

# THE STORY OF LILA

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## FROM THE YOGA VASISTHA



In Poem by

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### BACKGROUND

Once lived a perfect king and queen  
Both had deep spiritual aspirations too  
They lived a most ideal life  
Dutiful and happy in every way

One day a thought overcame queen Lila  
"What if the king passes away before me?"  
Life would be dull and quite dreary  
I should pray to goddess Sarasvati for this

Lila propitiated goddess Sarasvati  
Who appeared to her and offered boons  
Lila asked the goddess for two boons  
And they were granted instantly

First was that her husband should remain  
In the palace even after death  
Second was that goddess Sarasvati  
May appear to her when remembered

After some time the king passed away  
Sad with grief, she heard a voice  
Cover the king's body with flowers  
It will not decay or leave the palace

'Twas the voice of goddess Sarasvati  
Lila beseeched her: please appear  
And asked where her husband was  
Now that he had died and passed away

### GODDESS SARASVATI REPLIES

O Lila hear me very attentively  
There are three types of space  
Psychological space, physical space  
And infinite space of consciousness

To see your husband right here  
Meditate intensely on the infinite space  
When the finite mind travels between places  
This is what exists in the middle unseen

Give up all thoughts for this realm  
Realize the universe's utter non-existence  
As oneness with all must be realized  
To experience the realm of infinity

You will not be able to do so at present  
But you can enter this realm by my grace  
Meditate O Lila with all of your being  
Enter the state free of all distractions

### LILA'S FIRST EXPERIENCE

Lila meditated deeply with all of her heart  
Only by the grace of goddess Sarasvati  
Entered the infinite space of consciousness  
Where she beheld her husband once again

She saw him seated on the throne as king  
Surrounded by ministers and other kings  
She was not seen but beheld all this  
Wondering as the king had passed away

Lila awoke right back in her palace  
And summoned a meeting of the court  
Finding the same ministers present there  
Whom she had seen in her husband's court

The ministers cannot be in two places  
At the same time as just experienced  
Which is real and which is a reflection  
As a mountain is reflected in a mirror

She sought help from goddess Sarasvati  
"This world exists within the undivided  
And outside here as solid matter too  
Which is real and which a reflection?"

Sarasvati asked a question in return  
"What do you consider real and unreal?"  
Lila replied, "You are here, this to me is real  
Where my husband is now seems unreal"

Sarasvati then said to Lila  
"How can the unreal be an effect of the real  
The effect is the cause, there's no difference  
Just as a pot that holds water is clay only."

Material effects are by material causes  
Your husband's birth is without  
An immediate material cause  
Besides the past which is memory

Memory like space is but emptiness  
All creation is an effect of that too

Your husband's birth is of memory  
An illusion and effect of imagination

The story I am about to narrate  
Illustrates creation's dream-like nature  
Listen carefully with rapt attention  
And see what the story points out to

### STORY IN A STORY

In the infinite pure consciousness,  
In a corner of the creator's mind  
Was an old dilapidated shrine  
Covered with a blue dome

Fourteen worlds for rooms  
Divisions of space for windows  
Sun the light, cities like anthills  
Earth for mountains, water for oceans

This is creation—'tis the universe  
In a small corner lived a holy one  
Dutiful with wife and children  
In good health and free from fear

Witnessing a royal procession one day  
A wish arose in the holy one's heart  
T'would be nice to experience this  
All the splendor of royalty for once

Death overtook the holy man and wife  
She too had prayed to me just like you

That her husband's spirit would not leave the room  
A boon which I granted to her as well as to you

The holy man had lived righteously  
His merits earned his wish to experience  
A life as a mighty ruler and king  
This same man is your husband and king

On account of ignorance and delusion  
It seems this takes place in consciousness  
The kingdom appears to exist only  
In the hut of the holy man on the hill

Memory of the past is well hidden  
You both have risen again from a wish  
All in the space of the holy one's hut  
Worlds within worlds in each atom

Space and time have no fixed span  
Both are appearances, both imagination  
All this happens in the wink of an eye  
Death, forgetfulness and reappearance

Unrelated 'tho feeling related somehow  
A habit of ignorance repeating itself  
Memory formed, mistaken for the real  
Though path-crossing is merely coincidence

Liberation is the direct recognition  
Of the utter non-existence of the world  
Intellectual or mere lip denial won't do  
Your heart has to grasp this as real

One infinite consciousness alone is  
'Tis all thought-forms or experiences  
No cause and effect relationship exist  
Infinite conscious is forever in itself

Lila thanked goddess Sarasvati  
For the enlightening words and instruction  
Expressing a wish to see directly  
The original house of the holy man

#### **SARASVATI'S DEEPER INSTRUCTION**

"Give up this form, attain one of light  
Only Brahman can realize Brahman  
My body is made of pure light—consciousness  
You cannot journey deeper in your form

Body of light you must attain  
To enter subtle fields to the subtlest  
Attaining which you will at once see  
The holy man's house on the hill

Affirm to yourself with all of your being  
I shall leave this body, take one of light  
With a light body, like the scent of incense  
You will unite with the field of consciousness

By persistent practice of such meditation  
Your body will become pure consciousness  
I see my body and world as consciousness  
You see body and world as made of matter

By relentless self-inquiry comes wisdom  
This alone can dispel one's ignorance  
Ignorance in fact does not really exist  
Nor bondage or liberation—only consciousness

Dream body appears real within a dream  
But vanishes completely upon awakening  
Even so will the hold of the physical body  
Dissolve when one's tendencies cease to be

At dream's end the physical body is seen  
When tendencies stop, the ethereal one is seen  
Deep sleep ensues when dream does end  
When seeds of thought end there is liberation

Seeds of thought do not exist in liberation  
Though the sage appears to live and think  
He does not really do anything at all  
He is a portal of pure consciousness

#### **UNRELENTING PRACTICE**

Persistent practice quietens egotism  
This is known as abhyasa  
Thus you will rest in pure consciousness  
Materiality of things will indeed vanish

Thinking of that alone in thinking  
Speaking of that alone in speaking  
Conversing of that alone in conversing  
Utter dedication to that, the wise call abhyasa

The intellect must fill with beauty and bliss  
For broadest vision where all passions cease  
The world's non-existence is then realized  
The wise call this dedicated practice or abhyasa

'This is world', 'This I am', and such  
These thoughts don't arise in the mind  
Thus do attraction and repulsion cease  
Not by force but by wisdom's dawning"

### INNER JOURNEY 1

Sarasvati and Lila sat in deep meditation  
Giving up all notions of the world  
They rose above body consciousness  
And roamed freely in their wisdom bodies

It seemed they traveled very far  
They were still in the very same room  
But on another plane of consciousness  
Lila beheld what Sarasvati's mind revealed

They saw oceans, mountains and celestials  
Kingdom of the gods, sky and earth's bowel  
Lila beheld her very own house too  
Then entered the house of the holy man

His family was deeply in mourning  
The atmosphere was sad and gloomy  
By yoga practice Lila's thoughts materialized  
She and Sarasvati appeared as normal women

They could not hide their radiance  
Which brightly illumined the room  
Lila asked the eldest son the cause  
Of sorrow that seemed to afflict all there

The son replied "'twas was parents' death  
Both lived exemplary righteous lives  
Both died and departed at the same time"  
Lila relieved his sorrow by her blessing

Lila asked Sarasvati how it could be  
They were seen here by this family  
Not her husband the king earlier  
Ruling a kingdom when they visited

Sarasvati replied to Lila's question  
"Earlier you held on to the notion  
'I am Lila'—this you have now let go  
And overcome body consciousness

Till consciousness of all duality  
Is dispelled from the heart completely  
You cannot act in infinite consciousness  
You cannot even understand it a little

Now that you've abandoned duality  
You'll be able to deal with your husband  
As you did before but without slipping  
Into the snare of worldly thinking

There is no distance in the spiritual plane  
Everything is right here all the time

But in the physical plane it is not so  
Millions of miles separate the planes

In the majestic infinite consciousness  
Universes come and go in each atom  
Like specks of dust in beams of light  
Shining through a hole in the roof"

#### LILA RECOLLECTS

O Divinity! All glory be to thee  
I remember now all 800 births  
As insects, animals, male and female  
Some rich, poor, evil and others good

#### VASISTHA'S COMMENTS

Infinite consciousness has no barriers  
No universe exists nor any galaxies  
Sarasvati and Lila remained within  
The space in Lila's inner apartment

It was there that the holy man  
Became king and ruled his realm  
All happened in pure space itself  
No universe, no distance and no barriers

On account of intense yogic practice  
Lila acquired knowledge of threefold time  
She expressed her recollection to Sarasvati  
In the same space of her inner apartment

#### LILA'S OBSERVATIONS

Here, in the space the size of a thumb  
We imagined my husband's kingdom afar  
Though we are both pure consciousness  
My husband and kingdom seem distant

Truly marvelous this mysterious power  
Maya, a force that deludes the wise too  
I would like to enter the capital  
Where my husband now does rule

#### INNER JOURNEY 2

Both rose into space, seeing all creation  
Beyond which was pure consciousness  
Essential nature of being consciousness  
Thus all forms arise and return in it

Countless universes exist in creation  
Very different they are in every way  
Different divinities preside over them  
Different too are their inhabitants

Since consciousness exists everywhere  
Creation and dissolution are perpetual  
All held together by a mysterious power  
One consciousness alone exists, in it all is

Lila then saw her palace's inner apartment  
Where the dead king lay buried under flowers  
Intensely wishing to see him once again  
She soared through this realm to where he was

A mighty king from a nearby kingdom  
Was laying siege to her husband's realm  
A fierce battle ensued as they approached  
And beheld her husband with his war council

#### VASISTHA'S COMMENTS

It is impossible for one rooted in the idea  
'I am the body' to pass into subtlety  
This innermost conviction is the obstruction  
When this is absent, all limitations are too

As water remains water and flows down  
Fire remains fire and always rises up  
So also consciousness always remains  
Pure consciousness always unchanged

As is the understanding so is the mind  
Understanding is what is called mind  
However its direction can be changed  
With great and unrelenting effort

Everyone's consciousness is similar  
In nature and power as consciousness  
Idea of the world and people does differ  
This is called understanding or the mind

All wake up in their understanding  
To a very different mental creation  
Though creation is the same for everyone  
The inner world is what all are looking at

#### INNER JOURNEY 2 (CONTINUES)

Both entered the king's apartment  
Goddess Sarasvati blessed the king  
Inspired he recollected previous lives  
And asked Sarasvati about the mystery

"It has been one day since I last died  
How come I've lived in this new body  
A very full life for seventy years  
Pray goddess, kindly enlighten me"

Sarasvati smiled and replied to the king  
"All that you are seeing right here  
Manifested where you last did die  
In the hut of the holy man on the hill

That is his world and in that world  
Is the world of king Padma too  
Where you find yourself living in  
Thinking and relating in one way

These are my relatives, kith and kin  
These are my friends and enemies  
I am ruling and governing this realm  
Now seeing and receiving instruction

All this took no time to happen  
Just as things appear in a dream  
Unborn and imperishable you are  
Your notions are your bondage

The wise see only pure consciousness  
The ignorant see and experience differences  
A long dream is this entire universe  
'Tis the ego that fancies dream as real

O king you shall die in this war  
Then regain your previous kingdom  
Returning to your previous status  
Family, ministers and surroundings

We shall go now as we came  
All must follow their own course  
For the nature of motion does differ  
In a horse, an elephant and a camel

A courtier appeared at that very time  
Bringing the news of impending destruction  
The king bowed and excused himself  
Leaving his wife to attend to both

The king's wife looked exactly like Lila  
Younger as she looked in her youth  
The ministers in the court right there  
Were exactly the same as in her realm

"What is the secret of all of this  
How come they are in both places  
If they be reflections of our fancy  
Are they sentient or conscious beings?"

Sarasvati replied to dispel Lila's doubts  
"The vision arising within oneself

Is what is immediately experienced  
Both vision and experience are consciousness

'Tis because of all being consciousness  
Everything takes place so instantly  
A mere thought causes worlds to arise  
Time, space and objectivity do not hinder

What is reflected in one's consciousness  
Is what is seen outside as well  
This objective world being experienced  
Is really no more than that in a dream

In both states of waking and dream  
There is no reality to the experienced  
Both are reflections within oneself  
Both worlds exist in oneself too

In life, death does not exist  
In death, life does not exist either  
That which holds together either experience  
Is absent in the other, making it thus

Whether ether is real or not real  
One cannot say with surety  
The substratum from which all emerge  
Is the only sure eternal reality

In Brahman does the universe exist  
As an idea, just as a snake in a rope  
Neither real nor unreal is it  
Just as the individual's existence

Each experience their own desires  
Some old and some new wishes too  
Experiences are sometimes similar  
But sometimes they are dissimilar too

All experiences appear to be real  
As these ministers and the queen  
All exist as reflections in consciousness  
You, me and others—know and rest in peace

The queen's wife too was named Lila  
Let's call her the second Lila here  
She expressed her doubts to Sarasvati  
Hoping for clarification to the mystery

"O divinity, I used to worship Sarasvati  
You look like her, I presume you are her  
Please grant that when my husband dies  
I may accompany him wherever he goes"

Sarasvati then spoke to the second Lila  
"You have indeed worshiped me devoutly  
Therefore I grant this boon you seek  
To accompany your husband after his death"

The first Lila asked goddess Sarasvati  
"Your words always do come true  
Why did you not allow me to travel  
Between planes with the same body?"

Sarasvati replied to the first Lila  
"I do not really do anything at all

Each earn their state by their deeds  
I preside over the intelligence of all beings

I am the power in consciousness  
Its life-force too I am as well  
Forms taken by each one's energy  
Does fructify in due course of time

You longed for liberation—attained it  
You may consider this as either  
Fruit of austerity or your worship  
Bestowed by Pure Consciousness

All bestowal is by consciousness  
Just as fruit that falls from above  
It only seems to fall from the sky  
It is the tree that really bestows it"

The battle grew fierce as they talked  
Watching the war from the palace  
The king joined the ranks and the fight  
Missiles and weapons clouded the air

The second Lila then asked Sarasvati  
"How is it that though blessed by you  
The king is unable to win this war  
And death is his fate certainly?"

Sarasvati replied to the second Lila  
"The king was indeed blessed by me  
His prayer was not for victory in battle  
I grant the deepest prayers of all

I am the indwelling consciousness  
Whatever a person asks of me  
That fruit I do bestow on him  
Just as fire gives heat quite naturally

The attacking king prayed for victory  
Victory he will attain in this battle  
Your husband will be slain in this war  
Rejoin you and soon attain liberation"

Just then the king was slain in battle  
The second Lila fell unconscious at this  
The first Lila said to goddess Sarasvati  
"My husband is about to give up the ghost"

Sarasvati replied to the first Lila  
"There's neither a kingdom nor the earth  
The terrible war is as real as a dream  
All this is only in your own palace

There is the world of king Padma  
There is all of your own world too  
The entire universe is there as well  
In the house of the holy man on the hill

Uncreated, indestructible is Reality  
That is the only Reality there is  
That infinite consciousness is perceived  
As the universe by the ignorant

As a city exists within the dreamer  
Worlds exists in a small atom

There are atoms in these worlds  
These atoms have worlds in them too

The second Lila who fell unconscious  
Has already reached king Padma's body  
Which lies covered in flowers, as you left him  
You are both dream-objects of the king

We have created each other in our fancy  
All in the undivided pure consciousness  
One who knows this does renounce  
Objects of perception very naturally

The youthful Lila was indeed yourself  
To be with the king was her prayer  
Hence she left before the king did die  
And is with him again as was her prayer

You are individualized consciousness  
Cosmic consciousness am I my dear  
I make all these things happen  
All in undivided pure consciousness"

#### **VASISTHA'S COMMENTS**

The second Lila rose into the sky  
Met her daughter and proceeded  
Across the oceans into consciousness  
To where her husband the king was

Countless universes in consciousness  
Unknowing of each other's existence

The second Lila felt most fortunate  
Blessed to reunite with her husband

### INNER JOURNEY 2 (CONTINUES)

Sarasvati spoke to the first Lila  
"The king, courtiers and all the rest  
Are in infinite consciousness only  
Reflected as this fanciful creation

When wisdom about ethereal bodies  
Arises within one does not recognize  
The physical body as true body  
And one can enter subtler realms

The second Lila does not possess  
Such wisdom of direct experience  
Her experience of reaching her husband  
Takes place all within her own fancy"

The enlightened Lila asked Sarasvati  
"How do objects acquire characteristics  
Like heat in fire, coolness in ice  
And like the solidity of the earth?"

Sarasvati told the enlightened Lila  
"After dissolution creation disappears  
Only the infinite Brahman remains  
And fancies the existence of creation

What the Infinite fancied earlier  
During the first creation still remains

Along with all their characteristics  
Into what else could they dissolve?

Something cannot become nothing  
Just as gold appearing as a bracelet  
Cannot become entirely formless  
Such is the universe's order eternally

According to the first creation's order  
Characteristics fell into place for all  
Changes in subsequent creations  
Result from existing purity or impurity

One who adheres to the injunctions  
Of scriptures and the teachings of sages  
Enjoys a long healthy lifespan  
Reaching the end quite normally"

The enlightened Lila asked Sarasvati  
"Kindly do thou enlighten me further  
Is death pleasant or unpleasant  
What happens after death finally?"

Sarasvati replied concerning death  
"Human beings are of three types  
Fools, the wise who meditate  
And also the yogi or intelligent one

The fool lives carelessly and suffers  
The wise and yogi practice meditation  
Abandoning living for the body  
They may depart at their own will

When there is cessation of life-breath  
One ceases to live, death comes to him  
But all this is however imaginary  
Infinite consciousness can never cease to be

Eternal and infinite is pure consciousness  
Never rising, it can never cease to be  
In it does all life appears to rise and to fall  
Consciousness remains pure and unchanged

What is called jiva or the individual  
Is the atomic particle that's stored  
With memories and latent tendencies  
It stays in the space of the dead on death

This they call the departed soul  
This jiva abandons the earlier seen  
And perceives other things once again  
Just as in dreaming or day-dreaming

After a lapse of consciousness  
This jiva begins to fancy another body  
Another world and life-span too  
What the jiva sees, it experiences

In the infinite space of consciousness  
Time and action do not exist at all  
The jiva fancies death, heaven and hell  
And experiences whatever it fancies

This cycle of experience does repeat  
The jiva decides and thus experiences

This cycle ends when the jiva  
Is enlightened by self-knowledge

Consciousness masquerades as all  
Sentient and seemingly insentient  
There is no distinction between the two  
Due to the substratum of consciousness

'Tis the same infinite consciousness  
Known by all these different names  
Appearing in all these different forms  
Appearing individual and independent

The king who died here now wishes  
To enter the body of king Padma  
Fancying entry into another world  
Let us proceed there on our own paths"

#### **VASISTHA COMMENTED**

When the first Lila became enlightened  
She abandoned the link with the physical form  
As it was ignorance making it appear  
As if she was that physical body

The unreal manifests in the deluded mind  
Creating havoc till it is dispelled  
All nothing but fanciful conviction  
Of the unreal rooted by repetition

One can move to other ethereal bodies  
Just as from one dream to another

Without abandoning or destroying  
The previous one that was inhabited

Though the yogi's body appears to be  
It is really invisible being pure light  
He appears to live and to die  
Non-different from pure consciousness

The ethereal body is the only body  
Appearing linked to the physical  
The yogi attains this while living  
Due to his inner enlightenment

#### **INNER JOURNEY 2 (CONCLUSION)**

Sarasvati restrained the king's entry  
Into the body of dead king Padma  
The enlightened Lila then asked her  
"How much time has lapsed in meditation?"

Sarasvati replied to enlightened Lila  
One month has passed in meditation  
You abandoned your body in fifteen days  
It was cremated by your ministers

In you now are no memories of past  
Nor are there any latent tendencies  
Intelligence is established in its true nature  
Today is the thirty-first day you are here"

They revealed themselves to the other Lila  
Who worshiped them spontaneously

Sarasvati asked her how exactly  
She recollected having gotten there

The second Lila replied to Sarasvati  
"I fainted seeing the fierce battle  
My subtle body rose into the sky  
And was brought here by the king

Seeing that he was quite fatigued  
From the battle, I fanned him  
Not wishing to disturb his rest  
You appeared at this very moment"

Sarasvati then allowed the entry  
Of the king into Padma's body  
Instantly awoke king Padma  
As if from deep slumber

The king inquired about both  
Sarasvati and the enlightened Lila  
Who proceeded to tell him who  
She and goddess Sarasvati were

The king at once rose to his feet  
Respectfully saluting goddess Sarasvati  
Who blessed him with long life and health  
And the blessing of attaining enlightenment

#### **VASISTHA CONCLUDES**

O Rama, deeply do contemplate  
The story of Lila narrated to you  
It will remove faith in the reality  
Your mind has with what is perceived