not to labour, rather he will labour over you. You have to simply gaze steadily at his service, workmanship and art.

"You have to start your journey.

"Day and night you have to merely keep a watch over your powers that are dormant for their own reasons, and over the fickle fancies of the mind.

"You have to launch on your journey."

After a restless wait, the magnificent dawn of her renewal arrives.

The day somehow went by in rumination and discussion talk but...

[18] The n...i...g...h...t goes on and on.

The earth is soundly asleep, while the clay is sleepless.

She is turning over, waiting for the dawn.

The clay looks upon even the n...i...g...h...t as the morn. When the pangs of sorrow subside, the sorrow, too, looks like joy. It is the result of your feeling – a useful observation this!

Finally, the moment arrived on which she had lidlessly set her eyes. The clay welcomed the moment and exclaimed:

“Many a morning have I seen, but [19] never in the past have I found a morning like this. And the morning, using a light red ink, writes something on the dark back of the night – that here is the last night and here the very first morning, that here is the last body, and here the primeval colossus.”

And the dawn, from an excess of joy, makes a gift to the night of a sari dyed in the light green of delicate young leaves. And the night honours the morning with a gentle smile, as a sister honours a brother.



Dr Vilas S. Sapkal, Hon. Vice Chancellor, Rashtrasant Tukdoji Maharaj Nagpur University (R.T.M.N.U.), Nagpur receiving copy of 'The Mute Clay'. V.C. announcing to take up 'The Mute Clay' as a subject for research studies at the R.T.M.N.U.

On this morning, auspicious omens occur for the good and the opposite for the evil.

Here, the river carries to the bank countless wreaths of countless flowers afloat, outshining the waves' silver glow [20] and mocking at it. These flowers, sent by the river, fall at the clay's feet.

It is a rare, rewarding sight when the river, in the guise of foam, spills, as it were, curds from auspicious and smiling urns, held by the river banks who are all standing with them...

And look at this! The earth, with the dewdrops on leaves of grass, acts like an ebullient river; and in the earth's gentle core wakes up a surge of compassion which marvellously thrills every limb of hers, making her break out into a natural dance.

[21] Today, one can see in the dewdrops an energetic enthusiasm, and cheery smiles, and good sense.

Today, one can see, in the moments of vigour, an illumination and detachment, and growth and seamless contentment.

Today, one can see in angry minds the dejection of the god of carnal love, and signs of their destruction, and loss of their consciousness.

Today, one can see in the grains of faults, asphyxiating torture, a diminution of being, and a revelation of a bundle of base qualities.



Acharyashri before
the holy rituals



The traveller on the path of spiritual self-reinvention makes her first fumbling step.

After all, today the journey is set to commence. Even while the traveller makes her first step where the path begins, [22] at the end of the path something begins to pulsate; a disturbance is set in motion.

From the traveller's nonviolent sole, a communication flows that is quick like electricity. And success stands up at the end of the passage, waiting humbly and respectfully for the traveller who had been sleeping for ages, sunk in despair.

When two parties' thoughts match and their customs are similar, communication gets better. Else it is distorted.

Proper communication is marked by a purposive movement like that of a fluent river-stream firmly held in place by solid banks and heading for its goal.

[23] Listen! The special thing on this subject is that a feeling of having a right on the receiver of message is a misuse of one's communicative power, and fails in its aim. On the other hand, a feeling of cooperation amounts to its good use and makes it meaningful.

Communication is the manure that nourishes and strengthens the plant of good feelings, makes it cheerful. Communication is the fodder which satisfies the hunger for the knowledge of the principles.

Indeed, one has to accept, too, that in the initial stage, the means of communication as a part of saadhana appear to be something of a burden, somewhat meaningless, and produce a painful strain on the mind.

[24] But, the later stage is just the opposite. Even a seasoned writer writing with a new nib necessarily finds it rough at the start; however, by dint of use, the nib smoothens and the handwriting becomes comparatively neat. And then the pen becomes a servitor and a companion of thoughts. Towards the end, the pen floats as it were on the current of the thoughts. This, we can say, is the common law.



Acharyashri with his Guru Gyansagar :
The FAITH moves on from the revered Guru to his Disciples

Amid cheerful portents, the clay's guide and guard for the times to come, the potter, appears on the scene.

Look at this! What is it? A sign of an auspicious event. [25] An alertly wide-eyed deer wakes from slumber, jumps from field to field, field to field, and speedily crosses the path. It disappears far into the distance.

One remembers the saying: "From left to right a deer runs across/ Ram goes to Lanka and is home victorious." The clay sees in the distant valley someone known or unknown. His laborious steps are coming towards her. The simple clay is puffed with joy and looks on lidlessly towards the valley.

[26] In the morning itself, she is overcome with a surge of delight. And now those steps have come near, the distance closes in. Slowly the scene condenses and thickens, and the large skyey expanse fades from sight. When the eye zeroes in on a dear one close at hand, all else goes out of focus.

What blessedness! A face appears before her that is imbued with unique feelings, boundless zeal.

The one whose forehead this is, is not a child but a grown-up, and he is large of heart and a storehouse of great luck. Listen, [27] it is a forehead that is never tense or burdened.

He is a man of a steady, strong will, one who does not even for a moment like to chatter idly. He is an expert craftsman. Taking the clay scattered as particles, his craft gives it various shapes.

The government does not levy taxes on him because through his craft he is always free from the offence of thieving.

Leave entirely alone any misuse of money, this craftsman does not even handle the spending of money. His craft makes him rich. He has not degenerated his culture since the beginning of the age. [28] It is a spotless craft and he is an expert craftsman.

At the beginning of the age, he was named the potter – kumbhakaara. Etymologically, in Hindi it means the lucky luck-bringer. In reality, although it is his own self that he fashions in whatever he crafts, tradition calls him a potter.

The potter, a liberated soul, offers his salutation to the divine at the start of his work.

Well, now the potmaker, at the start of his work, makes an obeisance to the holy syllable AUM. As for his ego, he has already got rid of it. He is free from the feeling of being the doer [29] and is established in his duty.

O aya, these tendencies need to be absorbed till the job is accomplished.



A few glimpses in the day of revered 108 Acharya Vidyasagar-ji at Ramtek

The potter digs the clay, packs her into a bag, and loads the bag on his helpmate, a kindly donkey.

Oh, oh, what is this! What kind of duty is this? Who ordered it? What is its purpose? A cruel, hard pick-axe hits at the clay head-on. The pick-axe digs deep into the soft clay. Is it the clay's merciful nature that has attracted the pick-axe's mercilessness? Are mercy and mercilessness close friends? If not, why don't we hear an agonized cry from the clay's lips?

[30] And why doesn't the clay see red? Is this the secret of achieving majesty? It seems that barring some exceptions, you cannot rightly meet the inner person by observing the outward actions. And you cannot live by taking wrong decisions, either. Thus life proceeds nonstop all by itself, raising doubts and counter-doubts and answering them as best it can.

And here, the simple clay said nothing. It is being packed into a bag, both the ends of which are closed. In the middle is an opening. The simple clay is decked and ornamented like a newly-wed bride which is feeling shy, shrunken and is peeping through her veil.

[31] She peers from the bag again and again, this simple clay. This ancient custom of veiling women is dear to chaste women and yogis. Compared to it, the modern trend of wedlock-free unions is rated low.

That is why the sensitive craftsman asked the clay: "Free from baseness, your pure cheeks have something like wounds or holes on them. I feel a bit puzzled, so if you don't mind, will you kindly explain?"

For some moments the clay looks into her past and can make no answer but fetches only a deep sigh.

[32] The sigh resolved the craftsman's doubt, and faith found a body to breathe in. Nevertheless, he did not quite get her meaning and was not satisfied. The craftsman's curiosity remained. Seeing this, the clay expressed her hidden feelings in words:

"It is a tale not of rich but of poor people, not of a palace but a hut.

"In the rainy season, the roof drips and then the ground below becomes full of holes. And then all life I have had nothing but tears and more tears in these hapless eyes. [33] The tears have flown on the cheeks, so naturally they are full of

holes. And then there is a difference between the wounds of love and those of pain. Is the feeling of attachment the same as that of detachment?"

Hearing the clay's story from her own lips, the craftsman spontaneously said, "This is a true life, blessed one, this is a pure life."

And it is a changeless law that without an extreme experience you cannot have the ultimate experience. And without a vision of the ultimate, you cannot know the beginnings. It means that excess of sorrow is the end of sorrows, and the end of sorrows is the beginning of happiness.

[34] For a few moments, the craftsman stands in a fearless posture, as if consoling the clay. He then calls to his unsalaried helpmate, the donkey. This creature who used to roam about freely in the valley also takes some wages for giving his body. He likes no bondage, but is tied down by the commands of his master. He is carrying the footless clay to the master's shelter on his strong back.



The Temple of FAITH - the auspicious *Bhumipujan*
at the venue of the Parvarpura Itwari Temple, Nagpur

The clay, being unwilling to be a load on others, feels sad for the donkey and develops a sisterly kinship with him.

On the way, the clay's eyes fall on the donkey's back. Friction with the rough bag is skinning his back. In commiseration, the clay feels stirred up deep within.

[35] The frail being of the clay constantly trembles with fear born of compassion. A companionable love blooms within and without. For this kind of feeling, not merely physical but emotional nearness is a must. Here, it is not an unconscious sympathy but a conscious and active one.

Nearness of feelings in a way bridges physical distances. And every moment the clay is sieved through the holes in the bag, and it provides the softest balm to the wounds caused by skinning. Her compassion gets warmer as she goes.

[36] Even the dry feel of the bag turns into a deep soft feel. All the same, the clay is downcast and feels averse to a journey riding on others.

And why does the clay feel so?

Because, knowing that the skinning and the inflammation is on account of her, she sort of burns in penitential fires.

And how can there be any rest for compassion in such a heart? She could no more bear the donkey's agony, and by means of the tears she wept and the sweat she released, [37] she kindly wetted the whole bag.

There can be no doubt that a sensuous person ruminates only on desires and sense objects. On the other hand, in compassionate eyes, day and night only spiritual life is reflected, regardless whether life has been harsh or kind to the seer.

And to have sensitivity and feeling is what rightly distinguishes life from non-life.

But to most eyes, a show of mercy to others appears to be a sign of an outward-looking eye, of foolish attachment, of an incorrect vision of self, and remote from spirituality.

[38] Such a self-centred notion is damaging to spirituality, though.

Because, listen! The knowledge of the other via self and of self via the other is inevitable, though there may be a distinction as to which is minor and which major. When we look at the moon, the wide sky is seen, too. To be kind to others is to

remember self, which leads to kindness to self.

Along with this, one has to note that to indulge in lust is to stay attached to the world; to evolve one's compassion is liberation. The one is a fire that burns life frightfully; the other is a holy decoration that makes life stronger.

[39] And listen! Incomplete mercy and compassion is not due to partial attachment; it is thanks to partial destruction of attachment.

The circle of lust is insentient... the body. The sphere of mercy and compassion is unbounded. Compassion radiates from the conscient centre, which is sensitive by nature. It is a store of nectar.

From the stem of compassion emanates, constantly, the fragrance of justice. This being so, who can say that compassion is related to passion?

A servant of passions, obeying the senses, must be blind. A slave of the mind has to be arrogant.

Agreed that everybody is the doer in relation to his self, [40] but in relation to others the person can be a sub-doer as well as kind to him. Everybody is an instrument unto his self; unto others a person can be an apparatus or a sub-instrument, too. That is how the donkey is not blind or arrogant. He is all moist within with feeling, and his feelings easily show outside. He prays to God:

"Let my name be justified. Etymology says that I, a gada-haa, am a remover of diseases. I wish to be exactly that, nothing else."

And what is this? It is a rare happening. The clay is surprised no end.

[41] The essence of this extraordinary event is that the flowers of feelings have bloomed, and all flowers have ripened into fruits: the clay's cheeks have become free from wounds, from holes; the skin is clear. The donkey is true to his name as "a remover of diseases".

The kindness of the clay and the donkey is spontaneous. They appear to be twin sisters, with a natural sympathy for each other. They do not appear to be younger or older than each other.

They exemplify the time-honoured saying that living beings live by mutual concord. This is a living demo of life, rejuvenation, revival.

Even so, the kind clay declares herself to be the younger of the two.

With or without feet, a ride on a living thing is incomplete mercy, which she

does not like.

[42] And she holds her breath, as though reducing her weight and gazes towards the shelter in a waiting posture. She appears like a queen in a silver palanquin, bored, shy and hesitant, gazing towards the queenly quarters of the palace.

Here one finds the raised head of good deeds. And the clay finds her first opportunity.



Generations of the noble Faith -
Acharya Vidyasagar-ji and Muni Viragsagar-ji, at Nagpur

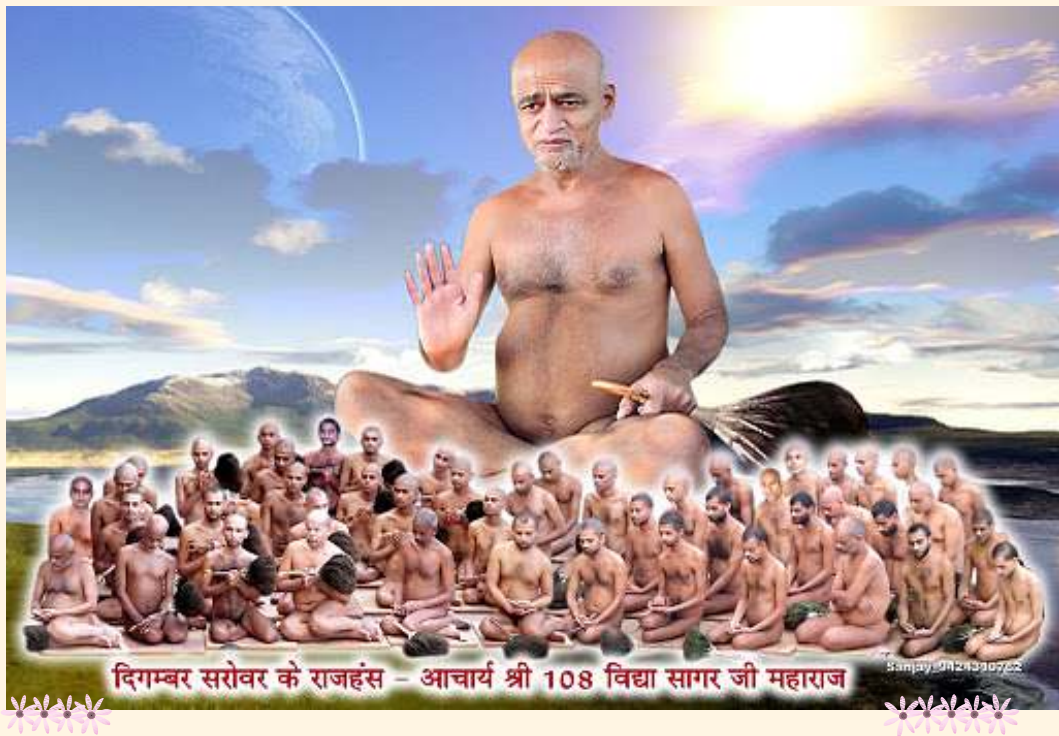
The potter reaches the clay to his shelter.

This is the campus of the potmaker's shelter where there is hard labour going on day and night. Here there is a school for yoga, and a first rate laboratory too.

Here, every moment of time the craftsman imparts education and training, [43] which directly affects the learners' inner life.

Here he is not concerned with making a living but with making a life. History is witness to this.

Here, a downward-flowing life gets an upward turn and elevation. A lost and homeless being also becomes a support unto others! Seekers find ideals here. Centuries-old historical riddles are effortlessly solved with just a little bit of his company. And those looking for tips on a simple, sensible culture get the necessary advice without asking. Here, the sword and the ink, the tiller and the rishi, find authoritative preachments without looking for them.



A holy congregation of the Guru and his Disciples -
in pursuit of *shanti* peace to the World

He sieves the clay to separate it from grains, who protest their exclusion.

[44] Well, now the clay has been unloaded in the shelter. At once, a thin-wired sieve is brought and the clay is being sieved.

The potmaker himself sieves. With his kind eyes, he soulfully looks at the fine clay coming through the sieve. With his benign, keen hands, he touches the true clay. He rejoices in body and mind without envy. Then he spontaneously utters these words:

“Blessed one! This is the crowning state of righteousness, [45] and you, being so soft, are the greatest achievement of clayhood.”

The clay is purified. The clay is spoken to. But the grains that are cast aside simmer with a justified-looking protest. Even so, they submit to the potmaker in modulated language: “Why are we being separated from the clay? Is it without reason, or is there a reason?”

To this, the potmaker gently replies: “When I use soft fine clay, of a humble caste, my craft attains splendour. When I use rough hard stuff of a proud caste, my work is scattered. Secondly, [46] I have to avoid a hybrid product of clay and grains. So I have separated you grains.”

On hearing this, the grains get inflamed. Their lips flutter. Their words get hotter than before: “Whether you talk of body or caste, it's one and the same thing. We and the clay are alike, we can't see any dissimilarity. Do you, potmaker sir? Have your eyes been surgically treated?”

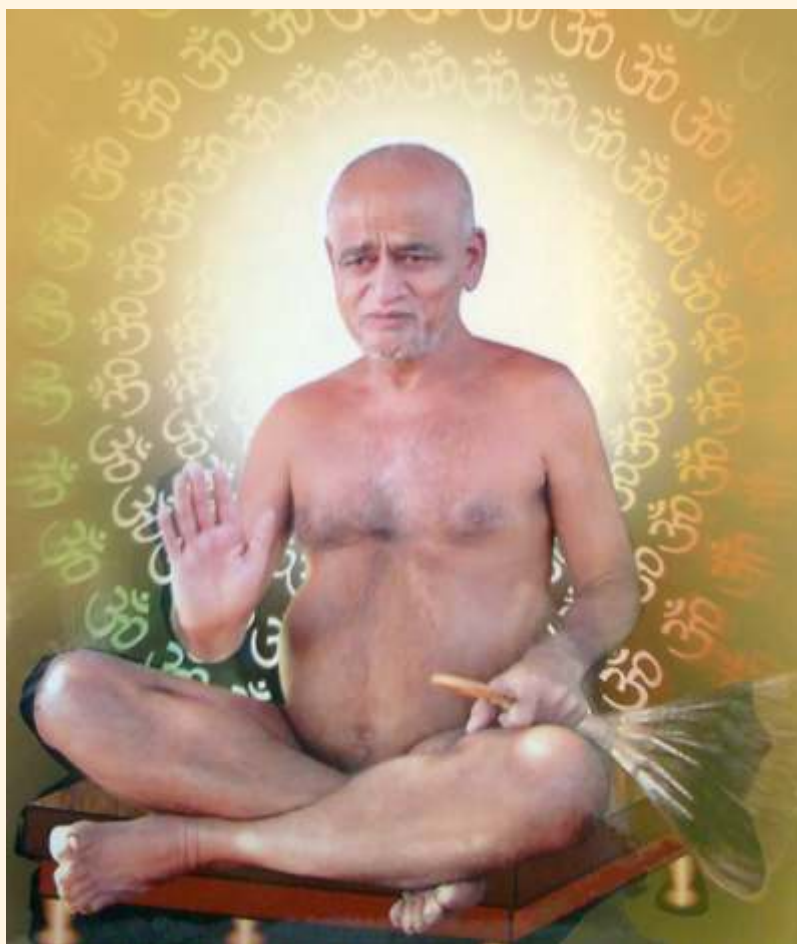
“And as for the colour, what is there to describe? Our colours are the same, and that's before you. The dark colour of Krishna is not despicable. [47] Do you hear or not? Are your ears all right? Then how can anyone talk of a colour-hybrid? We too silently worship Lord Shankar of the same colour.” And the grains fall silent.

Even on hearing these words, the potmaker does not in the least lose his temper. He presents a naturally quiet face like the earth.

He suggests, “In this context, 'colour' does not imply the skin-tone but the style and character. That is to say, the adoptee has to change to the ways and manners of the adopter. [48] Otherwise one's work is blemished with a hybrid. This is inevitable.

“However, this does not deny the very possibility of upgrading someone through cross-breeding. Water is of one caste, milk of another. Their feel, their taste, their colour – they all differ. And it is well-known that to suit one's pocket and the practice, water is added to milk, whereby water becomes milk. And listen. As for colour, cow-milk is white, and so also is the white sap of the poison-herb aak that we call 'milk'. To the plain eye, each of them is plain white, but mix them, and cow-milk will be denatured, it will turn sour, it will be hurt, so to say.

[49] “Turning water into milk is an upgradation of species, that is, of the water species, which is a blessing. Milk turning sour by addition of aak is a degradation, a curse.” Enough has been said.



Acharyashri Vidyasagarji showering his blessings on the followers

The potter calmly but categorically justifies the removal of the grains, clarifying that unlike the clay they do not absorb water and swell with it. The clay advises them, too, and when they see their misarguments, she forgives them and blesses them.

The potter speaks on, "O grains, you mingled with clay but didn't unite with it. You touched clay but didn't homogenize with it. Not only that, if one puts you into a grinder, you don't forget your qualities. You become sand, not clay.

"If irrigated with water, you get wet [50] but you don't swell. You don't acquire moisture like the clay. Is it not your shortcoming, you rascals?

"When do you have the capacity to hold water? You may be in a lake for ages, but you can't be the lake. I can't call you heartless, but you surely are stone-hearted. Even when you see others' pain and sorrow, you don't melt with compassion, such is your breast.

"All the same, saints and rishis have always advised and directed us not to scorn the sinner but the sin, not the mud-born lotus but mud. [51] O best of men! Act timely and godhood attain."

With this bitter dose from the craftsman, the grains look down upon the clay with piteous eyes. And the clay turns upon the grains with eyes awash with freedom.

The polite clay sort of advises them:

"You certainly have to explore the Universal Mother, regulate your desires, and come out of your narrow existence. What I mean is that the giving up of smallness, and aspiration for greatness, is an auspicious enterprise. A boat navigates across a seemingly shoreless sea when it has no hole in it. [52] Yet sometimes the boat trembles with fear, and this fear is not on account of water or the depth of the water but on account of the tremulous liquidity of the water. Consider the iceberg tipping above the surface of the sea, floating along the sea-currents. What a symbol of arrogance it is!

"It is a blockade to a straight journey and a symbol of vicious intents. Moreover, it consumes liquidity and becomes solidity.

"It doesn't know swimming, nor wants to swim. Unfortunately, it wants to sink things and men that float. It wants to remain in water but [53] not in a spirit of co-existence.

It wants to dispatch the world to the sea-bottom and remain on top, quite against the spirit of live and let live. O arrogant creatures! Look at water and feel some shame.

“O God witness to all, when will this arrogance be crushed?”

The flow of the clay's sermon was not broken yet. She turned from the literal to the suggestive mode of discourse:

“A seed is sown. Rains fall. The seed sprout, and within a few days a hairy waving crop stands... powerless. Now, leave alone hails, even an icy wind burns down the standing crop [54] like a fire. Water gives life, ice takes away life. Between good nature and perversity, this is the difference, as the saints say, who know all about the world and life.

“This goes to show that although the outer skin of ice is cool, inside it there is now no coolness. Surely, there has instead arisen a tendency to inflame. Consider this. You are thirsty and your throat is parched, and your eyes are burning. Suppose in this state you consume for relief ice instead of water. What happens? Your thirst gets worse and your nose waters.

[55] “This is a triumph of perversity and a case of helpless obedience to innate evil nature.

“In spite of all this, the spirit of the sea, or of the Universal Mother still does not sink the iceberg. What is the secret?

“It appears that this follows from Mother's tender affection towards her child, which is after all a part of her own race. She cannot take such a step even by mistake. She takes all burden and trouble on herself and keeps silent over it.

“Granted that separation comes into being on account of arrogance, yet one cannot deny that too low a pride leads to dishonour. But it may just be the seed for reaping high honour [56] in future.”

Thus an ironical dig was addressed to the grains in the middle of the potter's work. It touched the grains not only on the surface but also in their inner being.

At once the grains apologized saying, “No, no. We were rude. Mother, forgive us. We should not have brought this upon you.” And the host of grains wept and prayed, “You are beyond honour and dishonour, O gentle mother clay. Give us a mantra to be a diamond and precious like gold.”

On listening to the grains' prayer, the clay smiled and said, "Control your passions, [57] and walking this path you will be diamonds. You will have to follow a hard discipline of body and mind. In Hindi the inversion of the word for a traveller is a 'diamond'. You will have to burn yourself down to ash, do rigorous penance. In Hindi the inversion of the word for ash is 'true'. Then the soul-power will descend in you. Burning down your passions is the key to true achievement." With this the clay, generous like the sea, gives the grains her blessings.



The refreshing preachings of the Guru are omni-present even in the dew drops

The potter gets ready to draw water from the well, but the rope to tie to the bucket has a stubborn knot in it. The teeth and the salivating tongue rally to loosen the knot.

Today, the clay has to be swelled with the help of water from a pot in proper measure. [58] It has to be mixed with water and swelled. By and by she has to forget her past, her old ways. She has to be swelled today. In those particles, a new spirit has to be inspired every moment. She has to be swelled today.

For this very purpose, there is a well in the yard and the potter stands near the well with a bucket in hand. The bucket has a wavy handle to it. The potter keeps it down and unknots a snarled rope. It comes straight [59] except for a knot, and a hard knot it is.

It is necessary to remove this knot, and the craftsman's job begins. He concentrates all the energy in his thumbs and index fingers, and his breath stops.

Now, that amounts to yogic holding of breath within – kumbhak praanaayaam – without willing it. He sort of bites his lips, the veins and arteries of his arms tense up, and the skin is sort of swollen. But the knot is not untied. The thumbs have grown weaker, the index fingers are nearly senseless, and the nails are flushed with blood. But the knot does not come untied.

[60] Just then, the teeth pray to the craftsman, “Sir, grant these servants an opportunity to serve. The time demands it. We have heard the rule that when words are powerless, we use hands, and when hands are powerless we use instruments. Hence give us the rope without hesitation, sir.”

And the rope is passed on to the teeth. At once the right upper sharp tooth said to its companions, “Brother, you cannot [61] locate the joint in the knot!”

And the right lower sharp tooth feels the knot from all sides and at once dips into the depth of the joint with the help of the upper sharp tooth. The two teeth unite with each other and their strong roots gain strength from each other.

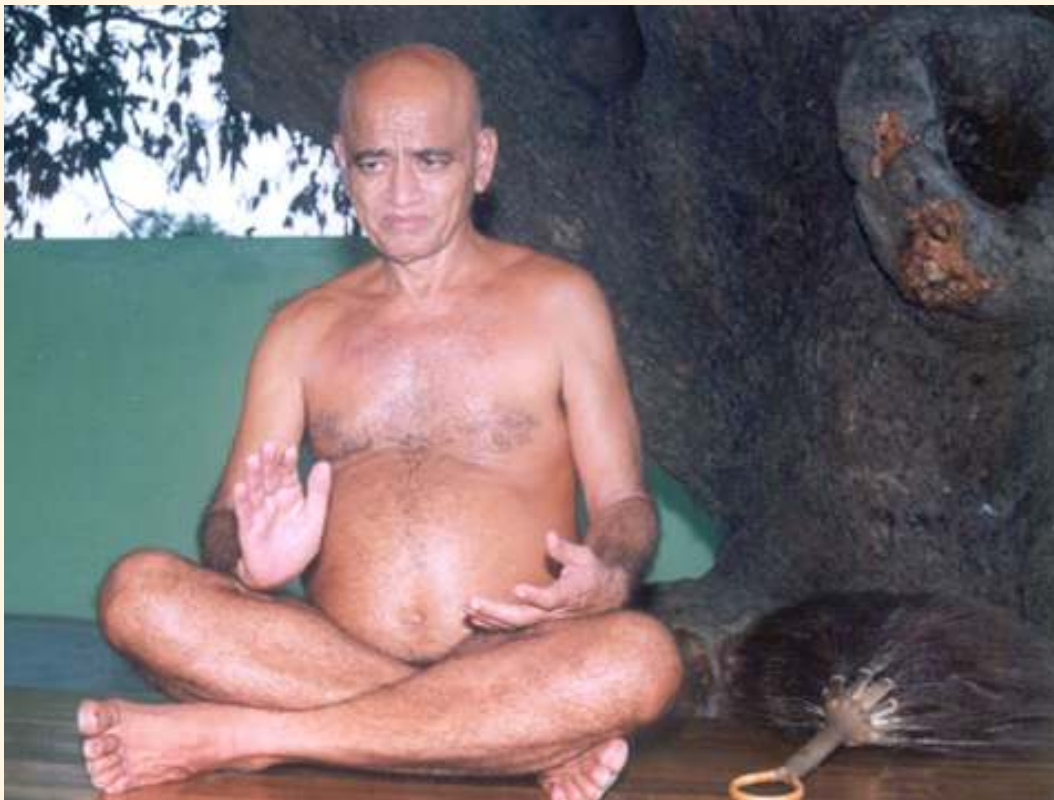
Even after this, the knot does not come untied; in fact it does not even stir while the teeth threaten to shake and their tops threaten to crack.

And look, the soft gums have been skinned in this struggle [62] and the flesh is about to peep from them.

Even the tongue got excited to see this and addressed the rope: "Today you are acting feelingless. You used to be single; you were reputed to be like grandmother and elder sister, kind and slender, but you're no longer straight. You are dense and knotty, and very obstinate.

"Give up your tantrums, loosen the knot, or else you will repent when your indivisible life is split into two."

[63] And pooh-poohing the rope's despicable act, the tongue, as if in condemnation, spits on the rope at the knot, covers it with saliva. As a result, the rope trembled at the thought of its frightful fate. And, within a few moments the knot got wet, softened down and became loose. It was wonderful! The teeth get active as they watch this success. All the upper and lower teeth together untie the knot.



Like the tree gives us the shadow,
so the Guru gives us and guides us on the path of enlightenment

The tongue tells the rope of the master's nonviolent ways.

Now the rope asks the tongue curiously; “What was your master's problem with the knot?”

The tongue replies, “Listen, rope. [64] My master is a man of self-control, shy of violence. Only nonviolence is his life. He says that without self-control, a man is no man.

“Our duty is to worship nonviolence, and whenever there is a knot, violence plays its deceitful part. That is to say, a knot engenders violence.

“Only in a knot-free state does nonviolence grow up, prosper, gain strength.

“We are marchers on a knotless path. We always favour, praise and worship this path alone. May this life [65] go on in this same way in future, too.

“That's all. We wish for nothing else.

“You had fostered a hard, difficult knot. Without untying it, if a filled bucket had been hauled up, the knot would've stumbled on the wheel; the bucket would then have been sure to lose its balance, and the rope would have tripped on the wheel.

“As a result, much of the water in the bucket would surely have been spilled back into the well. The creatures living in that water would have died prematurely owing to the injuries received. How can my master commit such a sin? For this reason, it was not just necessary but essential to untie the knot. Do you see? [66] O rope, crazy thing! My friend!”



The Guru listening to a point in a community meeting

An upward-aspiring fish in the well wants to grow out of the confines of the well and be transformed into a higher being, a swan.

Now what has happened here? The shadow of the craftsman's smooth-smiling, happy body falls far below on the clean water where a fish was swimming freely. The fish looked up and aspired to reach higher. But it worried how its body would rise to the top. The body is material, and material things require a support – that too of moving conscious beings.

The fish says: “And listen! Maya prevails because of the body. My mind is affected by maya. [67] The mind can take the righteous path if maya is overcome.

“I'm lying in a blind well with the complex that I'm ugly. I'm like frog in the well. My fate, my mind, my circumstances are all deformed. How can I know my true form? Not a single ray of light reaches me from the top.”

A painful cry escapes the fish's mouth: “Someone take me out of the blind well and give me the form of a swan.”

But no one hears the cry. She says again, “O folks with ears, have you all grown deaf?” This cry is a cry in the wilderness, the fish thinks, and is again lost in musings.

Therein [68] she finds a ray:

“In vain musings, one loses the hope of life and goes out to eat poison; but in the lap of a firm resolve one finds the long-asleep capability to act with courage and patience.” Thus the fish was determined to come to the top.

In the fish's heart, her attachment to the perishable body loosens and an aspiration to attain divinity rises. She is detached, now. How much longer would she stay in love with water? Her attraction is instantly gone. She had found a sanctuary, her fears have vanished.

This marked in the fish's life [69] the beginning of a blessed victory.



The Guru is omni-present in the five *tatvas* (elements) of LIFE

The other fish are happy enough with their limited existence.

Now the task ahead is taken on. The craftsman whose limbs were well-disciplined and hands trained in self-control, took charge of himself. He tied a bucket to the rope's end and slowly lowered it into the well so as to avoid injury to fish and other water creatures. This is done in order to avert a karmic backlash to the spirit here as well as hereafter, now as well as later on.

[70] Wow! The fish's resolve appeared to fructify within no time. Her hopeful, quiet eyes, wanting to see the dream come true, look upward. A sort of airplane seemed to land with the inscriptions: "Kindness is the core of religious conduct," and "I take refuge under religion." As the bucket went lower and lower, frogs and innumerable other water-creatures quickly went deeper into the water for dear life.

But all kinds of fish, slaves to the tongue and greedy, come to a standstill and gaze at the lowering bucket blinklessly, hoping to get some food.

But what do they see? A disappointment coming their way. [71] The bucket is empty.

All these fish mistook the bucket for a net and ran away scared. Only the one fish, who had made a resolve, stayed where she was. She said to a friend of hers, "Come on. Let's take refuge under this bucket. 'Kindness is the core of religious conduct.' This is the sole refuge of the refugeless. This is a great abode, which will care for us. Otherwise we are sure to be swallowed by death today or tomorrow.

"Don't you know that here big fish devour small ones whole?

"Among souls of the same religion and caste, animosities flourish. A dog digs the ground with nails upon seeing another dog and growls violently."

[72] The friends replied, "What you say may be true. But if by eating us, our kind is fulfilled and nourished, that is the way things should be. Because when your time is up, only your caste-mates come to your aid. Others are only spectators, idle preachers. And how can you believe those of another caste? In practical life, every moment we witness a breach of trust.

"And listen. It is rare to see the product inside live up to the claims on the wrappings outside. In this world, deceptions are rife.

"The claims of kindness are vain. The world is empty of kind souls. [73]

Kindness is life, claims of kindness are mere acting. Nowadays, even weapons, clothes, swords are branded with the slogan 'Kindness is the root of religion.' But swords are not kind to anyone. They are the very opposite of kindness.

“How much more to say? A flagpole of religious banner also becomes an instrument of fight. Religious maxims, too, when they find an opportunity, become an instrument of fight. And a flute of reed that sings praises to the lord can also become a beating stick to beat true devotees. I salute the times.”

On hearing her friend, our fish responded again, “If you don't wish to come, then don't. But don't waste my time with your preachments.”

[74] And the fish proceeded without her friend and her worldly wisdom. To face every obstacle cautiously is to find new light of awareness. Or, in other words, it is to find the final solution.

It is essential to know what virtues are as well as what faults are. But to despise faults is to encourage them and, at the same time, to undermine virtues. Depriving oneself of the pollen and fragrance of flowers by despising thorns is a sign of ignorance. Enjoying fragrance by avoiding thorns is a sign of wisdom, which is rare.



Guru Acharya Vidyasagar-ji - The lighthouse of Knowledge & Wisdom

The potter's bucket lowers into the well, and the aspiring fish enters it with great hopes.

[75] Here, water enters the gently landed bucket and the bucket enters water fully. The fish enters it, living the mantra: "I take refuge in religion." Her faith is firming up and her soul gaining strength. All the fish around were surprised to see this image of fortitude and faith. For a while, they forgot their fears.

One of the fish conceived the thought and made the resolve to do a good deed. All others seconded it.

[76] One was inspired, the others impressed. One had found sight, and all others had found a direction.

The refuge of kindness was found. The heart was illumined. All of them were enlightened, and had an immediate ablution within and without.



On the path of peace 'n meditation 'n tyaga 'renunciation

The spiritually ambitious fish makes a wish to transcend the sphere of passions.

Now, the whole family of fish assembled in a cheerful mood. As they swam, ripples arose, and it appeared as if they each had a flowery wreath in their hands to felicitate the great fish. Slogans were raised: "Wish you a happy journey to liberation." "May ignorance perish." "May religion be victorious." "May the karmas be all worked out." "Hail to you, hail to you, hail to you thrice."

[77] Wow! The time is near for the airplane-like bucket to take off. The fish makes the auspicious oath: "In the limitless time to come, may my heart be emptied of desires.

"This auspicious journey has only one end, that I may look upon all beings with equanimity. May my mind be always bright and cheerful. May I not do violence to demonic bodies or human minds.

"In heaven and on earth, and in the bowels of earth, [78] may the spirit of nonviolence and kindness prevail."



The apostles of the 'satvikta' goodness of religion :
108 Acharya Vidyasagar-ji and Mallisagar-ji Maharaj

The fish jumps out of the bucket to where the clay lies, amid visions of an immediate liberated life.

The bucket, full to the brim with water, now rose up from the lowly world of degradation to elevation. The fish merely looked on. Water was not in short supply nor was her power to swim, but she did not swim. She had, as it were, forgotten to swim, her mind was still and she had a vision of her self. Her actions seemed to cease. She is wised up.

The bucket safely rose to the top, the fish is freed of the bondage of the well. The salute of golden sunshine is to her a source of joy.

[79] With the splendour of sunshine, this haven appeared perfectly blissful. The vermilion-faced fish turns her eyes straight to the shelter.

The sun has sent his beautiful wife to serve the shelter all day, and she dutifully illumines every corner of it, as if kissing it in every limb. She is manifest in the gross form, she is a treasure-house of beauty, but beyond grasp. She is not touchable by a stranger but only by the sun – who is, like God, beyond the subtle touch. Sunshine! Such is, we must say, the result of the shelter's shade. [80] The fish broke out of her folly – and out of her sorrow.

Now, this scene comes alive in the shelter yard: on the mouth of the largest pot is tied a doubled, clean cloth of hand-spun cotton fibre. The potmaker approaches it with the bucket in hand.

Very carefully he pours it into the pot in a stream, and the water is slowly filtered. Just then, the craftsman's eye slips elsewhere.

The fish, restless to leap, jumps out of the bucket and falls at the clay's holy feet. Then she cries effusively, her eyes saturate with feeling. [81] Pain overbrims. These eyes are thirsting for an unknown experience. These eyes are popping out like a handmaiden of God, and from them pour bright tears to wash the clay's feet.

The drops which have entirely imbibed the holiness of the mythical ocean of milk have rained profusely a sea of pain.

Ariyaka Adarsh Mati Mataji,
Principal of Principals
along with all Teachers,
M.A. & B.Ed, of Pratibhasthali -
THE HOLY COMMUNION



The fish begs of the clay to preach her, and desires death by fasting. The clay dissuades her from such an untoward course and discourses her in soothing words. She asks the potter to restore the fish to the well.

Here this pen asks the age whether humanity is all extinct from human affairs. Have demonic forces taken charge? It seems that generosity is entirely missing from human nature. And then, [82] when was demonic nature generous?

A soul who treats “the world as his family” is rare for these eyes to see, know and experience. Even if it exists, it is not in India – Bhaarat – but in the epic of another age namely Mahabhaarat. In India, selfishness prevails.

Yes, this change is seen, that the ancient Sanskrit saying which enjoins you to treat the world as your family has been twisted into a modern meaning. For us, acquisition of wealth has become our motto, wealth is our family, wealth is the crowning glory of life.

The fish says to the clay, “Say something, mother. Enlarge on this very theme of the sign of the times.”

In response to the fish's prayer, the clay pithily says, “Listen, child. This is the true sign of the age of falsehood – kaliyug – [83] the wickedest of all ages. In this age, truth is always treated as falsehood. Truth is always objectionable. And the age of truth – satayug – is the age in which falsehood and evil are discarded from human affairs.

The fish again interrupts and submits, “The discourse is getting too deep. Please simplify.”

So mother says, “Child, try to understand. Whether satayug or kaliyug, they are not external phenomena but internal happenings. An eye that seeks after truth – sat – is living in satyug, my child. And an eye which is lost in asat – the attractions of the senses – and which treats true as false, is living in kaliyug. Kali is like death, the house of cruelty, very merciless. And sat is like an ivy abloom with delicate buds, it has always been very kind, very, very soft.

[84] “The eyes of Kali are always full of dark illusions while the eyes of sat always brim with peace.

“One hankers after selfish ends, the other cares for all humanity. The first is flighty, the other is steadfast.

“One is like a lacklustre corpse, the other is the nectarine, immortal deity Shiv. We have to cremate the corpse and arouse love for permanence. Do you follow, child?”

[85] The fish replied, “I was ignorant, but I've wised up, mother. I was confused, now I'm clear-headed. I don't look for water to drink. I don't look for power in life. All I long for is that this shattered and tethered life of mine should somehow connect with the permanent truth, that my mind should become whole by means of stabilized thinking. I don't look for a needle and thread.

“This fish, though born in water, has burnt in the fire of jealousy of water and water-creatures. Where can you find any coolness in ignorant hearts, mother, which I found in just a few moments at your feet?

“I no longer crave for the sandalwood of Malayaachal or prepossessing bright moonlight. I don't long for their cool, soothing touch. Your cool words flood me with joy. Mother, you're a spring of coolness, verily the house of purity.

[86] “Only in your lap will I find knowledge, mother. Only in your lap will I pursue my quest – the quest for the source of infinite good qualities.

“I'm not so scared of bodily ills as of mental ills. And I'm even more scared of worldly decorations. I need no outer possessions, mother. All I wish for is a trance of equanimity, not an idle waste of time. An instrument of mind-control helps, doesn't it? And a collection of worldly possessions hinders, doesn't it?

And the fish adds, “Hence give me the scriptural, spiritual fast unto death *sallekhanaa*, mother. Give me seeds of knowledge, your preachings mother. Give me the eye to see the truth, give me the experience of yogic trance.”

To this the clay smiles and says, [87] “*Sallekhanaa* means thinning down the body and its impurities, child. When you emaciate the body, the impurities thin down – they ought to thin down. And this body is not for dissolution. Feel neither sorrow nor joy in the dissolution of the body or the gain of wealth. This is true *sallekhanaa*, child, otherwise the wealth of the soul is lost.

“Whether conditions are favourable or not, whether you get your wish-world or not, whether you get sorrows or joys, it's all for your welfare. The eyes of equanimity can see it. Whatever fate befalls you, it is for your ultimate betterment.

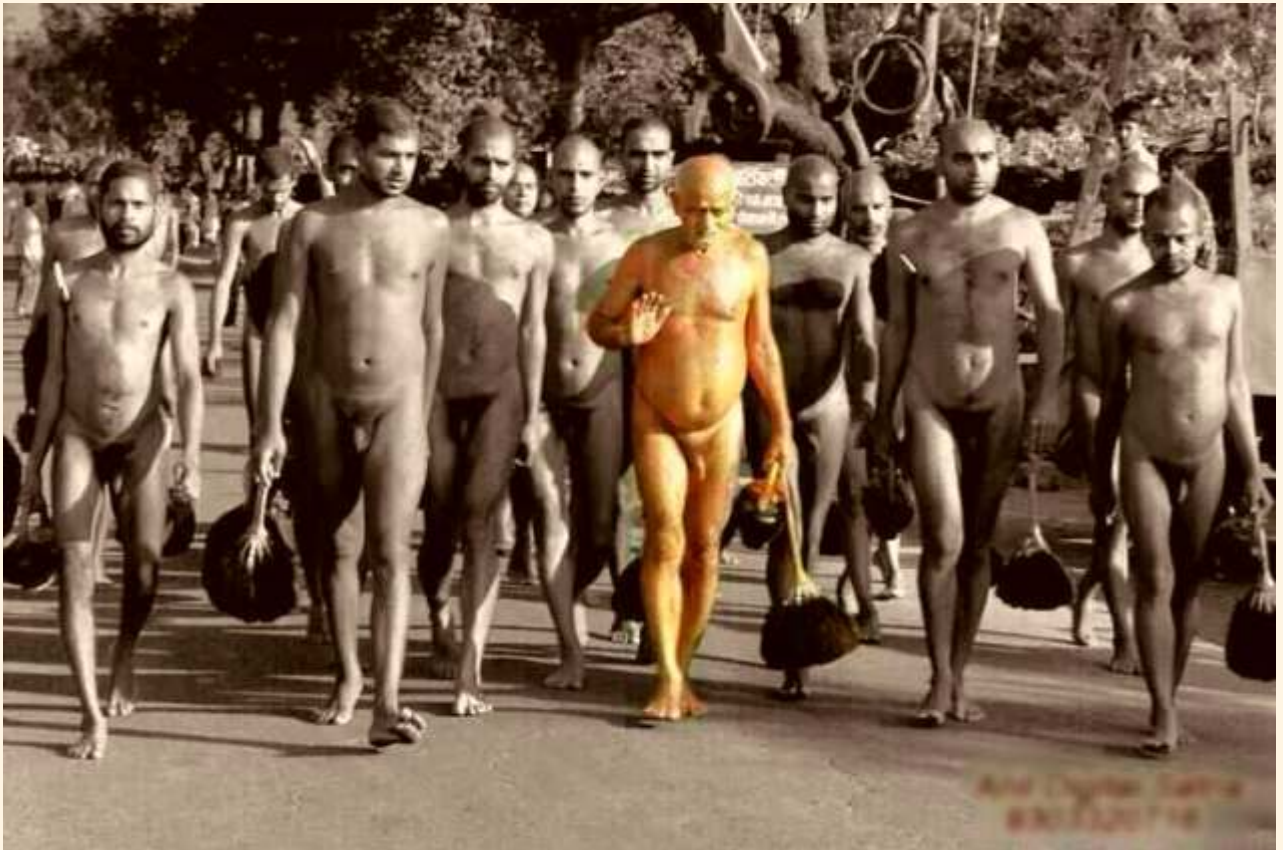
“Towards the end, I wish to say this, that never in your life be like those

cunning fish, never be swayed by the attractions of the senses. [88] And listen, child, be innocent, that is the way to attaining trance.”

With this, the clay signals to the craftsman: “Please reach this great soul to the well, safely and at once. Otherwise she will perish and you will be to blame. That will result in unbearable sorrow.”

The water has been filtered. The fish and water-creatures remain in the cloth. The craftsman pours some pure water into the bucket, puts the fish and other creatures into it and carefully escorts them into the well.

The well resounds once again with the words, “Religious conduct is purified by kindness.” The words echo from the walls, reach the shelter and dissolve in the air.



108 Acharya Vidyasagar-ji leading
his disciples 'sangh' on the path of righteousness