

CANTO IV : The Test by Fire, the Silver-like Ash

Section 1

Summary : The potter organizes his kiln with sticks of acacia, margosa, pine and tamarind wood so as to bake the pitchers. The sticks hesitate to burn the pitcher, but at the potter's behest agree to do so.

[269] Here the earth's heart trembled, was in fact shaken down, and her lips quivered. Her fortitude was nowhere to be seen.

It was a time when neither the goddess of carnal love nor of the ascetic kind could think aright. The earth's surface fecundity, her power to nurture and sustain plants, might flow away, no one knows where. Generally, this is what we have heard: the creatures of the sky make few gifts to the creatures of the earth but give them ample beatings. What can an undisciplined soul give to one that lives by rules? What can a dispassionate soul take from a passion-ridden one? And we have not only heard but often seen that in the face of a well-regulated and restrained person, not only the unruly soul but even the Death-god comes to his knees. The inhabitants of the sky as well as gods and demons have to alike accept their defeat.

[270] Today, we just passingly saw the kiln. The pitcher has to be placed in the kiln within the set time, without losing a moment. The kiln is being cleaned.

At the base of the kiln, large, knotted, shapeless and black-barked sticks of acacia are being arranged one on top of another. They are being supported by margosa sticks with their red-yellow bark. Some quickly flammable pine sticks are being laid in between, and smooth, slow-burning tamarind sticks stand around the kiln. At the centre of the kiln, the batch of pitchers is neatly piled up.

The acacia stick, hemmed in from all sides and choked in the throat, expresses her last inner agony to the potter. Her sorry posture feels bold enough to say these words: [271] "We, being wood, are hard-natured by birth. The weight of our sins is so heavy that the scales nearly dip down to touch the earth.

"The sphere of merit is left far behind. A gap of space as well as time dies between merit and this sinful life of ours. Sometimes they make the hardest hard canes out of us to clobber criminals. But generally, the real criminals go scot-free while innocent people are beaten up. And we break while beating them. How can we call this a republic? This is an out-and-out rule of wealth or a rule of caprice.

"We too get a taste of these untoward happenings. This scheme of burning the innocent pitcher through our agency [272] is another link in the murderous chain in which I am involved. I can no more take the bitter draught, my throat feels choked with pain. There is no room within for poison or nectar. And anyway, for some time nectar will have no effect on this life which has become poison-like by being in a poisonous atmosphere.

"When there is an overlong delay, injustice does not look like justice; in fact, then even justice looks like injustice. This is the order of the day."

The stick's tongue stumbles, pauses now and then, and continues, "The *raison d'être* of the powerful is not to trouble the weak but to empower them, support them and save them."

On hearing this, the unruffled craftsman speaks these gentle, affectionate, honeyed words: "When someone raises [273] a weak person, his/her arm may ache. But that is no fault of the person who raises him/her. The powerlessness to raise them is at fault. Yes, indeed. The person raising is incidental to the pain, and in the present situation such is the case. Moreover, in this task, none other than you yourself has to be the instrument."

When the stick hears these words of the craftsman, she seems to agree inwardly. She is abashed and hesitant, like a wife before her husband, slightly nodding her head. The stick says, "I understand certain things and do not understand certain others. Still, looking at your magnanimity, I dare not contradict you." And the stick gives her assent to the auspicious work at hand.

So, granular ash and soil were so packed on the mouth of the kiln that even an external sound could not penetrate into it. To the north of the kiln [274] there is a small opening at the base. The potter goes to this opening and chants the *navakaar* mantra nine times, with the eternal pure principle in his heart. Then with a small burning stick, fire is kindled in the kiln. But the flames go out within a few moments. Again a fire is lit and again it goes out.

This lighting of fire and its going out goes on for some time. Then the potter courteously addresses the stick again: "It appears that in this auspicious job, your full consent is yet to be given, otherwise this hindrance would not have cropped up."

The stick pronounces again in mild, intimate words: “No, no. This hindrance is not from my side. Once accepted, forever accepted. Once surrendered, forever surrendered. [275] What is within is without, what is without is within. Body, mind and tongue act in concord. Only a single current of service flows here. And listen, the real obstruction comes from someone else – the fire itself. I want to burn, but the fire does not want to burn me, for reasons best known to herself.”

Principal of Principals : Originator of the concept of Pratibhasthali



105 Aryaka Adarshmati Mata-ji



105 Aryaka Mata-ji



Acharya Vidyasagar-ji, the Inspiration & the strength of the righteousness of the purity of LIFE

**Fire also refuses to burn the pitcher but the potter solicits her cooperation.
The potter requests fire to burn not the pitcher but his shortcomings.**

The craftsman thinks, "In what words shall I implore fire? Will she be able to hear me? Will the sight of this heart move her heart? Will the flames act like water? When will its thirst be quenched? What if she gets angry with me?" Thus thinking, the doubtful craftsman once again lights the fire.

And wow, the lit-up fire said, "I believe that without a fire-test no one has yet been liberated, nor will one ever be. That's the standing law in this matter. Then! [276] Will fire not be tested? Who will test me?

"To test yourself by your standards is quite easy. But to take the right decision is very difficult, for you cannot see the redness of your own eye. Another thing. He whose life is a touchstone for others need not be a touchstone to himself. This being the case, one has to take a false decision, saying that one is living by one's standards. But fire cannot do it.

"My standard is to live a life of goodwill and good conduct. That's my real touchstone. Hence leave aside burning the pitcher, I find it a sin even to think of burning him. This I submit with due respect to you."

The pitcher overhears this dialogue from within the kiln and humbly submits, "To show kindness to well-behaved people is, indeed, the proper and dutiful use of your inborn powers. [277] And not to destroy evil forces is to waste your powers, it amounts to dereliction of duty. I am not innocent, I am a house of faults.

"Unless you burn them I cannot become innocent. You inherit the power to burn. I don't say burn me. Burn my shortcomings.

"To burn my shortcomings is to give life to me. Saints have regarded it as the highest act of religious conduct to burn one's own and others' faults. Faults are lifeless, incidental; in a way they creep in from outside. Virtues are part and parcel of a human being, hence they're welcome. You will attain spiritual advancement by this act. Life will gain through you. I have the power to hold water, waiting for you. For its full expression, your helping hand is necessary." [278]

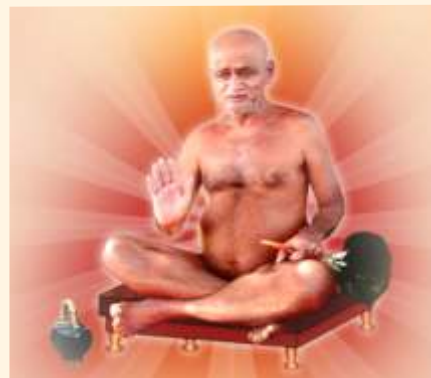
A fire now starts in the kiln, which belches thick dark smoke. It chokes the pitcher's nose, but he performs yoga to withstand the onslaught.

The fire understood the pitcher. The potter smiled happily. The line of despair on his face blossomed into a line of self-confidence. His expression changed fully. He shook off his languor and perked up.

And look! Within a matter of moments, a hissing fire was lit up, taking the whole kiln in its embrace. It consumed all sticks, large and small. The kiln started continuously to emit puffs of collyrium-black smoke, like the awful and thundering rain-clouds of the first rainy month of *Aashaadh*. Within a radius of thirty to forty hands all was lightless. It appeared as if the earth had turned like the dark nether region of *tamaprabhaa* and was sending up purest pure darkness. The craftsman walked out of the agitated circle of smoke, but could not see the kiln. If the outward conditions are so frightful, what of the inner state?

The entire kiln was filled with smoke, which spun rapidly [279] in it like a cataclysmic cyclone. There was nothing but smoke and more smoke. The potter's head went giddy, and as for the pitcher, ask us not.

Smoke pervades the mouth, belly, eyes, ears and nose of the pitcher. He chokes on the smoke. From his eyes not tears but the vital element, life itself, seeks to go out. But the smoke that invades him from outside doesn't allow life to leave him. The pitcher's nasal nerve is as if paralyzed by the pungent odour of the smoke. Even then, the pitcher exerted himself fully, breathed in the smoke to fill his belly, and retained it there – that is, performed *kumbhak praanaayaam*. This *praanaayaam* is the best instrument in yogic practice and the root of a healthy yoga-tree.



Acharyashri-ji - the glow of Divinity

By and by the smoke ceases to arise and a red glow pervades the kiln.

The pitcher started consuming the smoke to find out whether it had the power to digest – not food but fire. [280] The pitcher felt no distaste as it consumed the smoke nor did he vomit it. Vomitting is caused by nothing but an inward distaste. From this we infer that if sense attractions and passions are not being vomitted, the reason is an inner liking for them.

Gradually, the smoke ceased to rise. A smokeless fire illumined the kiln. Even the reddish glow of heated gold is second to the inside glow of the kiln. Today, at this time, the heat of the fire has been expressed one hundred per cent.

The touch of fire has burnt the lustre of the pitcher and this lustre is sinking into languor. Its soul has brightened, nearly to sink into effortless peace. [281] The pitcher's sense of touch asked the pitcher what that touch was. The pitcher said that it was a touch of purity, and this cannot be experienced unless you go through a fiery penance. In this context, the pitcher's tongue also declared that the intellectuals who believe that fire is deficient in an appeal to the sense of taste are wrong. Experience and inference contradict them. So, why should the tongue not taste fire? Indeed, only that tongue can enjoy taste which is above not only a desire for life but also the fear of death. A person who is a slave to his tongue can never truly know the taste of anything. When you mix milk with rice, you don't get the separate taste of milk and rice but a mixed taste. And if you add sugar to it, all the three individual tastes are overthrown.

The pitcher's slender nose, which had been struck unconscious by the suffocating smoke, now, in the absence [282] of smoke seemed to support the tongue. It hastens to smell the pure perfume of fire. The pitcher's eyes had been sort of closed, blinded by the smoke. Now they have opened. They bloom like a lotus owing to the salutation of the glow of pure fire and the dispelling of darkness.

The pitcher's eyes fall first on the dispassionate smokeless fire. There was no second sight for a second glance. The seer looked all round to find only one object – fire, fire, fire.

Fire sermonizes the pitcher, preparing him for greater trials and giving him a vision of becoming useful through penance. The pitcher prays to loosen his attachments.

The varied types of sticks are no longer what they had been. They have all drunk and internalized fire. Shall I put it this way – they gave birth to fire and then immersed into it.

Everything is wiped out by the emotions it generates; in them it is absorbed. This rise and wiping out of emotions is [283] natural and spontaneous, it is self-dependent. It has no beginning nor an end.

Fire looks at the industrious pitcher, and to express her evolving experience, she speaks a little bashfully about her excesses: “My speed doesn't exceed proper limits yet. And listen. The extreme of excess is still very far, very far. My burning reminds me of cold water. My burning gives a taste of bitter eye-black. It is a rule that in the first step, one feels merciless sorrow and labour. My burning provides drinking water to people afterwards. As such, have forgiveness in the heart, forgive me. It is the religious duty of a seeker to conduct himself/herself according to the scriptures.”

On hearing this, the pitcher's strength was fortified. His zeal was infused with new life and he spoke: [284] “I keep in mind the aphorism that 'The height of labour is when you achieve your desired goal.' That is why this traveller is averse to resting on the way. He prays to God again for more strength than before.

“This vessel desires neither worldly pleasures nor even liberation. He is indifferent to applause when people praise it. I wish to swim across the river of fire without ever raising a sigh in moments of crisis. I don't worry if the baseness of the world pervades all its cells. I should be even-minded in the face of a base, ignorant world.

“And master, listen further. I am tired of the awareness of self and am fully immersed in duty. [285] Now a silent smile on your cheerful face is not enough, my lord. I look for a discourse.

“Lord, I wish to be saved from the cycle of cause and effect, from spells of charming happy experience. O all-pervading lord, I want to be beyond attractive shapes and smells and touch. Lord, I wish to be like iron that is rust free. Without attachments, I wish to immerse in the fire of meditation.”

Fire blesses the pitcher with advice on meditation, delighting him. She also explains to him that philosophy is merely an intellectual exercise while spirituality is healthy knowledge.

Fire hears the pitcher pray to the lord, his absorption in this emotion, his talk of the fire of meditation, of the path of knowledge, and intervenes: "This is the memory of ages after ages. I know many souls, for I have spent time in the company of saints and ascetics. [286] To talk of meditation and to talk carefully are two different things, with a world of difference between them. Just by opening centres for meditation, it is not possible to focus your mind in meditation. Talking of meditation, here are a few lines to paint the modern scene: 'In our times, two men want to lose themselves. The first goes for sensory pleasures and liquor, the second gets absorbed in yoga, sacrifice and meditation on the self. Both are freed from the wanderings of the mind within a matter of minutes. What to say then! The first lies still like a corpse, the second is true like God in human form.'"

[287] The pitcher thinks, "Today I got to hear from fire some words of experience which are rarely heard even from profound thinkers and philosophers."

He wants to imbibe more of philosophy and fathomless words of spiritual lore, and submits to fire again: "Are philosophy and spirituality two feet of the same life? Are they related as the revered and the reverential. If yes, then who worships whom? Are they related by links of cause and effect? If so, then which is the cause and which the effect? Which one speaks and which one listens silently? Who breaks out into a perfume of meditation? Who smells it with his clever nose? Which leads to liberation? Which gives satisfaction? Just let this world hear a discourse on these two.

[288] At this the fire begins her discourse: "So listen now. Philosophy originates in the head. Spirituality flows from a heart marked with the holy swastik. Without philosophy, a spiritual life can go on, it does go on. But without spirituality, philosophy is not illuminated. A lake can be without waves, it is in fact waveless at times. But without a lake, a wave cannot be. Spirituality is an eye self-governed, philosophy is the glasses that are dependent. Philosophy cannot give you a vision of the absolute reality. Truth and untruth revolve around philosophy –

it is sometimes true, sometimes untrue. Spirituality always shines with truth. Spirituality is healthy knowledge. The life of philosophy is preoccupied with resolutions and afterthoughts. An extrovert or multifaceted talent delivers philosophical knowledge. An introverted, silent glow of consciousness speaks of the spotless reality. [289] The weapon of philosophy is words and thoughts. Spirituality is weaponless – it is absolutely still and free from thoughts. The first is knowledge and knowable. The second is meditation and the object of meditation. When a swimmer swims in a lake, he sees not the underwater sights but only those that are outside. At the same place, another person, a diver, dives and sees the underwater sights, being dissociated from the outside world.”

Wow, wow! What a deep dive is this – the commentary on philosophy and spiritualism! The pitcher expresses his respectful thanks to fire.

Now listen to what happened next. The fire, as it accepts the thanks, flares up. A dawn breeze – sweet and cool – now blows outside, but it makes no impact on the kiln. The degree of heat goes on increasing. No difference remains between day and night, afternoon and morning. [290] Nowadays, where can you find the time that changes its direction now and again. The divisions of time have ceased in the kiln, only undifferentiated time flows.

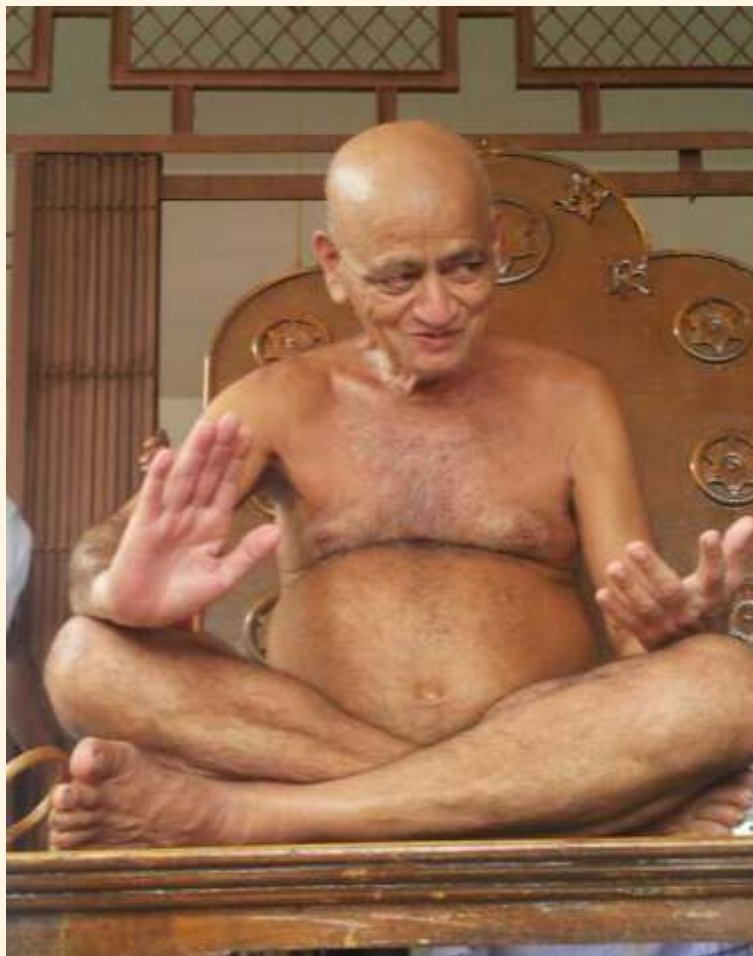


Blessed be you....an appreciative look

A tune arises in the kiln, singing of the impermanence of everything except the act of flowing.

On this subject we suddenly hear a self-willed tune that expresses its agreement with what has been stated. O traveller, listen.

The flow of time is the flow of a river, it just goes on and on. Flowing it says, "The life of things living or lifeless is flowing every moment in this flow. None was, is or will be stable, immovable, eternal. Only the act of flowing is permanent. This is the secret of being, which is laughing.



convincingly told... and... to the point

The pitcher begs the potter for relief from the heat and asks for water. The potter kindly obliges.

[291] O what do we see here? A patch of painful time. From where comes this sound of begging? Where is it, why, and in whose quest?

Does the voice belong to a man or a woman, a boy or a girl? It surely does not belong to a man because it sounds sufficiently thin to the ears. What is its purpose? Now we learn of it clearly:

“O Mother Earth, you who have tender feelings for your children, can you not hear a baby's desperate cry? Leave alone reaching the destination, one cannot find a drop of water along the way. What to say of fruits and flowers, the path scarcely has any shades.

[292] “Don't push me into the jaws of death. Holding out hopes of the light to come, don't darken my present. I can no more stand this heat. Progressively I can bear less and less. Don't burn this life – give it a cool drink of water. Mother, if you wish, give me life.”

When Mother Earth uttered no words of assurance or blessing, the pitcher said to the potter: “Have all sanctuaries departed from here? Although you are the maker and guardian of the pitcher, you too have forgotten it. Unless I get water now, I will not be able to entertain anyone. That is to say, my exit is imminent. I cannot take this fire-test any longer. Even a small vow appears mountainous to me. Faith is at sixes and sevens and I have no curiosity for the future.

“It's a pity that I think [293] that unless I quench my thirst, the desire to provide water to others is a mere fancy, just idle talk.”

The large-hearted potter was pained to hear the pitcher's entreaty that verged on tears and he thought of his, the pitcher's, serious condition and his extreme agony of the heart.

And he started off towards the pitcher in the kiln with refreshments and water to infuse courage into him and satisfy his hunger and thirst. The potter had stirred out of his deep sleep and come out of his dreamy state.

The potter is impatient to see his work, the pitcher.

And mind you, how can you dream at will the dreams that you want? That is why the craftsman broke into laughter at the dreamy state. Then his eyes became solemn.

[294] In his eyes, there shone vaguely and heavily not only the vanished past but also the dreamy and nebulous vision of the future – the certainties, the possibilities.

After concluding the prayers, the potter came out and saw that the golden morning sunshine could not settle on the earth's cheeks. Since before dawn, his heart has been impatient to inspect the kiln that day.

The potter administered the fire-test and the pitcher underwent it. He not only hopes for one hundred per cent result, he is confident of them. Even so, where is his patience? For he has seen an inauspicious beam. The kiln noted the potter's approaching feet, and she spoke on behalf of the pitcher, "Sir, [295] dreams are generally without fruits. Excessive belief in them is dangerous.

"I define a dream thus on the basis of its Sanskrit name – it cannot bring up and protect itself. He who cannot protect himself – how can he support others? A mind that is linked to the past, alienated, is a mind that dreams. In the dreamy state, the threads of wakefulness are lost. In sleep, the mantra given by a realized soul is also dead, and self-realization is not possible."

Hearing these words of the kiln, the potter came still closer to her. But, from where can one hear the scream of the pitcher? Where is someone begging for alms from the potter?

There was no torture of the pitcher nor his entreaty. He stood alone. Where is the thirsty soul; [296] where is his grief, his wails? Where is his disease; where is his face, and where the house of fire which these ears, eyes and hands had heard. Seen and touched in dream? The dream proved to be false, its disastrous foreboding was averted.

The potter opens the kiln with a spade and looks at the pitcher that has come heart-whole through extreme pain.

“If a pitcher is all right, it is my skill,” said the potter, welcoming the kiln enthusiastically. With a spade he removes the sandy ash from the bosom of the kiln. As the ash is removed, he gets more keenly curious to see his pitcher safe and sound...

Ah, here he is seen. The colour of the ash and the body of the pitcher are alike. His eyes cannot make out one from the other. Burnt by fire, the pitcher acquires a body dark as the night.

[297] The pitcher had undergone excruciating pain. Great calamities had befallen it. And yet the pitcher escaped by a hair's breadth from the jaws of death. The potter experienced pain and misery, much tumult, the joy of seeing the result of the fire-test, and a sense of pride. When he witnessed the fluid principle, he experienced neither surprise nor wonder. At the same time, the consequences of weighing things on the scales of time shimmered in his mind.

A holy personality has to have a holy future. But his past must remain a subject of mockery – unholy, unholy, unholy.



A prayer together - Aadarshmati Mataji
alongwith Teachers from
Pratibhastali, Ramtek



The glow of the power within -
Panchbalyati at the garbhgraha of
Shantinath Digambar Jain Temple, Ramtek

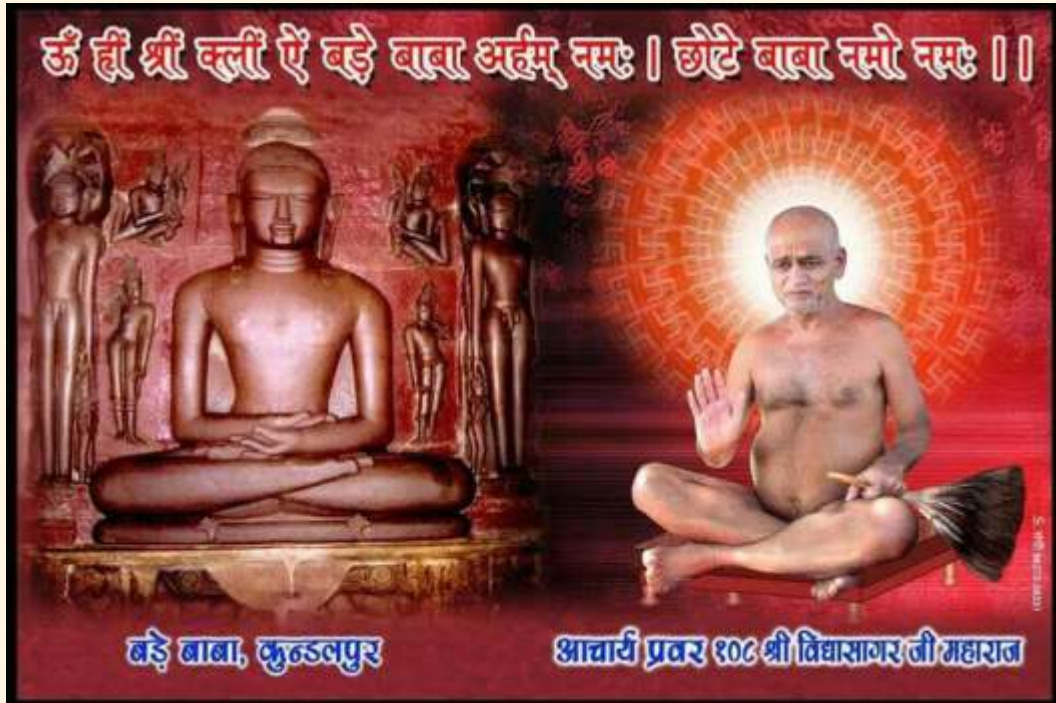
The pitcher is dark as Lord Krishna but not bothered about his complexion.

Today the pitcher has come out safely from the kiln. His body radiates a blue aura like the body of Krishna.

[298] It looks as if all its inner faults have been burnt and come out. Now there is no shelter to sins in his life. And anyway, when does a sinner offer water to a thirsty person?

On the face of the pitcher is the glee of a free soul who has swum across the shoreless ocean of worldliness. The pitcher scarcely pays attention to his burnt body. A chain of experiences is running in his mind. When is a beetle sad? His body is black, too, and he is constantly sipping nectar.

Being embodied is not enough to experience the body. Being in the mayic world, you are not necessarily enmeshed in maya. You have to have an attachment for and interest in it.



Meditation sublime...and...THE medium of that divine bliss

Divine music floats all over and the pitcher has come to a point from where he cannot fall. He realizes what the qualities of a pure soul are.

The potter gingerly picks up the pitchers with his hands and places them down on the earth. The clay was, is and will be of the earth. [299] But earlier it was in the earth's lap, now it is at her breast, and the breasts have the form of pitchers. From the cells of the pitcher's body, from within and from without, waves of music emanate. The earth and the sky swim in this music.

Now, hardly have two or three days passed since the pitcher was taken out of the kiln, than the surge of good sentiments in him reveals to everyone that now there can be no fall for him, only a steady climb to moral elevation. He will reap a crop of good fortune. Nothing is unattainable for him, everything is before him.

A devotee's devotion draws the deity to himself/herself. This devotion consists in giving alms to the deserving. [300] The receiver of alms must be pure, walker on the feet, with the cup of his hands as his receptacle. He should be nectar-sipping and soft as butter towards others. He should consider others' suffering as his own, and praying to the lord must be his sport. He should be fully free from sin, unattached like the wind, scared of subjugation, as free from pride as the mirror. He should be lush green and fruit-bearing like a plant. Like the river he should be running towards his goal non-stop and untiring.

He is equal in honour and insult, steadfast like the Mount Meru in yogic observances, useful to others like the simple cow, above any craving for fame, but ahead in the search for the pure principle. He should not be a fault-finder but one who picks up others' good qualities. [301] He never assaults hostile enemies, nor is too happy to find helpful friends. He never craves for fame and gain.

He is not cruel and is fearless like the lion. He never begs anything of anyone, is charitable like the sun, and never – even by mistake – craves for the results of his actions. He has conquered sleep and his senses, he is helpful like a water reservoir, eats little and speaks but few and useful words. His aim is to earn the pearl of the experience of absolute consciousness. For washing away his sins he criticizes himself. He never indulges in fault-finding with others – in fact he doesn't

wish to hear others' criticism. He goes deaf to it. Although he is successful, strong of will and a penancee, his tongue is mute when it comes to self-praise.

He spends his winter night on the edge of a sea, a river or a lake. [302] His summer days are spent on hills under the merciless rays of the sun.

Thus the pitcher conceived a mental picture. "Your emotions free you from the world," say the saints, and this had to be proven here. It was.



The holiness in totality

A rich merchant, upon receiving a signal in a holy dream, sends his servant to buy a pitcher. The messenger is mesmerized by our pitcher's miraculous shape, the fruit of the craftsman's consummate skill.

Here, a rich man of the town dreamt that he had himself welcomed in his own yard, with an auspicious clay pitcher in his hands, a mendicant who is a great saint. He woke up at dawn, felt fulfilled, thanked the dream, and narrated it to his family. He sent a messenger to the potter to fetch a pitcher. The messenger told the potter what his master had said. The potter was gladdened and he said, "Our stamina helped us attain our goal. Our labour has proved to be fruitful. We are fulfilled."

The messenger was glad with the potter's gladness. [303] He held the pitcher with one hand and sounded it with a pebble to test it. The pitcher said in a surprised tone, "After the fire-test, is there any more test to go through still? Go on, test me. You are testing others, why not test yourself a little? Sound yourself and find out which note emanates. Hear it with your own ears. Is it the prattle of the crow or the high-pitched braying of the donkey?"

"Before you become an examiner, you have to pass exams yourself. Otherwise you will be a laughing stock."

At this, the messenger politely returned, "It is true that you have passed the fire-test. But how far is the test administered by fire right? This cannot be judged except by testing you. That is to say, [304] through your agency I'm putting fire itself to a fire-test.

"Secondly, I am not a servant of any master. I am myself the master and enjoyer of certain things necessary for life.

"You cannot judge things right merely by commerce, by a give-and-take, because vision is money-oriented. In the eyes of a customer the value of a thing lies in its utility. It is this utility that gives a few moments of pleasure to the consumer."

So, the man has come in the role of a customer and he sounds the pitcher seven times. First comes the first note of the Indian diapason – *saa* – followed by *re*, *ga*, *ma*, *pa*, *dha* and *ni*. Thus the pitcher evidenced his unattached nature – like the

perishable notes. Altogether, the sense that emerged was that [305] it was not his nature to feel any kind of sorrow. This follows from the Hindi meaning of all syllables that constitute the notes *saa, re, ga, ma*, etc. Sorrowing cannot be the innate nature of the soul. Sorrows are felt only when the soul is deluded and attached as a result of its karmas.

The emotional transformations occasioned by particular causes are somewhat alien. To understand the sentiment behind the seven notes truly is to enjoy music rightly and to find a meet companion.

Hence has the pitcher acquired this incomparable powers, the messenger thought, and the pitcher replied, “This is the result of the craftsman's craft, his immense labour, strong will and conditionings of pure *saadhanaa*. And listen, my body that is black like Krishna is not a burnt body. Just as a skilled musician applies ink to the mouth of the *mridang*, the craftsman has applied ink to my limbs, [306] which produce varied kinds of utterances that reveal the differences between inconscient nature – *prakriti* – and the supreme soul – *purush*. This is done when the soft of the palm and the middle finger strike the instrument – *dha... dhin... dhin... dha/ dha... dhin... dhin... dha*. *Salary-mindedness is different from spirituality. Ta... tin... tin... ta/ta... tin... tin... ta*. Why do you worry about the body?”

The messenger who had come as a customer was amazed. His mind was as if hypnotized by a mantra, and a spell appeared to be cast on his body when he saw the shape of the pitcher and the miracle of the potter's craft. What can one say when one sees a miracle of the psyche? The anxieties of the mind, the wailings vanish within a few moments. A wave in the lake dissolves within the lake, not outside.



The FIVE Principles of LIFE

The potter, being in too joyous a mood, gives the messenger pitchers free.

The pitcher was tested, inspected. [307] Then the messenger selects one or two small pitchers, one or two large ones and tries to place in the potter's hand a proper price. The potter says, "Today is a day to give in charity, not to engage in a commercial give-and-take. This is a dispeller of all bad times and a gateway to happy days.

"You should honour the pearl, not the oyster, and the flame, not the lamp. Boundless time has been spent in a forgetfulness of consciousness and in indulgences of the body, in deviating from religious life and luxuriating in wealth. It was all a spell of maya. Now we have to live only for the eternal principle and absorb it within ourselves.

"Of course, gold is priced and so is silver, whether it is equal to a grain of corn or a ton of it. Everything carries a price tag on it, but money by itself has no value. [308] It is only a primary thing which is precious. Money is not a primary thing but dependent on other things. It is for others, a make-believe."

Yes indeed. You can value other things by money, that too according to your need. Sometimes you pay more, sometimes less, sometimes merely as a formality. It all depends on moneyed people. Neither a rich man nor a poor one can value a thing correctly even in a dream, because a penniless person is often in a pitiable condition, while a rich person is blind with desires ruled by his arrogance.

When the money offered was not accepted even as a gift, the messenger courteously offered thanks instead and went home happily with the pitchers.



The ritual of Muni Deeksha Samaroh, on the altar of self sacrifice
- for the bigger good of the World

The merchant joyfully washes the pitcher and using sandalwood and saffron draws on it holy swastikas with dots as also the divine syllable AUM. He decks it with betel leaves, a coconut and other holy substances.

[309] The rich merchant stepped down from his seat and enthusiastically took from the smiling messenger our pitcher into his hands. Then he washed it himself with fresh cold water.

Then, holding the pitcher with his left hand, he draws his own symbol, the swastik, with his right ring finger using the beautiful sandalwood from the famed Malayaachal mountain. He makes the wish that everybody should attain selfhood, experience their soul. In all the four petals of each swastik he applies four dots using sandal mixed with saffron from Kashmir.

They tell the world that all the four stages of worldly life are devoid of happiness. Likewise, on the top of each swastik, the merchant drew the holy syllable AUM in the devanagari script, with a crescent and a dot. The purpose is to achieve steadfastness in yoga and worldly activities. Yogis generally [310] meditate on this syllable only.

Two thin lines with turmeric adorn the neck of the pitcher while a touch of the red paste of *kumkum* in between makes it incomparably beautiful. Turmeric, *kumkum*, saffron and sandal gladden the atmosphere with their fragrance.

Four or five beetle leaves – which help digest food and whose green laughter is soft melodious and even-minded – are placed along the mouth of the pitcher. Like the petals of a blooming lotus, their tips show outside. A coconut – that holy fruit – is placed in the middle to fondle them. Turmeric and *kumkum* are sprinkled on the coconut.

At this moment the coconut said to the beetle leaves, “Our body is hard while yours is soft. You will not like this hardness.

“So far, the body only liked a soft treatment, but that was the worldly path. Now this path is just the opposite of it, isn't it? Here, the soul emerges victorious, doesn't it? [311] This path does not lead to bodily pleasures. The body is secondary, it aims at consciousness. Here you find similarity between soft and hard. Is your body as soft as our heart is?

“Well, all you have to do is to peep within. The true test of softness and hardness lies in the heart, not in the body.”

The fibrous covering of the coconut was removed, leaving only a tuft at the top. A fragrant, fully blossomed rose is stuck in it.

Normally, everybody's hair flows downward, but the coconut has its hair pointing upward. Maybe, that's the reason why the gift of a coconut is said to be liberating from the world.

A crystal-bead garland, with pure transparent stones, was placed around the pitcher's neck. It seemed to say, “Repeat the name of the flawless soul – God.”

This auspicious pitcher, as if waiting for a holy guest, [312] was set on an octagonal sandalwood stool.



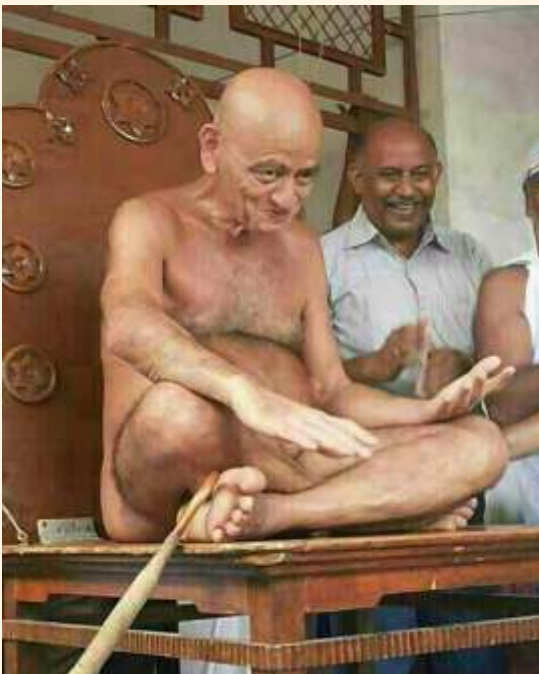
The symbol of PEACE amidst diversity

The merchant goes for his daily ritual worship, praying for nothing but liberation from the worldly bondage.

Like every day, the merchant goes for the worship of God to the temple on the fifth story of his palace – a property bestowed on him by virtue of his accumulated merit and religious observances. Here, on a silver throne sits a speechless silver idol of God of unequalled beauty.

First, a prayer was made to God with absolute faith. Then a ritual bath was given to the idol. The merchant applied to himself a forehead mark that is pure in itself and makes others pure. He is reverential, glad.

Then he washed his hands and rubbed the idol with a very clean white cloth. He performed pooja of the lord who is devoid of sin and hypocrisy, without a craving to accumulate wealth, is ever-free, and has given up all worldliness and passions. This worship is with eight auspicious substances and heartfelt devotion and involvement, not for any worldly object. [313] The only object is liberation from bondage, to swim across the ocean of *samsaara*.



A point well conveyed and well received.....THE POISE..the BALANCE

It is time for holy guests to come seeking for alms in the form of a meal, and the merchant, like so many other townsmen, stands in wait for one. A holy guest appears on the scene.

By now, playful girls have drawn auspicious figures in the yard. It is about time for saintly guests to go seeking for food. It is just this that the donors are discussing. On every street of the town, in the neighbourhood, a long chain of donors stand in their yards, waiting eagerly for the recipients. Almost in every yard, the donor stands with a common feeling. They all pray that the guest may have his meal unhindered and that he should dine at their house.

The merchant also concludes his prayer and comes down in his yard. He, too, stands with the auspicious pitcher. [314] Some men are standing with a silver urn and some have cupped their hands in the shape of an urn. Some have a copper urn, some a brass urn, some have a mango, some a custard-apple, some a *raamphal*, some a guava, some a banana. Some mount an urn on an urn, some hold an urn on their head, some are empty-handed while some are with a plate. What is notable is that all bowed their heads respectfully, and repeatedly cast a glance in the distance, waiting for the holy guest.

And wow, a guest is seen and the donors exclaim, “Hail, hail.”

Victory to those who wander freely, who regulate their thinking, victory to saints and meritorious people, victory to gentle, peaceful folk.

[315] Victory to the impartial, victory to brave, naked ascetics, victory to compassionate souls who live by the basic teachings of religion, victory to those who look equally on everyone. Victory to the resting places in the weltering sea of the world, victory to the paragons of purity, victory to supremely tolerant souls, victory to those who wash away the dirt of karmas. Victory be, victory be, victory be...



The cleaning from outside for cleansing within...a reflection of the care & devotion by Acharyashri-ji

The holy guest nears the merchant's house. The houses he has bypassed, silently declining their alms, wear a downcast look.

Now, the guest has come nearer. His holy feet have passed by several houses at the start. Moment to moment he advances, and the yard which he has bypassed looks morose and crumpled. As the sun declines, the cluster of roses fades. Even then, they conceive the hope that the guest may return any time.

The sun may re-rise the next day. It does rise again. But it does not turn back midway. Leave alone returning, it does not even glance back. It always goes from east to west and never from west to east. Such a thing has never been seen: it is not possible.

When and how does the recipient, the guest, judge the donor and his gift, one doesn't know. It takes place within the flash of a lightning.

One donor wails, "When the holy guest comes to the yard and goes away unfed, the donor is deeply pained." Instantly he remembers the saintly utterance that when extreme merit comes to fruition, you get to receive a holy guest. Our merit is bound to rise, but slowly and in degrees. [317] It is a rare thing to see merit of the highest quality. Some donors remain silent, as if charmed and transfixed.

Some become restless on account of being overlooked and repeatedly touch their forehead. It appears as if they are scolding away their adverse fate.

One donor revealed his heart thus: "Your holiness, if we are bypassed, no matter. At least you could have looked this way. We would have been content."

A donor has many qualities, one of which is discrimination. One donor lost his discrimination itself and in a surge of devout feeling, went too close to the recipient, advancing across his path. He spoke these piteous words: "In this life I didn't get the good fortune of making a gift to a holy recipient. [318] Many times I saw recipients but felt no urge to give. Today the urge is strong, and if even today I see you and don't touch you, touch you but feel no joy, my feelings will starve. Now, when will my hunger to give be satisfied? Please have your today's meal at our place, that's all. If there is anything wrong in this I will be responsible for it, your holiness. O ocean of mercy, be merciful. Don't delay but show charity."

When the donor gets thus sentimental, the silent saint turns his smiling glance to him and walks four steps watching him. At this, the donor utters these despairing words: "When I had teeth I had no grams to eat. When I had grams, I had no teeth. When I had both, I had no stomach to digest them."

The pitcher cautions the merchant against making the kind of errors that other donors make, telling him what the right manner of making an offer is.

[319] The donors made many such errors. The pitcher cautioned the merchant, “Well, even we can be reduced to such a condition. You may pray to the recipient saint, but not excessively. At such a moment, you may forget everything but not your discrimination. You may express your servitude through body, mind and words, but not your despair. You may sport a gentle smile but should not joke. You should have zeal and energy, but not impatience. Through every pore of your body you may exude humility, but not invoke pity. In this context, I had heard a verse from saints which I recite now, listen. It is well-respected and praised by wise folk.

“The earth is thirsty for water. She has opened her mouth, the receptacle. [320] She is resolved not to wait for the donor nor to criticize him too much. She wouldn't overstep her limits, her yard, even by mistake. For, a piteous gesture in the recipient arouses pride in the donor and he incurs sin. In a free and self-respecting recipient, slowly and gradually a sense of dependence creeps in. He slips off from his duty. What happens then? Both the donor and the recipient hang midway.

“That is why these dense dark clouds are busy looking for a proper recipient so as to convert their sins into merits. When they do find such a recipient, they are overcome with emotion [321] and rumble with their eyes wet. Their sixty-four torrents in the rainy month of *Saavan* make obeisance at the feet of the receptacle.

And thus the earth easily and effortlessly washes off the clouds' darkness. How otherwise would the clouds be cleaned up after rains?”



A path to be the blessed...as guided by Acharyashri-ji

The merchant reflects on his error and welcomes the holy guest in a none-too-excited way, just appropriate for the occasion.

The merchant heard a verse, brief and succinct, from the pitcher's mouth, and he learnt of the glory of giving and the code of conduct for it. In the mirror of these words, he saw his own face which had deviated from the ideal way of life. This face only reflected the conceit of being spotless. His eyes opened. He started controlling himself as all his misconceptions got washed off. [322] Listening to the poem, he was much impressed. The merchant again gets a signal that the holy recipient was sure to come to him. As the recipient approached the merchant's yard, his steps slowed down and he sensed that some highly meritorious face was preventing his steps from passing by and attracting him to itself.

Looking at the recipient's slowing pace, the merchant got alerted. With faith in his heart, and neither too slowly nor too fast, he started welcoming the guest in moderate, sweet words.

"Your holiness, I bow to you, I bow to you, I bow to you. Please come here, come here, come here. Stand, stand, stand." Thus the words of welcome were repeated two or three times. At the same time, the merchant's slightly swinging earrings also respectfully invited the guest. [323] The holy guest, a house of fearlessness, stops at the yard. He is neither anxious nor perturbed. What to say now! The merchant considers this his good fortune, and uttering the words "Praises be, praises be," he starts circumambulating the guest from the right, with his wife and family.



The cluster of holy temples nestled in the lap of Mother Nature

The merchant washes the saint's feet. The pitcher in his turn surrenders at the saint's feet his residual ego. The merchant worships the naked saint ceremonially and offers him food in his cupped palms.

This sight of today appears as if the sun and moon, along with the planets, stars and asterisms are circumambulating the legendary Mount Meru. They completed three rounds, taking care not to hurt any creature. Ninefold devotion begins now, with an obeisance. "Please come, your holiness. The mind is pure, the words are pure, the body is pure, and the food and water are pure. Please enter the dining hall. [324] And, without showing their back, the whole family lead the way. After they have entered the house, a seat is purified and the saint is requested to occupy the high seat. The saint does so.

The merchant begs for the leave to wash his feet, and the request is granted.

The saint's two feet, which outdo the flame-of-the-forest flowers in grace and charm and which are not afraid of any attachment, descend on the silver plate. And, at the same time, the plate also expresses her fond devotion for the guru's feet. Like these feet, she turns red like *kumkum* and sandalwood. The donor bent at the saint's feet with a pitcher of water that was filtered and heated to make it germ-free and then made lukewarm. At this time the pitcher who was devoid of desires and pride, saw his reflection in the mirror of the guru's toe-nails. "Praises be, praises be," he said.

[325] Victory to the guru, victory to the guru. Long live this moment. The pitcher surrendered here all the dreams that were realized, the pain of traversing the path, the remnant of desires, and all its ego. He said, "O merciful supreme guru, your feet are my refuge. They are my ship to cross the ocean of the world. Take me across." With these words of guru-praise, a head-bath – *abhishek* – as well as a bath of the guru was performed, of him who destroys obstructions and brings prosperity. The whole family joyously applied a forehead mark on the saint. The merchant with his family looks like Indra, the king of gods.

Further, a worship was performed with due ceremony, according to the worshippers' affording, in the proximity of the well-seated naked saint. They used

eight auspicious substances – water, sandalwood, unbroken rice grains, flowers, the sweets of *charu*, lamp, incense and fruits – and prostrated themselves with five limbs touching the ground. [326] Again the whole family prays to the saint with joined hands, “Your holiness, kindly come out of your posture of cupped palms and have meals.” Seeing that the donor was well-versed in the due ceremonies of giving alms, the saint uncups his palms and washes his hands. Then, for a few moments he fixes his eyes on the nose-tip to meditate on semi-realized souls – the *arhatas* – the ones who live a detached life, free from attraction and aversion, who cannot be touched by the cycle of life and death, old age and debility; who feel no pangs of hunger or thirst; who are above pride and the desire to surprise others; whose sight drives away fear; who are free from the seven kinds of fears; who are abodes of security; who remain unaffected by sleepiness or drowsiness; who are ever alert; whose body is never drenched in sweat; who feel sorrow and trouble in nothing; [327] in whom infinite power is manifest; whom, as a result, no terror can touch; who have found inexhaustible happiness; who are devoid of grief, always cheerful; whose life is a picture of detachment; from whom, as a result, the goddess of carnal love runs away; who have no attachment nor affiliation to a union; who are lonely souls free from worries; who are always free from anxieties and free from the eighteen faults described in the scriptures.



An expression of peace and happiness during a discourse of Acharyashri-ji

The recipient performs meditation and takes his position for having food, standing on a mat offered to him.

As soon as the guest completed his meditation, he stood on a mat, keeping a distance of four fingers between the heels and eleven fingers between the toes of the two feet. He is in the state in which one not only has his food standing but also takes one meal a day. The recipient joined his palms to form a receptacle and hold them out towards the donor. "This verily is the mendicancy which lowers one's (327) towering pride," says this pen, and comments on hunger: hunger is of two types – bodily and mental. Bodily hunger is slight and natural; as for the mental one, the mind alone knows how large it is. The abnormal hunger is a terrible demon, not related to the past alone but also to that which has not happened. That is why this person has not been overpowered by hunger, having found the self.

As far as the sense organs are concerned, they feel no hunger – only one feels outwardly that they have hunger. The tongue wants no juices, the nose no smells, the skin no touch. The ears are never feverish for melodies. Even deaf persons live. The eyes don't worship spectacular sights. The material cause of inanimate things is inanimate, they have no desire, they have no path.

[329] Darkness and light are alike to them. Indeed, the sense objects are experienced by sensuous persons, only through the senses. The fact is that the five senses are windows, and the supreme soul – purush – sitting in the house that the human body is, peeps through the windows with the eyes of desire, and he experiences the sensory objects.

Secondly, the tastes – sweet, sour, astringent, etc. – whether good or bad, never tell you to taste them.

The skin-feel – light or heavy, smooth or dry, cold or hot, soft or hard – whether good or bad, never tells you to touch it.

The touch-feel of a thing, whether large or small, buttery or rough, cold or hot, soft or hard, never tells you to touch it.

Odours – pleasant or foul, good or bad – never tell you to smell them.

[330] Colours – black, blue, yellow, etc. – good or bad, never tell you to look at them.

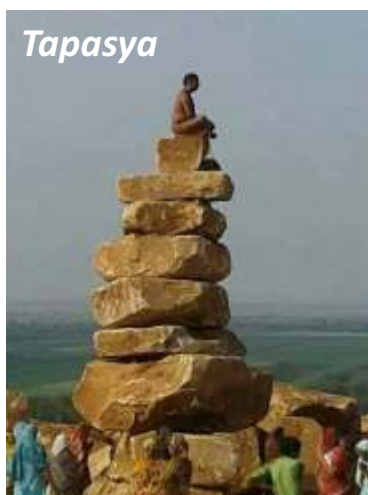
The seven notes of music – *saa, re, ga, ma, pa, dha, ni* – good or bad, never tell you to listen to them.

Listen, listen. Touch, taste, smell, sight and sound are properties of inanimate things and to perceive them is a mayic function.

From this we deduce that hunger is felt owing to the rise of delusion and pain – that is the pang of hunger. That is the law of hunger and thirst. That you don't become a saintly soul merely by knowing this, you have to have equanimity. An ascetic's prize quality is equanimity.



Deep meditation, deeper introspection -
set to the rhythm of flowing water,
that is Jangalwale Baba
108 Muni Chinmay Sagar-ji



Tapasya, penance
atop the stones by a
Muni... there are thousands
of ways of reaching God



A live *Nagraj* (a Cobra) gliding
and in search of peace on the
idol of Bhagwan Parshavnath-ji
in a temple at Palanpur Patiya,
under the aegis
of Dharnidhar Jain Sangh

The merchant offers the guest first germ-free water. Then he offers food. The saint's palms do not open to the golden urn with a tasty milk delicacy, nor to a silver urn with sugarcane juice in it, nor to a crystal urn holding pomegranate juice. His palms open to the earthen pitcher, and he starts having his fill.

Here, the almsgiving begins with the pouring of germ-free water into the saintly guest's cupped palms. But what is this! Suddenly he has closed his palms. [331] At once, a golden urn is held out with tasty milk in it. The palms still don't open. Seeing this, a third urn – a silver one – is held out with sweet sugarcane juice in it. This too is ignored.

Now comes the turn of the crystal urn with pomegranate juice, red like the glow of youth. And what a surprise! The guest does not look at it even once. In despair, this pot, too, is taken back. Now, the family thinks that further delay would be improper. The guest may consider it to be an obstruction – *antaraaya* – and may leave unfed. They get worried. The merchant, remembering God in his heart, musters all his courage and might, and with trembling hands, extends the earthen pitcher. And wow, the guest's palms open up – like an oyster swimming on the sea-surface at the sight of white raindrops in the asterism of arcturus. [332] He drank four to five palm-cups of water, a little sugarcane juice, then whatever came his way. This went on and on. He had his food not just any time, not following his whims. He took it without begging, without any signal or gesture to ask for it. His condition was that he should be hungry – then whatever food he got, whether savoury or dry and insipid – was alike acceptable.

When you pour food or drink from one pot to another, does the pot change? The vessel neither makes a song and dance nor cries. Blessed is the man and his human body, the best of all bodies.



All that grace,
all that poise,
all that peace
- within

The saint eats with a cow-like attitude, not for the taste but to fulfil a need of the body. The pitcher is glad that he has been used in the saint's service.

Before sowing seed, the farmer levels the field that is eroded by a flow of water, by filling up the holes with garbage and pebbles and stones. Thus does the donor go on giving alms [333] and the receptor takes them. After all he has to fill his stomach. This is what is called the way of filling a pit of an even-minded ascetic – *shraman*. When you put grass and fodder before a hungry cow, she does not raise her head to look at the cow-keeper's accessories and decorations and limbs. Such is the tendency of a saint while having his meal, which is called the cow-like tendency.

He has no alternatives – the food may be salt or sweet or whatever kind. The food is like water to extinguish a burning house, just that. The food may be tasty or insipid, or any other kind. It should be eatable. You have to put off the stomach-fire, haven't you? The ascetic's tendency is like that of a fire-extinguisher. It is the best of all. A group of beetles thirsting for pollen drinks the delicious fragrance of bunches of newly sprung leaves, flowers and fruits, but never hurts them. [334] Rather, the beetles make them dance with the throbbing touch of their hands and entertain them by humming songs. Just the same way, the donor gives alms to deserving saints and feels puffed with joy. This dispels deep darkness and brings a new dawn in life. Such is the beetle-like tendency of saints.

Ascetics have many tendencies and practices that reveal their spiritual personality. The merchant's family had heard of them reverentially, but today they got an opportunity to see them close at hand with their own eyes. As a result, the whole family was overjoyed. In the merchant's fair hands the earthen pitcher looks as decorous as a sapphire encrusted in gold.

The hands and the pitcher praise each other. First the pitcher says: [335] “You lifted me and owned me up. This was a great favour. Because of you I could participate in this auspicious act.” At this, the hands at once rejoined, “No, no, listen. It is you who have favoured us, since this act would not have been possible without your help. All the devotional feeling herein is yours, we are merely incidental.”

On hearing this dialogue, the saint's cupped palms say, "Without a vessel, you cannot hold water; without a vessel you cannot sustain the life of a being. He who drinks water off a pot cannot be a good saint. The vessel of hands is the best vessel. After all, to own a vessel is also a sign of one's accumulative tendency.

"Secondly, without a guest who arrives without fixing a date – *atithi* – dates cannot be venerable. An *atithi* is the maker of dates, [336] still he doesn't go by dates, which are dependent on time. Modifications are one's own and they differ from person to person. To be tied down by the bondage of dates is to wander in the worldly states. Perhaps! If a saint gets tied down in bondages, he is in reality taking destiny as a sport." Thus commented the donee.



Acharyashri-ji in a contemplative mudra

The saint's simplicity and the pitcher's plainness contrast sharply with the showiness of the merchant's rich trappings.

Here, the giving of food continues unhindered, and the merchant is absorbed in wishing that this job should go on happily in this way. His blue shoulder-cloth flows down from both shoulders, and its ends cling to both his arms – the right one goes to the left, the left one goes to the right. Then they are wrapped tightly around the waist and hang loose.

The shoulder-cloth cannot look up – it is completely defeated by the blueness of the pitcher. [337] It feels ashamed, wants to hide under the earth, and shrinking, it does not want to show its face to anyone.

In the merchant's right middle finger is a cheerful gold ring, encrusted with a ruby which repeatedly compares her red glow with the redness of the guest's lips. At last she is defeated and feels distressed, and weighed down with shame she touches the bottom of the guest's feet. This is a proper thing, too, because by worshipping venerable souls, you get what you wish.

Similarly, in the merchant's left index finger is a silver ring encrusted with a pearl. She feels tired looking at the glow of the saint's fingernails, and develops a fever. This is why her body is a bloodless white.

The saint's cheeks are round and well-shaped, [338] they are fleshy and clear-complexioned. The donor's golden ear-pendants compare themselves with the cheeks. “Are we any less,” they think. “We radiate a glow like a newly risen sun. We are round and shapely as well, are of a good colour, beautiful, and we're golden, not red. Why, then, is there a difference between the glow of the cheeks and our glow? What is lacking in us? Who knows the mystery, whom should we ask? And how should we ask?”

Here, the cheeks advise the ear-pendants, which are in a state of perplexity: “As soon as people see you, they feel a longing for you. As soon as they see us, a spontaneous affection is inspired. Even a worldly soul feels detached for a few moments. The tender affection stored in us comes to the surface [339] and slides down the cheeks, and it turns even the stony chest of a hostile enemy to a gentle

flower. Invaluable words are nurtured in us, you are all hollow.

“One more thing. Whether your life is developed or developing, whatever the brilliant qualities in you, to compare yourself with others is the cause of defeat and a sign of wretchedness. And this act of comparing is in a way a rivalry. Rivalry brings to light the subtle ego that dwells deep inside. And when is ego ever content? Without contentment, life is faulty. That is the sole reason why a wrongful life burning in the desire for praise and fame is deprived of the deep cool shade of spontaneous applause and happy virtues.

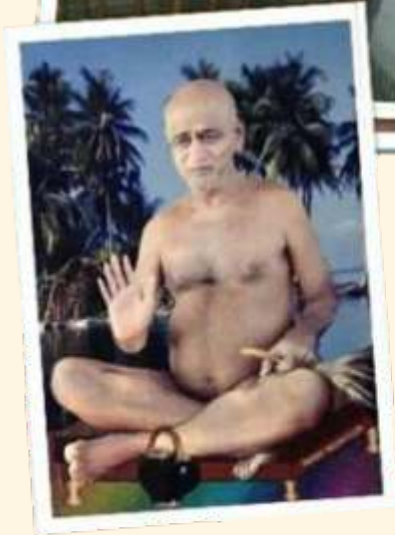
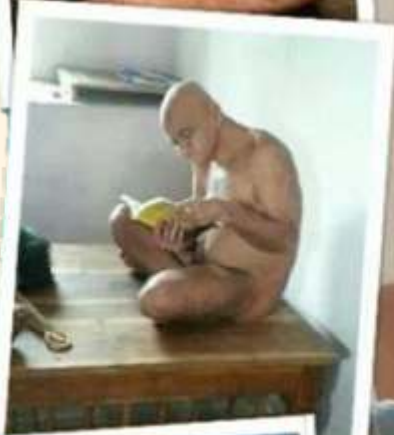
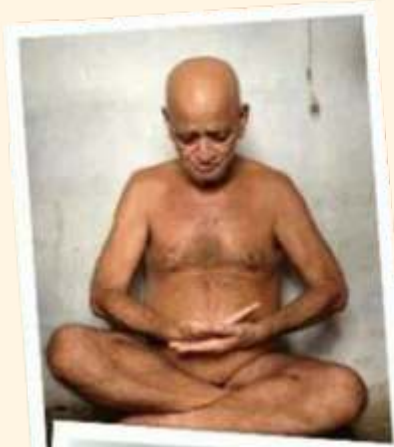
“In a way, the word 'self' is itself saying that [340] self is a wealth, self is the writing of the providence, it is the house of treasures. To attain to one's self is to attain all. Then, why compare oneself with the incomparable?” The golden ear-pendants, being thus exposed by the cheeks, became dull and lustreless.



Acharyashri Vidyasagar-ji on a blessed path that leads to God

The blue-black pitcher is happily reflected in the merchant's yellow garment.

The merchant is wearing from foot to head a yellow garment – *peetaambar* – that glows like the lotus-stem. In it, his face shines like the rose. In the mild breeze, the garment flutters, and the reflection of the blue pitcher floats in it. The yellowness of the garment gets eager to drink the pleasant blueness of the pitcher.



The different moods of Acharyashriji



The donee satisfactorily concludes his meal, washes his mouth, and clears off the food particles on his person.

Here, all the children of the house – boys as well as girls – have been ordered to stay indoors. [341] They are compelled to sit silent. All the same they now and then jostle each other to peep out of the windows.

An unrestrained person cannot remain within the limits imposed. The more you disallow them, the more they act according to their sweet will. In childhood it is not possible for one to give up the unworthy ways of life and embrace the worthy ways. It is owing to fear that children perform obey what they obey. This is exactly what happens here.

The merchant has tightly tied his head to keep his hair in place. Even then a black wavy lock of hair hangs on his wide forehead and watches the happy scene of giving of food with single-minded attention. This lock fearlessly says to the chief donee, “You saints are even-minded. The donor [343] is rich in charity and loves dispassionate souls. Both of you want liberation from bondage. Then please tell me why I am in bondage. I abhor bondage. I accept that my past is sinful, but then whose past is not? It is depraved, full of stains, rotten and unsteady. But today things have changed and I wish to give up my wrong habits.

“Sin has come to meet merit, poison has come to immerse in nectar. O sun effulgent, listen to the prayer of darkness. Instead of driving him away again and again, please waken him once, master. Give him a place within you. Erase him or own him up. True light is that which illumines all. I make bold to say, lord, that lucky people don't drive away unfortunate souls. They bestow on them luck and godhood. (342) So saying, the lock on the forehead quickly turns and falls silent. Here, the giving of food was happily over, the saint sat down on a seat and washed his mouth with germ-free warm water. The food particles and water drops that fell on the belly, chest, thighs, etc. were cleaned with his hands. Then he half closed his eyes and immersed in the thought of the supreme.

It is time for the saint to part, and the merchant makes a request to bless him with some words of advice so that he might overcome sensuous attractions. The saint preaches briefly.

He came out of his meditation, and the merchant humbly placed into the guest's hands, which are marked with signs of fearlessness, a bunch of peacock feathers – an instrument in the observance of restraint.

He filled his special pot of ascetics – *kamandalu* – with germ-free water which is not for quenching thirst but for washing hands and feet before a study of the scriptures and after answering [344] nature's call. This water can be used only for twenty-four hours, whereafter it is held impure.

Neighbours have assembled in the yard for a holy view – *darshan* – of the saint and touching his feet. As soon as the saint stepped into the yard, the sky resounded with shouts hailing him. Along with the emotional public, the merchant prayed to the saint: “While we labour to perform our duty, we also nurture the hope that we shall soon receive your benedictions and become detached from sensory attractions; we nurture the further hope that we walk on your path. Master, as you leave, give us a piece of advice which we should take to heart and be bound by, and whereby we should recognize where we stand in life. A needle which is threaded with a string may fall anywhere – it is not lost. Your advice will be that thread. [345] The saint realizes that neither this place nor this time is suitable for preaching. Nevertheless his compassion wells up and as a pearl emerges from an oyster, some words come out of his lips.

“Whatever I see outside is... not... I, nor is it mine. These eyes cannot see me. I have power to see, and I was, am and shall remain a witness of it. I was, am and shall remain a witness of everything. Whatever is seen outside is... not... I.”

So saying, the saint's feet turned towards the garden and his back was towards the spectators.



The tradition of The Teacher and the Taught...the *Guru Shishya parampara* in full view during Acharya Bhakti in a temple at Ramtek

The saint sets out and the merchant follows him, unwilling to part. Breaking away from his guru is extremely trying and tears stream down his eyes.

Close behind the saint like his shadow, holding his *kamandalu* in hand, the merchant walks on. Near the city is a garden [346] and therein is a temple – *nasiyaji* – whose pinnacle kisses the sky. Its torus – *kalash* – shines with a golden sheen and declares that all that glitters in the world is deluded and deluding, not leading one to the true path.

Within the temple is a beautiful idol of Neminath. The merchant viewed it, became self-aware, was thrilled and filled with joy. Once more he fell at the saint's feet and got ready to turn homeward, but his body began to protest and break.

His eyes moistened, the path became blurred, steps became heavy, and much as he tried not to cry, tears broke out. He wept bitterly and rolled at the saint's feet.

“Master, I do not wish to leave the shelter of my guru's feet and return. [347] This is just the way a swan heads for his ultimate spiritual destiny, the Manas Lake. All the same it's a pity that the body has to accompany the mind, and Lord, the mind is swifter. Within a matter of minutes, again and again it is overcome with varied emotions. And Godward steps don't rest on solid earth. Without a resting place for the feet, what can I do?

“In a mountain river, in the floods of the first rainy month of *Aashaadh*, not only small creatures but even elephants disappear. All flows away. My own previous actions have come in the way of my emancipation. While I do aspire to *dharm*, the path of *dharm* is like a hilly climb. And I? I'm not only a dwarf but a lame man. The path is very long – how shall I walk it? The mountain peak [348] touches the sky, how shall I climb it? I have no expert companion – how shall I move forward... now?

“Shall I be entirely optimistic or leave everything to fate? Shall I give up my labours? O supreme soul, tell me what I should do? Should I test myself by the tests

of the time? Should I accept time and destiny as the controllers of all – movement, progress, arrival; fall, rise, change?

“Is the doctrine false that every human being is free, the doer is free? The dictionary has not only to verb 'to become' but also the verb 'to do'.”

In response to the merchant's string of questions, the guru broke his silence, and as a mother tenderly answers her child, said: “The answer to all your questions is here. Look at me, raise your eyes.” The merchant looked up with wet eyes – only to see a silent face completely devoid of a smile. The saint [349] is all seriousness. His eyes are steady, his forehead guileless. He as if reveals the mystery. Stability exists only in the self. To immerse in one's own self is destiny. Therein lies rest. True labour worthy of man – his proper *purusharth* – is to forget everything except the soul, the only quarry that is worthwhile.

The merchant learned the true nature of destiny and effort. Time is a neutral presence, indifferent and fixed at one place.

The merchant's doubts are answered, all the same...



The deliverances to the World are sourced from deep within the scriptures
and the antaratma the inner voice

The saint bids his disciple goodbye, who returns home brokenhearted, having lost sight of the most precious entity in life.

The merchant is like a silent cloud after rains, devoid of thunder and glory. His face is small and sad as he walks home. When a wick is nearly separated from oil or when very little oil remains in the lamp, it flickers weakly. Like that lamp [350] is the merchant, holding meagre life in his body, and walking like a tortoise. His mind is churning. He is like a trader who has lost his capital and is going home, worried about the future and at a loss what to do. Thus the merchant walks homeward...

He is like the milk from which all ghee or cream has been extracted; he is sensing his own saplessness, has grown insensible. Thus the merchant walks homeward...

At this moment he is experiencing many times more anguish than the anguish of a defeat before colleagues. He is like a flower which, having fallen down, can no longer suck the juice from a branch. He is separated from a dear one and his courage has nearly ebbed out. Thus the merchant walks homeward...

[351] Like a sobbing child, he takes deep breaths. Thus the merchant walks homeward...

As a forest is distressed at the passing of the spring, the merchant is distressed at the parting with the saint. Thus the merchant walks homeward...

As a shallow, thin, weak river slides down a desert devoid of grass and full of mirages, with nothing but the hope of meeting the sea, the merchant walks homeward...

Like the brilliant sun that springs up from the lap of the east and sinks into the west, afraid of the darkness to come, the merchant walks homeward...

He feels like the moon of the dark fortnight. He is like a poem without the peaceful mood – *shaant ras*; like a dawn without any chirping of birds, like a night without the coolness of moonlight, [352] like a woman without a forehead spot – *bindi*. Everything appears quiet, all desires have vanished. Like a piece of rock rolling down a slope, the merchant reaches home...!

The merchant's family rejoices in the memory of having fed a saint. The pitcher addresses the disheartened merchant with some sobering words of solace.

The entire family is in a state of boundless joy, having fed a saint. The meritorious pitcher is also puffed with satisfaction. They all sit together to dine. The glorious pitcher looked closely at the merchant's fair but depressed face and said: "Such is the benefit of the company of saints. You can see the end of your worldliness. The one who enjoys such company may or may not become self-controlled all at once – there is no fixed rule about it – but he does become contented. To get the proper directions is to be situated in the right conditions.

"When skilled physicians diagnose an illness correctly, the patient who takes the medicine [353] and wants to be well cannot indulge in immoderate eating. Immoderate eating is the root of disease. And listen, it is a miracle not of medicine but of correct diagnosis. Taking medicine leads to the eradication of disease. Good health – a disease-free state – is an invaluable wealth."

And listen to what else the pitcher said: "In old age, leave alone ornaments and decorations, even the fine muslin from Dhaka appears burdensome. And in a state of detachment, whether you're a child or a youth, middle-aged or old, a forest-dweller or a dweller in a house, it's a burden to face a welcome or gratitude."

These saintly words are also not out of place: "The sky can never love the earth. The god of love can never love old age. [354] This, too, is a rule, that a good soul can never love liquor. A widow never likes beautification of the body. A married woman can never give up togetherness with her mate. It is rare to find someone who defies the ways of the world. A man in ochre – an ascetic – never likes a blemish on his character.



In pursuit of *shraddha* FAITH.....Acharyashri-ji with the devout followers the Munisangh.....and with Prasadsagar-ji, 108 Muni Yogsagar-ji and Samaysagar-ji Maharaj

The merchant senses a saint in the pitcher, and he and his family resolve to abjure golden and other expensive kitchenware: they take to clay utensils. The golden urn bursts out furiously.

The moment the merchant heard the pitcher, he felt that he was savouring saintly words.

He had now nothing to do with salt words. He had nothing to do with promises of preachings of the essence. All dormant streams of the essence had burst forth before him. He felt blessed.

A saint was incarnated in the speckless mirror of the pitcher. [355] The pitcher's total surrender was like the thankfulness of a saint.

This pen also offers a few pertinent lines: "If you're afraid of sorrow, listen. Love to do labour. And if you cherish your ego, listen. Beware of sense attractions. Control the mind, control the senses."

Thanks to the potent mantra given to the merchant, his poison-like restlessness and anguish disappeared. And he said, "Now except in the worship of God, this fortnight clay utensils will be used as we used them in feeding the saint. He stepped down from his silver seat on to a wooden seat. His family heard him and responded, "We too feel the same."

To see the changed circumstances of the family, gold plates [356] and other beautiful kitchenware – cups, spoons and the rest of them – made of silver and precious stones wondered what was happening.

And then what took place here? A brass urn filled with cold water was inwardly pained, felt defeated, burnt with emotion and turned more yellow. To see the welcome of the black colour on the door of gold, the golden urn was overcome with rage. Its hues cannot be described in words. He was beside himself. From the cavernous mouth of the golden urn, these volcanic words of protest break forth: "This day isn't over yet and such gushing welcome and honour to a visitor! [357] It doesn't look civilized behaviour to put clay on the head and thrash the crown at your feet. Leave alone fellow-feeling for oneself, this shows a lack of even outward ceremonies of owning up another. This is happening all by itself. I believe that to

The merchant and the golden urn argue over the former's rejection. The golden urn turns extremely bitter. The urn calls the saint a charlatan.

The merchant quietly listens to the urn's impassioned speech with both his ears. Then, wishing the urn well-being, he offers a few drops of peace: “As far as dust particles are concerned, none but a fool applies them to the head and pampers them. Dust becomes venerable by the contact of feet. [359] Those feet are venerable which are worshipped by the eyes. Those eyes are right which can recognize the feet which are capable of reaching one to the destination. The libertine eyes which ignore feet are bound to suffer. The word 'feet' preaches to and orders the well-wishing eyes not to stray from the feet.

“O God, I wish to understand what atoms those are that have fashioned eyes. When eyes are infected – in Hindi, 'the eyes come' – there is pain. When the vision is lost – in Hindi 'the eyes go' – there is pain. How much more shall I say, how long shall I speak? [360] When eye meets eye, there is sorrow. When is there any joy in eyes? Eyes are a mine of sorrows, slayers of joy. That is why self-restrained saints and sages don't believe the eyes. They humbly look downward at the feet as they walk. Praises be.

“All the same, it is a pity that eyes are above and feet are below. Thinking that it is worthwhile to take shelter under those who are placed high, and wanting to be revered, some dust particles enter the eyes. Instead of becoming revered, they lose their freedom to fly. Now they cannot free themselves from the bondage of the eyes. [361] Inside the eyes they struggle around and about, lose their identity, and come out as deformed mud – abhorrent, foul-smelling, disgusting.

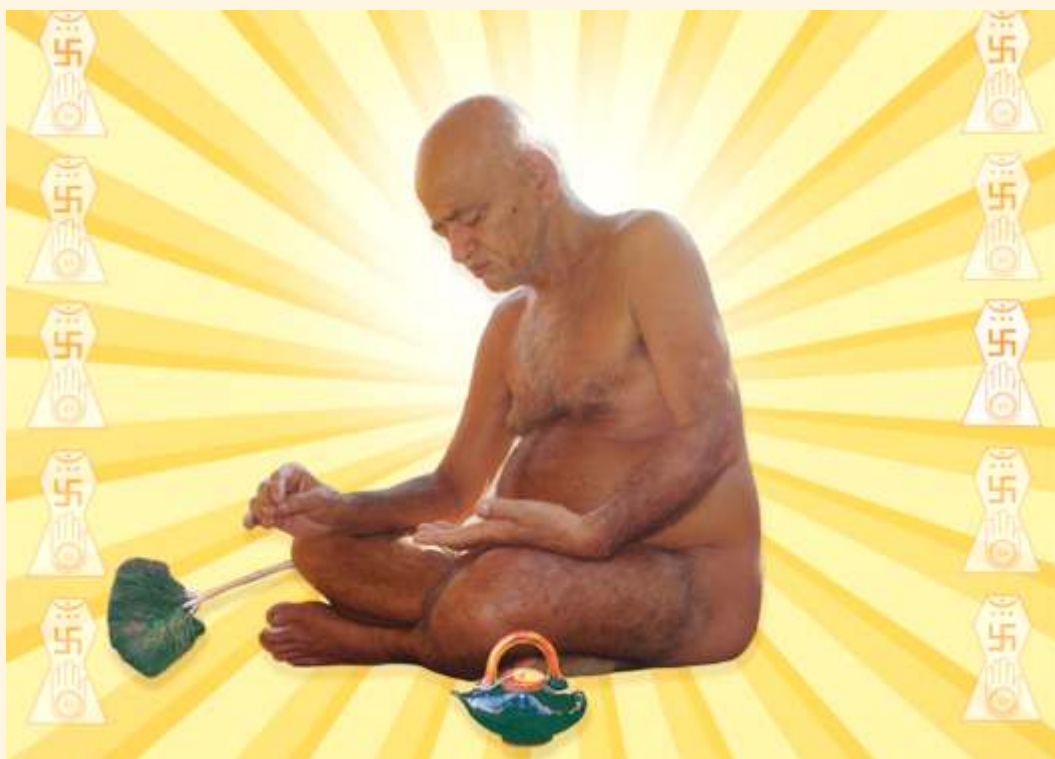
“All this influence on us is thanks to the even-minded saint.”

Thus the merchant concludes his speech and starts his meal. Just then the urn again speaks sarcastically: “Listen, listen. We have seen many who are saints only in the name. Rare are saints by character. And what use is their equanimity which cannot remove the terror of the terror-stricken and cannot shelter the shelterless? What an irony is this! [362] Only someone like Raam, who labours to battle a lawless Raavan in the battlefield, can bring the age of purity – *satayug* – in

this age of untruth – *kaliyug* – and bring heaven on earth, not those who are unafraid of the rounds of worldliness, dress like ascetics. and merely bless the shelter-seeker with hands of fearlessness.

“A true ascetic – *shraman* – is one who labours. As for an idle, impecunious fellow like this, even the maddest jackal would not want to touch his red cheeks, leave alone eating them.”

Even with these seething words, the urn's passion was not spent. Like rice and lentils boiling in a pot, his feelings continued to boil. And he continued to denounce the saint: “Who says that the saintly guest was even-minded? He was all biased. What to talk of true equanimity, he could not even make a proper show of equanimity. One whose [363] eyes discriminate between high and low, who don't regard a golden and an earthen pot with an equal eye, cannot be even-minded.



Acharyashri-ji in a prayerful meditation

The sweets in the pitcher vehemently criticize the golden urn and enjoin him to call the clay pitcher as mother.

[364] Unpolluted by the golden urn's bitterness, the sweet in the clay pitcher, glorified by being gifted to the saint, said placatingly : "You have no sweet in you. Your feet are besmirched with sin, unholy. You are unacquainted with merit... That is why you don't like the worship of holiness. You see hypocrisy in holiness. A person with even black water in his eyes can make out this sight. Your eyes are jaundiced. Why, otherwise, is your body all yellow?

"You are pricked by others' praise. You're enraged by the welcome and honour bestowed upon the pitcher. What is within, comes out. If you drink buttermilk, your belch will be sour even as you feed others on milk.

"You are gold, you boil in no time. Clay is not gold. It yields gold. You are what the clay has given forth. [365] Till today, we've neither heard nor seen nor read that a seed sown in gold has sprouted, come to flowering and fruition, and grown into a plant waving in the breeze. O golden urn, that soul is invaluable which melts with pity at the sight of poor, unhappy beings. What use is a soul poor in charity? Clay gets moistened with charity and moistens others. A seed sown in earth, duly watered and aired, nourished with nutrients, gives a thousandfold crop.

"If clay were to change her nature even the least bit, for the slightest bit of time, the world would lose faith in everything. A cataclysm would follow.

"There is one more thing, O golden urn! [366] If you'd been really of a high caste, why wouldn't you see, daily, the rare sight of the sun. Possibly you are afraid of light like a day-blind person. That's why you're buried far away, in the depths of the earth. Possibly you find joy in the lowest of the nether worlds. It won't be out of place to say that those who live in your company generally take to the wrong path. The mere sight of you binds the seer. Being bound, you are a cause of bondage to yourself and others.

"You are the foundation stone of bondage. You are the impregnable, hard-to-approach fort of capitalism. You are the cause of endless claims of unrest.

"O golden urn! Listen to me at least once. Be grateful in this life. Give immeasurable respect to mother clay. Henceforth address her as mother."

The golden urn is likened to a torch, expensive and rough, while the clay pitcher is compared to a lamp on which a yogic practitioner can meditate.

[367] Seeing that the sweet dares not say more, this pen wishes to add this: “O golden urn! Instead of praising the praiseworthy, you find fault with the faultless and seek to hide your own faults. Your outburst at the saint, your mockery of his equanimity, your insult to the merchant, and so on... are unpardonable sins. Even then I overlook them. I set forth before you not only the greatness of clay but wish to bring out your own worth through two examples.

“Normally, the lamp and the torch are two means of illumination. But their characteristics differ. One takes a bamboo stick about two to three feet long and tightly ties several rags at one end, one on top of another. There is a grip at the lower end. That makes the torch.

[368] Clay is rubbed on the burning end of the torch because the torch-flame is uncontrolled. A torch gives light, but in meager quantity. Flames such as the tongues of demons emanate from it, but these flames cannot be called light. The torch is a spendthrift, for one has to pour oil on it again and again, and that too precious edible oil.

“And yes. Sometimes, for the sake of entertainment, a torch-bearer fills his mouth with kerosene, and holding the torch high in the air, blows into the flame. Then, within an instant the whole kerosene burns up and disappears into space in the form of black cloud-like smoke. The torch appears awe-inspiring like a fire-pit during a cataclysm. A little carelessness would result in an outcry of fear and terrible losses. [369] If you try to blow the torch out, you cannot. Yes, the blower may lose his lips.

“A yogic practitioner cannot concentrate on a torch, which is flickering and unsteady. As they say, 'If the object is unstable, the skilled meditator's quiet mind will also be stirred.' There are many other drawbacks of the torch. How many shall I recount? So saying, this pen turns to the second example.

“The lamp is self-restrained. You can increase or decrease its flame at will. A lamp filled to the full by the inexpensive kerosene burns at its own pace, moment to

moment, it does not consume the fuel all at once. Like an ideal householder, the lamp is frugal. How regular, how passionless! Even a small child can walk holding in his soft, loving hands not the torch but the lamp. [370] It is more light-giving than the torch. The hot, unrestrained, explosive kerosene also, with the loving care of the lamp, turns upwards. A lost and lonely wayfarer, wrapped in darkness and stricken with fear, feels secure at the sight of a lamp. We have heard that in a burning place, ghosts have torches in their hands which compel even a fearless person to close his eyes.

“And look, the red flame of the lamp looks like fire but is not fire. It is a flame which illumines itself and others. It is still, and by gazing at it unblinkingly, a spiritual seeker can turn from the gross to the subtle. Gradually, within a matter of moments, his preoccupied mind becomes calm. Then? What then? He comes face to face with entirety. The lamp is possessed of many virtues, how many shall I [371] recount. There should be some limit, that's that. O golden urn, you are like the torch, full of dark intentions. The clay pitcher is like the path-lighting lamp, dispeller of darkness and courageous, pure by nature.”

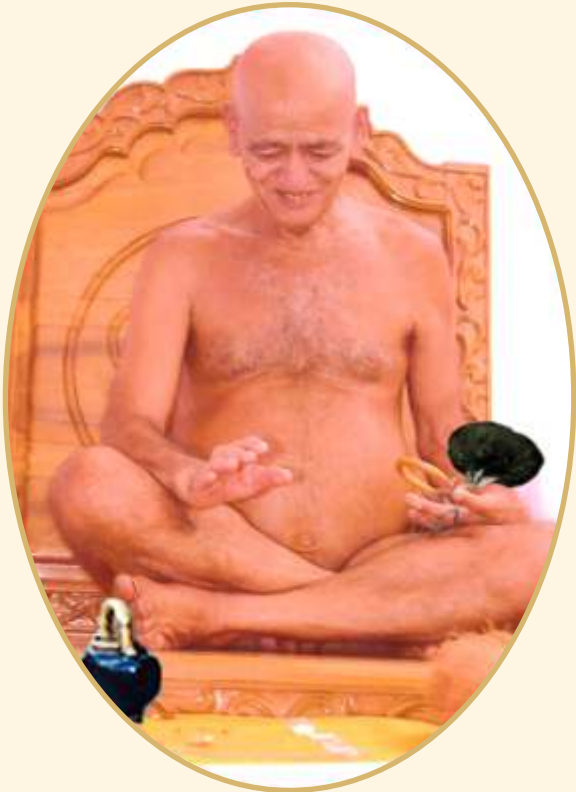


Kundalpur ke Bade Baba, a devotee paying respects at the feet of the Lord

The demeaning comparison of the golden urn with a torch infuriates him. The clay pitcher prays to the lord for equality to all.

The golden urn, likened to the torch, felt insulted. The clay pitcher condemned himself thinking that the single-eyed pen had, under the guise of praising him, performed the condemnable task of insulting the urn. The pitcher had become instrumental in another's censure, so his guilt was also proved. The pitcher breathed deeply and started praying to God: "These wealthless great ones have, for ages, seen defeat. Now [372] when will they experience the supreme state? Is it possible for them in the near future or not? Tell me at once, O God.

"Before attaining to godhood, one is praised, another blamed; one is raised, another falls; one gets rich, another poor; one becomes beautiful, another ugly. Why all this? I'm anguished to see this disparity, lord. This is too much to see, and perforce I close my eyes. Master, it will be a great kindness of yours, a great favour, if there is equality in all."



Blessed be YOU

The crystal ewer blows the top at the clay pitcher, calling him sinful, with the pitcher refuting the charge. The argument heats up.

The crystal ewer, rasped by the pitcher's prayer, said, "O sinner! [373] God is not pleased with sinful prayers. The holy lord is pleased when you renounce sin.

"He who repeats that he has passed the fire-test to prove his innocence is not only a sinner but an arch-sinner.

"There is so much sin stored in you that it cannot be burnt out over ages, neither can it be washed. During a cataclysm, not only water but also fire rained on you several times. But when is there a change in your blackness?

"And listen further. Even the acacia stick which looks like the moonless night overcast with dark *Sraavan* clouds, takes the fire-test, not many times but only once, to rid itself of all sins. [374] That is how it shines beautifully as white silver-like ash."

At this, the pitcher interposed: "After the fire-test, acacia coal is darker than every other kind of coal. Why? Come on, tell me."

The ewer replies, "O dimwit, O fellow blind with pride, listen. When the supply of fire is less than required, wood does not burn down to oil but remains coal. Otherwise it does turn to ash. It is the fault of fire or the watery element in the wood. It is not the fault of wood at all. Don't you know such a simple thing?

[375] "Out with you. To talk with you further is to attract demerit."

And the ewer quickly turns her face away from the pitcher.

The pitcher responds, "If it is a sin to talk with me, then don't talk. If it hurts you to look at me, then don't look. But all I wish to state is that your conclusion about sin, based on your peculiar thinking, is false. At least listen to this, then judge."

And the pitcher started his discourse: "To know self as self and the other as the other is true knowledge. To dwell and revel in self is the result of true knowledge.

"A person who is attracted to sense objects is a slave to sensuous pleasures, a servant of his senses... and what else... such a servitor of body and mind alone tries [376] to rule over another's objects. This is a sin... the father of all sins.

“O ewer, just look at yourself, your tendencies. When one fills you with milk, you look white. Where, then, goes your transparency? When one fills you with ghee, you turn yellow, whereas when one fills you with sugarcane juice, you turn green like an emerald. With different objects filling you, you instantly change your expressions, your colours. You are like a heavenly danseuse – *apsaraa* – full of sensuality. With your ability to change, you act and react.

“Not only that, you absorb the colours and qualities of things lying near you – black or yellow, green or red or pink. Your sensuous craving is the limit. [377] You don't stop to consider mean caste or high caste. You are ashamed of nothing. This you cannot call equanimity, nor boundless capacity.

“Equanimity means neither to be affected by others nor to affect others in the least. Worldly attachments run in your veins and arteries. Outwardly you may look a thing made of crystal gem – energetic, clear, liquid-like. O deceptive ewer, how long can you hide the secret of your being?

“So don't prattle any more. The heron has taken a lesson from this nature of yours

“And what shall I say of my nature? I am an open book. When did this pitcher ever use a veil? All it is covered with is the sky. All that he likes, all that shelters him – is the cover of the sky. [378] I shall hide sins if I have any. I shall then gather the means to hide them. Others' freedom is not looted here, nor is my own freedom taken away by anyone.

“No colour or paint affects me. My condition is always the same. This is what is called equanimity. For attaining to this state, rishis and maharshis, saints and holies take the shelter of the clay. That is to say, they practice sleeping on earth.

“And liberation – the friend of equanimity – elects not gods, demons, water-creatures or birds but even-minded dwellers of the land. Understand, ewer? You doll of sin, you mistook clay to be out of mind.” And the pitcher sinks into silence.



The pomegranate juice in the crystal ewer joins the ewer in the verbal war against the pitcher.

The pomegranate juice in the ewer turned redder with rage when he heard the ewer called a doll of sin. [379] Which servant is not roused to anger to see his master insulted before him? If the foundation is shaken, the superstructure is shaken, too. If the container is shaken, the thing contained is shaken as well. The juice furiously says, "We know too well the courtesy in the merchant, the saintliness of the saint, and what kind of image of equanimity and concentration he has and why. You can sense the depth of water by touching the banks."

And here, a spoon that is standing head downward, in saffron sweet porridge – *halwa* – in a shining silver plate on a black teakwood seat, is hiding his face in shame at his uselessness. He speaks in support of the pomegranate juice:

"You have defined a saint rightly." And he seems to cry tears in the form of excess ghee, having been ignored by the saint.

[380] The fragrance of ghee had, in the hope of finding a shelter in the saint, travelled to his nose. But as soon as the smell tried to enter his nose, she was kicked back in rejection. She ran back and said to the ghee: "I am not permitted into the shelter of the saint. Dreadful things are nurtured there. The nose is a destroyer of happiness. I wish to stay here uncomplainingly, now don't send me there."

And here, the saffron also shook his head in surprise: "Leave alone sheltering the unsheltered, he didn't even get a smiling glance.

"Though his hair is no longer black, and for ages he's been an ascetic, he lacks in ascetic qualities. He has intelligence but he has forgotten his religious duty. He looks mighty and intelligent, but his life is ineffectual. No hope now of simplicity in his body, mind or [381] consciousness. The opportunity has slid into the endless forest of the past. I agree that cognition has always remained in cognition, and the cognizable in the cognizable, but it is natural for cognition to assume the form of the cognizable. So where was the harm in looking this way?

"It seems that the nominal saint's cognition is afraid of things that are cognizable. In this state it's certain that a life displaced from equanimity is rolling not towards immortality but death. And listen."

Saffron raised his voice here and said, "Life's novelty lies in this that it doesn't pass away. That is the way to row across."

The merchant's family finishes its meal, which tastes more savoury than any other meal in their life. The merchant one night becomes very feverish. A mosquito and a bed-bug, unable to sup on his blood, rate him a miser.

Thus the pitcher and other utensils debated and argued. [383] The talk no longer remained an easy and natural conversation. Turn by turn, the utensils in the merchant's kitchen mocked at the pitcher and held him to be worthless. Such is often the result of majority view. Even a deserving person comes to be regarded as undeserving, and then there appears to be no sin in worshipping the undeserving. Like addicted rogues, the varied delicacies looked upon the saint's equanimity as a mere pretence and openly showed disrespect for the merchant and the saint.

In the meanwhile the family has finished its meal. They felt , "Today's experience is the real experience." It is not an experience of want, nor of worldly life. They had truly understood the purpose of having meals. When you turn pure-minded, when you give up your craving for tasty foods, and when you immerse in the worship of your object, liberation is not miles away [383] but seems to run towards the seeker as sunrays run to the lotus.

For some days the utensils intermittently argued like flashes of lightning, then an outward peace was slowly established. What was within their hearts is a different matter. Like the heat of a kiln, passions remain in all embodied beings.

The resolve of one fortnight was happily achieved. Then came the dark fortnight. Through with the day's activities, the whole family was asleep, only the merchant was turning from side to side, unblessed by sleep. The night passed slowly and appeared too long.

His body is burning like a grid from head to foot. All watery element in his body nearly evaporated, which is why although he weeps from time to time, no tears come to his wide open eyes. [384] The intense feelings within him stay choked. As the eyelids wink repeatedly, the eyes burn evermore. A light breeze at first kindles a fire, then makes it burn brightly.

Although the merchant's bedroom is so made that a light, cool breeze should constantly blow into it, yet his fiery breath set the whole atmosphere ablaze.

From his forehead, which had been brought up gently, the touch of gentility vanishes. It turns blood-red, and even a blood-sucking mosquito, eager to land on it, dares not do so. [385] For no sooner did the mosquito reach the forehead than its thirst doubled. Its body heated up, throat completely dried up, and both wings slackened. Its desire for blood flew off. It winged away humming: "Oh, rich people are showy in the performance of religious duty, they are miserly. If you meet them you get nothing. If you get something by pure chance, what you get is polluted by salt, and your thirst doubles up. I first bowed to this rich man and offered obeisance to him. Then I sang his praises at his ears. And after all this, I'm reduced to this shabby state."

A bed-bug thirsting for blood, on hearing his friend, the mosquito, speak ill of the merchant, circumambulates the merchant and says by way of a reward, [386] "What can I say, pal? You spoke the right thing at the right time to show the path. You defined an arrogant, avaricious miser. You dispelled the night of delusion which had been there from time immemorial and would have gone on endlessly. Which creature except man accumulates in its life-span undue amounts of stores?

"I too agree that certain things are necessary for life – a house, a wife, ghee, pots and so on. These have to be acquired. That is why saints have deemed the wedding ritual of the bridegroom and bride holding their hands – *paanigrahan* – a custom to protect and promote our culture. But alas, greedy, sinful men turn even this ritual of 'taking of hand' to 'taking of life'.

"Generally, they take undue services from servants and pay scant salaries. [387] They call themselves the children of the great prime lawgiver of the race, Manu! Great men indeed! Talk to them of giving, and their 'generous' hands look as though paralyzed. And what they give – or have to give – in spite of everything, they give in the form of a mere drop, and that too with ill-feeling.

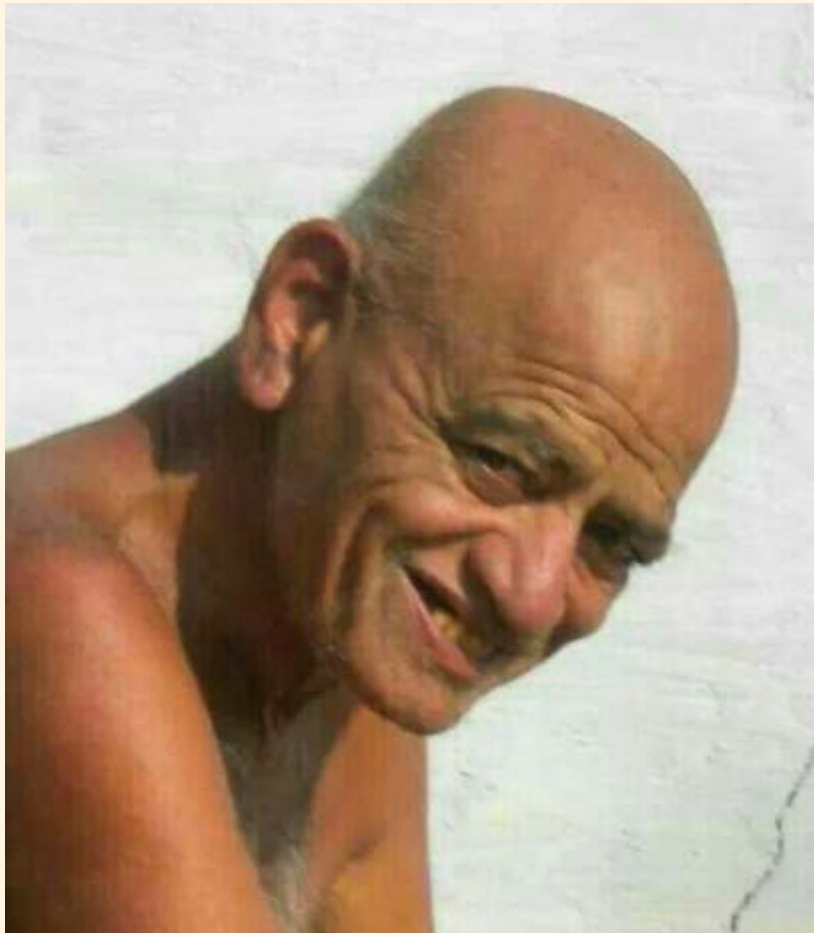
"The taker cannot properly digest the thing given. Why, otherwise, should our blood, though red, smell so foul?"

And the bed-bug, without getting angry, devoid of any hope of a reward, gives up his circumambulation and says to the merchant: "Don't hold out a mere temptation. Live life relying on yourself. Abandon your clever deceptions. Adopt humility – the mother of greatness. May the sky be contained in the vast compass of your modesty. [388] May your life set an example of generosity. May you always

remove others' sorrows with no ulterior motive."

Finally the bed-bug adds this to his discourse: "I am a particle, not a heap. I'm not wealth, hence I'm not a battlefield that causes deaths. I owe nothing to anyone, neither am I a sacrificial animal. I'm not living depending on someone, nor do I wish to live so. I just am... and thus I wish to remain. I have neither a mantra, nor a machine, nor any conspiracy. My whole life is well-regulated. I'm no deceiver or torturer, I don't find fault with others though I live in a hole." And the bed-bug enters a small hole.

Hearing these original words from the impartial mouth of the bed-bug, the merchant felt gladdened and edified.



Acharyashri-ji, all smiles

The merchant from time to time becomes semi-conscious. The very best physicians are summoned and they diagnose the ill as inflammation.

[389] Very slowly the night was dispelled and the dawn arrived. The moments of waiting are very tedious, aren't they? And if you are in a state of sorrow, what can one say? In a way, happy times run briskly at their own pace, like the shoreless sea. One doesn't know where it goes, when and how.

This happened in the morning. World-renowned physicians, each one more experienced than the other, come to treat the merchant. They include such intelligent ones as diagnose the ills correctly by mere face-reading. Some diagnose by examining the colour and appearance of the tongue, and some by the way the pulse goes. [390] Some diagnose by studying the degree of redness of the nails and eyes. One of the physicians has acquired supreme merit and through long, diligent practice achieved success in the rare art of reading the voice. He is a veteran in healing by mantra, occult tantric methods and in removing hindrances.

Each of them examined the merchant using their respective sciences. The merchant lapsed every now and then into a semi-unconscious state. The body is somnolent while the tongue is nearly silent.

One by one they drew their conclusions. They unanimously agreed that the patient was suffering from inflammation. His depressed state aggravated the illness. He had indulged in desires in only one direction, at a uniform pace. [391] The physicians said he ought not to worry so much. One should care for the body, too, a little bit. The body must be given its due, and the mind needs proper rest. No good comes of mere repression of desires. You get nothing by merely repeating "soul, soul" and brooding over it.

Saadhanaa does not mean going contrary to your nature. Your *saadhanaa* is not successful if there is no world-love in your detachment. Let one clause be added to the age-old saying that "There can be no love without fear." It would be very nice to say, "A loveless way is no way, and without a proper method there can be no song." What is the song about? It is about your victory, about realizing the truth by means of practice. It is true that the supreme soul – *purush* – is the experiencer [392] while insentient nature – *prakriti* – is that which is experienced. When the

experiencer by means of his tongue savours a taste, that is *prakriti*, the tongue lovingly releases saliva to make the eatables more juicy. The soul, the seer who loves the game-play of the world, interestedly views a sight with wide eyes. What happens then? The ever-active *prakriti* uses the eyelids to remove the obstructions before the eyes with continual flapping. Though the soul is a yogi, nature is his collaborator and helps him all the way to the pinnacle of his *saadhanaa*. She shelters the labouring shelter-seeker, being ever-present and self-dependent.

Neither is it improper to say that the actions and reactions within the soul – movement, excitement, pulsation – are expressed by nature. His love is expressed through her. If woman ceases to exist, man's life is over. [393] Lastly, this too needs to be stated that there is no scent of desire in *prakriti*. Yes, a fragrance does dwell in her. A man – *purush* – may become a slave to desire under various irregular conditions, and to quench his desire he may close his eyes under the shadow of *prakriti*, like a tired traveller. In fact this is man's necessity at that point of time.

A thirsty man's mouth – not a normal man's – waters at the mere memory of a tamarind, when he is yet far from eating it. This is but natural. All the same, the wonder is that the tamarind's mouth does not water even in the mouth of the eater. Yes, indeed. At that point, nature appears attached to and fond of soul. [394] This indeed is man's madness... his baseness. For ages he has been perforce bridled by his lust. And this is woman's purity, her mercury quality, that for ages she has been raising thirst-quenching water without becoming enslaved. She is self-controlled and she releases man from his deformity and compels him to be self-controlled. She opens his path for this. To say that the interplay of *purush* and *prakriti* is the world, is to commit a folly. Such a view is born of delusion. The player is the supreme soul – *purush* – while unconscious nature – *prakriti* – is a mere plaything. To make oneself a plaything is not a matter of play, only an expert player can do it.



Me and myself.....a holy congregation of the Saints.....and,
Muni Yogsagar-ji Maharaj, brother of Acharyashri-ji

The merchant's family prays to the healers to make him well soon and not to care for the expenses. The clay pitcher takes control of the treatment.

We have become acquainted with *prakriti* and *purush*. [395] To get knowledge is to have a mystery revealed. “Without the love of *prakriti*, man does not succeed in his religiously enjoined tasks.”

When the family heard the pronouncement of the physicians, they accepted it and humbly requested: “May the merchant recover soon. Let the cure be so effective that his disease is countered. Your restrictions will be totally followed. Whatever you say, whatever you prescribe, is acceptable.

“And please don't care about the treatment charges. You will get them with all respect. The payment will be readily offered, like an ever-prompt maid in a man's service and well-featured like a shadow.

“In a way the physicians' eyes don't ever turn to the fee, and that's the way things should be. These eyes are like the mind of a well-bred [396] girl from a good family. Even so, *kaliyug* casts its own influence. Life does not progress towards its good, and even if it does progress, it is not steadfast. We hear it and we see it, too – all arts aim at earning and accumulating wealth. People's livelihood – it is disgusting to say – smells foul like the tongue-cleaner. The nose is used to it. But sorry to say, the eyes are silent over this phenomenon. People are not concerned which word means what.

“Basically, the word 'art' denotes that which gives satisfaction to the soul. Whatever the art, it alone brings happiness, peace and prosperity in life. There is no happiness in money, nor from money.”

The team of physicians perked up on hearing the lust-free family pronounce on art. When the family noted this, [397] they brought about an adequate change in the timely discussion. But before they could say anything, the clay pitcher spoke up: “As for the dietary prescriptions, all healing sciences are of the view that by following these prescriptions, you can do away with medicines. And if you do not follow the dietary prescriptions, even then you need no medicines!

“Even then if you ask about medicine, hear. Not only the passing diseases of the body, even the timeless malady of the consciousness, manifest as birth, decay and death, disappears within no time. The three seed syllables are *sa* and the two kinds of *sha* in Sanskrit. The huge tree of health comes to flowering and fruition only with these seed syllables: *sha*, *sa*, and the second *sha*. You've to apply all your force in pronouncing them, [398] hold your breath within and release it through the nose in the form of the syllable AUM. This *sa*-trio is revealing its own identity. The first *sha* reduces passions. It is symbolic of Lord Shankar, beyond doubt, and a school of eternal peace. The *sa* is a companion of all, enfolding entire humanity. It reverses worldly tendencies, an easy means of attaining happiness, and a tremendous source of equanimity. And the second *sha* (used in Sanskrit words like '*shatakon*', a hexagon) is written in Sanskrit with a line across the belly of *pa*. It tears apart sin and merit which make a deluded person do the rounds of worldliness. Hence, this *sha* which slits the belly of sin and non-sin takes you beyond karma. This is the story of the inside. Now listen to the story of the outside, too.

[399] “The earth is the mother of the past. The earth is the mother of the future. The earth is the mother of sentiment. The earth is the mother of effect. The earth is the mother of emotion. The earth is the mother of possibility. The earth is the mother of Bhavaani (consort of Lord Shiv). The earth is the mother of mountains. The earth is the mother of land-creatures. The earth is the mother of hunger. The earth is the mother of roles. The earth is the mother of worldly existence. The earth is the mother of splendour. And the earth is the mother of the self-born. In the three times, that is past, present and future, and in the three worlds, namely nether, terrestrial and upper, everybody's role springs from the earth. You can see nothing but the earth. The earth, the earth, the earth, the earth... here, there and everywhere. Lexicographers pronounced at the beginning of the age: 'It is the rule of the earth.'

[400] “And listen. The earthiness of the earth lies in clay. That is how we have the wise aphorism: 'Clay, water and air drive away a hundred diseases.' This therapy is independent, not extravagant but frugal. It produces no side-effects in any corner of body or mind.”

A clay plaster is applied to the merchant's head.

A lump was made by kneading some oh-so-touchable, strained, kumkum-soft black clay with a well-measured quantity of water, and this lump was shaped into a headgear to revive the merchant from his unconsciousness. First of all, it was mounted on his head.

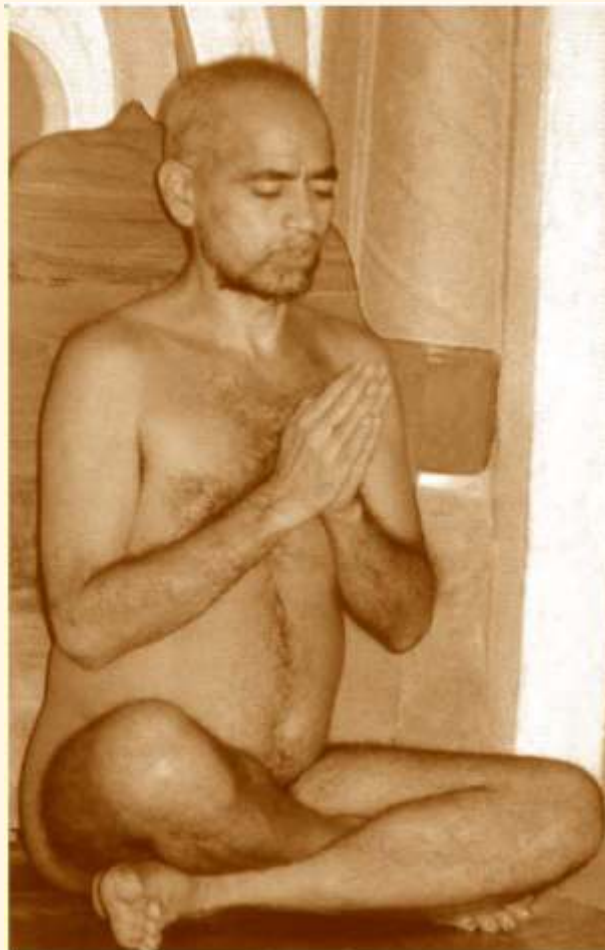
As a heated piece of iron, when dropped in a pot of water, absorbs water from all sides, this headgear started sucking in the heat inside the head. As the heat diminished, consciousness began to surface. [401] And what do we see! The minute movements of the lips seem to indicate that he is trying to pronounce the syllable AUM. In a way, the worship of the three-world-conquering, three-world-sustaining omkaar, the mantra AUM, is going on within – the result of long, long spiritual practice.

The tradition of paraa-vaak, which is unheard-of before and unfamiliar, has been deemed by worldly sciences as fit for yogis. Originating at the base of the spine, and steered by the wind, this force moves upward up to the navel. Circumambulating the navel, it surfaces as pashyanti, which is a type of language, and sings in the navel-well. It is liquid and wavy. But it is all wordless and cannot be grasped by the literate folk who are at a remove from the restraints of the meditative method of vipashyanaa, but only talk about it. [402] This pashyanti rises towards the broad chest, shakes the heart-lotus, speaks merry words with each open petal and tenderly caresses them like a mother. Within the heart, this same force is now called madhyamaa. And, let us learn it, not a grown-up person but an unpolluted child alone can understand a mother's nature. Now this madhyamaa travels from within to without, as intended by the man concerned. A man's intentions are generally found to be of two types – owing to the differences in sin and merit.

Noble souls' words aim to achieve the welfare of others. Ignoble souls' words aim to cause pain and misery to others. When this madhyamaa emerges outside with the help of the palate, the throat, the tongue, etc., becoming the object of common peoples' hearing, it is called vaikhari. [403] Why should we have a common nomenclature for the language coming from a passion-ridden soul and a saint? Such a doubt is unwarranted. The language may appear similar but it is not.

Not only the meanings but even the words differ with the speaker.

The words coming from a noble soul are definitely true, leading to happiness and wealth. Doesn't a stream of water falling from the cloud become sugar in contact with a sugarcane? The words coming from an ignoble soul are definitely full of deceit and sin. They are senseless, bringers of calamities. Doesn't a stream of water coming from a cloud become bitter in contact with the margosa root? [404] Whichever way you look at the words of ignoble people, they are enemies of themselves and others. Let there be peace.



Prayers with a purpose - peace to the World

The merchant regains consciousness and praises the pure principle. The pitcher lauds clay as a medicament. More clay is applied to the merchant for a better recovery. The merchant is given simple home food scientifically.

The merchant uttered praises of the Pure Principle with a simple heart and chaste pronunciation. He talked with his family, was introduced to the physicians, told them of the felt symptoms of his disease. But owing to continuous inflammation, [405] his eyes are unable to open. They are yet incapable of seeing light. The gentle rays coming from the precious stones look like sparks of fire. The pitcher saw the unopened eyes and again said: "Don't worry. Clay can be used on any part of the body except the heart.

"Clay is beneficial on a blood-oozing wound, whether raw or ripe, on inner or outer injury, unbearable ear-pain, head-splitting fever, a wound in the nose, a running nose, a nose bleeding from heat or a headache on one side or both. In fact, even a broken bone of a hand or a leg can be quickly joined by the application of clay. You will start working as before within just a few days. [406] What limit is there to the powers and virtues of clay? Where is the balance to weigh them? What can you compare clay with, here? This weighing is not for value but for qualities."

It was enough that the pitcher said so much. Two clay balls of about twenty grams each were made, flattened, and placed on the merchants' eyes. Within a few minutes the physicians noted the efficacy of the remedy.

So, about every half hour (every *ghari* to be precise, which is twenty-four minutes), clay continued to be also applied on the belly below the navel. This treatment went on systematically, six to seven times in the daytime and six to seven times in the night.

The team of physicians, impressed by the success of [407] the treatment by clay, formulates its prescription about food and drink also as the pitcher dictates. He says that the patient has to be given milk heated in a clay pot and fully cooled. Alternatively, he can be given buttermilk made from curd formed in the same pot with the help of due quantity of curdling, churned with a hand-churner, and fully de-buttered. With buttermilk, he has to be given sweet, easy-to-digest, simple and

pure mash made from *karnataki* millet. The millet should be roughly ground and the mash should not be too thin. This has to be given in the forenoon, but not in the evening.

For, during the conjunction of day and night, the solar principle dwindles, and the dual principle – *sushumna* principle in the yogic parlance – rises. This time is suited for meditation. To indulge in pleasures in times [408] suited for yoga is the cause of disease. And if you are diseased when you wish to enjoy pleasures, you get sad. So when does one see the end of sorrows? When one is out of the flux of time... then does one get the dark shade of the tree of sorrowlessness.



Any & every place is the right place for meditation

In a few days the merchant recovers fully, and the credit goes to the pitcher.

Within a few days, the merchant recovered not partly but fully. The raging inflammation was gone with this cure. This is like a poet's pure sentiments which, when they see various metres, give up their waywardness and shrink into themselves.

Sciences tell us to read that the true worth of medicines lies in their ability to cure diseases. Whatever the medicine, it is not worth much or little. Even then, wealthy and intellectual people believe otherwise and go for costly medicines. The merchant is an exception to this rule. [409] The team of physicians was honoured, rewarded service-wise. And with the noble motive of giving a long life to the non-violent method of treatment, with joy-wet eyes, bending low with humility and prayer, he gave a huge nine-digit sum with his own hands into the team's hands. He felt favoured when the team was pleased.

At parting the team turned back to the merchant and said that the miracle had been worked entirely by the pitcher. It was the pitcher's cooperation, too. They, the team members, were merely incidental, subordinate. And full of expressions of thanksgiving, they left.



Noble thoughts waiting for their turn - to be expressed on paper

The golden urn feels depressed and humiliated. He advocates the use of noble metals and precious stones, rich foods and lavish spending. He spurts with rage. The pitcher asks the golden urn to take a look at himself.

Here the golden urn thinks: "Once more a moment has come to sorrow and feel the pinch of dishonour." [410] And helplessly he sinks into depression like an idling forest-dweller who has lost his faith in the soul.

He says, "Once more an opportunity has arisen for these noble ears to hear the glorious saga of those of a low birth. And that too from the mouth of intelligent people greedy after money. Ugh, this is unbearable pain. I feel like hammering nails into my ears.

"The image of truth is blurred. The red glow of the evening is also about to sink and once more a vision has appeared before these chaste eyes. Fallen souls are being regarded as holy and enthroned on a high seat with honour. Those who destroy sins are being called hypocrites and deceivers.

"This nose had not expected this, nor believed that once more a dry wave – the miasma of humanity's fall – would run her way, defiling these tender nostrils and making them unconscious." [411] Even after pronouncing thus, the golden urn's anger was not pacified and he says with a worried, serious face: "We shall have to call it the impact of *kaliyug* or a foreglimpse of a dark future that the world is turning away from the use of original things and giving precedence to the enjoyment of worldly things. Shame on it. Look at the twinkling garlands of jewels, strings of melodious pearls, necklaces of dazzling, large, countless-faceted diamonds, dumb corals that put to shame a parrot's beak, sapphire crystals pleasant to the eye and making a peacocks blue neck break out into a dance, topaz crystals that spray saffron, transparent quartz, rubies which are fiery-red and yet radiate tranquil waves. [412] These precious lot not only induce coolness in us but also quell incurable diseases like diabetes, cough, breathing trouble, tuberculosis, etc., and normally save one's life from the malefic influence of planets. But today only glass and dirt is getting respect.

"Golden pitchers, urns and plates; silver jugs and cups; copper pitchers

which remove the ills caused by water; large plates and pans – all these authentic utensils are being sold off, and lowly, defective utensils are being bought even by rich and intelligent people. Today people are attracted to and give respect to steel for every other need. In a prison, a prisoner too has steel shackles in his hands and feet. [413] How far can one say? Here, young men and women also wear steel bracelets. Is this what science tells us to do? Is this a sign of progress? Gold is forgotten. What a pity that it has to pit its mettle against iron.

“Listen, listen. There is more to the saga of this *kaliyug*. In case of inflammation and fever, it is considered a boon to take the bright water dripping from the gem *chandrakaant* on a moonlit night, rub the sandalwood of Malayaachal in it, and apply the paste on the forehead and navel. We have also heard, and experienced it, too, that if you mix camphor in due proportion with very fresh, pure, fragrant ghee, lightly finger-massage the ointment on the suture of the skull; and if an expert masseur rubs the spinal column with an efficacious oil, it is a fail-safe remedy against inflammation. [414] To ignore these remedies endorsed by the wise and to apply earth and mud is a sign of poor intelligence.

“Similar things are taking place as regards diet as well. Ignored are varied foods like tasty, nutritious milk; ghee that enhances inner and outer brilliance; and curd-based delicacies that ward off untimely death and induce pure, quiet feelings. The result is that an inflammatory disease prevails and even the merchant is gripped by it. To feed on sapless mash and buttermilk is to invite poverty.

“One more thing needs to be said. It concerns the notion that you should spend frugally, not extravagantly. And never, never should you misspend your money, not even in a dream. Not spending your money is best of all. This notion is far from the correct view [415] because every person spends as much as he earns, and earns as much as he spends. Between earning and spending there is no time-lag in which one may accumulate money.

“Here, the arrangement of income and expenditure has been deemed permanent. Then how can there be excessive spending or misspending?

“Can our exertions alter the true nature of things? No, no, never. Yes, of course we can get an impression of change in our polluted minds. And that is the root of worldly misery – this ego. This proves that we cannot lay down rules, we can

but adopt the rules that already exist.”

[416] Towards the end of his outpouring, the golden urn burst out like a lamp fed with unfiltered oil: he spoke a good deal against the merchant and his family, the team of physicians and, out of jealousy, hate and envy behind his back, against the clay pitcher. But his words had no effect, everything remained as it was.

What is the power of anger, anyway? Where can it stand in the face of forgiveness. A person bitten by a snake may die or not die, may be poisoned or not poisoned. But the snake does fall unconscious. Such was the state of the golden urn. His shadow falls on the small golden and silver urnlets standing nearby. [417] A still silence prevailed for a few moments, then the pitcher himself spoke to the golden urn in a gentle tone: “O urn, you hardly look as you looked yesterday. You're only pretending to repeat your yesterday's behaviour. Where has vanished the soft beauty of your cheeks? It appears that the sweet nectar on your lips is gone, it's gone once and for all. Your body lies forlorn for want of intelligence; it is artless, restless; your face is small. O urn, you hardly look as you looked yesterday.”



Acharyashri-ji sharing pearls of wisdom

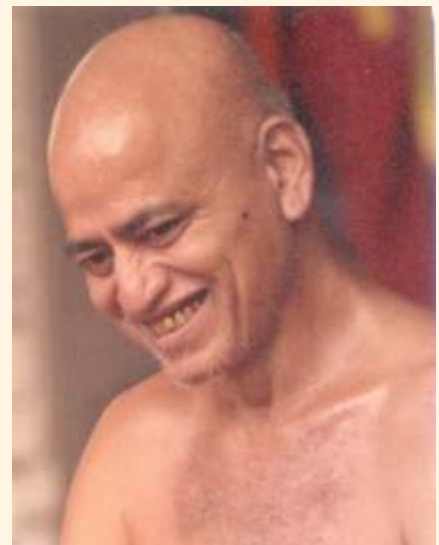
The golden urn recoils vindictively and with his companions, the other rich kitchenware, conspires in a terroristic way to exterminate the merchant and his family.

The golden urn, on hearing these teasing words of the pitcher and finding himself the butt of mockery, felt worthless and ignored. He smouldered with a desire for revenge.

[418] And well, there rises a conspiracy to finish off the merchant with family. A day and time is fixed to make a terroristic attack.

It is certain that terrorism is born when the ego is piqued. Similar is the result of pampering or too much exploitation. In such conditions, the aim of life is not purification or investigation but revenge. But it is an act of great ignorance, showing want of foresight, and is harmful not only to others but also to oneself.

The golden urn conducts hush-hush parleys with his companions. No member of the merchant's family can scent this barbarity. Civilized people's nose can remain hungry, but it never – not even in a dream – turns to foul odours. [419] The beetle and the housefly can't be grouped together merely because they feed on smells. The beetle can never leave fragrant flowers to zero in on dung, urine, phlegm and flesh – the places where the dimwit housefly gets trapped and dies.



The 3 stages in the making of the Acharyashri-ji, all exuding message of peace, positivity & eternal hope

Some of the golden urn's teammates, led by the crystal ewer, break away from the conspiracy and argue with him to dissuade him.

Today the terrorist gang will storm at midnight calamitously. But at the same time the golden urn faces a big problem – a group of his team-mates is disaffected. It disagrees with the decision taken earlier and calls the proposed act unjust and barbarous. It does not extend its support and cooperation.

The breakaway faction is led by the bright crystal ewer which is impressed by the clay pitcher and says, “Don't unleash injustice at the altar of justice.” [420] By and by many of the team-mates can see the ewer's wisdom, and her side effortlessly gains strength.

Silver urns and urnlets frisking with a slight shine; spoons and spoonlets hoodwinked by clever leaders; copper utensils raging with base desires; and others – thirsty cups and all – that are indulging their passions and giving their love to wrong parties, almost all of them give up their prejudice and no longer pay allegiance to the golden urn. They bend at the ewer's feet, which now says: “O golden urn, in the eyes of him who is advancing towards the World-mother and climbing the steps with equanimity, golden rubble and earth have the same value. And that is what the fundamental truth also says. [421] Here, grab the opportunity, give up your stubbornness, and leave your excessive pride. Make obeisance to them who have attained to such a spiritual height that they are beyond honour and insult. Thereby, be saved from a sea of sins.”



A picture of poise, determination and harmony

The pitcher, wised up to the murderous revolt brewing in the merchant's house, counsels him to escape. The merchant and his family follow the counsel and leave town. In the forest, a band of elephants is being chased down by a terrible lion, and the family offers them asylum.

But why would the terrible golden urn be moved by the ewer's words? Did the wise Mandodari, Raavan's wife, succeed in persuading her haughty husband to return Seeta to Raam? So, instead of being cooled, the urn became like a pan of boiling oil into which four or five drops of cold water have been sprinkled. You could see an awful exhibition of uncontrolled rage. And then the golden urn thundered excitedly: "I won't spare any of you. Mercy to you is impossible. You will have to face a cataclysm right away."

What can one say now? [422] A disaster seems to be quite scheduled before its time. Here, the ewer hinted to the clay pitcher, which in turn quietly alerted the merchant's family. The pitcher became active secretly.

With the benign motive of precluding a cyclone on the innocent neighbours, the pitcher said to the merchant, "You have to at once get away from here with family. Delay can be disastrous." And the family escaped from the rear door of the mansion.

No one knew, not even the ewer. Neither were the conditions suitable for informing. The pitcher thought, "A newly acquainted person may be trustworthy, but a deep secret should not be entirely revealed to him/her just yet." He is held by the merchant's in his hands and will act as his guide. The merchant is followed by his sin-fearing family. Time to time they look back, pass through the city gate, and disappear into the dense forest.

Tallest tall trees which touch the sky open an umbrella above. The beautiful green earth is there to relieve fatigue. A shade has spread a carpet on the earth. Large and small plants, loaded with fruit, flowers and leaves, bestow smiles on tired and languid travellers. Lovely creepers that embrace trees from foot to head seem to invite and charm the steadily walking travellers. "Do take some rest," they say. And so the whole family, breathing security, sits down for a while on the ground cleared of creatures.

Their bodies drip with sweat, their minds are wounded with sorrows, and they feel peace at the touch of a cool breeze. [424] A line of muscular-armed bamboo trees, which has been traditionally blessed for ages with the love-nectar of the tips of Vanshidhar, the flute-playing Krishna, and which brings auspiciousness and removes inauspiciousness stands like an arched gateway and feels most fulfilled as it pays obeisance to the pitcher. It rains tears of bamboo pearls which are brilliant white like the character of saints and supreme saints.

Meanwhile the family suddenly sights a band of scared elephants, hounded by a carnivorous lion and seeking shelter. It is approaching the family, which says, "Fear not, come on friends," and lovingly invites the elephants with their eyes. Wow, what can one say now? The elephants found never-before peace at the family's feet, as an infant feels total security in his mother's lap. [425] The elephants mock at the bamboos, outshine the bamboo pearls and humbly offer a quantity of precious pearls to the pitcher. This must be the reason why these pearls are known as elephant pearls.

In a gentle atmosphere of silence, the two kinds of pearls gaze at each other. Some moments slip by. Elephant pearls and bamboo pearls spread their respective glows on each other for quite some distance. They are at this time testing their long-separated feeling of intimacy. But the differences in their brilliance are tongueless. The difference between mine and thine has crumbled down and nearly died. All else is wiped out, what remains is glow... glow... and more glow.



Muni Prasad Sagar-ji releasing stamp of Guru Gyansagar-ji -ONE GURU and many images, also seen Mrs Nidhi Jain Managing Editor 'Aacharan' Sagar

As the family moves on, a gang of vicious, vigorous robbers accosts them with a design to loot and annihilate them. The elephants make a protective ring around their saviours, the merchant family.

[426] When the delusion was gone, it was the end of labour. The body gained health and the mind was jolly.

They have to go further, so the family got up – and made a move. Just then a deafening roar came from behind. It had come from a band of men who lived by violence and aggression. These people said: “Stop, you cowards. Where will you run and how far? Now give up your love of the body. Stop, you sinners. You have to receive the wages of your sins. You who hide ill-gotten wealth under a pious garb! Tell us true, how much wealth have you looted and how many lives have you wrecked. Remember this, and now get ready to die.”

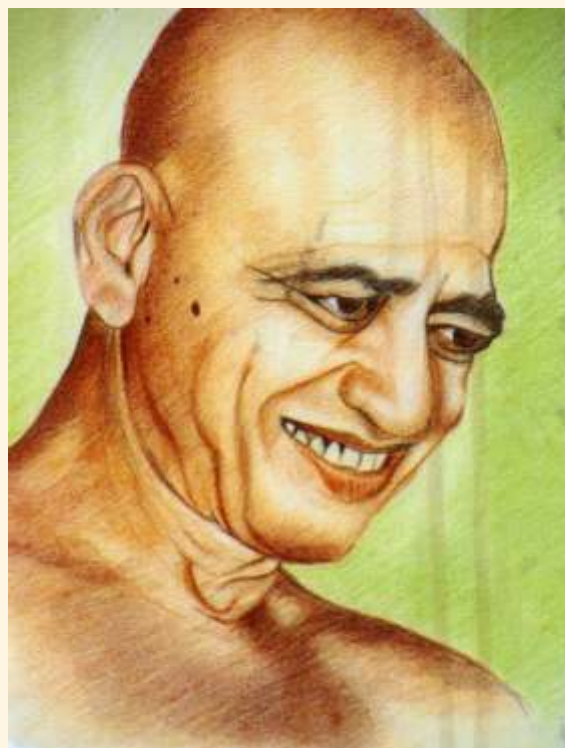
The family turned and saw – it was a group of terrorists which could destroy even elephants. These men had weapons in their hands with which they were repeatedly slashing the air. A fire like the lightning [427] flashed from them, which forced common people to close their eyes. The gangsters were continually biting their lips, surging with anger, and as a result blood was dripping from their lips. Their bodies were muscular, minds determined, and they had tied their lower *dhoti*-ends tightly around their waist.

Like the lion, they have a slim, negligible waist, their thighs are like banana-trunks and muscles of their thighs seem to guffaw. Their knees cannot be made out from a distance, being sunken in the musculature. The hair of their heads is thick, wavy and black and flows down to the shoulders. It looks like ferocious serpents. Their chests are broad, their robust calves show a network of veins standing out. Their restless eyes remind you of banyan roots in the earth and they emit fire like the solar gem *suryakaant*. [428] On their forehead they sport a triangular mark of the red cosmetic powder *kumkum* which looks like Lord Shiva's third eye in the terrible, open state. It seems to be watching you. This gang of foot-to-head black-bodied men follows the ways of the malefic planet Raahu. One glance at them can make even the formidable death itself shiver. These men have moustaches that curve

upward with an excess of pride like the tails of young horses from Kathiyaavaad. Their powerful, muscular arms can madden even the valiant sun. On these arms, they have tightly tied in a black thread the margosa fruit. Finally I may say that their limbs are packed with sheer mercilessness. The mouth follows the heart, doesn't it?

Normally, bodies become thickly muscular only by suppression of kind feelings. That is how saints pronounce: "O embodied being! A lustrous, thickly muscular body is not the purpose [429] of life. Your body-love has disabled you from experiencing, till now, the bodiless state."

When the group of elephants saw the merciless crooks about to attack the merciful souls, it mused. "An attack by swords is irresistible, all the same it is necessary to save this family from an attack. It is the prime duty of aryaans." And the elephants made a protective ring around the family.



A master sketch of being true to oneself and to the Supreme

The elephants trumpet thunderously, awakening snakes and cobras.

The trumpeting of the elephants resounded in the sky, it shook up the steady earth, and the hilly surroundings also feel troubled. Disinterested birds which flew above, lost their sense of direction out of fear and rushed into others' nests. Pythons were instantly shaken awake from their deep slumber. Those that were awake felt feverish. Deer lost their way and stood face to face with the lion. Large snake-holes [430] crumbled to the ground, and cruel venomous snakes crept out hissing and spitting venom, with fury dancing fiercely in their eyes. They raise their hoods, stand on their tails and look for the source of the disturbance.

At once the snakes realize the root cause of the explosion in the surroundings. The merchant family is innocent and immersed in prayers to their ideal deity. The band of elephants looked angry and preoccupied with the protection of the cultured folk. It was logically concluded that the remaining party was guilty, being engaged in devouring and robbing others.

What to say now! The chief of snakes said to all others: "Don't bite anyone, nor kill anyone. Merely challenge the enemy. The penal code exists to end libertine behaviour. No doubt death punishment is the severest of all. Although it is a lesson to others, yet [431] it deprives the condemned of a chance to improve. Whether the penal code accepts this or not, it is a crime to punish a merciless criminal mercilessly. It amounts to a fall from justice."



Purification from the outside to attain purity in totality

The robbers are scared of the reptiles. A cobra and his mate declare themselves to be peace-loving and nonviolent and offer obeisance at the reverend feet of the pitcher.

Now terrorism was surrounded on all sides. Wherever it glanced, it saw countless cobras and cobresses. Things looked as if the god of cobras had with family come out of his lowest nether-world – *paataal* – to render support to the fallen and the downtrodden. This was the first occasion when terrorism was itself terrified. It was about to retreat. It was already black of hue, but to see death staring at it, it turned blacker in the face. [432] The powers of terrorism are gradually draining out, like a mighty elephant bogged down in a mire. A river that clears the earth as it rolls down a slope can hardly look back at the mountain. Such is the state of terrorism. It hides in the dense forest.

Said a cobra and a cobress: “Talk not of killing. Struggle on and on. Talk not of defeat, climb higher and higher. And listen. On a mortally wounded branch, a juicy fruit doesn't grow. And even if it grows, it doesn't ripen. And just in case it does ripen over a long period of time, it won't taste so good. All because the surroundings are deformed.”

The pair added: “O fortunate one, don't count us a cobra and a cobress. [433] Down the ages, history vouches that our race has till now never trampled on any creature, never crushed anyone underfoot. For, we are footless. That is why saints have very thoughtfully and sensibly named us the way they have – *urag* – walking on the chest. Yes, indeed. If anyone steps on us and plays mischief we don't spare him/her. We have not trampled on anyone out of mean selfishness. On the contrary, if anyone is, for whatever reason, downtrodden, we have crawled up to him on our chest – *ura* – and embraced him lovingly. We have given a soothing touch to his wounds.

“Every particle of existence is full of sagas of our love and tenderness; we have healed the sorrows of every atom. [434] We haven't bitten even thorns but rather embraced them gently. For, they are exploited beings. The sap and pollen flowing through the branches is sucked up by the flower; it is the flower that earns

a great name, with the result that those that are left out of the party dry into thorns.

“We wish to say one more thing. It is legged creatures alone who, for the sake of a high positions, tread upon others, indulge in hypocrisy and sin. We pray to God to keep us legless and without a high position. All positions of honour are abodes of calamities. May the snake of craving for position never scent us even in the future. That is what we heartily wish, O lord of all.”

The family stood amazed to hear from footless creatures the fate and ways of footed and high-positioned creatures. [435] The herd of four-legged elephants was also struck numb, stopped still like a machine, and their legs froze like ice. To see the elephants depressed, the snakes took hold of themselves and said: “Please forgive us! Please forgive us! We beg your forgiveness!”

“Normally we don't speak categorically, but there may be an occasional lapse. We could not express ourselves fully. Here is the rest of what we had to say. We speak in our broken words. Not all people in positions of power, and not all who are placed high to protect the public, are like that.

“There are some feet which we long yearned to worship. Today the day has come and our hearts are full of joy.” And first of all they washed the pitcher's reverend feet with tears of joy and offered a hundred obeisances. Then the cobra and cobress fully opened their hoods. [436] They stood respectfully, and their uniquely rare, valuable and lovely gems, shedding a quiet mild glow, were offered in worship. And the congregation of snakes experienced the supreme fulfilment of their life. The snakes bowed, vomitted their ego. Outwardly they engaged in fights, inwardly they carried brotherly love.

The charming soft touch was the genesis of an original, otherworldly and God-revealing poem worth hearing. Who is its author, where is he, and why is he silent? He is the best of men, humble at heart.



The holy congregation of the Saints, the Munisangh, at Ramtek

The robbers plan an occultist attack on their quarry and invoke the clouds to inundate the place.

Terrorism now and then leaped and peeped from bushes and watched the unexpected happening with a mind to curse it. [437] Once more its terror rises high owing to the agitation, pain and uncontrolled heat on account of defeat.

What else can a powerless force do in the face of powerful ones?

Seven lemons are charmed with the mantras the robbers have realized. A needle runs through every lemon with a black thread tied to it. Then the lemons are tossed up in the empty sky with a wish for dark clouds. When you employ a mantra, you don't have to wait – the results follow at once. Such is the result of concentration. There is no rub that the user of the mantra should be noble-minded or ignoble. His mind should be in his control. That is the law, that is the experience and that is exactly what happened. [438] Thick clouds floated in the sky, darkness sort of prevailed, and the earth became hard to view. Only the feet can feel whether the earth lives or not. It appears as if a night in the nether region called *raurav* has come overhead. You can no longer feel different colours. An almighty gale is let loose, concealing a cataclysm within. The feet of the mountains stumbled, their turbans fall to the ground. The trees jostled against one another giving rise to the noise of friction. One felt not only touchables but also that which is beyond touch. The difference between soft and hard was levelled off. The mightiest trees were shaken at the roots, some went topsy-turvy. Bamboos lay sprawling, across the breast of the earth.

The bitter loud thunder of the clouds was unbearable to the ears. Peacocks could hardly dance their usual dance of joy. [439] Even their cries became muted. Cracks of lightnings whipped across the sky to infuriate and madden the clouds and these were like a woman who knows no limits of honour and decency. And torrential rains poured. It rained not in small and large drops, but rather like a waterfall. The earth is sinking in the water. The wrath of water is felt all around. One did not know when the day ended and the darkness arrived. Whom to ask and who can tell? The clouds kept rolling, lightnings kept flashing, and intermittently hails rained stormily. A cold wave came over, hours ticked by. In such a situation how could one go to sleep? And who wanted to sleep anyway?

The elephants protect the family from the torrents, and in course of time the rains abate. The family proceeds to a river, aiming to cross it. But the river is in flood and the hapless refugees think of retreating to their embattled home. The pitcher bolsters their courage and helps the family to start crossing the river.

In order to experience things that bring us pleasure and enjoyment, we have to have a propitious time and place – and in fact not just those things. [440] Even during these cataclysmic conditions, the appreciative band of elephants ceaselessly offered protection to the family. The clouds dispersed, the dark hours vanished. Why, otherwise, would the distant eastern sky break out in streaks of red? The family goes and stands on the river bank.

Owing to the rains, the river is flush with new water and it flows with great vehemence. It is like a berserk woman who is a stranger to spiritual conduct. A serious problem faces the family, and so formidable it is that the family feels daunted. In fact it feels that it should return home from there. But when it is about to start homeward, the pitcher says: [441] “No, no, no. No retreat. Neither now, nor ever after. For, terrorism has not vanished yet. We have to struggle against it. It is determined, it is firm in its resolve.

“As long as terrorism lives, this earth cannot breath in peace. These eyes can no longer stand the sight of terrorism, these ears can no longer hear of terrorism. This being is also resolved – either that will live or this. Don't make delay now, you have to cross the river. Is the pitcher fated to fail and be reduced to naught? Was his sacrifice inadequate or mean? Did it sacrifice only to live in anxiety and smallness? The slackening faith will get a fresh lease of breath, and this foul air will be replaced by a rich fragrance. [442] Don't entertain fear, puzzlement and hesitation.

“Tie one end of a rope round my neck and line up with little gaps, tying the rope tightly around your waist. Then, with a resounding chant of AUM, jump into the stream.”

When the family's hesitation is not overcome, these words come out of the pitcher's lips: “Who likes bondage here? I, too, like freedom, which is why I don't wish to be tied down in any kind of bondage nor to bind anyone. Let us know this, that to bind is to become tied. All the same I myself wish to be wary of libertine conduct. I manage this, too, as much as I can [443] and whether others want to be

saved or not, I try to save them. I manage, too, as much as I can. Who likes bondage here? I too love freedom.”

This time the words acted like the potent ayurvedic medicine of lavanbhaaskara and the merchant followed the pitcher's advice. He tied the pitcher to his thin, leonine waist and leaped into the strong river-current. Immediately the family followed his example. The support of solid earth disappeared from underfoot and the feet had no base now. Only the rope tied round the waist is now the saviour, verily life itself. And the pitcher is functioning as a large boat. The bodies are immersed in water, only their faces and heads show above its surface. The family experiences extreme cold.

The body's natural heat is ebbing out. The blood [444] is flowing slower. The hands and legs lose their movements. The teeth chatter. And as they enter deeper into the river, large and small fish leap playfully out of the water. The thin tails of water-snakes moving zigzag wind around their round calves effortlessly. Many shy tortoises will also lose their restraint, touch the soft, fleshy thighs of the family, and will then vanish.

Great carnivorous crocodiles, in whose fierce tiger-like jaws there shine rows of large irregular teeth, whose blood-thirsty tongues repeatedly leap out, [445] and whose poisonous and thorny tails are raised up, are rearing their heads around the family in search of food. More of cruel water-creatures of varied species look agitated because of hunger. And yet, to see the family's peaceful faces they have forgotten their basic nature of acting out of their agitation. Their tendency is thoroughly transformed and they have forgotten all about food-gathering. And just as the sight of God inspires devotees to praise Him, the water-creatures have acquired the sense of fit and unfit, the discrimination between milk and water. They turn towards their duty, being awakened variously.

A few words of inspiration
about the Guru Gyansagar-ji



The river holds in her heart hostility against the travellers, calling them hypocrites. According to her they ought to remain in one place, not wander like this.

[446] But, a reverse kind of revolution takes place in water. There are two principles – insentient and sentient – each with its own peculiarities. Sentient beings, when they find knowledge and proper momentum, make progress. Insentient beings remain where they are. The insentient are ignorant, unusually stubborn and unchangeable... troubled. They cannot grow in health. The river, whose nature is opposite to that of water-creatures, gushes and speaks with an access of jealousy: “Although you're protected by me, you act against my will. You wish to live life, drink elixir, as though you are infirm infants, yet you forget your mother. Go on. You'll come to grief. You'll nowhere find tender love, you'll have to repent and yearn bitterly in memory of nectar.

“You're in league with land-creatures and taken in by wicked cheats. I wish to say [447] nothing to you. I pity you. I wish to see those who cheat the innocent and envy water-gods.” And the river, using her countless wave-arms, starts slapping the family's soft cheeks. O this exasperated, bilious river!

And she continues: “You deceitful worshippers of the earth, where will you go? Go and hide in the earth. Go lower down into the nether world – *paataal*. You arch-hypocrites! Don't show us your faces. Your life is all a pretence. Time consumes all. Your life is aimless and miserably poor, siding with snakes. Like the earth you've stayed in one place and appropriated other people and other people's wealth. You are stricken with the malady of acquiring and accumulating – a kind of acute diarrhoea. That is the reason why I stop nowhere even for a moment. [448] Even if I get others' wealth, I don't accept it even in a dream. Neither have I pretended to be generous by gifting wealth to others out of any ulterior motive or for earning a name. That's why saints have justly named us as non-takers – in Hindi, *nali*, that is one who did not take.

“Those who go against our current are miserable. Certain lax ascetics have been rightly activated by the saying 'Waters should be flowing, the yogi should stay in one place.' What other ideal can be worthier than this in the whole world? See yourself in the mirror of this ideal and recognize your true self.”

The merchant points out that the river, being situated on the earth's back, ought to be grateful to her. The river gives a counter-jab and the family gets gravitated towards a fatal vortex.

On hearing this chatter of the unrestrained, stupid river, lost in self-praise, the merchant spoke without getting worked up: [449] "Without finding the earth to roll on, where would you be? You would sink below even the lowest nether world. The earth adopted you, embraced you. No god showed mercy to you, no sky sheltered you. When you were small, you fell on the peak of a mountain. All laughed while you cried. You were deeply wounded and you looked liquid and simple. But now you have become poisonous and wicked. Your power lies in your trickery. You run briskly crossing all, you ungrateful wretch! You acquirer of sins! Don't accumulate more sins. The whole world is indebted to the earth, and you too have to set down your debt. Hold the earth reverently in your heart – you have to improve your deeds sincerely."

Alas, whose misfortune is it? The merchant's or the river's? The merchant's noble intents did not [450] succeed. His critical discourse, too, failed to open the river's eyes. On the contrary, she flamed up with anger: "Wicked folk! You talk of my going to the nether world. Your end is not far."

And they gravitate from all sides to a vortex, wherein everything disappears, where water goes round itself, the upper water goes down and the lower water rises up, all very briskly. The water goes and comes. Here, the water principle is absorbing the earth-principle with a guffaw.

Here were seen some beasts, some deer, some nonviolent and some violent, some unconscious and some conscious, some dead and some half-dead – with a desire for life written on their faces on account of an untimely end. Helplessly they all flow with the current.

[451] Within a matter of minutes, a huge elephant came flowing with a grownup lion sitting on top of it, scared of the terrible job awaiting him. And it got trapped in the vortex, circled once or twice and disappeared within it. Strong or weak, none could withstand the vortex – all lives were sacrificed here.

The pitcher defies the river, pointing out that they have reached a safe point in their journey. He asserts his power to hold an ocean in it.

To keep up the family's morale in the teeth of these terrible happenings, and to keep it focused on its aim, the pitcher challenged the river: "You of sinful feet, listen. This family is well on its way to the other bank, it is not in midstream. He who seeks shelter from the earth is ferried across by the earth. That's the sworn method of the earth. [452] The Hindi word for the earth, '*dharati*', when reversed with a slight change, signifies that she carries the banks on it and reaches people to the other bank. She is all holy, a place for pilgrims.

"So, how can you drown us now? And remember, you won't be able to flow us anymore. No trickery can make us drift with the current.

"When we have crossed a river of fire, and have not been laid low by the extreme pressures of spiritual practice, but have loved them, how can you have the powers to drown us? We had resolved beforehand not to serve and praise too much superficially, for how long are we to swim on the surface. The arms are bound to get tired. Generally, those who are content to look at the waves are seen to drown here, on the surface?

"You who drift downward, you who commit base sins, this pitcher has the capacity to hold an ocean. For, we have been fragments of the earth. The pitcher's *raison d'etre* is to hold water, after all. And listen, the word 'earth' – "*dharani*" in Hindi – on being reversed signifies that it holds water and nurtures it.



A point explained in clarity by Acharyashri-ji to Mr. Sunil Jain ex. M.L.A. Deori

A whale offers the pitcher a pearl, and the pitcher and company bypass the vortex. The river surrenders.

Just as the blue gem is held the best among gems, the blue lotus the best among lotuses, the joy of good character the best among joys, Mount Meru [454] the best among mountains, the Milk-sea the best among seas, a brave death the best among deaths, and the fish-pearl the best among pearls, so the best of all virtues is gratitude. On seeing the pitcher charmingly endowed with this virtue, a whale was pleased enough to gift him a valuable pearl. And he says, "May this slight service be accepted, master." And he goes out of sight in the water. This pearl has the great power that when a gentle person gets it, he finds an unhindered passage even in unfathomable waters." And that is what happened immediately. The pitcher and the merchant family effortlessly crossed even the vortex. With a light smile, the pitcher reminds the merchant of the aphorism: "You get pearls without asking for them, and by begging you don't even get alms." It adds, "Such is the outcome of sacrifice and penance, sir." The pitcher's self-confidence [455] and courage greatly inspired the river. She quiets down and is overcome with a will to surrender.

With humility and reverence she started saying: "I beg your forgiveness for my impertinence and unruly conduct." Then she started flowing without fickle waves, in a serious mood. She was without unseemly gestures, mature, modest-eyed and like a woman of good breeding who is long initiated into spiritual life.



LIFE is.....all about Peace & Prayers

The pitcher party are now suddenly revisited by the robber gang chasing them in a boat, And they beseech their friend the river to do the enemies in. The river asserts her kinship with the pitcher party.

Almost half the journey is over. The voyagers feel as if the destination is drifting towards them. The pitcher glows with joy like an industrious, humble and extraordinary student that has passed in the first division. The family too feels puffed with joy.

Just then terror repeats itself – in the same way and same style. Every limb of it smirks in mockery. The figures and the faces are the same. [456] The moustaches stand upright, the gait and gestures are the same, same is the spurting of crooked power, same is the deep black hair, same the cruel, deathlike forehead, same the intoxication and overall state. All the directions tremble at them. Their tongues are the same and so are their garbs. They cannot be controlled by anyone. It's a familiar sound which has often been heard. Same is their tune.

Same is the breath and same the doubt. Same is the destruction and same the roaring laugh. Same the awesome dance and same the demonic deeds. Same is the vermilion hue of the eyes which stare and stare. Same are the limbs and same the head, same the feet and same the hands. They are together in every ambush. Same are the cheeks, same the lips. Same is the red colour and same the blood. Same is the intent and same the strategy. Everything is the same, nothing is new. It's the same heart without pity.

And terrorism begins to pray to the river. “Mother, Water-goddess! Tell us, do you ferry even criminals across? [457] It is proper and dutiful conduct to nurture meritorious souls. But do you love sinners, too? If not, then drown these people who, taking the help of the pitcher, praise the earth and wish to cross to the other shore. There is no end to their sins, they don't love righteousness. What they adore is riches and means of sensuous pleasures. Still you are going to support them?! Your bright history will be ridiculed, people will lose faith in you. Then what to talk of others, everybody's life will be in doubt.

“Of course, in the wood you have spellbound even the Fire-goddess who is

short-tempered and hot, who burns and kindles others. Then, sometimes [458] when you saw her manifest as a flickering forest-fire you have used your invincible power to conduct it to the nether world in the form of lava.

“And even now you govern her. Then what has come over you today? O mother, O Water-goddess, tell us. How do we know that such a change has taken place in you?”

To this, the river says now: “Those whom you are asking me to drown – in their absence you'll find here nothing but want and misery. What is a sheath worth without a sword? What use are enjoyable goods in the absence of the enjoyer. Whatever charm the earth has is thanks to these people and service-minded people like them.

“What will happen to the crest when the base is removed? [459] What will happen to the flower in the absence of soil? This I need not say. Now power will not be misused, a surrender has taken place. The energy has been directed to worship, and generosity has taken root in the heart.” And the river goes silent with the words, “That will do.”



The morning prayers TOGETHER

Terrorism, unfazed, blocks the family's way and pelts it with a shower of stones. It argues that their protestations of socialism are fake. The merchant family's blood is let in the river.

The river's solemn silence did not deflect or depress terrorism. A few moments of stillness... and then it moves towards its purpose full of rage.

And it is a right policy that after jumping into the fray, one should not linger remembering friendly forces but rather launch an attack on the enemy. It is a sign of wretchedness to take shelter under others. It injures the valour in you. Any help received from friends is, truly speaking, an expression of their pride. It comes in the way [460] of victory like darkness in the path. Now terrorism nearly felt success within its grasp – not a mirage, nor an illusion. Luck seemed to favour it. The opportunity was assessed, their boat gathered more speed. Terrorism's only wish was that the wind should not blow unfavourably.

At last terrorism blocks the family's way and says amidst roars of victorious laughter: "Now give up the thought of reaching the other bank. Resign from life. You are all set to be sent to the nether world. Such are the wages of hypocrisy and sin." And stones began to be madly pelted on the family.

And these words accompany the shower: "Your sentiments are base: you seek to receive a welcome from people, you seek to enjoy enchanting luxuries, you seek to savour the good things of life. Then tell us [461] where is your faith in socialism? Your motto is, *you* before all, let the society struggle.

"At least look at the meaning of words. Society signifies a group, and group – if you rightly interpret the Hindi word for it – '*samooch*' – means balanced thinking, which is the foundation of righteous conduct. Altogether what we mean is that far from propaganda and publicity, the life of noble conduct and thought alone amounts to socialism. You cannot become a socialist by merely crying 'Socialism, socialism.'"

Such uncivilized words were being used that just on hearing them one felt enraged – and one's pride was hurt. The deep wounds caused by the stones have sort of deranged everybody's minds. Stream of blood have been let [462] which make the river also ruddy – it is as if two friends of like thinking get angry with terrorism. Except for the merchant, the whole family is helplessly agonized.

The merchant lies prone to guard the pitcher, their guard, from the stony onslaught, covering him with his belly. Terrorism seeks to cut off the rope connecting the members of the fugitive group. The struggle intensifies, and the robbers get the setback of their life.

Feet tend to stop upon seeing how someone is conducting themselves, and when a covering appears, eyes tend to bend low. The embodied being, the fool that he is, sometimes considers a serpent to be a rope and indulges in sensuous pleasures. Such are the powers of delusion, which cannot end unless one gets to know the true nature of self.

Yes indeed, even in these circumstances the merchant is foremost, with courage and patience in combating terrorism. [463] To protect the pitcher, he holds him below his belly and lies prone. Self-possessed, he is bearing the torturous fruits of his karmas remembering the happenings in the forest.

The calamity continued mercilessly from a distance of seven to eight arms. Many attempts to break the pitcher – the guide and strength for reaching the other bank – were foiled. The rope which was a saviour of their lives was attempted to be cut off with sharp weapons, but all such attempts failed. Maybe the Water-goddess appreciated the pitcher's hard penance of crossing the river of fire and created through reverse action a protective ring around the family. Or maybe the miracle was worked by the fish pearl. Whatever the case, now terrorism could see its hour of defeat approaching. [464] Simultaneously, it started to understand the nobility of the targets of their attack.

As a result, its physical power started viewing the pitcher and the family with unseeing eyes, its mental power directed the anger upon itself, and the speech power came to its knees before the whole atmosphere. But its deceptive power is still intact, it is as strong as before, and it is up to its old tricks. That is why terrorism is about to cast such a net on the family as can trap huge fishes effortlessly. But the earth-worshipping mind cannot stand the sight. [465] And what do we see? The mind assumes cataclysmic proportions, not with rage. Even an emperor would within a moment feel giddy before this cyclonic wind. At a single stroke the net was

snatched away from the evil gang and tossed far away into the void. It appeared as if it was trying to trap the brilliant sun itself in the clear sea of the sky. The jerk was so strong that the gang's feet lost their resting place, the men turned over many times and fell head-first and dizzy in the boat itself. All went dark before them. Their eyes closed, their heartbeats slackened, and the altered pace of blood circulation made them unconscious. But their moustaches were not unconscious, they stood tightly as before.

How can one find out if they are living – life has nearly ebbed out. The gangsters looked lacklustre, they foamed at the mouth as a sea-shore foams where it meets the land. Their boat rocked, went round itself countless time within a moment. Along with its passengers, the boat was about to sink.



Acharyashri-ji immersed in thoughts and still giving an ear to the faithful 'Bhakt' follower, as they walk along the chosen path of the God

The pitcher asks the whirlwind to tone down, the terrorist band gets a fresh lease of life, and it reverts to its old murderous ways. It argues that rich people are responsible for provoking the thieves to steal.

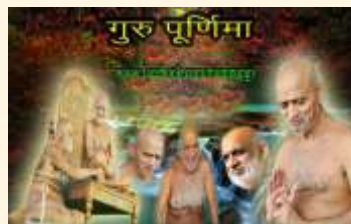
When the cyclone is speedily moving towards mischief and massacre, the pitcher signals to him reproachfully to put an end to extreme measures. And the wind, like a servant who considers his service to a reverend master to be a source of a happy life, quiets down at the pitcher's signal. The boat comes to its original position and goes round the family three times.

The whole atmosphere felt glad when the disaster was averted. [467] Just as Laxman had regained his consciousness when water was sprinkled on him by the gentle palm of Vishalyaa, the terrorism came to consciousness when it was touched by the water-drops' cold spray from the river. Now what can one say! Terrorism again boiled over like Laxman. "Catch, catch! Halt, halt! Do you hear or not, deaf fellows! Die or support us. You who are pushing the world down into hell! You are no one's saviours. You are paradigms of sin. Listen, listen, just listen.

"Now don't collect wealth but people. And duly distribute what you have recklessly accumulated out of greed. Otherwise paupers [468] are provoked to steal, they have been provoked to steal. It is a mere pose of religiosity to say, 'Don't steal, don't steal.' It is superficial decency... a mere formality.

"Thieves are not so sinful as those who generate in them the tendency to thief. You're thieves yourself, you foster thieves and you father thieves. Good people never hide their faults, never even think of hiding them. Instead, they reveal them.

"When Raavan abducted Seeta, she said, 'If I hadn't been so prepossessing, Raavan would not have been tempted, and my beauty is due to my own karmas. This karmic bondage is due to my own good and bad actions. In such circumstances, holding Raavan alone to be guilty [469] would be to invite a worse fate.'"



The significance of Guru Pournima, the full Moon night dedicated to all the Guru's of this Universe

To see terrorism's renewed violence, the God-fearing family's resolve again crumbles, but the river gives them a moral boost. It rocks the robbers' boat, and they in turn invoke an occult power to crush their enemy. But the demigods invoked plead their helplessness to hurt the family.

The overpowering threats of the gang shook down the family except for the merchant. The family's resolve began to dodder. The desire for life rose powerfully, and when it sensed an impending untimely end to their lives, they were compelled to consider self-surrender.

Just then, the river said, "Don't be hasty. Self-surrender of truth, and that too before untruth! O God, what a time has come! Is untruth going to rule now? Will truth be ruled over? Alack, a diamond necklace faces defeat today in a market of jewellers! Alack, glittering glass is outshining the dazzle of diamonds. Now chaste women would subserve a lewd and promiscuous woman. [470] In the eyes of untruth, truth can be false and falsehood can be true. But has goodness also lost the discrimination between truth and falsehood? Has truth also lost its faith in itself?

"Will truth travel now on the back of the crowd? No, no, never.

"All that has happened in water, on land and in the sky is now intolerable. This stream will never deflect from her aim, such a thing will never happen. It won't, it won't."

So saying, the river gets angry, it flows agitated, and makes the boat dance. Terrorism [471] considers the precarious condition of its boat and calls to mind a mantra. A team of gods arrives, pays respects and humbly asks for any service desired: "Master, please let us know why we've been summoned."

Some moments trickle by while they wait for a command. And the gods respectfully submit: "Master, we magician gods *vidyabalas* have our own limits. We have to stay within them. We feel embarrassed to say but we are incapable of accomplishing what you desire at the moment. Hence we beg your pardon.

"In a way, master, you must have compared your powers with the other

party's powers. What did we feel as soon as we arrived here, that we stand here like a fawn [472] before a lion. There is no question of a confrontation in these circumstances. To surrender before the family would be to ensure your safe passage through the river... and also to find your way to God almighty.

“All other endeavours would result in attack and defeat, that's for sure. If you still wish to have a confrontation, listen.

“It is trickier to harness wind than to harness water, and it is even trickier to harness fire than to harness wind. But to harness the sky is... impossible. Water cannot rule ghee, ghee knows how to ride on water. Immortals are unaffected by poison and beetles are unaffected by houseflies.” [473] The team of gods recounted several aphorisms, inspiring quotes, examples and parables, new and old views and rarest experiences. Terrorism somehow swallowed it but how could it digest it. It takes its own time to digest. Your vision may change instantly, but your stride cannot. The force of passions takes time to become ruly.



Rain, shine, wind, or anything else will not deter Acharyashri-ji from walking on the path as asked by the Supreme

The robbers now feel remorse and beg the merchant for the gift of life, which he generously grants.

But where was there the time for such a thing? The event had to happen... and now only a little time remains for that. All would be reduced to nothing.

The boat's girdle sank whereon it was written: [474] "May terrorism win, may socialism perish, may differences end, may divine knowledge prevail." This sight gave a sudden jolt to the gang's self-confidence. It felt as if a thunderbolt was striking.

What the team of gods said came true. Ugh, terrorism suffocates with remorse, feels restless and grief-stricken, and says with a choking throat: "We have no shelter, no saviour but you. Forgive us, forgive us, O forgiveness incarnate. We made a terrible blunder, but believe us, it shall not be repeated.

"We are hemmed in by disasters. If you wish, then save us. We are all pricked by thorns – if you wish, then spread flowers for us. We are guilty and we yearn for the highest wisdom. Tell us the correct path, don't be long. [475] It is a child's nature to be naughty, but a mother does shower her love on him. Whether it is her child or someone else's, when was it in a mother's nature to trouble and torture... do tell us."

Having said this, the gang goes quiet. The merchant muses, "When the mind turns from the surfaces to the core, a person moves from disaster to a meaningful life." And he says: "Brothers, don't belittle yourselves further. If a lush green tree, laden with fruit and flowers, is waiting for a wayfarer, is it not laughable to ask it for just a little bit of shade? If a host has invited a guest to a full tasty meal with respect and persuasion – can he not serve the guest water? Come on, you tell. [476] And as for a mother... well, at times, for some reason, a mother's eyes may also get excited and agitated. This does happen, and this ought to happen, too.

"But till now, one hasn't heard or seen the intrusion of anger into mother's honourable lap – the lap in which a baby easily passes her happy moments.

"And see, such is mother's kindness and generosity. Since ages she has been carrying two urns full of milk on her breast to feed thirsty and hungry babies, and to quietly hold to her heart those that are stricken with fear or devoid of joy. How she holds them tight and caresses them."

The gang, well-advised by the merchant, has now a thoroughly changed heart. Members of the merchant's family lead the robbers securely to the bank.

The merchant goes on, "Once you have accepted mother as mother (476) why should you test her again? So, now don't peer into her eyes and be guilty but rather be men of supreme intelligence. Don't be of base intelligence, don't be slaves. In any case don't commit crimes."

These words of the merchant were enough – the gang's hesitations and doubts were over. The gangsters jumped from the sinking boat into the stream, like a child entering a mother's lap fully assured of safety.

As a tender and affectionate mother catches a baby, every member of the family caught hold of a gang member. Every gang member found a support with due respect, and the transformed beings found a fresh lease of life.

And now the boat sank fully. (477) It spelled the end of terrorism and the auspicious beginning of infinitism – a journey to the infinite.



A moment of mirth, a moment of joy, a moment of Bliss
all bundled together nicely in a satsang with Acharyashri-ji

The family as well as the robbers reach the solid bank and feel the greatest relief.

Foremost among the party is the pitcher, free from pride and arrogance. Two rows of nine men each follow the pitcher, walking with mutual support. They are like children of one mother – different bodies but one breath.

From the pitcher's mouth emerge these lines of goodwill: “Here, may everybody's life be always happy. May a shade of comfort spread overhead and may ill-will vanish from all. May the life-creeper of everyone be lush green and smiling, may the creepers flower with virtues, may the thoughts of damage to others be wiped out, may they spread fragrance from the roots up... that's all.”

And here, why is the bank restless? [479] He has to welcome the pitcher. The young sun's bright light seems entangled in the continuously rippling waves.

This light looks like passionate women in pink saris bathing shyly.

The whole atmosphere is filled with love of religion. The keenly awaited river-bank is approaching, is quite near.

First of all, the pitcher accepted with a fond kiss the welcome offered by the bank. A foam has been worked up at the bank, and in its whiteness is mingled red sunshine. It appears as if the bank awaits the party with the welcome of a rose garland.

The party came out of the river with a glad breath. All feet felt the rare dust you find on the earth. [480] Then they untied the rope tied in their waists with one another's help. The rope says: “Forgive me, you had to suffer because of me. Your slim, slender waists have been skinned and frayed and have become thinner.”

The family at once spoke these words of gratitude: “No, no, O humble one! You always do favours to others! It is by your grace that we could make it to the shore. Today we know rightly who is capable of what, and how far extends one's field of action. We find that the notion that 'material cause is what accomplishes a job' is false. You also need the blessings of the efficient cause. Yes indeed. [481] It is an inviolable law that the material cause is itself moulded into the thing or the work.

“But in this moulding, the support of the efficient cause is also required. It will be better still to explain the matter in these words – if the material cause has an outside friend here, it is surely the efficient cause which goes with its friend steadily all the way till the destination.”

And the family once again eyed the rope respectfully, filled the pitcher with strained water and proceeded farther. They reach the same old place where the potter had come to take the clay. The pitcher along with the family greeted the potter. Memories were revived. It was as if a lake was rippling on account of the wind.



Acharyashri-ji - a perfect frame of peace, peace and more-peace

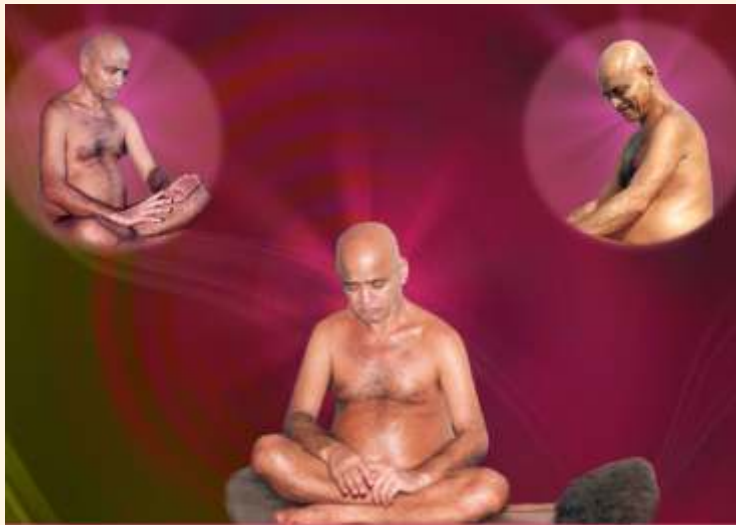
The earth, the clay's mother, congratulates her on her spiritual attainment, attributing it to her innate God-ward quality.

[482] The well-endowed earth says, “Child, the mother is happy to see your progress, your pride-quelling submission.

“I did say, didn't I, that a child's nature is known in the cradle. This I did when you had obeyed my command and stayed in touch with the potter. That was the first step towards creative living. You need to surrender to the one whose shelter you seek. You rendered your ego at his feet, which was the second step towards creative living.

“After surrender, you have to undergo great tests. And listen, true criticism follows. You underwent the fire test and bore calamities with zeal and courage. That was the third step. [483] After a test, there has to be the result. Like the nasal sound – *anusvaar* – written in devanagari as a dot on top of a letter, you elevated and advanced your life to become *visarg* – double dots written after a letter – which is the last of vowels. That was the last step to creative living.

“You acquired various attributes from nature and made yourself natural and spontaneous. That was the culmination of creative living, which is beyond classification.”



The 3 dimensions of the Acharyashri-ji -
narrowing down on the Almighty point of our Universe

The potter – the shaper of the pitcher's destiny – thanks the grace of sages which has accomplished the transformation of the clay into a noble pitcher. He blesses all. Terrorism at this point is unable to believe in lasting bliss.

On hearing the earth's utterances, the pitcher and others regarded the potter gratefully. The potter replied unassumingly: [484] “This is thanks to the grace of rishis and saints. I am but a lowly servant in their service, nothing more.” And he invites everybody's attention to a dispassionate saint sitting on a stone slab at some distance under a tree. At once the visitors circumambulated him and paid obeisance at his reverend feet. His feet were washed in worship and the water was applied on the head. Then like the eager *chaatak* bird they waited for the guru's blessings.

Within a few minutes the guru's glad face started distributing grace. His hand rose in a posture of removing fears. It expresses the sentiment: “May you receive eternal happiness.” At this, terrorism at once said, “Master, [485] the whole world is full of sorrows. Happiness is there, but it is from sense objects and fleeting. This we have experienced. But we are unable to believe in undiminishing happiness. But yes, if you find imperishable happiness yourself and then show it to us, or tell us of your experience of it, then it is possible that we too shall believe. And then we may follow spiritual practice like yours. Otherwise desires will linger in the heart. So, kindly bless us with the words, 'May your wish be fulfilled.' That will be a mighty grace.”



The ritual goes on from one generation to the other

The saint advises the robbers to give up their ego. For him it is a moment of the greatest satisfaction to see that the mute clay is spiritually transformed.

When the gang had said what it felt, the saint smiled gently. “Such a thing is impossible, because... listen. My guru has told me not to give advice to just about everyone, and I have given my word to my guru. Yes indeed. If a promising person, innocent and strayed from his path, desiring his welfare and full of humility wants directions, I should discourse to him with beneficial but brief and sweet words. But never, not even in a dream by mistake, should I give my advice to the undeserving.

“Secondly, a complete eradication of the binding body, mind and speech is liberation. In this state does one find imperishable bliss. [487] Having attained to it, how can one revert to the world, tell me? When milk is progressively processed, finally ghee is produced. But is it possible for ghee to become milk again? Tell me.”

The saint observed the expressions of the gang and again spoke: “If you don't believe in the ways of an ascetic's spiritual practice and eternal bliss, then here are my final words.

“Be where I am – not place-wise but conduct-wise – and look at me. Then you'll know me in the true sense. Because when I look down from a height, [488] I feel giddy, and from a low point when one looks at a height, the inferences are generally wrong. Hence believe in my words. Yes indeed, faith will achieve realization, that's for sure. But not midway during the journey, only at the destination.”

And the saint immersed into a vast silence, and in a zero-thought frame of mind gazed at the eyes of the...mute clay.



The Truth and the Truth-seeker - in Black & White