

Yoga Vasistha

Swami Suryadevananda

Introduction

The Yoga Vasistha is a very important scripture for sincere seekers of the truth but perhaps not as well-known as some others. Here, we have a dialogue between the great sage Vasistha and Rama who amongst other wonderful qualities, was also a prince. The core of the scripture is a dialogue between Rama and Vasistha in the royal court of his father and in the presence of other great ones and sages.

After finishing his education with others, Rama returned to his home and resumed his normal way of princely living. Very soon, he had an urge to go out and see the country before he would get into the thick of his duties and responsibilities. With his father's permission, he set out to see the world – the land his duties were tied to. He toured the length and width of the land and eventually, returned to the palace and princely way of life.

Soon, a wave of thought overtook him and he became indrawn and pensive. Others noticed this but did not know quite what to make of it. One day, the great sage Vishvamitra came to the royal court and asked the king, Rama's father for a favor. He asked that Rama's company him for some time as he was involved in a sacred rite which required his full involvement and there were others bent on disturbing the rite. With Rama, the rite would be secure and this would benefit others including Rama in many ways. Rama was sent for but to the surprise of his father, he appeared very indrawn and pensive. When asked about the cause of his present state, Rama spoke about his observations on life and the inability to reconcile what was observed during his journey, what he had very intelligently pondered upon and what was expected of him in terms of his duties and responsibilities. He was not dejected but at the threshold of awakening and sage Vishvamitra requested the sage Vasistha to resolve any doubts Rama may have.

Part 1 Summary (Chapter I)

1. **Background:** The Yoga Vasistha unfolds as the dialogue between the sage Vasistha and Rama, in the presence of others in the royal court and other great ones who assembled to hear what would unfold.
2. **Examining everything:** Rama came to the crossroads of life and understanding by his own careful examination of things. This crossroad is not of finding fault in things as they are but in finding one's understanding of things not adequate to a deeper scrutiny of them. Inner wisdom is intuitive and not something learned in a classroom or from others. It

comes about by one's direct observation of things as they are, as things unfold and while desiring a good understanding of them. This intelligent way of observing is fluid and sees things as they are as it is not based on memory but on one's direct observation in the present.

3. **Awakening:** When one lives intelligently, which is examining things as they are and as they unfold – one sees that one's existing notions and understanding of things as they are is not adequate. This bucket of existing notions about things is conditioning as it conditions one's observation based on many things which we will not get into further here. When one discovers that existing notions or the known is not adequate to really know things as they are – one awakens and stays awake.
4. **At the crossroads:** To awaken and stay awake is to not rely on any existing notion – however elevated the notion be. One learns to see things as they are and as they unfold. While walking the awakened path, one comes to a crossroads where what is seen cannot quite be reconciled with what is expected of oneself and the way through the maze is not quite clear. It is here, the guru or teacher's light on the path becomes very important as just as you light one candle with another, one's own inner wisdom is also brought to a steady flame with the help of the teacher.



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