

T.T.D. Religious Publications Series No. 1091

Price :

Published by **Sri M.G. Gopal**, I.A.S., Executive Officer,
T.T.Devasthanams, Tirupati and Printed at T.T.D. Press, Tirupati.

Srinivasa Bala Bharati

SAGE VASISHTHA

English Translation

Prof. K. Neelakantham



**Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams,
Tirupati**

Srinivasa Bala Bharati - 143

(*Children Series*)

SAGE VASISHTHA

Telugu Version

Prof. Salaka Raghunatha Sarma

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First Edition - 2014

Copies : 5000

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Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams

Tirupati.

D.T.P.:

Office of the Editor-in-Chief

T.T.D, Tirupati.

Printed at :

Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams Press

Tirupati.

FOREWORD

If a beautiful garden is to be raised, one needs to take proper care of tender flower plants. In the same way in order to create a good society, great care needs to be taken of young children who are going to be future citizens of India. All their intellectual attainments will be futile if they fail to learn of their culture and its greatness. They need to be told of great men and women of this country so that they are inspired by their ideals. The essentials of our culture should be given to them in the form of simple and charming stories. They will cherish these ideals and be guided by them. They will promote good and they will love the society they live in. They make their families proud and bring great prestige to their country when they grow up into good citizens.

Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams have brought out these booklets for children in Telugu under Srinivasa Bala Bharati Series. Although meant for children, they are useful to the elderly too. They have found place in the book shelves of every family. The stories of legendary men and women are narrated in a simple way. We hope that more and more children will read them and profit by them.

I congratulate Dr. R. Sri Hari, Editor-in-Chief, TTD for his efforts in bringing out the English translations of SRINIVASABALA BHARATI SERIES so well. We have received co-operation of many learned men and women in our efforts to popularize this series. I am thankful to them.

In the Service of the Lord



Executive Officer,

Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams.
Tirupati.

FOREWORD

Today's children are tomorrow's citizens. They need apt acquaintance with the life-histories of celebrated persons at tender so that they get opportunity to lead their lives in an exemplary way. They will come to know that great things such as Indian culture, basic tenets of life and moral teachings are abundantly available in the life-experiences of great men. It is observed that there is no scope to teach such subjects in school curriculum.

Observing such circumstances the Publication Division of Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams has published about hundred booklets in Telugu about the lives of famous sages and great men written by various authors under the editorship of Dr.S.B. Raghunathacharya under "Bala Bharati Series". The response to these books is tremendous and it has given impetus to publish them in other languages also. To begin with, some of the books are now brought out in English and Hindi by T.T.D. for the benefit of boys and girls and the interested public.

These booklets, primarily intended to the growing children and also to the elders to study and narrate the stories to their children, will go a long way to sublimate the aspirations of the children to greater heights.

R. SRI HARI
Editor-In-Chief
T.T.D.

Welcome To Srinivasa Balabharati Series

The series is the outcome of abundant grace of Lord Sri Venkateswara.

This will be an unfailing source of inspiration to the young.

It enshrines the best of Bharatiya tradition. May this noble endeavour be successful.

India has been known for its culture and civilization, its ethical and dharmic way of life from time immemorial. India has marched ahead with its commitment to dharma, its resistance to adharma, its espousal of life-affirming values and its humane attitude to life as a journey towards God realization. Those who embodied these values in their life have been a beacon of light to us. Their impact is deep on the life we lead. Young boys and girls will find them exemplary and feel proud of their invaluable heritage. They will love their motherland and dedicate themselves to its service.

It is therefore necessary that the young learn about these great men and women so that they will realize their indebtedness to them for their selfless contribution to the enrichment of life. This should indeed be a chief component of true education which ensures the perennial continuity of Indian culture and civilization. SRINIVASA BALA BHARATI SERIES has come into existence to acquaint the young boys and girls with right perspective of Indian life and values through a series of booklets written exclusively for this purpose describing in brief the lives of great men and women.

We welcome you to share our joy in launching these booklets.

S.B. Raghunathacharya

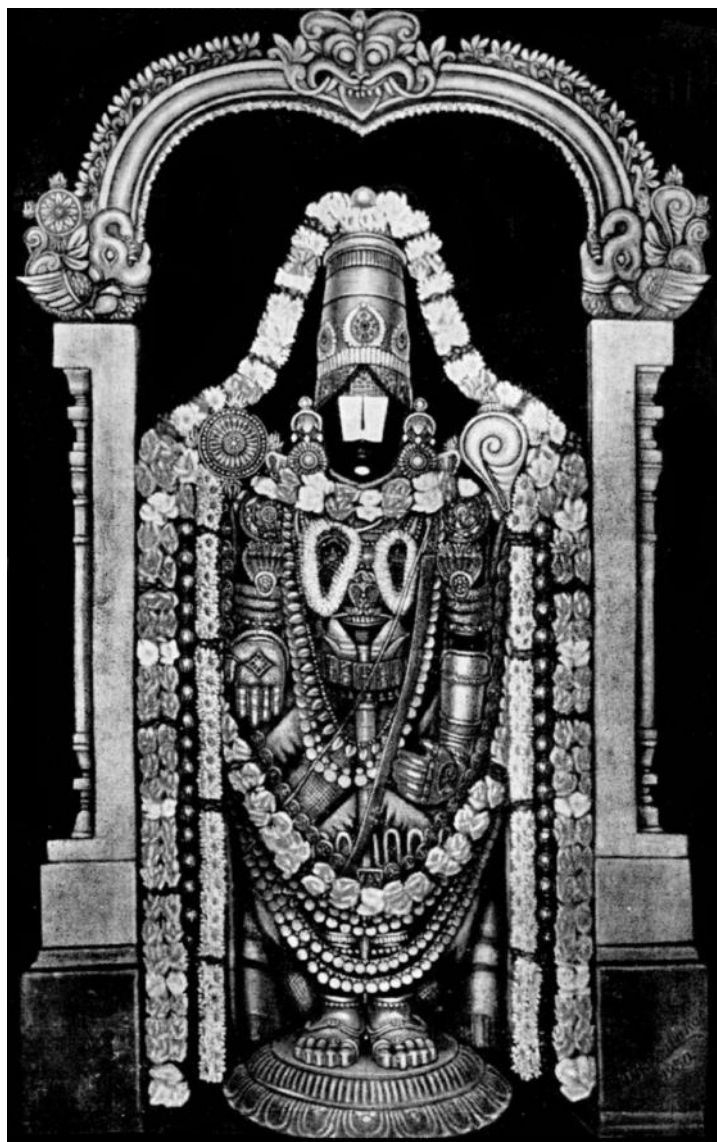
Cheif Editor

Can there be a magic to obtain tamarind by reciting mantras? Say so some dull-witted. How can there be a shower of tamarind? Yes, many miracles do happen. All the material powers should bend their heads before supreme powers, i.e. Brahmi Sakti. If people are egoistic about their powers, and take pride in little knowledge they possess and attack the great souls. But it is sure that they will have to bend before the supreme power. And such arrogant people who take pride in their rajasic and tamasic powers are sure to get insulted.

In our history, there is such an instance where a king, attacked a Brahmarshi. The Brahmarshi smiles at him and places his Brahmadaanda a stalk of knowledge of Brahman, before him. All the weapons and missiles turn into ashes. All the worlds are surprised to see this brahmanic power. It is the victory of wisdom. The Kshatra (royal) power bent its head.

Viswamitra represents Kshatra Sakti and Vasishtha represents Brahmanishtha. This story of sage Vasishtha, the preceptor of Ikshvaku dynasty, is the foundation stone of worldly welfare, which inspires us all.

Now read this story -





Sage Vasishtha

Cool fire !

He was a king. He was angry over a poor brahmin. He used all the missiles and weapons on him so angrily. But that brahmin had a majestic stick called “Brahmadandam”- a weapon of Brahmanic power! That brahmin just kept it against the missiles. All of them got burnt into ashes like the flies in the fire. One can not imagine the grief and wonder of the king where missiles powerful enough to burn the worlds, were put into ashes. He was so ashamed. He wanted to obtain that Brahmanic lustre. He understood that his kingdom and kingship are mere waste before it. Having renounced everything, he left out to do penance. Due to his severe penances, he could become Brahmarshi. Do you know who was that poor brahmin who was the reason for the king’s achievement of Brahmanic power? He was the great sage Vasishtha.

Shall we know about his life ?

Birth in the pot :

One day the Sun god who illumines the world and the god Varuna who rules the western region of the world, went out for an entertainment walk. They saw a celestial nymph called Urvasi, who was the most beautiful of the women in Devaloka. Urvasi was not a

common woman. She was a holy woman born from the thighs of Srimannarayana. Both the Sun-god and Varuna lost control of mind at her beauty and they have dropped their power down. Since they are great, Urvasi, preserved their power in two different pots, and took care of them. And those two powers kept in pots have grown into Vasishtha and Agastya. Since they are born from pots they could be called “Kumbhasambhavas”, but mostly this was used only to refer to Agastya later. Sun-god was also called Mitra. Since these two Vasishtha and Agastya are born to Mitra and Varuna, they are called ‘Maitra Varuni.’ Lord Brahma had created many great people for the welfare of the world. And Vasishtha was one such of Brahma’s creation. They are called Brahma manasa putras. We come across these stories related to Vasishtha in Puranas.

No other thought :

The great soul was born in this way and began to do penance with no other thought in the mind. He was deeply immersed in meditation on God. And due to this penance Vasishtha became a Brahmarshi. There was nothing in fact that was not possible for humans to achieve through penance.

Let us see some more miracles achieved through his penance and the welfare done to the worlds through the merit of penance.

Sand turned into Rice :

Arundhati was another name for sanctity. She was a light which never turns off. She is seen as star in the sky even today. It is a tradition to look at the star on holy occasions. We believe that merit accrues to those who behold her on certain holy moments. And that great lady was the wife of Vasishtha. Once Vasishtha was going around in search of a person who would cook the sand in his hand as rice and feed him with that. Arundhati, a virgin staying in a village of a low caste, was ready to fulfil Vasishtha's requirement. Having poured that sand into a pot she meditated on God with unmoved concentration. And the sand grains got cooked into rice. Then Vasishtha, with the permission of her parents, married her and ate that rice. Arundhati had such power in her childhood. And that couple led an ideal life. They gave birth to sons like 'Sakti'. And Parasara was the son of Sakti. Parasara was the father of Vyasabhadra, who was the author of Mahabharata, Bhagavata and many other puranas.

How he could serve food to the guests ?

Maharshi Vasishtha was in a forest spending his time in penance. Once king (when he was a king) Viswamitra went on hunt in to the forest. And when he felt thirsty, went to the hermitage of Vasishtha. Since a king came to his asram, sage Vasishtha offered food to him and to all his retinue. King (Viswamitra) was

surprised. How a poor Brahmin could give food to such a great group. He looked around and looked at the cow from which many great varieties of food in heaps were being produced. The king and his people enjoyed the food and belched.

No need of your cows :

The king approached hesitantly the sage and said 'Swamy' in half tone. The sage asked him what he



wanted. The king began to say “Swamy, your cow is so great and so good. I have never seen such a one before. You are a knowledgeable one, you know everything. Such Cows are to be with the kings. I will give you a lakh of cows. Please give this cow to me”. The sage replied “My boy! This cow can not be given to anyone. It can not leave me, neither can I leave it. The cow gives me everything I require. It gives me even milk, curd and ghee etc., for Agnihotra (fire god) for the performance of sacrifices. I do not have anything to do with your lakhs of cows. And it is no way possible to give it to you.

Let that Power be attained !

King was very angry. He said, “who are you to give or not to give. Out of respect I have requested you. Kings have the right to take what they like either by convincing or by employing the force. So, I will take it forcibly. Do what you like.” Saying this much to the sage, arrogantly, the king ordered his soldiers to take away the cow from its place. The cow could not understand what was going on. It could not know why the sage renounced it and why these people were pulling it forcibly. It looked at the sage. It could see the pain of heart in his eyes. That is all! Many strong soldiers came out from its body and attacked the soldiers of the king. King was more angry. He tried to win the sage with the power of his missiles. All of them turned futile before the sage’s Brahmanic power. Viswamitra

was ashamed. All his strength, his army, his missiles which he learnt through a lot of effort - all this turned waste before the poor brahmin's power! He decided to gain such power. From that day onwards, even after such a decision, he began to trouble Vasishtha for no reason, whenever there was a chance.

Mitrasakha became Kalmashapada :

There was a king called Mitrasakha in solar dynasty. He went to a forest on a hunt and shot one of the two tigers. The other turned in to a demon and got escaped. After some time that demon in the form of Vasishtha approached Mitrasakha and asked him to serve him human flesh as food. And having said so, he went off. The king thinking that Vasishtha himself had asked for it, arranged human flesh for food. Then Vasishtha approached the king. This time it was the real sage. Mitrasakha did not know this. He served him human flesh. The sage was furious. He cursed the king to turn into a demon eating human flesh, since he offered human flesh to him. The king who was innocent only, finding no fault with himself, since he offered only what was asked by Vasishtha, was very angry and took water into his hand to curse the sage back saying let him not be the priest for solar dynasty hereafter. Vasishtha could know the mischief done with his divine power. Since the king was innocent, he relaxed his curse saying that after twelve years of time,

he would come back from his demon form. The king also felt it undue to curse the sage at this stage, left the water on his feet. His feet got burnt and turned black since they are the cursed waters. From then onwards he was called Kalmashapada.

Good opportunity :

This Kalmashapada who was turned as a demon, was going to Vasishtha's hermitage one day. He saw Sakti, the son of sage Vasishtha on his way. Due to demonic pride, he asked the boy to give way to him. Then Sakti questioned why to ask him to move when he was on right path. The king-demon became angry and beat him. Sakti cursed him to be a demon for ever since he attacked him for no reason. The king repented his mistake and prayed the sage-boy to excuse and show him a way to see the curse get nullified. Meanwhile, Viswamitra came that way and looked at this incident. He took it as a chance to torment Vasishtha and employed his servant, a demon called Kimkara to possess the king. And the king possessed by the demon, left his kingly affairs and began to wander as a demon.

Hundred at one go :

One day that king was free of his demonic nature, a brahmin approached him and asked to serve him food with meat. The king said ok but forgot latter and got into sleep. After a long sleep, remembering the

brahmin's request, called the cook and ordered for a meal with meat to serve the brahmin. Then the demonic nature entered him again. When the cook told he could not get meat at that late hour of the day, the demon-king ordered for human flesh. The cook went to the Vadhyasala i.e. the place of execution, brought the human flesh and served the same to the brahmin. The brahmin knowing this cursed the king to be a demon. King remembering that Sakti was the reason for all this, swallowed him and his hundred brothers in one gallop. All the hundred sons of Vasishtha faced death in one instance.

What can not be achieved through penance ?

Parents can not tolerate when their children are put even to a little suffering. If the son hurts his leg they feel the pain. Even with a little rise of temperature, they can not withstand the grief. If such is the love of parents, what could be the grief of the father when hundreds of his sons are dead! Vasishtha could not withstand the grief. Though he knows that suicide is a great sin, he prepared to end his life. He jumped into flames. Due to his inner power of penance, he became fire in the fire. And that fire was like ice to him. He jumped into the great ocean. Like a mother who embraces the son to her bosom, the ocean embraced him and made him reach the shore safe. Still Vasishtha could not come out of his strong desire to kill himself due to the grief that afflicted him. He, then jumped

down from a great mountain. The ground turned a soft bed for him. Finding no way, he tied his legs and hands tight and drowned himself in the speedily flowing river. The river which attracts people into it, when they move very close to it protected him and breaking his shackles made him reach the bank safe. Nothing is impossible through penance. The fire, ocean, river became life-giving sources to him. We can know how people like Prahlada and Vasishtha achieved such greatness by facing the calamities in their life through yogic power.

What a great soul !

All the attempts to end his life turned but futile. Helpless, he returned to his hermitage. His daughter-in-law, the wife of Sakti, was then carrying the child of Sakti at that time. The child in her womb was chanting the Vedic mantras. Hearing this, Vasishtha who realized that his sons who died can never come back, gave up of ending his life and wanted to see his thoughts grandson who was chanting Vedas even when not yet born, and took care of his daughter-in-law. Kalmashapada, who turned in to a demon, one day followed this woman to swallow her. Vasishtha, who saw this poured 'spell' water upon that demon. The demon got his human form back. This is what is actually called real help done to the person who harmed one previously. And the son of Sakti was Parasara, the father of Vyasa.

Man in one month and Women in another :

There lived a king called Vaivaswata. He wanted to perform a sacrifice to have a son. With the help of Vasishtha he performed it. But his wife with a desire to have a baby girl, told another preist about it. That preist, without anyone's knowledge, secretly recited the hymns related to the birth of a baby girl. As a result she gave birth to a girl. King Vaivaswata repented for it and asked sage Vasishtha the reason for it. Then Vasishtha with his divine knowledge came to know the reason. He prayed Lord Vishnu and turned that girl into a boy. And that boy was Sudyumna. Ila was the name of the baby when she was in the form of a girl. Once Sudyumna dancing, went to the garden called Kumaravana where Parvati and Parameswara were spending their free time. It was a rule that no man shall enter that garden other than Siva. It was also a curse that such a man turns a woman. When Sudyumna was a woman, Budha, the son of the moon, had been seen by her. They fell in love with each other and led a married life for sometime. They gave birth to a son called Pururava. Ila, who did not want to remain a woman, wanting to get rid of that, contemplated on Vasishtha in mind, and prayed. Vasishtha knowing her mind, prayed to Lord Siva. Siva who felt happy with his prayers, honouring both his curse and Vasishtha's prayers, granted that Ila shall remain a man for one month and a woman for another month. Through this

we come to know how great people's decisions give great results.

Win my father's heart :

There lived a king called Samvarana in the solar dynasty. He happened to see a beautiful girl when he was on a hunt in the forest. She was lustrous like that of lightning. It is not possible to describe the exceptional beauty of her face. She looked as if she was made out of all the soft flowers in the world. King Samvarana fell in love with her. The moment he approached her, she disappeared like a lightning in the sky. The king was unhappy. Forgetting that he was king and without considering that it could be an insult to cry in the public, began to cry aloud. The girl got surprised. And she felt also happy that such a handsome person cried for her. As she was the daughter of Sun-God, she was not supposed to marry any person without his permission. So she slowly revealed that she was Tapati, the daughter of Sun-God and asked the king to marry her, after taking the approval of her father and left for her worlds.

Crime of the king: Punishment to the country :

King could not know how to please the Sun-God. He was sad. Sage Vasishtha came to know about it. He went to the world of Sun-God through the power of his penance. Vasishtha prayed the Sun-God and requested him to give his daughter in marriage to king

Samvarana. He explained his virtues and also his love for Tapati. Could Sun-God say no to the proposal of Vasishtha? He has sent his daughter along with Vasishtha. This is how an ordinary king, a common man could marry a divine woman with the help of Yogic power of Vasishtha. Such people are only called great who have the power of making impossible possible. And king Samvarana neglected all his kingly duties enjoying his love for Tapati. And because of for this, the country faced many calamities, there were no rains and no crops. All the people were in troubles. And in this situation, it was once again sage Vasishtha who took the assignment of rectifying the lapses of the king, by doing expiatory rituals, he restored peace in the country, protected it from the famine and saved the people of the country. He was a priest in the real sense. (Purohita:- that one who takes care of the Pura).

And the son born to Samvarana and Tapati was emperor Kuru. Kaurava dynasty which is very famous in Mahabharata was named after him.

Harischandra - His steadfast vow of truthfulness :

There would be none who does not know the story of Sri Rama. Lord Vishnu was born as Rama to kill Ravana. Rama's dynasty is called Ikshvaku and Raghuvamsa. The kings of that dynasty are great and also good. Vasishtha was their family priest. He was like a god to the kings of that dynasty. The priest sage



Vasishtha also took great care of the kings like the eyelid that takes care of the eye. He used to take away their difficulties and problems with his power of chants and penance. It was due to his advice and power that the great kings of Ikshvaku dynasty became more honourable in the world. Every one of them achieved great and unique positions in each field. We all remember great Harischandra, the moment we hear the word truth and vice-versa. They are synonymous. Let us see how sage Vasishtha was the reason behind Harischandra's reputation spreading all three worlds.

As long as Sun and Moon last :

One day there was a discussion on the practice of truthfulness in the court of Devendra. Sage Vasishtha who was in that court declared that there was no other king equal to Harischandra in truthfulness. We know that Visvamitra could not bear Vasishtha. He made a vow that he would make Harischandra speak a lie. Vasishtha challenged that it can never happen. And one can not explain to what extent Harischandra was tormented by Visvamitra, to make him lie. He took away his kingdom, made him sell his wife and son. And Harischandra was also sold to a graveyard in charge. King Harischandra faced all this pain but never swerved from the path of truthfulness. All the gods appreciated his ability. In that way his fame spread all the directions in the worlds and would last as long as Sun and Moon stay in the world. Sage Vasishtha was

the person behind it. The confidence of teacher Vasishtha over the king was great.

Rectify your mistake :

Dilipa was a great king in solar dynasty. He was a very righteous person. Like a father, he has protected all his subjects. He made friendly visits to heaven to see Devendra. One day, while returning from heaven to his kingdom in Bhuloka, he saw Kamadhenu on his way, but forgot to worship the holy cow. He was in a hurry to meet his wife Sudakshina. The holy cow became angry for not being worshipped. It was an insult to her, it felt and cursed the king that he would not get progeny. King Dilipa could not hear the curse due to the sounds of Iravata which was bathing in the heavenly river. The king could not have children for a very long time. He married Sudakshina for the continuation of the dynasty but grieved a lot for not having a son to continue the family. The couple who was in a great grief went to see their family priest Vasishtha for help. He handed over the burden of kingdom to his ministers and went to the hermitage of Vasishtha. They made a salutation to the holy feet of sage Vasishtha and explained the reason for their grief. Vasishtha's divine sight revealed that the curse of Kamadhenu was the reason for the royal couple's childlessness. Vasishtha asked the couple to worship the cow Nandini, the daughter of Kamadhenu, which



was there in his hermitage. He said it was not possible to worship Kamadhenu as it was sent to Patala loka, on some other work. Vasishtha assured the king that he would be blessed with a son by the grace of Nandini.

Service like a shadow :

The king Dilipa gave up all his royal pleasures and got himself ready to serve the cow like a common shepherd boy. He stood when the cow stood and sat when the cow sat. He took his food after the cow was fed. He drank water after the cow drank water. He was just a shadow to the cow Nandini. It was routine to him to follow the cow to the forest for food. And he slept in the cow-shed in the night. The royal couple served the cow in this manner for twenty days. Nandini was happy with their service and wanted to grace them. But the cow wanted to test the couple.

Can you give up life for the cow :

That was the last day of Dilipa's service to the cow. There was not even a small mistake in his service to the cow. The forest where the cow was taken for grazing was pretty and green with many flowering trees and streams with full of water. The thought about its beauty came into the mind of the king only on that day. The moment he lost in that thought having taken off his glance from Nandini, a lion roaring so loud attacked the cow. The moment the king observed this,

he got ready to kill the lion. His hand which went to take the arrow got frozen. The lion began to speak like a human. It said: "Oh king, I am a servant of Lord Siva. I am protecting this forest. And I was ordered by him to kill the animals and eat their flesh. Now, your cow is my meal, you may go back." Listening to the voice of the lion the king was surprised and replied thus: "Oh king of lions, the cow is equal to the life of my guru. Its true that you want meals. Leave the cow and have my flesh for your meal." The lion laughed loudly and said 'How mad you are! You are the emperor, you are in youth, you have a family. How come that you got ready to give up your life for the life of the cow? Can you not give a thousand cows to your guru ?

One divine star :

Having listened to the words of the lion, the king has said that the lion does not know the greatness of the cow and the power of his guru. He said that he can not live with bad fame. Since the body is temporary, it is a merit if it is sacrificed for the life of the cow. And having said thus he shrank his body in to a small ball like form and made himself available to be eaten near the mouth of the lion. And he was waiting for the sudden fall of the lion on his body. But it was a cool breeze on him. He heard these words of the cow: "Oh my son! Get up, there is no animal that can harm me.

This is the power of the penance of sage Vasishtha. I only tested you. Your service pleased me very much. You want a son, am I right? Then get a vessel made of leaves. Take my milk in to it and drink, you would get a son.” The king was so happy and said “Oh mother! I have been blessed, I am so happy. My penance bore fruit. But your milk shall be used for the rituals first. Your calf shall be fed first. Then only will I take my share. For that also I take permission from my guru.” In this way the king Dilipa passed out both the tests given by the cow. How many would possess such a control, devotion and readiness even to leave life in observing the righteousness? That is why Dilipa was such a divine star. The king took the milk of the cow with the permission of his teacher and returned to his hermitage with his wife Sudakshina. Within no time Sudakshina gave birth to a son. In this way sage Vasishtha helped the king from falling in to hell for not having a son.

It was a great test :

King Raghu was another moon risen in the Sun dynasty. He conquered all the kings and brought out the whole unused wealth into one place to spend it in a right way. He performed a sacrifice called Vishvajit. The condition of Vishvajit was to exhaust all the wealth in giving charity. No single pie shall remain with the king. Here king Raghu has followed it well. He was



compared to a white cloud of autumn season (Saratkala), which can not rain. He, after giving away everything in charity, became like the cloud of Saratkala. An young student called Kautsa approached him in want of crores of rupees. No one was capable of giving such huge money to the student. King Raghu welcomed the guest carrying water in an earthen pot to wash his feet. Kautsa could infer that the king was now penniless. But he was happy to see the king's virtue of charity. The king received him with great honour and enquired him of his desire. The student could not reveal his mind but began to tell him the whole story.

‘Your humility is Dakshina to me’ :

“Oh king! I am Kautsa, I have learnt all the sastras in the hermitage of the revered teacher Varatantu. My guru ordered me to take householdership after the completion of my studies. I begged my teacher with folded hands to accept Gurudakshina. He smiled at me and said he does not require any gurudakshina and my humility itself is dakshina to him. But I pestered him to accept dakshina. With that pressure, he got angry and ordered me to get 14 crore gold coins in return to 14 branches of learning I learnt from him. From where can I get such huge amount of money? I came to you since you are a highly virtuous emperor. But you are like the moon from whom all the gods have taken the whole nectar. It is my luck, don't repent, I will try for another source.” Kautsa said.

The power of mystic water :

King Raghu felt sorry for the plight of that boy. It never happened in the history of Sun dynasty that a needy person was sent out without fulfilling his desire. The one who approached the king now was not a common man. He was a scholar in Vedas and other sastras. And his desire was to give Gurudakshina. The person who was to give charity was but Raghu, the king from Sun-dynasty. And it is a great insult to send him with empty hands. The king thought for a while and requested Kautsa to give two days of time. He told him to stay in his house of sacrifices and not to go else where in need of money. King Raghu asked his charioteer to arrange for the chariot to go to Kubera who was lord of Wealth. His journey to Kubera was not to beg, and begging was never known to them, it was to fight a war with Kubera. Kubera stays in Alakapura which is not in Bhuloka. No common man can go there. But how could this king Raghu go there? It was the greatness of their guru sage Vasishtha who can make impossible possible. Sage Vasishtha sprinkled mystic water on the chariot. With the power of that sprinkled water the chariot could go like a ship in the water and fly like a plane in the air. It could also run on the uneven mountains. That was the power of penance of Vasishtha. That was the affection of the teacher for his student. Kubera could see that Raghu was ready to fight a war with him. He did not want a war and rained

all the gold coins which filled the treasury. Both the student's desire and the king's prestige were fulfilled. It was once again the power of penance of sage Vasishtha that solved the problem of the king.

How stable in Dharma !

Raghu was blessed with a gem like son. He was 'Aja' by name. He was soft at heart like butter. He was handsome. And his observance of dharma was matchless.

The king of Vidarbha was preparing for swayamvara (i.e. in which a bride chooses a groom of her choice) of his sister Indumati. All the kings had been invited. The king Aja also began his journey and stopped for a while on his way to Vidarbha. A big elephant fell on his retinue all of a sudden, when his people were relaxing. Elephants in the king's retinue got panicky and ran wildly throwing the people on the ground. Horses ran like bees in the air. All the army men got dispersed here and there. How natural it was to get upset and be angry at this hour for any bride groom who was going for marriage. But it was not so with Aja, the student of Vasishtha. He heard from his teacher that elephants should never be killed except in times of war. He had just released a small arrow on that wild elephant. One can imagine his kindness and his courage. What stability he exhibited in sticking to dharma even at the hour of misfortune and when his

life was at risk! Vasishtha's training made him perform sublime by as he was already sublime in nature. That was the reason the kings of Raghu's dynasty became ideals to the world.

Many kings came to marry Indumati who was famous for her exceptional beauty and virtues. No king was ordinary. The maid introduced every king present there. But Indumati, the princess selected king Aja as her husband. It was proved that Aja was the best of the greatest kings.

Be courageous :

Both of them Aja and Indumati lived so happily together like flower and its fragrance. And they gave birth to a son called Dasaratha. One day when they were on a ride, a flower garland fell on Indumati and she fell on the floor and lost her life. It was but an empty world for Aja without her. He thought that it was impossible for him to live alone. Sage Vasishtha came to know about his disciple's grief through his divine sight. But at that time he was in a Yajna and hence could not move. Neither he could ignore this matter of Aja maharaja. He sent an able student to Aja to console him. He approached the king and informed him of his guru's message - "My child! Your wife, Indumati was a heavenly nymph. She was born on earth due to a curse. Since her curse got expiated she returned to her original place. Earth is the actual wife

to the kings. So take care of the kingdom. You should be courageous since you know many things. She would not come back in spite of your severe grief. Even if you too die for her, it is not sure you would reach her, since people go to their respective places after the death depending on their actions. So, there is no hope of meeting with her, control your grief, do the rites prescribed for her journey to Paraloka. Dharmasastras proclaim that if tears are shed for the deceased, those tears burn away their good position, Oh child! Don't weep."

These words were a great relief to the king, they were like the cool showers for one who is burnt in fire. Aja Maharaja crowned his young son Dasaratha as the king and ruled the earth till his son became eligible in age. And then through yoga left his life. In this manner Vasishtha's help was available to those kings in times of difficulties.

Rama the life :

Dasaratha, the son of Aja became the king of Kosala. He had three wives - Kausalya, Sumitra, Kaikeyi. He could not get a son through any of his three wives, Even in his old age, it was a great grief for Dasaratha. Vasistha made the king perform Asvamedha yaga and also Putrakameshti. After the performance of these two sacrifices Dasaratha got four sons, who were like four arms of lord Vishnu. The eldest was sri Ramachandra. People used to make fun of the moon in the sky after

seeing Sri Rama. Such was his beauty. No one could describe what love Dasaratha had for his son. Rama was his life and was everything to him. He could not leave him even for a moment. And it was a great conflict which he had to face one day, all of a sudden.

A blow on heart :

All of a sudden there was a news that Viswamitra came to the court of Dasaratha. Every body had both fear and devotion for him. He was worshipped like a God by the kings. He was welcomed duly. After the formalities, Viswamitra told the king thus: “O king! Your son should come with me to the forest. He has to protect my sacrifice. Maricha and Subahu are the two demons causing disturbance to my sacrifices. Since I am in a vow, I can’t fight with them. You have to send Rama with me and I will send him back to you once my sacrifice gets completed.” It was a blow to him. Dasaratha expressed his inability to send innocent Rama to attack the wild demons. But he had already promised the sage that he could obey his order. King was in trouble. No king in his dynasty violated the promise earlier. But due to his love for Rama he was not ready to leave Rama. Viswamitra got extremely angry and got ready to go away.

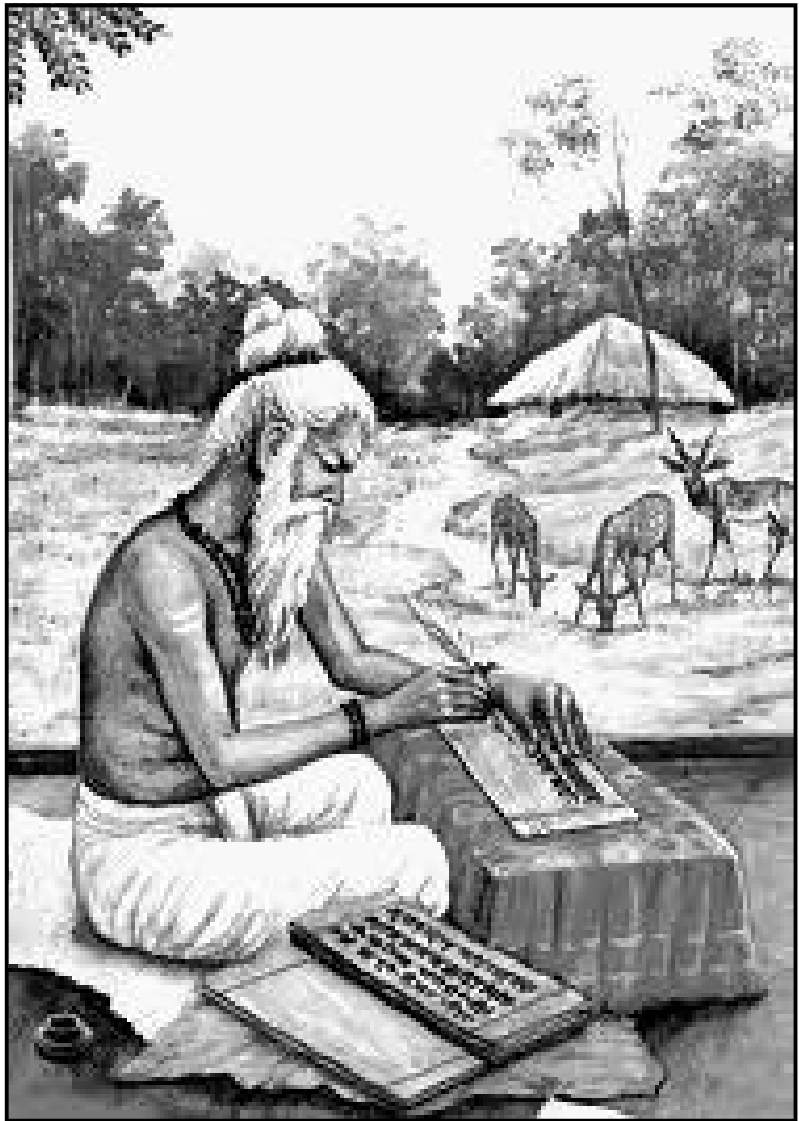
A good instruction :

Then Vasishtha told Dasaratha - “Oh king! This is not right. One who violates the promises once made

goes to hell. Viswamitra had come to bless you and your sons. Do not hesitate to send Rama along with him, thinking that Rama is a child. Viswamitra would teach him about all missiles and weapons which would help Rama immensely in his future.” Dasaratha was relieved from trouble and handed over both Rama and Lakshmana to Viswamitra. He was saved from bad fame. And it was the beginning for Rama’s mission of destroying the demons. The decision and instruction by the family priest Vasishtha given at right time could save Dasaratha from ill fame and see Rama as a world hero.

Yogavasishtham :

When Sri Rama was entering his youth, there was a great turmoil in his mind. He felt depressed in all the angles he watched the world. He could not believe that, the riches, enjoyments, fortunes which are so momentary can give permanent happiness. And this thought gave him no comfort both day and night. Dasaratha was so unhappy to see Sri Rama’s dejection at an young age when he was supposed to enjoy the life. Many sages like Narada and Viswamitra, came to the court of Dasaratha one day. Dasaratha asked Rama to tell the reason for his dejection. Rama has explained his views in detail. Then Viswamitra said like this - “Sri Rama requires peace of mind. And sage Vasishtha alone is capable of giving such peace. He knows everthing. Lord Brahma who created the worlds had



imparted all the knowledge to him. Since he is the family priest of Raghu's dynasty, he alone is a capable person. Then all the other sages seconded his opinion. The truths which sage Vasishtha explained to Rama in the presence of all the sages are so benevolent. And that dialogue between Vasishtha and Rama is now known as 'Yogavasishtham'. It is an encyclopaedia of knowledge. Let us know some good words from it and remember daily:

1) People talk about Luck. But do not talk up lucky words. Goddess Lakshmi does not wish to see the faces of such persons who just talk about luck but do not take up works that gives them luck.

2) Laziness causes much misfortune. If a person is determined to work hard he would definitely prosper. And sure he becomes a scholar.

3) Just like the light depends on the Sun, sastras, knowledge, penance, Vedas depend on the wise person.

4) Peace, Enquiry, Happiness, Friendship with good - are the four gates for salvation.

5) Wise persons never feel grief. They do not desire anything. They don't work either for holy or unholy things. They do what is virtuous and do not do what is forbidden.

6) Foolishness is the reason for grief. It is better to live like a blind fly in dark wells or holes of a tree than to be foolish.

7) We are not sure whether God is present or not. Still it is better to think about him. Even if one thinks about him with the feeling that he is not there, there is no harm. Since thoughts help a man cross the ocean of samsara.

8) Kingdom, riches, enjoyments, salvation-these are the fruits of good thought called Kalpavriksha.

9) A wise man does not seek fruit which is not reachable. He enjoys what he obtains. A man who has a good heart and good behaviour, is called a “man of contentment.”

10) Achieve one good virtue. That makes you get rid of many defects. If one defect enters you, many defects that ruin the virtues, enter in to you.

Nothing remains :

Rama was instructed in so many ways like this. Not only Rama, but all the sages got extremely happy listening to the teaching of Vasishtha. Viswamitra says “We could listen to him due to our merits. We are sanctified as if with the bath taken in thousands of rivers like Ganga”. There was no limit to the happiness and peace of Rama. He says “Oh my teacher! I could see the highest truth about the riches, thoughts, sastras, power of words, all the worlds, forms of misfortunes, in your sayings. There is nothing left to be known.”

Sages like Narada also congratulated the sage Vasishtha. The knowledge that flowed from Vasishtha

gives happiness for ever uninterruptedly to all equally. It knows no difference of caste, sex or age. Vasishtha is an embodiment of penance. He is the personification of goddess of learning. He is the human form of knowledge. He is the eternal light. That is why he is called “Sri Vasishtha Bhagavan”.

