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WILLIAM Q. JUDGE,

Gen. Secy. American Section,

P. O. Box 2659, New York.

YAJÑAVALKYASAMHITA.

A Work on Yoga Philosophy.

Translated for the American Section T. S., by Prof. Manilal N. Dvivedi.

CHAPTEK I.



YAJÑAVALKYA, the best of munis (ascetics) omniscient, whose dross of ignorance was burnt away by the fire of knowledge, knowing the essence of all *Shastras*, ever centered in the rapture of *Ātmajnâna*, fully acquainted with the inner sense of the *Veda*, and the *angas*,* master of yoga, having full control over his senses, above anger, beyond hunger or disease, wholly austere, having no enemies, favorable to and loving the knowers of Brahman, entirely peaceful, one with all

* Six in all, being each useful for proper study and observance of the *Veda*: (1) *Shiksha* (the science of pronunciation), (2) *Kalpa* (the science of the forms of sacrifice), (3) *Vyākaraṇa* (grammar), (4) *Nirukta* (etymology), (5) *Jyotisha* (astronomy), and (6) *Chhandas* (prosody).

beings, tranquil, of unfailing thought, free from exertion, appreciative of merit, having to do with others only for their good,—this Yâjnavalkya, residing in the penance-forest amidst a company of Brâhmanas of great merit and full of the knowledge of Brahman, and ever careful while explaining Brahman to the eminent and illustrious assembly, to perform the ceremony of Sandhya,* had for his wives two of the best of women, by name Maitreyi, and Gargi, the best among knowers of Brahman. The latter coming forward in the said assembly of the illustrious, laid himself prostrate, like a stick, on the ground, before him, and asked him as follows:

“Oh Lord! you who are deeply read in all the *Shastras*, and ever bent on the good of all, pray be kind, and tell me the essence of yoga in all its parts.”

Being thus requested by his wife before the whole assembly, he directed his eye towards all assembled, and began in the following manner: Rise, ye Gârgi! the best of the knowers of Brahman. Aail to thee! here I describe the whole of yoga as described before to me by Brahmâ. Oh, Gârgi! hear what I say with attention, and concentration. Having said this, the sage concentrated his mind on Nârâyana located in his heart, and called up his form before his eyes,—nârâyana, the lord of worlds, present in the heart of all, the son of Vasudeva, the source of the universe, the object of meditation to all yogins, free from attributes, of entire bliss, immortal, eternal, the highest Atman, the Ishvara; and began with great kindness: Come, my dear Gârgi! all-knowing and conversant with the very essence of the *Shastras*, I am about to describe the true substance of yoga, as it has been revealed to me before by Brahmâ himself. And, ye sages all! attend with one mind, along with Gârgi. Once upon a time I went up to the the eternal four-faced god Brahmâ, sitting in the padmâsanâ-posture, the lord and creator of the movable and the immovable; and having praised the god with proper words, and having paid my obeisance, asked him the very thing you have proposed this moment. I said: “Oh, god of gods! Lord of the universe! Thou of four faces! the great father! the great one! tell me that knowledge which is preserved with the greatest secrecy as being the last and highest, that Karma (duty, act) whereby I may attain the highest nirvâna, the immortal state of supreme absolution.” Being thus requested, Brahmâ, the self-existent lord of the universe,

* One of the three daily worships so-called from Sandhyâ, the name of the twilight, esoterically meaning only the “joint” *i. e.* of the surya—and chandra-breaths, *viz.* the sushumna, the time best suited to Yoga: consisting of prânâyâma or concentration, which latter is also a third sense of the word sandhyâ.

directed his beneficent eye to me and began to describe knowledge (jnâna) and Karma in the following manner.

There are two ways of knowledge enjoined by the *Veda*, and followed by the enlightened, viz., the constructive and the destructive. The duties peculiar to each varna and âshram, involving in their performance certain desire and will as motives, constitute the constructive part, always resulting in reïncarnation. That which is done without the said motives and merely from a sense of duty, simply because it is of the form of religious injunction, and with proper jnâna (knowledge) constitutes the destructive part of duties enjoined by the *Veda* (they being destructive of the bonds of ignorance and evil). The destructive part is so-called because it destroys all possibility of reïncarnation, whereas the constructive always keeps the ball rolling by fresh additions to Karma. Absolution, O Gârghi! is secure in the hand of one who, at all places, performs, in due form, and without any motive of desire or will, all that has been enjoined as peculiar to each varna and âshram. And he has heaven within his grasp who performs the same only *with* motive. Therefore all afraid of the evils of this world should follow out, in due form and manner, all that is enjoined by the *Veda*, but always without any motive or desire, and with proper knowledge. Men born in the three varnas, of mothers belonging to any of them but always of fathers not of a varna inferior to that of the mother,* are indebted each to the gods, pitries and rishees, from their very birth. These debts should be discharged respectively in the reverse order, by devotion to Brahman (*i. e.* the *Veda*, learning and teaching the *Veda*), by producing sons (to attend to shrâddhas), and by sacrifices. The duties peculiar to one's âshram should, at the same time, be observed with due care. The Brâhmana is entitled to all the four âshrams, laid down in the sruti (*i. e.*, the *Veda*), and the Kshatriya, Vaisya, and Sudra, to three, two, and one, respectively. Having studied the *Vedas* with the angas, and learnt the way of the wise, the Bramachârî must become a snâtaka (*i. e.*, perform the ceremony called samâvartana at the end of the term of study), take to wife a girl well accomplished, belonging to his varna, and beget a son of her. The grihastha (householder) should continue to worship the fire (which, invoked as witness of the marriage-pledge, has subsequently been installed as an object of daily worship in the family), in company with his wife. He may then retire alone into a forest, (*i. e.*, become a vânaprastha) situate in some lonely spot, and well-provided with fruits, roots, and water; and there

* Such births are called *anuloma*, the reverse being called *pratiloma* and not recognized as within the legitimate pale of the *varnas*.

continue to worship the said fire, concentrating all attention on the inner self. Then having lighted the flame of the internal fire at the altar of the external, he should at once renounce the latter and everything else besides, and enter into sannyâsa (the fourth ashram) performing everything peculiar to that order, till he shall fully realize the self within as the All. The Kshatriya should pass through the first three âshrams, stopping at sannyâsa, and the Vaisya through the first two, stopping at vânaprastha. The Sudra should always continue in the Grihasthâsrama, rendering such service as he can to the other varnas and âshrams; though some sages allow the Sudra to go through Brahmacharya as well. All born in the three varnas in the regular (*i. e.* anuloma) manner belong to the varna of their parents. Those born of Sudra parents should follow the duties peculiar to this class as enjoined by the enlightened. Everyone, in whatever âshram, should follow out with proper exactness and care, the duties peculiar to their order, without any motive either by desire or will. These being the general injunctions of Scripture, it behooves you also, O best of yogins! to observe the duties peculiar to your order, and walk in the way of knowledge with due faith. Having explained to me in this manner, the whole of the essence of Karma (duties) and jnâna (knowledge), together with the form of yoga, Brahmâ went into trance, having centered himself in the Self. Hearing these words of Yâjñavalkya, Gârgi carried away by joy, applied again to the best of sages, the treasure of the wealth of ansterity and penance, in the presence of the whole assembly.

“The absolution described by you is attained by observing with jnâna (knowledge) all karmas (duties) enjoined by the *Veda*; be pleased therefore, O best of yogins! to describe the nature of jnâna.”

Ynâjñavalkya, the treasure of austerities, being thus asked by his beloved, directed his kind eye towards her and began to describe the nature of knowledge. Know that knowledge is none other than that called yoga with all its eight subdivisions. Yoga, in fact, is the union of Jiva and Paramâtman (the lower and higher selves). I describe the subdivisions of this yoga, which, O Gargi! do thou with all the sages present hear attentively. 1, Yama (self-control); 2, Niyama (observance), Âsana (postures); 4, Prânâyama (regulation of the breath); 5, Pratyâhâra (abstraction); Dhâranâ (contemplation); 7, Dhyâna (concentration), and Samâdhi (trance)—these are the subdivisions of yoga. The first and second consist each of ten different things. Of postures eight are known to be very good, whereof three are the best. Regulation of the breath is of three kinds; and abstraction of five. Contemplation, too, is

fivefold, and contemplation has six kinds, of which three are the best. Trance is of one kind only. Each of these may be thus fully described.

The first, self-control, consists of non-killing, truthfulness, abstinence from theft, continence, sympathy, straightforwardness, patience, temperance, and cleanliness. The not giving the least pain, by act, word, or thought, to any being at any time, is described as non-killing by the wise. The killing incidental to sacrifice and abhichâra (certain acts, sacrifices, etc., performed with the object of destroying a foe or any similar desire) sanctioned by the *Veda* is no killing, though the cause of pain to the victims. Truthfulness is that quality of speech which makes it beneficial to all, and at the same time not removed from facts. Abstinence from theft consists, according to the precept of sages knowing the essence of things, in entire indifference to the wealth or possessions of another, in act, word, and thought. The entire abandonment of the idea of sexual pleasure in act, word, and thought, at all places and times, is called continence. This continence is possible to those who have retired to a forest; but even in the case of householders the same rule of continence is well preserved, say the wise, if it is not violated but with due ceremony* only on certain occasions. The privilege of Brahmacharya (with though meaning the period of study, means also continence as implied in the very idea of studentship in ancient India) is allowed to the Kshatriyas and Vaisyas as well, and some of the learned would extend it to well-to-do Sudras, also. But in the case of a Sudra the Brahmacharya is well-fulfilled by mere service, for in all cases, service of one's guru is equal to full Brahmacharya.

Five persons are declared to be the gurus of men of all the varnas, by the *Veda*, viz: mother, father, teacher, maternal uncle, and father-in-law, and the first three of these are said to be the principal, though chief of all is only the teacher, the knower of truth. Such an one alone, the best of men, knowing Brahman, and observing his daily duties with care, should be daily served with devotion and satisfied in every manner by his pupils. Sympathy is the desire to good to all, by act, word, and thought, in all

* This ceremony consists of certain sacrifices, etc., at the first physical manifestation of puberty. But on all subsequent occasions the first four nights are to be avoided, and from the fifth to the sixteenth the husband and wife may meet, according to rules as to days of the month, etc., as described in a previous paper on the *Garuda Purana*. It was there not mentioned what regulates the sex of the child. Aryan physiology believes that the sex of the child follows the sex of the mother or the father according to physiological differences.

matters whether enjoined or not. The being ever one whether in the performance of constructive duties or destructive, is called straightforwardness. The learned masters of the *Veda* call that forbearance which consists of the sameness of mind in all conditions, agreeable or otherwise. Patience is maintaining the equilibrium of the mind in adversity or prosperity, in union with, or separation from, friends, relatives, or others. Temperance is preserved by a Muni if he partakes only of eight mouthfuls during a day, and by a forrester if he partakes of sixteen, and by a grihastha if he partakes of double the last number. The smallness of the quantity of simple food (and drink) taken, constitutes what is called temperance. Cleanliness is of two kinds: external and internal, the former being accomplished by washing, etc., the latter by purity of mind. Purity of mind is acquired by the observance of religious duty or by knowledge of Atman; and these, O sinless one! could best be explained by the father or by the teacher. Knowing it to be so, all desirous of supreme bliss, should respect the guru full of knowledge and learning, above all, by thought, word, and act.

CHAPTER II.

Penance, Contentment, Faith, Charity, Worship, Study, Modesty, Prudence, Repetition, and Vows—these are the observances, thus separately described: (1) The subjugation of flesh under Krchhra, Chândrâyana, etc., observed according to prescribed forms* is the highest of all penance. (2) That state of the mind which consists of entire internal peace and purity consequent on satisfaction at whatever may every day be obtained, is called the happy virtue of contentment. (3) Faith is full trust in the prescribed limits and results of religion and irreligion. (4) Charity is the giving away with faith and goodness, to the poor, wealth honestly acquired. (5) Worship consists in adoring according to one's means, and with devotion and mental tranquility, the god Buddha or Vishnu, or any other deity; or it may be fully accomplished by keeping the body away from killing (as described before), the heart away from hatred, and the speech free from falsehood. (6) Study is the attending lectures (Kathâ) on the

* Krchhra, of the simplest kind, is fully carried out by taking only the milk, urine, dung, curds, and *ghee* of a cow on the previous day, and observing an entire fast on the next. The Chândrâyana is fulfilled by taking only one mouthful as large as a peacock's egg on the first day of the bright fortnight, and increasing the food by one mouthful every day till the 15th, then decreasing it for the whole of the dark fortnight in the same manner, and observing a fast on the last day of complete obscuration of the moon.

Vedânta. This is allowed to the Kshatriyas along with the Brâhmanas; and there are some who extend the privilege to such of the Vaisyas as are men of wealth and character. If a Sudra or a woman has risen far enough in the scale of purity, he or she may attend lectures on the *Puranas* and fulfil this part of observance in that manner. (7) Modesty consists in abstaining from those acts which are declared irreligious by the *Veda* or indecorous and indiscreet by the world, and any implication wherein naturally inheres a sense of shame. (8) Faith in everything prescribed by the Scriptures is prudence. (9) Repetition is the constant study, in some prescribed manner, of some mantra given by a guru or derived from some source not other than the *Veda*. The revising the *Veda*, *Sutra*, *Purâna*, *Itihâsa*, once studied, is also equal to the said repetition. Repetition is of two kinds, mental and verbal. The latter again is of two kinds, muttered or loud. Mental also has two varieties, mere mental repetition, or mental repetition with concentration. The two kinds of verbal repetition bear fruit a thousand-fold, but the mental transcends even this a thousand-fold. The second kind of mental repetition, however, is a thousand times more powerful than simple mental repetition. But in all cases the mantra should not be heard by any low man, for otherwise it bears no result. That repetition alone which is carried on with the attention fixed on its Rishi, Chhandas, and Devatâ,* O best of women! becomes immensely fruitful. The mantra should, in the first instance, have been given by a guru of his free grace and wish; then alone could it be utilized, under permission, for any of the three ends of mundane existence—religious merit, wealth, or desire. (The tenth observance, Vows, is curiously enough not given in the manuscript at hand. It consists, as other works inform us, of making any particular rule for one's guidance in regard to a particular thing or action. If the rule is not limited by conditions of time and place, it is called a Great Vow).

CHAPTER III.

Hear the beautiful Gârgi! I begin to describe henceforward the various postures. These are Svastika, Gomukha, Padma, Vira, Sinha, Bradra, Mukta, Mayura, which I describe to thee separately as follows:

* Every mantra is an invocation which controls a particular force [god] of nature. It is first discovered by some sage, who alone, with his descendants, knows the real method of its use. And the mantra is besides chanted in a particular way in order to be really powerful. These three are respectively the Devatâ, Rishi, and Chhandas of a mantra.

[*N. B.*—The remainder of the chapter, except the last four lines, is omitted until the reception of the transliteration thereof, which, when received from India, will be printed in a subsequent issue; and hereafter all similar matter will be given in transliteration and not in English.—*ED.*]

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The student should begin *Prânâyâma* after having cleared the nervous system of all impurities, by Forbearance, Observance, and Posture, as described hitherto.

CHAPTER IV.

Hearing this address of the learned *Yâjnavalkya*, the fortunate lady, full of austerity, spoke again in the assembly. “O lord! O teacher, explain to me the method of clearing the nervous system in all its details; and tell me by what means the purification can be accomplished. Tell me also the way in which the nerves are distributed, their rise and connections, not omitting to explain the method of concentration as well. Where and what, O lord! is the center of the whole system? and how many are the vital airs in the body? what places they occupy? and what functions they perform? O best of men! tell me whatever in this line is worth knowing about the internal structure of the body; there is no one besides you who can explain all this to us.” Being thus requested by his wife the sage meditated for a moment, and fixing his eye upon *Gârgi* began as follows: The body of every man is 96 finger-breadths long as measured by the digits of one’s own hand; and *Prâna* extends twelve digits beyond the body. Some regard the extension of *Prâna* to be 14 digits, but those who know say that it is not more than 12. That wise man who, by the fire produced within himself by force of *Yoga*, is able to extend or reduce the breath, is the best of all knowers of *Brahman*, and is the only one of men deserving the highest worship. O best of the twice-born! subdue the breath by force of the fire produced by the practice of *Yoga*. The place of this flame, as bright as melted gold, is of the form of a triangle in men; and in beasts and birds it has the shape respectively of a square and a circle. A fine jet continues to burn in the middle of this figure, and the fire is never extinguished. I may further tell you where in the body this place is situated.

* * * * *

In animals it

is in the middle of the heart, and in birds in the middle of the mouth. The central pivot of the human body is nine digits above this center, and is a block four digits in height and an equal num-

ber of digits in length. It has the shape of an egg, and from it all the nerves take primarily their rise. The central point of this pivot is the navel, and the principal plexus lies under it. The pivot has twelve branches, and it is indeed the main stay of the whole nervous system. The Jiva governed by good Karma or bad is bound to this point, like a spider enmeshed in a net of threads. The Prâna or Svava is rooted in this principal plexus, the seat of Jiva, who always remains entirely mingled with this Prâna. Above this point is the place of the Kundalini,* across and above the navel. It takes eight turns round the navel, and lies about the central pivot, obstructing the normal (upward) passage of air, as also of food and drink taken in. The root of the Kundalini obstructs the passage to the Brahmaraṇḍhra, and it is only the fire enkindled by the Apâna during Yoga-practice that moves it away from this point. The Kundalini, then, flashes like lightning or like a female snake just awakened, and straightway rises up to the heart, and the breath enters at once through the Sushumnâ. The Sushumnâ is a particular nerve situated in the middle of the central pivot from which all the nerves derive their source. Vârûni, Pusâ, Hastijivhâ, Yasasvini, Alambusâ, Gândhâri, Kuhu, Sarsvati, Visvodari, Asvakarnâ, Sankhini, Idâ, Pingalâ, and Sushumnâ are the fourteen principal nerves, but the last three are generally of importance, the most important being only one—the Sushumnâ. It is the stay and support of all, and is the only way to absolution, being situated, O Gârghi! in the middle of the central pivot. It extends by way of the spinal cord to the head, and its end in the head corresponds with what is called the Brahmaraṇḍhra, the door of absolution. It is one unmanifest, and is personified as the consort of Visnu. Idâ and Pingalâ are situated on the left and right side of the Sushumnâ, and are governed respectively by the moon and the sun. The moon is related to the Tamoguna (gross property of matter), and the sun to Rajoguna (life and energy). All that partakes of the poisonous belongs to the sun, all that partakes of immorality to the moon, and these two luminaries are the support of everything; they are, in fact, the time to which all things bow. I now declare to thee the secret of time, by informing thee that the Sushumnâ is the devourer of time. On the two sides of the Sushumnâ are situated the Sarsvati and the Kuhu; and the Gândhâri and Hastijivhâ lie at the back, and near the side of the Idâ. From the middle of the Hastijivhâ begin the Kuhu and the Visvodari, and the Yasasvini and Vârûni begin from the middle of Kuhu, the first of the last two being situated between Pusâ and Sarsvati on the one hand, and

* The vital electric force.

Gândhâri and Sarsvati on the other. The Alambusa rises from the middle of the central pivot; and the Kuhu extends in front of the Susumnâ, downward to the secret organ. The Yasasvini extends up to the toe of the right foot, and the Pingalâ extends, O beloved one! upward to the right nostril. The Pusâ extends similarly up to the right eye, being just behind the Pingalâ; and the Yasasvini, O Gârî! sends an offshoot up to the right ear. The Sarsvati goes upward to the tip of the tongue, and the Asvakarnâ and Sankhiri also take an upward course. The Gândhâri spreads itself up to the left eye, behind the Idâ which extends up to the left nostril. The Hastijivhâ extends to the toe of the left foot; and the Visvodari lies in the mouth. The Alambusa, O fortunate one! is the source of breath, and rises upward. These are the principal nerves, but numerous others rise and rerise from them, and extend all over the whole body like the minute lines in a lotus-leaf or a leaf of the Asvattha. O treasure of austerities! through these nerves course the ten breaths or airs, viz. : Prâna, Apâna, Samâna, Udâna, Vyâna, Nâga, Kurma, Krkala, Devadatta, and Dhananjaya! Of these, the first five are very important, and even of them the most important are Prâna and Apâna. The chief of all is, however, the Prâna, being the very life of all beings, and it is said to course between the mouth and the nose, in the heart, at the navel, and, as some add, even at the toes of the feet. Prâna encircles the Kundalini on all sides, and enlightens the place of its abode, like a lamp. The Vyâna occupies the ears and eyes, the waist and ankles, the sense of smell, the neck, and the shins. The Apâna is described by some to reside in the rectum, the secret organ, the thighs, the chest, the stomach, the testes, the lower part of the waist, and the navel. The Apâna, being ever present at the point where burns the fire in the . . . —the point which is the centre of the whole system, shines in all the places above mentioned, like a lamp. The Udâna fills all the joints, and the hands as well as the feet; whereas the Samâna pervades all parts of the body, and carries the essence of nourishment to all parts of the system, by identifying itself with the vital fire, and thus coursing freely through all the 72,000 nerves. It is, indeed, Samâna alone that pervades the whole body with the vital fire (electricity?). The five airs beginning with Nâga are situate respectively in the integument, the bones, etc. The Prâna in the mouth separates water and the substance of food from the pulp into which everything is reduced before deglutition; and holds the water above the vital fire, and the food over the water. Having accomplished this, it joins itself with the Apâna, and rises up with it to the point where the said fire burns. The flame burns brisk and bright by

the power of the Apâna, and heats the water fully charged with Prana throughout. The water being heated, the food which floats over it immediately yields its substance. All superficial water turns into perspiration and urine, and ghee (clarified butter) and similar substances go to form the ingredients of blood, the rest of the food being thrown out as fœces. The whole of this process is accomplished by Prâna. The substance is distributed to the nervous system by the Samâna, which pervades the whole body in the form of the vital air. The fœces, etc., are discharged by the nine orifices of the body, being pushed out by the several breaths. Inhalation, exhalation, coughing, are all functions of Prâna, whereas the discharge of fœces, etc., is the function of Apâna. Udâna carries nourishment to the parts, and it is Samâna that nourishes the whole. The uprising of the breath is the work of the Nâga, whereas sleep, etc., are produced by Kurma. Thirst and hunger are results of the action of Krkala. Having thus known the constitution and arrangement of the nervous system, as also the position and action of the vital airs, the student should proceed to purify the nerves by proper method.

SAVITRI.

WOMEN in India are dependent on males, but this dependence means not, in theory or practice, anything like the slavery it is often represented to be. The male too is, in a sense, equally or, perhaps, more dependent on the female. But apart from the facts of the case as they may appear to any mind, it is more convenient, and theoretically more correct, to discuss the relative position of the sexes from the stand-point of the sacred texts. The husband is there declared to be the master and teacher of the wife, who in her turn is emphatically pronounced to be the god and object of worship, not only of the husband, but of the whole family. The whole question of rights is thus presented in a nutshell, and the essence of its solution need not be sought beyond these narrow limits. The question of the relation of sexes is physically, and therefore mentally and morally, solved already by nature; and in the quality which subsists under, and is constantly resolved into, unity, nature has sought only to unite the positive and negative sides of her harmonious action into a complete whole. Love and all that belongs to the heart make up the woman, while physical strength and all that belongs to the head are embodied in the male. And this, generally speaking, is as it ought to be in the economy of nature. Evidently, then, the office

of either is clearly defined, and the question of rights or freedom is a superfluous one. For though, morally, every being is as free as the air to choose its own way of right and happiness, physically and even psychologically the sexes are so inter-dependent that freedom in the sense of encroaching upon either the natural position or the functions of the other is sure to become a fruitful source of physical strength is the natural guardian of the female, who, as the type and idol of the sentiment that melts away selfishness into the distinctionless bliss of altruism, is the goddess that commands absolute worship. Indeed, love itself were impossible but for this wise arrangement of nature.

This, briefly expressed, is the view taken by the Aryan *Shâstras*. I shall take occasion to corroborate and amplify it by quotations and explanations some other time. The object of drawing attention to these few particulars is to constitute them and what follows, as but a short introduction to the account of Sâvitri which I wish to lay before you in this paper. As it is the male whose business it is to produce and acquire, the acquisition of religious merit is also a part, and the principal one, of his special functions. The wife, as his better half, shares in his spiritual as in his temporal goods by complete devotion and engrossing love, which, in fact, make up the whole of her moral and physical duty. The wife, therefore, has no separate religious rites to perform, but, at the same time, the sacred texts lay it down that the husband cannot acquire spiritual merit* without having a wife to give, as it were, the holy sanction of love to all his acts. The wife therefore performs no vedic sacrifice, nor any separate religious ceremony whatever. She attends no religious lectures† (Kathas), nor does she frequent holy places and temples. Her sole object of worship and devotion is her husband; but this does not mean that she remains confined within the four walls of a solitary house. If she finds time enough from her family duties she is at liberty, under her husband's permission and guidance, to observe certain Paurânika ceremonies, and even to attend religious lectures. The Paurânika observances kept by women all over India to the present day are known by the name of Vratas; and every Vrata has peculiar ceremonies accompanying its observance,

* This injunction does not apply to the last spiritual act, viz.: Sannyâsa, renunciation of the world and complete unification with Brahman.

† The religious lecturer being an inseparable feature of every city, town, and village in India. He generally reads and translates to the audience some religious book every evening in some holy place. He is maintained by his hearers.

all backed by some suitable parable or anecdote to rouse the heart and strengthen the resolution. I have here selected one of such Vratas, viz.: the Sâvitrivrata, the observance sacred to Sâvitri. This occurs only once a year, generally about July, and all married females observe it with a fast, devoting the day to religious worship and meditation on the account of Sâvitri.

Asvapati, a powerful potentate of India, had no issue. Though education and the natural largeness of his heart had taught the King to look upon this misfortune with perfect indifference, the Queen, with the true instinct of a woman, would lay out the whole of her heart in earnest devotion and vows of various description. Her prayer was indeed heard; and the happy pair was blessed with the birth of a daughter. She was named Sâvitri with due ceremony, and the King spared no pains in giving her a liberal education. The great beauty of her form was richly set off by the very remarkable development of her form and character. As she advanced in beauty and education, she approached that period of maturity when the stay of a girl at her father's may, as the *Shâstras* have it, involve the family at any moment in the deadliest sin. The loving father and mother were therefore naturally anxious to give the young girl away to some suitable husband.

It so chanced that on an auspicious day Sâvitri went out visiting some of the celebrated paragons of virtue, belonging to her own sex, who resided in the forest at hand and while on her way back witnessed a scene at once heartrending and pitiful. There lay by the wayside, under cover of what by the merest courtesy was called a hut, a blind old man, supported in the arms of an old lady—for even the rags in which she was clad could not prevent her from appearing as such—with her eyes bent down in dejection and despair; and a young man of supreme beauty standing in mute agony beside the pair, with magnanimity and sorrow painted on every lineament of his superb countenance. The young damsel at once stopped to inquire, and the interest she felt in the group in general and the young man in particular melted her heart at the sorrowful plight in which she found them. Her heart nearly burst when she learnt that the old man and his wife were once the King and Queen of Avanti, and that the interesting young man was their only son. Their enemies had turned them out of the country, and mere chance had led them to the spot. The sudden severity of the shock produced on hearing of this freak of fortune transformed the emotion of sympathy which stirred the innocent heart of the young girl into absorbing love; and she mentally resolved to help the distressed family by actually becoming one of them. She resolved to marry the young man before her, and

turned away without saying a word to hide the tears that came up in her eyes. The measure of love is indeed the sacrifice it induces.

She retraced her steps home with all possible haste, and acquainted her mother with the resolve she had taken. The mother never likes that her daughter should be wedded to mere rags, nor does the father ever reconcile himself to the idea of bowing to an inferior. The father and mother therefore set themselves strongly against the matter, and offered to hold a large public gathering of princes of various rank to enable Sâvitri to make her choice from them. But the devoted young girl would yield to nothing; neither persuasion nor threats would make her change her resolve, for, said she, "Marriage is always one and indissoluble; I would not pollute myself by a second marriage." The whole family was in great distress, and none knew what could persuade the girl away from her obstinate resolution, when Nârada, the sage, ever wandering throughout the universe, dropped down from Heaven. The King and Queen drew some hope from the confidence they had in the tact and learning of the sage, and hastened therefore, after performing the ceremony of his reception, to disburden the whole of their mind in regard to Sâvitri. Nârada undertook to bring the child round, and tried every possible means in his power to persuade her to change her mind. He went even to the length of revealing to her the whole truth about Satyavâna, her would-be husband, informing her that he had only a year before him in this world. He tried to work upon her fears by picturing to her the appalling miseries of eternal widowhood; but nothing could prevail upon the iron resolve of the sacrificing young woman. The parents of Sâvitri, seeing that there was no other alternative, married her to Satyavâna, and sent her off to his hut in the forest.

The pride of Asvapati was somewhat flattered when he learnt the parentage of his son-in-law; and though his resources were not sufficient to restore the blind prince of Avanti to his dominions, he offered to place every means of comfort and happiness within easy reach of his son-in-law by way of dowry. But Sâvitri would not accept anything likely to interfere with the full accomplishment of her complete devotion and self-sacrifice, which alone, in her opinion, were sufficient to carry happiness and comfort into that dark abode of poverty and misery. She tried her very best to please her aged father and mother-in-law. Her husband was to her as dear as life itself, and he in his turn reciprocated her love from the inmost depths of his heart. On the one hand, the intensity of love was enhanced by the sense of self-sacrifice; and on the other, the feeling was fully reciprocated from a depth

rendered more deep by gratitude and sympathy. Devotion gave her strength; and ever cheerful and happy in her husband's unmitigated regard and love, she undertook to personally carry out all the minute details of the household with ease and tact, which made it appear that the change from the palace to the hut was imperceptible and even agreeable.

The family maintained itself on the scanty recompense which Satyavâna obtained every evening for a bundle of wood, which he felled with his own hand in the neighboring forest. One evening the youth found that the family was short of supplies, and if he did not at once repair to his daily routine in the forest, his wife and parents must go without supper. He took up his axe and wended his way towards the woods. Sâvitri regarded this accident as an evil omen, and remembering the limit of Satyavâna's life as indicated by Nârada, prepared herself to bear him company. It was growing dark, and the clouds were gathering thick and fast in the horizon, adding to the gloom of the darkness, relieved at times by flashes of lightning followed by peals of thunder. Satyavâna would not allow Sâvitri to follow him, but she, on her part, would take no refusal. They went out together, and at some considerable distance from their habitation they succeeded in gathering some edible roots and fruits. Satyavâna then climbed a big tree to fell some wood and provide himself against the morrow. The rain began to descend in torrents, and after a minute Satyavâna got down with great difficulty, complaining of severe headache and pain in the stomach. Sâvitri knew the meaning of all these forebodings, and, gathering all her courage, she made her husband lie down upon her lap, soothing him with fond caresses and words of encouragement. The rain continued to increase, and Satyavâna breathed his last in a few minutes. Did she shed tears of sorrow and love? A flash of lightning would have revealed her as the very image of resolution and fury, sitting with the very image of death on her lap, and determined to defy the messengers of Yama* standing ready to take the soul of her departed husband away to the next world. And, indeed, such was the power of supreme love, complete devotion, and entire purity, that the messengers dared not advance a step towards her.

When she did not heed their threats, prayers, and entreaties, Yamorâja himself appeared on the spot, and, saluting this chaste image of love, began to explain to her the transitoriness of life and the vanity of everything mundane, with the view of persuading her to deliver up the ghost of Satyâvana. Sâvitri agreed to surrender her husband on the condition that she might be allowed to accom-

* The God of Death.

pany him wherever he went. The god was greatly pleased by this act of supreme devotion, and requested her to name any boon short of the life of her husband. The Sati* thought a moment, and prayed that her father, Asvapati, might be blessed with a male issue. Yama granted this request, and began to proceed on his way with the ghost of Satyâvana, when, lo! on looking back, he found Sâvitri following him in mute and cheerful resignation. Yama tried to dissuade her, and explained to her the immediate necessity of returning to the aged parents of her husband and consoling them in this bereavement. She then asked for a compromise, and asked Yama to take her instead of her husband. Being highly satisfied with the sincere devotion of the woman, the god asked her to name a second boon, short, of course, of the life of her husband. Hereupon the Sati prayed that her father-in-law be restored the use of his eyesight. Yama granted this request and began to walk on, but Sâvitri continued to follow him. Yama again tried to put her off, but she said rather sternly, "O god! thou goest under the name of Dharma (duty), and it is strange thou knowest not that the wife can never live apart from her husband". The god, greatly pleased with the great purity and chastity of the woman, asked her to name any boon short of her husband's life, and retrace her way home. She now contrived in an indirect manner to ask the very thing prohibited, and prayed that she might be the mother of a hundred sons. The god smiled, and restored Satayâna to life. The wife and husband were immediately locked in the arms of each other, and threw themselves at the feet of Yama, who blessed the happy pair and disappeared.

It was daybreak when the loving pair entered the hut, where the old man and his wife were keeping an anxious vigil in thoughts of Satyavâna and Sâvitri. Satyavâna understood the whole strength of his wife when he saw that his father had regained the use of his vision. In course of time Asvapati had a son, and Satyavâna and Sâvitri also were the happy parents of a hundred male issues. With the help thus providentially placed in his hands Satpavâna succeeded in wresting his birthright from his enemies, and lived in Avanti in great peace and happiness with Savitri and his aged parents.

The observance of the fast sacred to Sâvitri, and hearing the account of her life, have indeed the virtue of adding to the life of one's husband.

MANILAL N. DVIVEDI.

* Literally a chaste woman; but the word is used almost as a proper name for any woman who in word, act, and thought never has thought or does think of any one other than her husband before or after death.