

THE CHARIOT OF GOD

or

The DHARMA RATH

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English Exposition by:--

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DEDICATION

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED TO MY BELOVED LORD RAM

I dedicate this Book to Lord Sri Ram who is my dearest of dear, most beloved, the essence of my life and being, and for whom, and for whose pleasure, and on whose behest, and on whose divine mission, this book is dedicated.

Nothing that I write is of my own creation. It is the Lord who is getting it done. So I deserve no credit. However, being an ordinary man like the rest of us, I may have committed errors, and for those I beg forgiveness. I hope this book will help to continue the great tradition of singing the glories of the different aspects of same indivisible one Divinity in order to meet diverse needs of the Soul, the Spirit, one such being to find peace and happiness amidst the surrounding turmoil of the world by being able to spend some time in the thoughts of the Divine Being, the same 'Parmatma', the same Lord known by different names in different tongues.

I submit this effort at the holy feet of my beloved Lord Ram, and surely also to Lord Hanuman who was very dear to the Lord, with this humble little prayer that comes to my lips: 'Lord God; Glorious and Blessed be Thy Name. I yield Thee my most hearty thanks and reverential gratitude that Thou hast given me the honour and the privilege and the opportunity to serve Thee and fulfill Thy desire to spread Thine Good Word for the good and welfare of the human kind through the Books Thou hast got written through these humble hands of mine. And for that mercy and graciousness of Thee, I shall ever and for ever remain Thine grateful and thankful and obliged.'

"He leadeth me! O blessed tho't!
O words with heav'nly comfort fraught!
What-e'er I do, wher-e'er I be,
Still 'tis God's hand that leadeth me!" [A Hymn by: Joseph Henry Gilmore in 1862.]

Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia
Author

THE CHARIOT OF GOD

or

The DHARMA RATH

Introductory

The word 'Rath' means a Chariot, and 'Dharma' refers to all that is righteous, conscientious, good, auspicious, noble, proper, moral and ethical in this world. Dharma incorporates in its definition all the glorious virtues that inspire a man to walk stridently on the righteous path, overcoming all obstacles and hindrances that he faces in life and from the world so as to achieve his avowed goals, both the temporal and the spiritual, successfully and easily.

Even as a brave warrior can defeat his formidable enemy when he rides into battle astride a strong, sturdy and invincible war-chariot, a person is able to vanquish all the seemingly insurmountable spiritual and moral obstacles symbolizing the countless enemies that he faces in this mortal world if he has the grand and divine virtues represented by the Chariot of God. It is this symbolic Chariot which will not enable him to not only become immune to suffering from countless miseries, frustrations, torments and horrors of life in this world but also show him the path to maintain his calm and poise and attain victory in the final reckoning. These magnificent virtues are metaphors for the different parts of the 'Chariot of God' because together they help the person to build a strong character and acquire a formidable foundation that aids in his rising above the mundane and acquire godly characteristics and attributes that make him an exalted and honourable being who is as worthy and adorable as God himself.

Like it is impossible to defeat the Lord God who is virtuousness and holiness personified, a person who acquires the auspicious, righteous, noble, moral and ethical virtues as symbolized by the Chariot of God also acquires immunity from the vicious attack from all the denigrating impulses originating in this material world which are ever eager to cast their dark shadow of negativity and delusions upon a person, pulling him down in the bog of depression, dejection, frustration, misfortunes, miseries, grief, pain, torments and tribulations.

It ought to be clearly understood here at the outset that the scriptures use metaphors and symbolism to explain certain esoteric principles, and therefore wisdom lies in their right interpretation and not taking them too literally. For instance, the 'enemy' that one is said to face and conquer in this world with the help of this Chariot of God, also known as the 'Dharma Rath', is not a physical enemy that a warrior faces in the battle-field, but is represented by the numerous temporal and spiritual problems that a man faces in his day-to-day life that can be very easily and comfortably overcome if one inculcates the grand

virtues and follows the eclectic principles of conduct and thought as described by virtues of the metaphor of this ‘Chariot of God’.

There are not one or two but countless symbolic enemies that a man faces in this world. A powerful army of a king can defeat a physical enemy in the battle-field, but there are so many spiritual and moral enemies that are invisible and subtle, eating the creature from within much like cancer that gnaws and nibbles at the tissues of the body from the inside and make it hollow. External dressing won’t cure the problems of the tissues suffering from cancer just as pretensions of holiness and righteousness in the external world will not help the spiritual welfare of the aspirant.

What then are the symbolic enemies that a man faces in life? The Upanishads have enumerated them. Let us now read about the enemies first. And then we shall read about this fabulous Chariot of God which will enable a man facing such formidable enemy to subdue and conquer them.

These so-called ‘enemies’ are the various faults or moral shortcomings that taint the spiritual glory of a living being. They are collectively called ‘Vikaar’. The Vikaars (also spelt as ‘Vikars’) are the numerous faults, shortcomings, imperfections, drawbacks or errors and blemishes in the character of a creature that cast a shadow on the otherwise ideal, immaculate and perfect nature of the subject under consideration. These Vikaars are like the dark shadow of the earth that eclipses the bright disc of the beautiful moon during the lunar eclipse. In other words, they prevent the original beauty and shine of the subject to come to the fore by casting a dark veil of evil tendencies and traits over its surface like the case of the solar eclipse when the moon prevents the brilliant splendour of the sun from being viewed from earth by coming in between the sun and the earth during the solar eclipse.

The *Varaaha Upanishad* of the Krishna Yajur Veda, in its Canto 3, verse no. 24, asserts that the best method to get rid of the numerous Vikaars is to burn them or eliminate them as soon as they raise their head. To quote—“When worldly negative traits called the ‘Vikaars’ such as ‘Raag’ (attachments, infatuations, attractions and strong yearnings for anything or anyone in this material world) etc. are first observed to be making their appearance, and a wise man uses his discrimination and intelligence to burn (eliminate) them in their infancy, there is no scope of their developing into full blown traits (which would then be most difficult to uproot and a cause of must dismay and agony for the man later on) (24).”

The *Yogtattva Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse nos. 14-15 stress that Gyan or truthful knowledge of the reality as well as Yoga or meditation and contemplation are the two important tools to overcome the various faults that engulf the creature and cause a hindrance in his spiritual progress. To quote—

“Verse no. 14 = [The following verses describe the ways to overcome the different faults and shortcomings enumerated above.]

Now I shall narrate to you the ways by which one can overcome the negative effects of the various faults, shortcomings, impurities and imperfections that taint the Atma. Say, how can Gyan (knowledge and wisdom) devoid of Yoga (meditation and coordination of the theoretical metaphysical knowledge with its practical spiritual application) ever be useful and successful in providing stable and permanent Moksha (emancipation and salvation, liberation and deliverance) to the creature and his soul from the torments of the trap in which the Atma has been allowed to fall due to ignorance? (14).

[Note—Refer also to Mandal Brahmin Upanishad, 1/2/2.]

“Verse no. 15 = Similarly, Yoga devoid of Gyan also cannot bestow Moksha. Therefore, those desirous of obtaining Moksha (i.e. those who wish to break free from the cycle of birth and death and its attendant miseries and torments, those who wish to attain emancipation and salvation for their self) should strive to establish a synergy, a harmony between both Gyan and Yoga. That is, they should employ both Gyan and Yoga in a well coordinated and synchronized manner to reach their spiritual goal (15).”

In *Ram Charit Manas* of Tulsidas, Aranya kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 43, Lord Ram tells the celestial sage Narad that Kaam (passions) and Krodha (anger) and other such vices are common enemies of those who have Bhakti (devotion) as well as those who have Gyan (wisdom and enlightenment).

To quote—

जनहि मोर बल निज बल ताही । दुहु कहँ काम क्रोध रिपु आही ॥ ९ ॥

janahi mōra bala nija bala tāhī. duhu kaham̐ kāma krōdha ripu āhī. (9)

My devotee has only my strength as he is completely reliant upon me, whereas those who have Gyan rely upon their own strength for their spiritual welfare. But both of them have common enemy—such as Kaam (worldly passions, lust, yearnings etc.) and Krodha (anger). (9)

[Note—All the worldly corruptions and vices are like the enemy of a creature. They are compared to the ‘enemy’ because they will never allow the creature to rest in peace if they are not conquered and crushed.

In this context, sage Kaagbhusund tells Garud that “Bhakti is the spiritual victory that is obtained by protecting oneself with a shield symbolized by Vairagya (deep sense of renunciation, detachment, non-involvement and dispassion), and a sword symbolized by Gyan (wisdom, enlightenment and awareness of the Truth and Reality) to fight the enemy represented by Mada (arrogance, ego, hypocrisy etc.), Lobha (greed) and Moha (worldly attachments and infatuations) and other such vices”—refer: *Ram Charit Manas*, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 120 Kha.]

Then again, in *Ram Charit Manas*, Aranya kand, stanza no. 1 of Doha no. 43, Lord Ram reiterates that—

दो०. काम क्रोध लोभादि मद प्रबल मोह कै धारि। ४३।

kāma krōdha lōbhādi mada prabala mōha kai dhāri. [Doha no. 3/43]

“Kaam, Krodha, Lobha etc. are like a huge and formidable army of Mada.”

In *Ram Charit Manas*, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 121 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 28-37, saint-crow Kaagbhusund enumerates the following faults of the Mana (mind and heart) that torment the creature interminably—Moha (worldly attachments, infatuations, attractions) is the root of all troubles—refer: Chaupai line no. 29; Kaam (passions) is like the painful disease of rheumatism, Lobha (greed) is like cough, Krodh (anger) is like the hot bile which creates heartburn—refer: Chaupai line no. 30; the desire for gratifying the organs of the body, and to acquire things that are innumerable and unreachable, known as ‘Vishaya’ (temptations of the material sense objects of the world which have a tendency to attract their relevant sense organs towards them to seek gratification) and ‘Manorath’ (having desires for such objects and seeking self gratification), are like the disease that create a lot of pain—refer: Chaupai line no. 32; Mamta (attachments, infatuations with near and dear ones, with the body, the world and its material things and their charms, with one’s material possessions, etc.) is like eczema, Irshya (jealousy) is like its itch, Harsh and Vishaad (to respectively feel elated and happy, or depressed and dejected) are like the disease of the throat—refer: Chaupai line no. 33; to burn in jealousy and have envy towards other by watching them happy and prosperous is like the wasting disease, and wickedness, cunning, conceit, deceit, pretensions and other vices are like leprosy—refer: Chaupai line no. 34; Ahankar (false pride, ego, vanity) is like the formation of knots and stones or arthritis, Dambha, Kapat (deceit, conceit, pretension, fraud, wickedness, crookedness) and Maan (arrogance, hypocrisy, ego) are like the diseases of the nerves and veins—refer: Chaupai line no. 35; Trishna (severe yearning for the world and its material sense objects) is like dropsy; and the three types of desires (for son, wealth and honour) are like the ague fever—refer: Chaupai line no. 36; Matsarya (ill-will, jealousy, malice) and Avidya (lack of wisdom and discrimination) are like two types of severe fever—refer: Chaupai line no. 37.

The 19 Vikaars or faults—The *Yogshikha Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse nos. 10-11, lists the nineteen Vikaars or faults and shortcomings in the character and mental setup of the creature which prevents the latter from becoming one like the supreme Lord of creation because they act as drags on its spiritual upliftment, pulling the individual’s soul towards this mundane world rather than going higher to reach for the sky of spiritual achievement.

To quote—“Verse no. 10-11 = Some of the inherent faults, shortcomings, imperfections and drawbacks that mire the creature’s spiritual progress and pull him down from reaching the high of spiritual achievement that would make him equivalent to the

supreme Soul of creation are the following—Kaam (worldly desires, lust, passions etc. and the attending greed, yearnings and aspirations that they create in their wake), Krodh (anger, indignation, wrathfulness and a sense of vengeance when desired results are not obtained and aspirations are not fulfilled), Bhaye (fear, consternation and perplexities arising out of uncertainties, confusions and other factors such as fear from death and enemy, fear of failure and its attending shame, fear of sufferings of the body due to old age and diseases etc.), Moha (delusions that create a sense of attachment, infatuation and belonging to this material world and attractions for the illusive charms that its sense objects offer, along with their sensual pleasures and comforts), Lobha (greed, rapacity and yearnings), Mada (arrogance, false pride, hypocrisy and haughtiness), Raja (the quality of remaining engrossed in this world of material objects, to think that one is the doer of deeds and therefore is entitled to the rewards of these deeds etc.), the problems associated with the cycle of Janma and Mrityu (birth and death), Kaarpanya or Kripantaa (to be miserly and pinch-fisted, shallow-hearted and small-minded, frugal, illiberal, niggardly, avaricious, stingy), Shok (grief, sorrows, miseries and agonies of all kinds), Standra (sleepiness, lethargy, indolence, drowsiness, sluggishness and lack of alertness especially when doing some important or dangerous work requiring concentration of mind, vigilance and alertness of the faculties), Kshudha (hunger) and Pipasa (thirst) [10],-

-----Tirshnaa (thirst for acquiring and enjoying worldly things and desire for self gratification; greed, avarice and rapacity for the material world and its sense objects and their enjoyments), Lajja (shame at doing something dishonourable and ignominious) and its attendant fear of losing face, self respect, dignity and position in society, all sorts of Dukha and Vishaad (sorrows, miseries, agonies, grieving, lamentations, feeling of gloom and guilt, melancholy, sadness, depression, dejection, low-spirited etc.), and Harsh (the opposite of Dukha and Vishaad; the feeling of elation, happiness, joy, ecstasy and exhilaration; to feel glad, cheerful and joyous).

These are the shortcomings or imperfections that cast their shadow on the otherwise immaculate and perfect Atma of the creature, thereby miring it in a number of unwarranted problems and separating it from its pure nature. Until the creature is freed from their clutches or tainting effects, he cannot ever hope to become as pure as the Shiva, i.e. the creature cannot attain his true primary nature which is pristine pure, uncorrupt, truthful, auspicious, neutral and beautiful like the form of Shiva [11]. (10-11).”

How to *overcome* these Vikaars—The same Yogshikha Upanishad, in its Canto 1, verse no. 12-14 describes how to overcome them. To quote—

“Verse no. 12 = Therefore it is essential to get rid of these faults and destroy them. Now I shall tell you the ways to do so. Some say that only Gyan (knowledge) is the proper instrument to affect this riddance. But simply Gyan is not sufficient to do so; it cannot alone provide the mystical powers necessary to achieve success in self-realisation and understanding the pure nature of the pure conscious Atma (12).

“Verse no. 13 = Gyan devoid of Yoga is also equally incompetent to provide liberation and deliverance from the horrors of the above faults. Similarly, Yoga devoid of Gyan is

also equally incompetent to do so. In other words, they have to go hand in hand if the spiritual aspirant is serious about obtaining success in his spiritual venture (13).

“Verse no. 14 = Hence, those who are sincere about spiritual liberation and deliverance should painstakingly practice both Yoga and Gyan with equal steadfastness and diligence. [This is because if Gyan can enlighten a person about the Truth, follow up action in the way of practicing what has been learnt from the reading of the scriptures is equally important. Simple knowledge is as useless as mere blind pursuance of any line of action. The word ‘Yoga’ means to bring about a union or fusion of two entities. Hence, if Gyan can enlighten a man about the Truth and Reality of existence from the metaphysical perspective, Yoga would help him to actually reach this Truth and Reality by making diligent and synchronized efforts and maintaining a steady progress on this path. What good is any knowledge if it is not actually practiced, and how can one practice if one does not know the correct way and the detailed method to be followed?]

The importance of Gyan in attaining Brahm cannot be underestimated or undermined. The reason is as follows—The attainment of the supreme transcendental Truth known as Brahm as well as the reality about one’s own ‘true self’ as the pure conscious Atma is only possible by following the correct path and having the correct knowledge as to what they really mean and actually constitute of. This is known by the medium of Gyan and no other means. Therefore in a sense and metaphorically, Gyan and Brahm are synonymous with each other. If one has true spiritual knowledge or Gyan it is implied that he knows about Brahm and is a self-realised person. Others who pretend to have Gyan and do not have this knowledge are mere fraudulent pretenders and cunning imposters.

The way to such an eclectic and divine holy entity known as Brahm and the Atma is by the path of Gyan. It is holy path that is knowledge-based. [One cannot hope to reach one’s goal by following a wrong path that is not compatible to one’s aim. For example, one cannot hope to become a medical doctor by studying engineering. So if one wishes to become aware of Brahm, one has to follow the correct path that leads to it, and that path is acquisition of correct knowledge of what or who Brahm is. For, if one does not have the basic knowledge, erudition and wisdom, neither would he know what to do and how to reach his goal, nor would he recognize the symptoms of his progress in the correct direction, and whether or not he has actually obtained success when he has reached his spiritual goal of Brahm-realisation and self-realisation.]

Hence, primarily Gyan is the basic path or means to Brahm. It is Gyan which enlightens the spiritual aspirant as to what or who Brahm is, what methods are available to reach this divine spiritual goal of life, which option is the most suitable for the individual, what are the benefits of following this path and what rewards await him on attaining or reaching his spiritual destination known as Brahm (14).”

The faults that can act as detrimental factors for a creature’s spiritual well-being are listed in *Lord Krishna’s Geeta*, Canto 13, verse no. 7-11 as follows—

“A person in whom the following eighteen faults or negative traits are not present is said to have acquired Gyan—(1) Maan (ego, false sense of pride and superiority), (2) Dambha (deceit, conceit, pretensions, falsehood, crookedness, wickedness), (3) Hinsa (violence,

both mental and physical), (4) absence of Kshamaa (lacking forgiveness, tolerance and fortitude), (5) to be Tedhaa (not being straightforward, to be cunning, wicked, crooked and deceitful), (7) to lack the desire to serve one's Guru (moral preceptor, teacher and guide), (8) Apavitra (impurity of mind, heart, body, behaviour and thoughts), (9) Asthir (unsteadiness, fickleness, transient nature), (10) A-nigrihit Mana (lack of concentration and regulation of the mind and heart; lack of self control or self restraint), (11) Aasakti (infatuated with the desire to gratify the sense organs of the body; to be attracted by and attached to the material objects of senses in the world), (12) Ahankar (pride, haughtiness, arrogance, hypocrisy and vanity), (13) to seek happiness in a world dominated by birth and death, old age and its associated problems, countless sorrows and miseries, (14) to be engrossed in and infatuated with the household and its numerous relationships such as a family consisting of the son, the wife etc., (15) to have Mamta (sense of endearment and infatuation with the world and its material things, as well the household and its related attachments), (16) the feeling of either Harsha or Shoka (happiness or sorrows respectively) upon acquisition of anything or lose of another in this mortal mundane world, (17) lack of Bhakti (devotion for Lord God), and (18) not finding peace and happiness in when alone and free from all disturbances (i.e. not preferring solitude and serenity which is conducive to spiritual practices) but instead liking the company of people who prefer to remain indulgent in this material world of sense objects with great passion and longing.

The *Yogtattva Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse nos. 12-13 presents a list of faults or imperfections that afflict the creature and thereby taint its otherwise immaculate Atma. To quote—“[These two verses describe how and why the otherwise immaculate and non-dual single entity known as the Atma begins to appear to have numerous forms and exhibit as many varied characteristic traits as there are creatures of various genres and personalities, each so different from the other that no two are alike.]

Some of the numerous faults, weaknesses, imperfections, blemishes or shortcomings that affect the character of a Jiva (living being, the creature) and prevent his pure and uncorrupt self, the Atma, from retaining its primarily untainted, pristine pure and immaculate nature and form which is one and non-dual, called the 'Kaivalya' state of its existence, are the following—Kaam (worldly desires, passions and lust), Krodh (anger, indignation and wrath causing spite and ill-temper), Bhaya (fear and consternation), Moha (attractions, attachments, delusions, infatuations, longing), Mada (arrogance, haughtiness and intoxication), Raja (the second of the three qualities creating worldly tendencies and desires related to this world), Janma-Mritu (the cycle of birth and death and its attendant horrors and agonies), Kaarpanya or Kripantaa (being stringy and miserly, specially in the field of religious duties such as giving alms and making charities, or supporting such activities; the word would cover miserliness of thoughts in the sense that one does not give the correct knowledge to others out of jealousy), Shok (sorrows, grief and agonies), Tandra (being sleepy, indolent, lethargic, lazy, careless and showing lack of energy and alertness), Kshudha (hunger, both physical such as for food and the insatiable desire for sensual gratification, as well as emotional such as the insatiable longing for worldly things), Trisha (desires, wishes and yearnings pertaining to the world) [12], Trishna (thirst, ambition, avarice and greed; the word is usually used in the negative sense; it pertains to a man's insatiable desire and greed for worldly things),

Lajjaa (shame, dishonour, ignominy), the constant fear of Dukha and its attendant Vishaad (i.e. being constantly tormented by the fear of sufferance from sorrows and grief of all kinds and the attendant agonies and miseries, distresses and a sense of despair and hopelessness and haplessness), Harsha (to feel elated and happy, to be glad and joyous, to feel cheerful and exhilarated by certain situations which seem to be in favour, such as on receiving some good news), etc.

It is only when the creature is freed from the tainting effects of all these faults, blemishes, imperfections and shortcomings that the Atma can realise its one and non-dual pure conscious form, the state of existence called ‘Kaivalya’ (12-13).”

Now that said, we will read about the glorious virtues symbolized by the ‘Chariot of God’ or the ‘Dharma Rath’ that will enable a person to come out trumps in the face of the vicious attack from this hidden enemy.

This divine CHARIOT OF GOD, or the DHARMA RATH has been described in the classic epic Ram Charit Manas written by the great saint-poet-philosopher of India known as Goswami Tulsidas. This epic describes in detail the divine story of Lord Ram who was in incarnation of the Supreme Being. This epic underpins the devotional and spiritual aspect of the entire story. It is the most loved, respected and adored version of the famous story of Lord Ram that has a ubiquitous and universal name of ‘Ramayana’.

The context of Lord Ram describing this glorious ‘Chariot of Dharma’ is the battle-field of Lanka. A fierce battle raged between the Lord and Ravana, the demon king. While Ravana had the advantage of a strong and invincible war-chariot, the Lord was on foot. This created severe doubts in the mind of Vibhishan, the younger brother of Ravana who had surrendered before the Lord earlier after being kicked and thrown out by his elder brother, about the prospects of Lord Ram winning the war while fighting on foot with such a formidable enemy. It was then that the Lord allayed his fears, and taught Vibhishan about the metaphoric Chariot that actually enables a man to attain victory in life.

Lord Ram has himself named this symbolic Chariot as a ‘Dharma Rath’—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 80.

After reading about this divine ‘Chariot of God’ or the ‘Dharma Rath’ as described by the Lord himself in Ram Charit Manas, we shall see how this symbolic Chariot has been described in the Upanishads.

Thus, we shall divide this divine book bringing to us the “Word of God” into two sections—viz. Section 1 describes the Chariot of God or the Dharma Rath as done in the divine epic Ram Charit Manas, and Section 2 describes the Chariot of God as dealt with in the holy Upanishads.

The verses of the Ram Charit Manas have been quoted in the original Hindi vernacular text alongside their English transliteration, and this is followed by an elaborate exposition in English.

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SECTION 1

Ram Charit Manas

(by Goswami Tulsidas)

In Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 80 a-b, along with Chaupai line nos. 1-11 that precede this Doha, Lord Ram has preached Vibhishan about the symbolic chariot riding upon which a man can achieve success and victory even against great odds in life; a ‘Chariot’ that can take a man to his victory and bestow him with acclaim in all spheres of his routine life in this mundane world.

The context was the battle-field of Lanka where Lord Ram was facing the formidable demon king Ravana in a ferocious war. Vibhishan—the prince of Lanka and the brother of Ravana, was a great devotee of Lord Ram, and had come to surrender himself before the Lord and join him in his campaign against the sinful demon race— was very worried and felt disconcerted when he observed that Lord Ram was on foot while the great demon king Ravana was riding a strong and well-provisioned war chariot. It was an unequal combat which caused Vibhishan a lot of consternation and doubts about the Lord’s success. He expressed his fears to the Lord, and the answer that Lord Ram gave him concerning the chariot that is needed to win a battle is very different than one thinks it to be. Here the Lord is alluding to the ‘battle that a creature has to fight every single day of his life on earth’, and the ‘chariot’ he describes are the stellar qualities and glorious virtues that a person ought to inculcate in himself in order to win the symbolic battle of life and ace all the life’s hurdles, to become stronger and emerge victorious at the end of the day.

This teaching of Lord Ram lists the excellent virtues and noble characters that make a man victorious in all his struggles in this mundane world. These virtues and qualities are likened to a “divine Chariot” on which a warrior rides to his victory in the battle-field. The analogy is obvious—the struggles of life in this mundane world are like the battle-field as they consist of innumerable pains and miseries as well as the improbable things of life over which one has no control. And just like a strong chariot helps the expert warrior to move swiftly from one corner of the battle-ground to another, issuing

instructions to his army and outmaneuver the enemy, the grand virtues listed by Lord Ram helps a person overcome all obstacles in life and emerge victorious.

The context, as we have read herein above, is the battle-field of Lanka. Ravana, the demon king, is astride a strong chariot, while Lord Ram is on foot. It becomes physically difficult to maneuver and move swiftly on foot and fight against a powerful enemy who is given the advantage of mobility and protection of a vehicle built especially for the battle, such as the war chariot. He can store his arms and ammunition in this chariot besides enjoying the advantage of the ability to have a commanding position from which to control the army spread across the battle-field by the virtue of his fast maneuverability and movement.

So, this deficiency made Vibhishan very worried and upset. Though he had immense affection and faith in the Lord, but for once he began to have doubts as how will the Lord conquer a strong enemy while fighting on foot. It was then that Lord Ram preached these grand and glorious virtues to Vibhishan just like Lord Krishna had taught his friend Arjun in the battle-field of Kurushetra that became famous as Lord Krishna's Geeta.

चौ०. रावनु रथी बिरथ रघुबीरा । देखि बिभीषन भयउ अधीरा ॥ १ ॥
अधिक प्रीति मन भा संदेहा । बंदि चरन कह सहित सनेहा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

rāvanu rathī biratha raghubīrā. dēkhi bibhīṣana bhaya'u adhīrā. 1.
adhika prīti mana bhā sandēhā. bandi carana kaha sahita sanēhā. 2.

When Vibhishan observed that Ravana was on a mighty war chariot while Lord Ram had no such privilege, for the Lord was on foot, he became very worried and alarmed¹. (1)

Vibhishan had great affection for the Lord, and the alarming prospect of the Lord having to fight a ferocious do-or-die battle while walking on foot, whilst his enemy had the privilege of mounting a war chariot that was not only fully armed but also gave him the added advantage of rapid maneuverability and protection, made Vibhishan feel very disconcerted; he developed doubts in his mind and became worried in his heart (about the chances of Lord Ram being successful against his enemy in the face of such great odds)².

So therefore, he bowed before the holy feet of the Lord and paid his obeisance to him, and then observed as follows—(2)

[Note—¹Vibhishan was very worried and felt disconcerted when he observed that Lord Ram was on foot while the great demon king Ravana was riding a strong and well-provisioned war chariot. It was an unequal combat which caused Vibhishan a lot of consternation and doubts about the Lord's success. He expressed his fears to the Lord, and the answer that Lord Ram gave him concerning the chariot that is needed to win a battle is very different than one thinks it to be. Here the Lord is alluding to the 'battle that a creature has to fight every single day of his life on earth', and the 'chariot' he describes

are the stellar qualities and excellent virtues that a person ought to inculcate in himself in order to win the symbolic battle of life and ace all the life's hurdles, to become stronger and emerge victorious at the end of the day.

²It ought to be noted here that only Vibhishan got worried because Lord Ram had no war chariot at his disposal; none of the monkeys and bears were concerned at all. Why so? It is because the monkeys and bears had never seen Lord Ram or his brother Laxman mounting a chariot till; nearly half of the war was won, and it was done while both the brothers were on foot.

They had witnessed the ferocious battle between Lord Ram and Kumbhakaran while the Lord was on foot; similarly they had witnessed the no-holds barred battle between Laxman and Meghanad while the former was on foot. They had seen Lord Ram and Laxman arriving in Kishkindha on foot, and then leading the attack on the demon army from the front as their commander-in-chief while being on foot.

The monkeys and bears themselves fought and won the many great battles without the privilege of a chariot, arms and armaments, or any other paraphernalia of warfare such as horses, elephants etc. that an army is supposed to have, and which the demons did have. They were accustomed to fighting and winning wars using natural means at their disposal, such as teeth, nails, rocks, boulders, trees, and the might and punch of their own muscular bodies.

These monkeys and bears had witnessed how Lord Ram had shot one single arrow that dismantled the crown and the royal umbrella over the head of Ravana, along with breaking to pieces the ear-rings of Mandodar, his queen. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 13—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 14.}

They had also seen how the Lord had remained calm and poised on the battle-field while tackling Meghanad and overcoming his tricks with a pleasant smile; the Lord had shot one arrow that pierced through the veil of illusions that Meghanad had created, dispelling all fears of his army. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 51—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 52.}

Kumbhakaran was Ravana's brother; he had the same sort of physical features like Ravana. He was colossal in size, was most vicious and ruthless, and had dark muscular body like that of a giant. When Kumbhakaran stood before Lord Ram he towered above him like a giant colossus, dwarfing the Lord like an ant standing before an elephant. But the giant and fearsome form of the enemy did not scare the Lord any wee whit, for he bravely faced Kumbhakran and ultimately slayed him; Kumbhakaran's size and ferocity did not deter Lord Ram.

To wit, the monkeys and bears were not at all concerned that Lord Ram was on foot while Ravana was riding a formidable war chariot. They were confident that if the need arose then they would dump a heavy mountain on the chariot and crush it to a pulp, pulverizing Ravana along with it.

But Vibhishan was used to seeing wars being fought using the usual means and paraphernalia of war; so he was worried. Even when his brother Ravana had launched his many campaigns against the gods of heaven, the fighting was on equal terms because the gods too used arms, chariots etc. to battle Ravana and his troops. Hence, from the

viewpoint of Vibhishan, this was a very unconventional way that a war was being fought, with one king (Lord Ram) on foot and the other king (Ravana) mounting a chariot!]

नाथ न रथ नहिं तन पद त्राना । केहि बिधि जितब बीर बलवाना ॥ ३ ॥
सुनहु सखा कह कृपानिधाना । जेहिं जय होइ सो स्यंदन आना ॥ ४ ॥

nātha na ratha nahim tana pada trānā. kēhi bidhi jitaba bīra balavānā. 3.
sunahu sakhā kaha kṛpānidhānā. jēhim jaya hō'i sō syandana ānā. 4.

[Vibhishan said despondently to Lord Ram—] ‘Oh Lord. You have neither a chariot, nor a protective shield or armour for your body, or anything to put on your feet. Say then oh Lord, how would you attain victory over this formidable enemy under this situation, with the limitations that you face?’ (3)

Lord Ram, who is an embodiment of mercy, compassion and grace, comforted Vibhishan with this reply: ‘Listen my friend (sunahu sakhā). The chariot that grants victory is a different one. [To wit, the chariot that leads a man to victory is different from the physical chariot you are talking about.]¹ (4)

[Note—¹What follows is Lord Ram’s great Gospel given to Vibhishan on the battle-field of Lanka, highlighting the divine qualities and excellent characters that would entitle a person to gain victory over the obstacles that he may face in his daily day-to-day life in this world, and thereby attain good fame for himself. It points out the stellar qualities one ought to inculcate in himself in order to attain success in all his endeavours and fields of activity in life. These are noble virtues that make a man great and worthy; they hand-hold him and take him successfully across the rough sea of life; they help him attain stability of mind and confidence in himself while facing the many inconsistencies and contingencies of life.

This wonderful discourse can be called “The Chariot Of God—the Dharma Ratha” as it has a divine spiritual message for the whole world, a message that can transform the life of the people and the world as a whole, bringing heaven right at our doorsteps if taken seriously by everyone.

Vibhishan was talking about a war chariot, but Lord Ram used this opportunity to teach him about the principles of obtaining success in all spheres of life and come out victorious from the battle symbolized by the constant miseries and torments that a man faces in this world in his life. The Lord explained to him the grand principles of morality, ethics, righteousness, propriety and probity—in essence, the laws of Dharma that protects a person like body-armour, can be used by him to vanquish all his negative and sinful tendencies as well as the thick layer of faults and blemishes that have accumulated around his Atma due to these sins and demeanours, because they act like a formidable enemy for a man. A physical enemy can at the most harm a person’s body which is nevertheless mortal and perishable, but the lack of good virtues are like an internal enemy that kills the prospects of his Atma from finding peace, bliss, tranquility, happiness and liberty.

It is interesting to note that Lord Ram is honoured as being ‘one who is an abode of mercy, kindness and grace’ (‘Kripaanidhaan’—‘Kripaa’ means mercy and kindness; ‘Nidhaan’ means an abode). This is to indicate that the Lord is gracious and kind enough to use this opportunity of removing the doubts of Vibhishan to preach to the world at large something of great value which would be of great help for the rest of the creatures to overcome formidable obstacles that all of them face in their lives in this world to a greater or lesser degree. The principles outlined by the Lord will act as a guide and moral reference manual for all of them to show them the path of victory in life and how to surmount all obstacles and hurdles easily so that victory is obtained by them against all odds.

Another point to note is that Lord Ram addresses Vibhishan as a ‘friend’—implying that he is about to reveal some secrets of success in life to him because Vibhishan is his friend, and therefore a saintly person. Spiritual secrets should be told to a competent person only, for otherwise it is wasteful to tell unworthy people. And being the Lord’s friend, Vibhishan must be assured that the Lord will undoubtedly win the war, and that he need not harbour unnecessary worries as these will have a negative impact on morale.

This discourse resonates with the one that Lord Krishna gave to Arjun on the battle-field of Kurushetra that came to be known as the famed ‘Gita of Krishna’.

Meanwhile, we shall read by-and-by that the gods did send a divine chariot to Lord Ram during the final phases of the battle with Ravana—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 89.]

सौरज धीरज तेहि रथ चाका । सत्य सील दृढ़ ध्वजा पताका ॥ ५ ॥

sauraja dhīraja tēhi ratha cākā. satya sīla dṛṛha dhvajā patākā. 5.

[Lord Ram now describes the various parts that constitute the glorious ‘Chariot of Dharma’.

These parts are metaphoric representations of the golden rules of conduct and grand qualities that a person must possess in order to be successful in life and overcome all obstacles that he faces during the course of his life in this tumultuous world. Riding a symbolic chariot that is made up of these auspicious virtues, any person is sure to obtain victory in the long battle against all odds in this life to emerge victorious and glorious.]

The two noble virtues of ‘Sauraj’ (valour; bravery) and ‘Dhiraj’ (courage; patience; resilience; fortitude; forbearance) are the two metaphoric or symbolic wheels of this Chariot (which takes a person to his moral victory and gives him glory and conquest against all odds in life).

The two flags or standards flying on this Chariot are the two virtues of ‘Satya’ (truthfulness and honesty) and ‘Sheel’ (good character and conduct; politeness, civility and courteousness; humility, good manners and etiquette). (5)

[Note—As we have by now read, Lord Ram is describing a symbolic ‘Chariot of Dharma’. Just like a warrior is able to obtain victory against a formidable enemy if he is

provided with a strong war-chariot, any person who rides a Chariot of Dharma is able to conquer the world as well as vanquish all his enemies represented by all the various hurdles that he faces in life to emerge victorious and glorious.

Just like any ordinary chariot, the fabulous Chariot of Dharma also consists of various parts, and all of them are necessary to make the complete Chariot. In other words, a person must inculcate all of them in his life, give all of them equal importance and attention, for even if one fails to reach the required standard the Chariot of Dharma will be weakened to that extent. And then chances of total and comprehensive success in life will be reduced to the extent that any of these virtues are lacking in strength.

Even as any ordinary chariot needs two robust wheels to move, the Chariot of Dharma needs the two primary virtues of ‘Sauraj’ and ‘Dhiraj’ to enable the person to ride to his victory. Obviously it is true—for without courage and fortitude, without patience and resilience no one can expect any big and sustainable success in life.

In ancient times, chariots had only two wheels instead of four, whether they were war chariots or civilian chariots. This is endorsed in the first of the four Vedas, i.e. the most ancient one known as the Rik Veda, which describe such chariots—the war chariot is described in its Mandal 6, Sukta (hymn) no. 75, and the civilian chariot in its Mandal 10, Sukta no. 85.

The two virtues of ‘Satya’ and ‘Sheel’ make him honourable and respected in society; a person who has these two virtues is shown the highest adoration in this world. Any success that is obtained by pretensions and deceit is dishonorable and contemptible. Then, success should not make a man pride, haughty and arrogant—i.e. he should have ‘Sheel’ in him inspite of the glories he acquires. This goes on to fortify his conquest—for if he is truthful and trustworthy as well as polite and kind, he is lauded and remembered for generations to come after he is dead and gone. Otherwise he is loathed and despised by all, even by them who praise him out of fear of reprisals.

The flag mounted on the chariot of a king stands for his authority, glory and fame. It is seen from far away even though the chariot is yet not visible. Hence, if a man has Satya and Sheel in his character, then his name and glory spreads to even the world’s remotest corner inspite of his never setting foot there in his life. This is tantamount to the conquest of the world—a conquest in which not a single drop of blood is shed. For instance, Lord Buddha’s glory and name has spread over the world even though he did not move anywhere, and preached non-violence in deed and words.

During a war, if the standard or flag of the king falls it symbolizes his defeat; the army surrenders or flees as soon as the flag is felled. Similarly, if a man compromises with these two noble virtues of Satya and Sheel, than he is deemed to be as good as being defeated.]

बल बिबेक दम परहित घोरे । छमा कृपा समता रजु जोरे ॥ ६ ॥

bala bibēka dama parahita ghōrē. chamā kṛpā samatā raju jōrē. 6.

This Chariot of Dharma has four magnificent horses—they are the four noble virtues of ‘Bala’ (strength; power; authority; force; energy; dynamism), ‘Vivek’ (wisdom; discriminatory powers and abilities; intelligence; rationality; discretion), ‘Dam’ (self-

restraint; self-control), and ‘Parhita’ (to do good to other; be diligent towards other’s welfare, happiness and well-being; benevolence, graciousness and magnanimity).

The reins or fasteners that tie them together and keep them in order are the three grand virtues of ‘Kshamaa’ (forgiveness), ‘Kripaa’ (mercy; grace; compassion), and ‘Samtaa’ (equanimity; equality; evenness of mind) (6)

[Note—Next important part of a chariot is the horse. The Chariot of Dharma is pulled by these four symbolic horses representing the four glorious virtues as listed above. In other words, one must carry on with his life and its duties energetically, and without losing courage and patience (‘Bala’), taking all decisions wisely, intelligently and rationally (‘Vivek’), all the while exercising great self-control over the mind and the sense organs of the body and keeping them under tight leash to prevent them from falling prey to temptations and other traps laid out by the deluding world (‘Dam’), and be mindful about the welfare and well-being of the creature around him so that any of his actions or deeds or words may not harm them in true spirit of non-violence as well as the eclectic philosophy of non-duality whereby one is expected to see the same Supreme Being in each individual living being known as the Jiva (‘Parhita’).

If a man has these four virtues in him, his chariot of life is driven smoothly like a physical chariot in which the horses are well trained and tamed.

Then again, the reins that are used to control the horses are symbolized by the three virtues of forgiveness and tolerance (‘Kshamaa’), compassion, mercy and grace (‘Kripaa’), and equanimity and evenness of mind (‘Samtaa’). A charioteer knows the wisdom of maintaining his cool and poise when riding a chariot—he has to control the horses, keep an eye on the road, skirt dangers such as holes and obstacles on the path, and avoid hurting passers-by. Even if some of the horses act wildly, even if the people met in the way act rudely or make disparaging remarks, the charioteer should not lose his cool and mind, for if he gets angry and loses his composure at provocations he will not be properly able to focus on riding the chariot which would start rocking and ultimately lead to some sort of accident, minor or major.

Therefore, to ensure that the Chariot of Dharma reaches its destination comfortably, the wise person must inculcate these virtues along with other virtues also because any chariot can reach its destination only when it is pulled by horses, and these horses need to be tamed, and properly harnessed and bridled.

The first virtue listed in this line is ‘Bala’ which literally means strength, force, powers and authority that a person possesses. There are said to be seven kinds of Balas—viz. (i) ‘Vairagya Bala’—the stupendous moral and spiritual strength that comes with true renunciation, detachment, dispassion and non-involvement in any thing related to this mundane, deluding and mortal world of sense objects and their allurements; (ii) ‘Shaairak Bala’—or the strength, stamina, vigour, energy, dynamism, potent, valour and abilities of the physical body, such as the strength of one’s arm and that which comes with a muscular body; (iii) ‘Buddhi Bala’—or the strength of one’s intellect and wisdom; (iv) ‘Tapa Bala’—or the astounding mystical powers that one accesses by doing Tapa, which means austerity, penance and sufferance of hardship for some noble cause which hardens a man from the inside; (v) ‘Yoga Bala’—or the fabulous mystical powers that come to a person by the virtue of his doing Yoga, which means doing meditation in a comprehensive manner as this bestows stupendous powers to its practitioner; (vi) ‘Sainya

Bala’—or the power that comes with a strong army of a kingdom; and (vii) ‘Atma Bala’—or the inherent strength that the Atma possesses, which can be translated as self-confidence and grit.

The second virtue is ‘Vivek’ which literally means wisdom, intelligence, an analytical mind, and the ability to discriminate between the right and the wrong. It also incorporates the ability to have insight and foresight. If a man possesses these virtues then naturally he is able to smoothly overcome all problems in life because he analyses each development and selects the best course of action that will suit his objectives in life. Such a man is never acts in haste and impulse; his actions are well-thought of and planned.

The third virtue is ‘Dam’ meaning self-restraint and self-control. This is a very important instrument in the hands of a person to by-pass many problems in life that are easily overcome or avoided by merely exercising restraint over one’s emotions and body. This virtue helps one to overcome temptations and entanglements with the world of material objects and their multifarious delusions and false charms. ‘Dam’ helps prevent greed and yearning; it helps get rid of such negativity as jealousy, envy and malice; it fosters peace and contentment of the mind; it prevents the mind to be wayward and instead helps it to be focused on the job at hand.

The fourth virtue is ‘Parhita’—or keeping in mind the good and well-being of others. This naturally fosters goodwill and brotherhood; a man who thinks good of others is invariably liked by everyone, and even his opponents fear annoying him as they know that the society will take his side. There is no better principle of Dharma as thinking and doing good of others, and to make others suffer is the worst sin one can commit—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 41 wherein Lord Ram has himself endorsed this virtue of ‘Parhita’ in a person as being the best one.

The next three virtues of ‘Kshamaa’ (forgiveness), ‘Kripaa’ (benevolence, grace, mercy and compassion) and ‘Samtaa’ (equanimity and forbearance; treating everyone and everything alike) go hand in hand. If a person has them, he is elevated to an exalted position in the world that would be no less than that of Lord Ram himself, because the Lord is famous as being an ocean of these three grand and eclectic moral and spiritual virtues.

Usually it is observed that when one becomes powerful and strong, when one acquires authority and fame by observance of the other virtues, then these three virtues become the first casualty. To possess them in addition to the other great virtues mentioned in this line ensures that a man is eligible for getting acclaim and honour that come with being truly successful in life.

An interesting point emerges by reading this verse. It mentions four horses but only three fasteners. The question arises how are the four horses controlled by mere three fasteners? Well, in war-chariots, two horses are bridled in the front row, and just behind them is the pair of the other two horses. The horses in the front row are tied together by two fasteners on either side, while those behind them in the second row need only one fastener as they follow their companions in the front. Another interpretation is that the horses are bridled on the right and the left by two strong fasteners, and a third is used to guide them in the straight direction. A charioteer has three reins in his hands with which he is able to maneuver the chariot in any direction he wishes—to the right, to the left and straight ahead. The implication is clear—the Chariot of Dharma must be controlled by

observing the three cardinal principles of Kshamaa, Kripaa and Samtaa. Otherwise it will be rocked and go out of control.

Another interesting observation is the placement of the four horses. The first pair of horses is represented by the first two virtues of ‘Bala’ and ‘Vivek’; they are fastened by the first two fasteners of ‘Kshamaa’ and ‘Kripaa’. Behind them are the two horses represented by the other two pair of virtues, viz. ‘Dam’ and ‘Parhita’, and they are fastened by ‘Samtaa’. This sequence is deduced from the way these virtues are mentioned in the verse itself.]

ईस भजनु सारथी सुजाना । बिरति चर्म संतोष कृपाना ॥ ७ ॥

isa bhajanu sārathī sujānā. birati carma santōṣa kṛpānā. 7.

[Now, after describing the chariot, Lord Ram describes who the charioteer is.]

Worshipping the Lord God and having devotion, affection and adoration for him is the symbolic the clever and expert charioteer of this divine Chariot.

The virtue of ‘Virati’ (Vairagya or renunciation, detachment and dispassion) is the strong shield, and the virtue of ‘Santosh’ (satisfaction; contentment) is like the sword. (7)

[Note—The charioteer is the person who is responsible for guiding the chariot and taking the warrior to his victory in the battle. So, if a person has devotion for Lord God, if he worships the Lord with faith and sincerity, then it is sure that the Lord God would protect him and guide his destiny to victory against all odds and tumult of life. One must offer his security and future in the trustworthy, strong, expert and caring hands of the Lord even as a warrior reposes his in the hands of an expert and wise charioteer.

The fact that when one leaves his destiny and welfare in the hands of Lord Ram, the incarnate Supreme Being, the latter takes full responsibility for the former is endorsed in Ram Charit Manas, 1/39/5 which essentially says that “none of the obstacles of life create any problem for a man on whom Lord Ram looks benevolently”. And the Lord looks mercifully and benevolently and graciously, with special care and attention, on those who have surrendered themselves to the Lord and have deep love, devotion, trust and faith in him, who worship the Lord as their only solace and succour—refer: Ram Charit Manas (i) Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1 and 5 that precede Doha no. 36 when Lord Ram has preached Sabari; (ii) Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precedes Doha no. 43 when Lord Ram preached Narad; and (iii) Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 129 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede it, Doha no. 130 along with Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes it, and then Doha no. 131 where sage Valmiki has listed the places where Lord Ram should live.

Obviously, when the almighty Lord of creation favours a person and vows to take care of him, no other force will be able to disturb his peace of mind or harm his interests.

Now, we have a strong chariot, well-trained and tamed horses, a strong rein, and an expert charioteer. What is now needed by the warrior is his personal armour and weapon. These are described next—the shield is represented by the virtue of ‘Virati’, and the sword by ‘Santosh’ as narrated in this verse. The shield is used to protect oneself against harm, and the sword is used to cut through the ranks of the attacking enemy.

If one has inculcated the eclectic virtue of detachment and dispassion, then he is able to overcome all temptations and allurements of the world, as well as the constantly annoying desire of the sense organs of his body seeking self gratification. The virtue of ‘Virati’ helps him to ward off all sorts of delusions and temptations, and the sword of ‘Santosh’ aids him in this endeavour to cut off any remaining residual effects of delusions that may be lurking and manage to sneak in unnoticed to corrupt his mind and sub-conscious.

It happens usually that one is able to turn away from temptations in the first instance, but later on his sub-conscious mind keeps nagging at him to yield ground. We can understand this phenomenon by a simple example. Suppose a man is advised by his doctor to avoid sweets. When a delicious sweetmeat is brought to him in platter full, he may resist the temptation of indulging in it right then and turns his head away, but his sub-conscious will not forget the dish so easily and would keep on nagging at him till the time he surreptitiously binges on the box of the sweet stored in the fridge in the kitchen. Otherwise he wouldn’t be able to sleep peacefully. This is what is meant in this verse. Even if a wise man is able to overcome all temptations and allurements of the world at the first sight by employing his grand virtue of ‘Virati’, he still needs the sword of ‘Santosh’ to overcome their long-term lingering effects.

A sword cuts on both sides; it is swung right, left and vertical. In other words, with practicing the virtue of Santosh, the spiritual aspirant is able to conquer the three main enemies of his, viz. ‘Kaam’ (passions and lust; desires and yearnings; greed and rapacity), ‘Krodha’ (anger that comes when Kaam is not fulfilled or required), and ‘Moha’ (attractions, attachments and infatuations that Kaam generates). This observation is endorsed in Ram Charit Manas as follows—(i) Greed dries up contentment; hence to use the latter to cut off the former before it attacks is important: refer—Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 16; (ii) Without Santosh it is not possible to eliminate Kaam: refer—Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 90; (iii) One’s anger, the desire to use strong language against one’s opponent and wreak vengeance upon him continues to increase if one is not satisfied fully and happy that his opponent has been sufficiently humiliated or defeated: refer—Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 274.]

दान परसु बुधि सक्ति प्रचंडा । बर बिग्यान कठिन कोदंडा ॥ ८ ॥

dāna parasu budhi sakti pracaṇḍā. bara bigyāna kaṭhina kōdaṇḍā. 8.

The virtue of being charitable, making donations and giving alms liberally, known as ‘Daan’, is the strong battle-axe.

The ‘Buddhi’ (sharp intellect and discriminatory powers; the analytical and rational mind) is like the most powerful and potent Shakti (energized arrow; a sharp spear).

And a highly developed ‘Vigyan’ (deep knowledge of anything; the ability to have insight into anything in order to understand that aspect of it which is subtle and hidden from view) is akin to a strong and robust bow. (8)

[Note—Here we have three powerful weapons—the battle-axe, the arrow or spear, and the bow. The bow is held in the hand; the arrow and the spear are thrown at the enemy; and the battle-axe is used both ways.

‘Daan’ is one of the four main forms of Dharma as described in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 103 Kha which says—“Dharma has four limbs (‘Satya’ or truthfulness, ‘Dayaa’ or mercy, ‘Tapa’ or austerity, and ‘Daan’ or giving of alms and making charity), but in Kali-Yug (i.e. in the present era of the 4-era one cycle of creation and destruction) Daan is the main limb of Dharma. One should therefore make charities and give alms to the best of his ability.”

In this verse, ‘Daan’ is described as being equivalent to the battle-axe because it makes even one’s enemy as one’s friend. Charity and magnanimity makes a man endeared to all, even his opponent is subdued by his attitude. A charitable man is welcomed everywhere, and everyone comes forward to help him should he himself fall on bad times. This noble virtue in any man acts to protect him against all misfortunes that may befall him in life—hence it is likened to an axe. Again, since donations are made and charities are given by the man using his own hand, the similie is apt.

‘Buddhi’ is used by a wise man to deal with the current situation as well as plan for the future. It is used by a wise man to overcome sticky situations and avoid such eventualities from occurring in the future. Even the greatest of difficulties are overcome with intelligent handling of any situation, while foolishness lands a man in grave trouble unnecessarily. This is metaphorically depicted in the form of an arrow and a spear. The ‘arrow’ is thrown at the enemy, while the ‘spear’ is used either by throwing or holding in hand. The reach of the arrow is far longer as compared to the spear. So, ‘Buddhi’ helps a wise man to overcome difficulties of life in the short as well as the long run.

But Buddhi cannot work alone; it works together with ‘Vigyan’. This is the metaphoric ‘bow’. Even as one needs a bow to use the arrow, one needs Vigyan to use the Buddhi properly.

In other words, intelligence, wisdom, knowledge, deep insight, analytical and discriminatory abilities, the ability to decide what is the correct and right path and what is not, to have insight and foresight, to be conscientious and sensitive, and such other grand virtues of the mind and sub-conscious—all must work in coordination to help a person to reach his goal in life.]

अमल अचल मन त्रोन समाना । सम जम नियम सिलीमुख नाना ॥ ९ ॥

amala acala mana trōna samānā. sama jama niyama silīmukha nānā. 9.

The Mana (mind and heart) that is clean, pure, steady and stable is like the quiver.

The grand virtues of ‘Sham’ (control of the mind), ‘Yam’ (self-control and abstinence that leads to quietitude and peace of the mind), and ‘Niyam’ (observance of various religious duties, vows and sacraments) are like the many arrows (in the quiver that the warrior carries and uses). (9)

[Note—A clear and stable mind can think properly. If it is fickle and unsteady, it will make the man fidgety and restless. Steadiness of mind and purity of heart are the essential requirements to be successful in any enterprise, because this makes the entire endeavour righteous and auspicious. In the field of Yoga it is unequivocally stated that the purity of mind and heart are essential for success in it because they help the aspirant to fully concentrate his attention on the subject that he deals with, without wavering and jumping from one subject to another and landing no where.

A warrior carries many types of arrows. Thus, a reference is made here to the various limbs of Yoga which work together to help the practitioner achieve his objective for which he had started doing Yoga in the first place—to find peace, to find spiritual enlightenment and freedom, and to establish oneness between his own ‘self’ known as the Atma and the cosmic ‘Self’ known as the Parmatma or the Supreme Atma which is equivalent to realisation of the Supreme Consciousness.

The Upanishads dealing with the concept of Yoga as well as Patanjali’s Yogsutra explain these different limbs of Yoga cited in the present verse. Now let us examine the virtues of Sham, Yam, Niyam etc. in brief.

There are said to be eight steps or branches or limbs or paths of Yoga as follows—Yam, Niyam, Aasan, Pranyam, Prayahar, Dharna, Dhyan and Samadhi.

(1) Yam—broadly meaning self restraint and it covers such virtues as non-violence (Ahinsa), honesty and truthfulness (Stya), abhorring theft (Asteya), abstinence, celibacy and detachment from passions (Brahmacharya), and non-accumulation and non-possession (Aparigraha).

(ii) Niyam—or observance of principles or codes of conduct in a religious pursuit. Such as having good habits and contentment, observing austerities and doing penances, self-study of scriptures, following a righteous, virtuous and noble way of life, and etc.

According to Skanda Puran, the ‘Yam and Niyam’ mentioned above are ten, and they have been described in Skanda Puran in these words:-

The ten ‘Yams’ are—truthfulness, forgiveness, simplicity, Dhyan (meditation, concentration of the mind), lack of cruelty (or presence of compassion and mercy), forsaking violence, restraint of mind and sense organs, pleasant demeanors and sweet towards all).

The ten ‘Niyams’ are—cleanliness/ablution, bath (purification of body), Tapa (austerities, penances, sufferings), alms and charities, keeping silence, Yagya (sacrifices, religious rituals), self study, observance of vows, keeping fasts, celibacy. (Skanda Puran, Bra. Dha. Ma. 5/19-21).

The 10 Yams and 10 Niyams—These have been described in (i) the Varaaha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, Canto 5, verse nos 11-14; and (ii) the Shandilya Upanishad of Atharva Veda, Canto 1, sections 1-2.

The Shandilya Upanishad of Atharva Veda, Canto 1, section 1 lists the ten Yams and section 2 lists the ten Niyams as follows—

“Canto 1, section 1 = The eight branches of Yoga are the following—Yam (self-control), Niyam (observation of spiritual laws or rules), Aasan (sitting postures), Pranayam (breath control), Pratyahar (restraint of the mind), Dharna (belief), Dhyan (concentration of mind; remembrance) and Samadhi (trance-like state of permanence in Yoga).

Yam and Niyam are of ten types each, Aasans are of eight types, Pranayam has three phases, both Pratyahar and Dharna have five types each, Dhyam is of two types, while Samadhi is of only one type with no variations.

The ten types or aspects of Yam are the following—Ahinsa (non-violence), Satya (truthfulness), Asteya (non-stealing), Brahmacharya (abstinence, continence, celibacy), Daya (mercy), Saralta (simplicity, humility), Kshama (forgiveness), Dhairya (patience), Alpa-ahar (moderation in eating), and Pavitra (purity and cleanliness).

[Now, each of these terms are being defined—] ‘Ahinsa’ means not harming or causing pain to any creature, at any time, and by any means—not by one’s thoughts or involvement of the mind in any way, not by speech or words, not by the body and its actions. [That is, non-violence should be holistic and comprehensive in nature—it is not limited to only avoiding physical cruelty or aggression but also includes mental and verbal aspects.]

‘Satya’ means to tell, honestly, truthfully and with the greatest sincerity one can have, whatever is for the good and true welfare of the other person, whether he likes it or not. This would involve the mind and its thoughts, the speech and the words used to tell the truth, and the body that implements this truth in the shape of deeds done by it and actions taken by it. [That is, Satya involves not telling things simply because they might appear pleasing to the hearer, or said out of some vested interest at stake, but to say things which are genuinely in the interest and long-term good of the other person. Such things might be unpleasant to hear in the beginning and might even cause rebuke or ill-will for the speaker of the truth, but they give the speaker or the advisor great mental and spiritual satisfaction for having spoken the truth without deceit or fear, besides helping to create positive vibrations around him, and ushering in an atmosphere of trust and brotherhood.]

‘Asteya’ broadly means non-stealing, and it includes the idea of keeping one’s self aloof from the wealth of others, of not being attracted towards such assets that do not rightly belong to one’s own self, of eyeing the wealth of others with envy and jealousy, of having a greed for them, yearning for them, and waiting for an opportunity to either harm them or deprive the other person of his possessions, or usurping and grabbing the assets rightfully belonging to others by any crooked or deceitful means one can think of. This neutrality and non-lusting must be genuine and sincere, and should involve one’s mind and its thoughts, one’s speech, as well as one’s body and the deeds done by it or actions taken by it. One should be sincere in not being tempted by the wealth of others, and of course this would involve the mind and the sub-conscious which must be duly trained and cultured. [That is, one must never be envious of other people’s prosperity and acquisitions; one must never allow the mind to ever contemplate of harming these assets or plan to grab them by force or conceit. Similarly, one must never allow the speech to ever utter a word of jealousy and say anything that might harm these assets simply because they belong to others, or create prejudice against the rightful possessor of such assets. One must not allow the body to do anything that would in anyway, directly or indirectly, cause harm to the assets that belong to others. Since the general meaning of the word ‘Asteya’ is ‘non-stealing’ it follows that even mental greed or yearning for something that belongs to others, and imagining how good it would have been if it belonged to me, is as good as the actual stealing of it. When the Upanishads talk about implementation of any principle, they imply a wholesome attitude and a holistic approach

towards it, and not only physical aspect of it such as its literal implementation which is devoid of the spirit of the doctrine. Not physically able to steal anything but be mentally obsessive about it is as good as actually stealing it. In other words, the purity of mind, sub-conscious and intellect are as important as the physical act of abstaining from stealing.]

‘Brahmacharya’ is to abstain from all sexual activities or any kind of indulgences and unrestrained behaviour involving the mind, the speech as well as the physical body and its sense organs under all circumstances. [That is, mere observance of physical celibacy is not enough. One must observe total control over the mind and its faculties so that they are not allowed even to think of any lustful subject or indulge in any inauspicious, unrighteous, unethical, immoral and improper thoughts related to sense gratification or attractions of the material sense objects of the world. One must never think or talk about sensual subjects that arouse passions and disturb the tranquility of the mind. One must never allow the gross organs of the body to be attracted towards objects of self gratification, or of sensual pleasures and comforts. In short, all sensual attractions, all forms of indulgences, all instances of temptations, all examples of self-gratification, and all sorts of unrestrained behaviour of the mind, the speech and the body are covered by the term Brahmacharya. It means total and comprehensive self-restraint or self-control in all spheres of life, and not just of the organs of sensual pleasures.]

‘Daya’ refers to having compassion and mercy towards all the creatures, to be graceful and kind towards all, from the lowly and the humblest to the highest and the exalted.

‘Aarjav’ or ‘Dhairya’ means to have exemplary tolerance, fortitude, courage, forbearance, resilience and patience of mind, to be immensely steady in one’s thoughts and behaviour, to restrict one’s speech and desist from speaking any wrong word against anyone or to anyone, and to keep the body under strict control and not react under any kind of provocation or situation, whether favourable or unfavourable. It implies that a person remains completely neutral and equanimous when faced by favourable and expected circumstances, or by unfavourable and untoward ones.

‘Kshama’ implies to be truly forgiving and un-affected by any offense caused by the other person, to bear with stoic calmness, equanimity, forbearance and a sense of neutrality all sorts of behaviour one has to face from others, whether done inadvertently or purposely, whether such behaviour is favourable or unfavourable, whether it is likable or not. One must be exemplarily calm, unruffled and be forgiving towards others, whether one is praised and honoured by them, or criticized and humiliated by them. One must be sincerely forgiving for any kind of mischief, any kind of misdeed, kind of transgression, any kind of provocative behaviour, any sort of insults, aspersions, asides or insinuations inflicted or cast upon him by other person, directly or indirectly, or by situations created by his adversary that lead to him being subjected to humiliation and insult. Kshama involves remaining unruffled and completely calm, both emotionally as well as sentimentally, under all prevailing situations and under all instigations. One must not harbour any animosity, ill-will, a sense of grievance, a feeling of hatred or a desire for revenge against anyone, or for any deed done by the latter, which has in any way harmed one’s own interest or even has been a cause of annoyance for him. [Therefore we see that Kshama, Daya and Dhairya go hand in hand; one must accompany the other to give meaning to what is being said in this great Upanishad. It has already been emphasized

that a wholesome approach is needed when one reads the Upanishad and hopes to benefit from this eclectic and grand philosophy promoted by it.]

‘Dhriti’ is having equanimity, neutrality, fortitude, firmness and steadiness of mind under all circumstances, even when one is subjected to immense emotional turmoil, both of the positive kind such as having happiness and joys, as well as of the negative kind such as being subjected to immense anguish and pain. [That is, one must remain unruffled and maintain one’s poise and calm under opposing situations—such as the one when he suffers from some great financial loss or loses his dear and near ones on the one hand, or when he begets some great fortune or meets his beloved ones unexpectedly on the other hand.]

‘Alpa-ahar’ is to eat with moderation or restraint. It implies eating only so much as to keep one-fourth of the stomach empty. It also implies eating such things that are soothing for the system and non-irritating by nature, things that are invigorating and energizing for the body. Such eatables are foods that are soothing for the digestive system, as well as sweet, pleasant and comforting for the body in general. Some of such eatables are clarified butter (Ghee) of the best quality, unadulterated milk, and other such things.

‘Shauch’ means to be clean and purified both externally as well as internally. While external cleanliness can be done by rubbing the body with clay and washing off the dirt with water, internal cleanliness and purity is achieved by keeping the mind, the sub-conscious and the intellect free from all sorts of taints, corruptions and negativities, and instead concentrating their efforts towards auspicious and righteous endeavours such as on spiritualism and attainment of the Truth. [Both sorts of cleaning are necessary. One should keep the physical body clean because it is the residence of the Atma, the pure ‘self’, and if the residence is dirty and filthy it would create a negative environment for the Atma, causing the latter restlessness and having a negative impact on its nature. Further, the body is regarded as the temple of the Lord because this Atma is a miniature form of the cosmic Atma known as the ‘Parmatma’, the Supreme Being. Just like a man keeps his place of worship, the ‘shrine’, physically clean so as to maintain its sanctity, it is equally important to keep one’s body clean as it is the abode of the ‘personal deity’ known as the Atma. But this body is driven by the mind and its various faculties, and therefore to ensure that the personal shrine of the Atma in the form of the physical body is able to maintain its sanctity and credibility it is imperative to keep the internal apparatus clean and uncorrupt. If the mind and its components are not clean then no matter how clean the external body may be it is of no good to the spiritual aspirant, for sooner rather than latter the body would fall prey to the many temptations of the corrupt world and their attending delusions. Therefore, all efforts of the mind should be diverted away from the falsehoods of the material world of the sense objects and focused on the Atma and the universal truth of the conscious ‘self’.] (1).

“Canto 1, section 2 = 1. The term ‘Niyam’ (literally meaning certain rules and regulations that one is strictly expected to follow in order to be successful in one’s endeavour) applies to the following observances—Tapa (austerity, penance and sufferance for some noble and auspicious cause), Santosh (contentedness), Astik (to be a believer), Daan (to give charity and make alms), Ishwar-poojan (worship of God), Siddhanta-srawan (listening to the tenets and doctrines of the scriptures being explained), Hri (shame,

prudence, modesty and self-respect), Mati (thoughts, intellect, sense, understanding, inclination, convictions, desires of the mind, and being mindfulness of one's duties and ethical behaviour), Japa (repetition of Mantras), and Vrat (religious fasting, observing austerity, keeping righteous vows and strict self-control or self-restraint).

[Now, each of these terms would be explained in a holistic way.] The term 'Tapa' in the context of Yoga (meditation) is to observe various religious sacraments such as the 'Krischa Chandrayan'¹ which helps the body to become thin, energized, fit, reactivated and detoxified, as well as shed its unnecessary flab and burden of ailments.

'Santosh' means to be satisfied and contented with whatever is available by providence, and never to greed or yearn or wish for more.

'Aastik' (believing) implies that one should sincerely believe in what the Vedas have said about religion and other spiritual matters.

'Daan' is to give alms to the poor, make donations and charities to the deserving, with due respect to the dignity and self respect of the recipient or the beneficiary, without expecting anything in return. These charities and donations must be made out of the wealth that has been obtained by rightful means, and which rightly belongs to the person who gives such alms, or makes donations or charities. [In other words, if charities are made to humiliate others, to demean their spirits and social standing, to show them that they are underprivileged, unfortunate and inferior to the donor, to create a situation when the other members of the society become lazy, indolent and unproductive in the expectation of getting largesse without making efforts to meet their requirements by doing deeds, or to show off one's wealth and majesty, or to reap some sort of worldly fame and name as a philanthropic person etc., or if such charities or alms are made out of assets acquired by unlawful and unethical means—then such alms, charities and donations are deemed to be null and void.]

'Ishwar-poojan' is to honour, to offer respectful worship and to pay sincere obeisance to the Supreme Being in his various manifestations, such as Lord Vishnu (the second of the Trinity Gods, the sustainer and protector of creation, and the Lord who had manifested as various incarnations on earth) and Lord Shiva (the third of the Trinity Gods, the concluder of creation and the patron God of ascetics) amongst others. Such worship and honour should be done cheerfully, with great devotion and faith, and by following the proper sanctified method for this purpose as narrated in the scriptures.

'Siddhanta-srawan' is to attentively hear the tenets and doctrines of the Vedas and the Upanishads being explained by those who are well-versed in them, those who are highly erudite and extremely learned in the finer nuances and intricacies of these great scriptures.

'Hri' (shame, modesty, self-respect and dignity) is to feel ashamed at one's own self for doing something that goes against the eclectic doctrines of Dharma (ethics, morality, righteousness, auspiciousness, probity, propriety and correct thought and action). Therefore, it also entails that one avoids doing anything that is regarded as unholy, lowly, demeaning, degrading and despicable by the Vedas as well as by traditional wisdom and universally accepted convention.

'Mati' (thoughts, intellect, sense, understanding, inclination, convictions, desires of the mind, and being mindfulness of one's duties and ethical behaviour) is to sincerely wish and have an inborn inclination to follow the tenets of the Vedas. It would include proper training of the mind-intellect apparatus to think and contemplate rightly, correctly

and with a positive attitude about the right things and in a right perspective. One should therefore turn away from those things that are demeaning and degrading for the soul, and which undermine the exalted stature of one's divine 'self'.

'Japa' is to honestly practice (repeat and meditate upon) the Vedic Mantra (hymn) that has been prescribed by one's Guru (moral preceptor). Japa is done in two ways—one is verbal or audible Japa, and the other is non-verbal or mental or silent Japa. The mental or silent form of Japa is done by repeating the Mantra mentally in a silent mode without uttering a word audibly, and involves concentration of the mind and turning its thoughts inwards. The verbal or audible form of Japa is again of two types—viz. one that is done loudly, and the other that is simply muttered. The Japa done while muttering the Mantras silently is thousands of times more beneficial than doing Japa loudly, and mental Japa that is done silently without even opening the lips is far better than even the one done by slowly muttering the words, and it is multiple times more beneficial.

'Vrat' (observance of religious vows) is to diligently, steadfastly, honestly, consistently and regularly follow the different eclectic principles, the doctrines and the tenets of the Vedas and the Upanishads—to avoid things that are proscribed by them, and do things that are prescribed by them (1).

{¹The word 'Chandrayan' means 'following the phase of the moon', while 'Krischa' means to become thin and lean. Hence, the term Krischa Chandrayan means to make the body thin by strictly restricting the diet according to the established system of doing the Chandrayan Vrat. Hence it involves restricting one's food intake by strictly following the phase of the moon—reducing it gradually during the waning phase of the moon, and increasing it in a step-by-step reverse order in which it was reduced during the waxing phase of the moon.

The Hindu scriptures have prescribed a number of methods of atonement for one's misdeeds and expiations for sins. The Chandrayan is the universal penance for expiation of almost any kind of sin—especially where no specific remedy is prescribed.

It is so-called as during this exercise one follows the phase of the moon in his eating habits. Starting with fifteen morsels of food on the full-moon day it is gradually reduced by one morsel per day till the new-moon day when not a single morsel is eaten by the aspirant. Then from this day onwards, one morsel per day is increased till the full-moon day when once again he eats fifteen morsels. This is one cycle of the penance. It can be repeated as many times as desired according to the intensity of the sin to be atoned for. This penance is also called 'Pipillikaamadhya' or 'middle of an ant' exercise because it starts and ends with full fifteen morsels of food with nil food in the middle.

There is a variation of the Chandrayan described above. In the modified version, the penance is started with one morsel on the full-moon day, gradually increased to fifteen morsels on the new-moon day and then progressively reduced by one morsel each day till the full-moon day when once again only one morsel is eaten. This is called 'Yavamadhya' or 'middle of the wheat grain'—as this grain is thickest at the center and tapers off at the two ends.

In the third variation, eight morsel of food is eaten each day for a month's time. This is called 'Yati-Chandrayan'—or the Chandrayan that is prescribed for wandering ascetics who beg for food for sustenance.

The size of the morsel of food is approximately that of a big myrobalan fruit. A person who undertakes the penance called Chandrayan should tonsure the head, do initial

fasting as a preparatory step, offer libations of clarified butter (Ghee) and water to the Gods, consecrate the food before eating it, and worship the Moon God.”}}

कवच अभेद बिप्र गुर पूजा । एहि सम बिजय उपाय न दूजा ॥ १० ॥

kavaca abhēda bipra gura pūjā. ēhi sama bijaya upāya na dūjā. 10.

The impenetrable body-armour (the ‘Kavach’) is represented by worshipping and having devotion and faith in Vipras (Brahmins; elderly and learned men) and Guru (moral preceptor, teacher and guide).

Verily, there is no better way to obtain victory in this world; there is no efficacious way than this to attain the glory of conquest. (10)

[Note—The ‘Kavach’ is the closest and the safest thing to protect the warrior. It is usually made of iron either as a plain sheet or as a mesh made of plaited iron chains. It is very sturdy and regarded as the safest protection because it directly protects the body from up close.

Since worshipping Brahmins and paying obeisance to their holy feet is regarded as one of the major auspicious deeds of Dharma (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 45), it is likened to a strong Kavach here because the worshipper gets their blessings and grace which protects him against any evil effects of sins and misdeeds.

Lord Ram has himself told the demon Kabandha—“Look, anyone who worships and serves Brahmins, who are like living gods on earth, by his mind, deed, as well as words and speech, without any deceit and pretensions, verily I say that all the Gods, along with the creator Brahma and the concluder Shiva, as well as myself, become subservient to such a person”—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 33.

Once again this virtue is reiterated by Lord Ram to the citizens of Ayodhya when the Lord told them—“Gods and saints are gracious and benevolent upon a person who serves Brahmins without any deceit and pretensions”. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 45.

We note here that two types of Kavachs are mentioned here—one is worshipping of the Brahmin, and the other is the Guru. It implies that both of them should be given equal importance in one’s life. Whereas Brahmins act as teachers and moral preceptors for the whole world in a general way, keeping themselves engaged in studying the scriptures so as to give advice to the world whenever needed, and carrying out religious duties and doing such deeds as needed for the general welfare of the society at large, the Guru is a personal guide and teacher who cares for the individual’s spiritual and temporal welfare. So while the Brahmin is a representative of the Supreme Being at the macro level of existence, the Guru represents the same Supreme Being at the micro level of the individual.

Another interpretation is that a wise warrior takes extra precaution by wearing a double-breasted suit of armour—so that even if the outer layer is damaged he still gets protection from the inner layer. In the present context this would mean that even if the Brahmins fail to protect him due to some reason, his Guru will always stand by him. The

blessing of Brahmins forms the outer ring of protection, and that of the Guru as the inner ring.

Now, we have a strong chariot, well-trained horses, an expert charioteer, powerful and potent weapons, and personal body armour. Surely then, all the paraphernalia for victory are there, and therefore there is no other better way to win a war and obtain conquest. What one now needs is one's own personal resolve and training, one's own strength, confidence and commitment. In other words, even if every imaginable instrument and mean for personal enlightenment and spiritual elevation are available to a person, even if he has read all the scriptures and is wise enough to understand them correctly and properly, yet if he does not commit himself whole-heartedly towards his spiritual path of obtaining liberation and deliverance, none of them will provide emancipation and salvation to him automatically. A wise man is he who uses all the available resources most judiciously and properly to reach his desired goal in life.]

सखा धर्ममय अस रथ जाकेँ । जीतन कहँ न कतहुँ रिपु ताकेँ ॥ ११ ॥

sakhā dharmamaya asa ratha jākēṁ. jīтана kahaṁ na katahumṁ ripu tākēṁ. 11.

My friend, anyone who has the kind of Chariot of Dharma which I've described to you above, becomes invincible in this world; no enemy can ever defeat and conquer him. (11)

[Note—The 'chariot' described by Lord Ram is not a physical one, but a metaphoric and symbolic one that stands for the glorious and auspicious virtues a person must inculcate in himself, grand virtues that he must seek and acquire for himself in order to be successful in life even against the most formidable of odds that might seem daunting on their face like a strong and powerful enemy, but they buckle when faced by a man who possesses these magnificent qualities like the enemy crumbling when it faces a stronger warrior.

Lord Ram has described a 'Chariot of Dharma'—that is, a vehicle that can help a spiritual aspirant attain his goals inspite of all the daunting and thorny problems of the world in which he lives. By following the principles of Dharma outlined above, he is rest assured of liberation and deliverance from all fetters and bondages that tie his Atma, his 'pure self', to this mundane world and makes it go round and round in an endless cycle of birth and death along with their accompanying horrors and miseries. Not only this, the journey through life becomes easy and smooth because the aspirant has the security and safety of the Chariot, and the protection of the umbrella of Dharma.

Lord Ram has listed the following twenty-one auspicious virtues that a man must possess if he wishes that the Lord extends him his protection, and if he wishes to become invincible against all the evil effects of this world. The sequential order of the virtues is as follows—Sauraj, Dhiraj, Satya, Sheel (line no. 5), Bal, Vivek, Dam, Parhit, Kshamaa, Kripaa, Samtaa (line no. 6), Bhajan (devotion for Lord God), Virati, Santosh (line no. 7), Daan, Buddhi, Vigyan (line no. 8), Amal (purity) and Achal (steady) Mana (mind), Sama, Yam, Niyam (line no. 9), and worship of Brahmins and Guru (line no. 10).

Now, it will be very pertinent and interesting to examine the presence of all these magnificent and divine virtues in Lord Ram himself as depicted at different places in

different contexts spread through the text of epic Ram Charit Manas, which made the Lord invincible.

Virtue no. 1= ‘Sauraj’ (bravery and valour)—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 25 where Marich tells Ravana that it is very unwise to make Lord Ram and his younger brother Laxman enemies because they are very brave, powerful and strong, and any opposition to them would be futile.

Virtue no. 2, 3 and 18 = ‘Dhiraj’ (patience, fortitude, courage and resilience), Satya and mind that is steady, firm and resolute respectively—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 82 where king Dasrath tells his minister to go behind Lord Ram, after he has been sent to forest exile, and try to persuade the Lord to come back. During this instruction, Dasrath says—“If the two brothers, Ram and Laxman, who are of a firm resolve and an unwavering mind, courageously refuse to come back because Lord Ram is extremely firm in his resolve and is true to his word (that he will go to the forest if it the father’s will)---”.

Virtue no. 3= ‘Satya’ (truthfulness)—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 264 in which the assembly felt glad upon hearing Lord Ram make a firm resolve to honour Bharat’s wish—because the Lord is exemplarily truthful to his words, and once he says that he will honour the wish of Bharat he will do it no matter what comes. The context is Bharat’s plea to the Lord to return to the city of Ayodhya to ascend its throne, and the Lord agreeing to do what Bharat says because he knew that Bharat cannot tell him to do anything that goes against the tenets of Dharma.

Then again in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 292, the Lord has been ascribed with the virtues of Satya, Dharma, and Sheel.

In Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 23 that precedes Doha no. 7 Lord Ram has himself proclaimed to Sugriv that “listen friend, my words do no go in vain; I do not lie”.

Virtue no. 4 = ‘Sheel’ (politeness, courteousness, civility, humility, good manners and etiquette)—refer: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 243 where Lord Ram has eagerly gone forward to welcome his guru sage Vasistha when the party of Bharat arrived at the Lord’s hermitage in Chitrakoot to persuade the Lord to come back to Ayodhya. Here Lord Ram has been described as being an ocean of Sheel. (ii) Then again, in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 29 Ka, it is said that “Tulsidas declares and asserts that there is no other Lord compared to Lord Ram in as far as the virtue of Sheel is concerned because Lord Ram is an abode, or a treasure-trove, of this grand virtue”. (iii) In Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 6 it is asserted that Lord Ram is an abode of Sheel and other auspicious Gunas (virtues).

Virtue no. 5= ‘Bala’ (strength)—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 12 that precedes Doha no. 2 wherein Jayant, the stupid son of Indra (the king of gods), has accepted that Lord Ram possesses unmatched strength, power, authority and potent about which he had not known earlier, for then he would not have had the temerity to hurt Sita. He regretted sincerely, and the merciful Lord forgave him and spared his life.

Virtue no. 6= ‘Vivek’ (wisdom)—refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 97 in which Sita says that Lord Ram is most merciful and full of wisdom. (ii) In Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 254, sage Vashistha declares to the assembly “no one knows the essential principles and the tenets as well as the practical implementation of the grand virtues of

Niti (laws of conduct and thought; laws of jurisprudence), Priti (love, affection, cordiality), Parmaarath (spiritual welfare; general good in the long run) and Swaarath (personal safety and interests) more than Lord Ram. (iii) Then again, in Lanka Kand, the 2nd half of Chanda line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 111, the creator has said while praying to Lord Ram that the Lord is free from anger and is always an embodiment of wisdom and enlightenment.

Virtue no. 7 = 'Dam' (self restraint over one's organs and urges)—refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 179 in which it is asserted that "Lord Ram is pure in mind and heart, that he is pious, and that he is disinterested in and dry (non-emotional) towards the sense objects of the world and their allurements or temptations". (ii) Then again in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 32, king Dasrath declares to Kaikeyi (his wife) that "everyone says that Lord Ram is like a Sadhu (saintly and pious)".

Virtue no. 8 = 'Parhita' (welfare of others)—refer: Ram Charit Manas:- (1) Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 192 that says that Lord Vishnu took birth as a human being (in the form of Lord Ram) for the interest, welfare, well-being and good of Brahmins, mother Earth, Gods and Saints. (ii) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 254 says "Lord Ram has taken birth for the general good, well-being and welfare of the world at large".

Virtue no. 9 = 'Kshamaa' (forgiveness)—refer: Ram Charit Manas:- (1) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 285 wherein sage Parashuram has declared that Lord Ram and his brother Laxman are like a temple (abode) of the virtue of forgiveness. (2) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 218 in which the creator Brahma has advised the Gods not to create mischief and put an obstacle in the path of Bharat's attempt to bring Lord Ram back to Ayodhya because though "Lord Ram does not get angry at any harm or offence caused to him personally or directly", but will not accept any mischief being created to annoy his devotees.

Virtue no. 10 = 'Kripaa' (compassion, grace, benevolence)—refer: Ram Charit Manas:- (i) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 259 that says Lord Ram is an 'abode of Kripaa'; (ii) Baal Kand, line no. 2 of Doha no. 208 Kha which says that Lord Ram is an 'ocean of Kripaa'; (iii) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 101 that also endorses this virtue of Lord Ram as being an 'ocean of Kripaa'; (iv) Aranya Kand, line no. 2 of Doha no. 2 that says 'there is no one comparable to Lord in having in him the virtue of Kripaa'; (v) Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 33 that says "Lord Ram has a very sweet temperament, is most merciful, compassionate and gracious, and shows his benevolence dispassionately, without any sort of interests involved"; (vi) Aranya Kand, Doha no. 9 and its preceding Chaupai line no. 8 that say—"When Lord Ram was told that the heap of bones lying on the ground was of the sages and seers who have been devoured by the demons, his eyes were filled with tears. He raised his arms and took a firm vow that he will eliminate all the demons from the surface of the earth. After that, the Lord went to the hermitages of all the sages and seers independently to comfort them and give them happiness and plesure."

Virtue no. 11 = 'Samtaa' (equanimity, fortitude, evenness of mind, to treat all alike without distinction and discrimination)—refer: Ram Charit Manas:- (i) Kishkindha Kand, line no. 1 of Doha no. 7 in which Baali, the king of the monkey race and elder

brother of Sugriv tells his wife Tara that “Lord Ram treats everyone alike and harbours no personal ill-will against anyone”. (ii) Ayodhya Kand, line no. 2 of Doha no. 227 in which Laxman has said “Oh Lord, you have equal love and compassion for all, and treat everyone like you would treat your own self”. (iii) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 219 which asserts Lord Ram has equanimity and evenness of mind as he treats everyone alike without any distinction and discrimination, and therefore has no ill-will against anyone nor is infatuated with someone else”. (iv) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 34 that precedes Doha no. 86 in which Lord Ram has himself declared that “all the creatures are dear to me equally as all of them are my off-springs, all have been created by me—i.e. I do not distinguish between them on any pretext”.

Virtue no. 12 = ‘Devotion for Lord God and worshipping him’ (Ish Bhajan)—refer: Ram Charit Manas:- (i) In Lanka Kand, from Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 2, till Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 3 it is narrated that Lord Ram had installed an image of Lord Shiva, known as a lingam, and then duly worshipped it. (ii) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 237 that says Lord Ram did his sacraments in the sanctioned way. (iii) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 237 says that the Lord brought flowers so that sage Vishwamitra can offer his ritualistic worship of Gods. (iii) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 103 says that Lord Ram worshipped an image of Lord Shiva on the banks of the holy river Ganges on his way to the forest after taking a purification bath in the river.

Virtue no. 13 = ‘Virati’ (renunciation, detachment, dispassion, non-involvement with anything related to the world and its gross objects of the senses)—refer: Ram Charit Manas:- (i) Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 31 which says “Lord Ram had no greed for the kingdom of Ayodhya; he never yearned for it”; (ii) Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 51 that says “Lord Ram’s mind is like a free elephant, and the responsibilities of the kingdom is like the iron shackle that is put around this elephant’s leg to tie it down; so as soon as the Lord learnt that he has been ordered to go to the forest he felt as this shackle has been broken and so he felt exceedingly glad and happy”; (iii) Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 165 that says “Lord Ram discarded the royal ornaments and clothes as soon as he received the father’s orders to proceed to the forest, and most cheerfully and willingly took up and wore clothes made of bark of the birch tree and leaves with complete dispassion, without having any sort of emotions either of happiness or of dismay in his heart”.

The same idea is emphasized in Kavitawali of Tulsidas, in its Ayodhya Kand, verse no. 2, line no. 4 which says “The lotus-eyed Lord Ram went to the forest after abandoning the kingdom of his father like a mendicant who has no attachment with anything at all, and who does not look back at the place which he leaves”

Virtue no. 14 = ‘Santosh’ (contentement; satisfaction at whatever is available)—refer: Ram Charit Manas:- (i) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 342 says “Lord Ram, who is always fulfilled and contented, became satisfied by the words of King Janak”. (ii) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 133 that says that Lord Ram’s mind and heart felt fully contented when he saw the natural beauty of Chitrakoot.

Virtue no. 15 = ‘Daan’ (making charity)—refer: Ram Charit Manas:- (i) Baal Kand, Doha no. 148 in which Lord Vishnu has told Manu and Satrupaa that they are free to ask for anything they want as the Lord is a great giver who gives liberally. (ii) Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 196 says that king Dasrath gave

charity with an open hand at the time of birth of Lord Ram and his brothers. Sundar Kand, Doha no. 49 Kha says “the wealth that Lord Shiva had granted to the 10-headed Ravana when the latter offered his heads to him as sacrifice, the same wealth was granted hesitatingly by Lord Ram to Vibhishan (even without the latter making any sacrifice like Ravana)”. The fact that Lord Ram was ‘hesitant’ in giving Vibhishan all this is that the Lord felt that it was not enough, and that he should have given Vibhishan much more than that. In other words, Lord Ram is a most magnanimous and benevolent giver; he always thinks that he has not done enough for his devotees and should have done more. (iv) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 12 says that when Lord Ram was crowned the king of Ayodhya after his return to the city, liberal donations were made to Brahmins. (v) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 24 says that after becoming the king of Ayodhya, Lord Ram used to make liberal charities to Brahmins in many ways.

Virtue no. 16 = ‘Buddhi’ (intelligence)—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 56 that says “Lord Seshnath (the legendary celestial serpent with a thousand hoods) is unable to recount the splendorous glories, the matchless strength and immensity of intelligence and wisdom (Buddhi) of Lord Ram even though he has a thousand mouths (hoods)”.

Virtue no. 17 = ‘Vigyan’ (analytical abilities; deep insight and foresight; higher levels of intelligence; transcendental intelligence and wisdom)—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 72 that says “Lord Ram is such an expert that he knows how to act in different circumstances like an expert artist who can assume so many different postures according to the role he is assigned on the stage of the theatre”. No one can say that the person playing out a particular part on the stage is not the same person in practical life, so expertly does the artist play out his role. This is because he knows the secrets of the trade, has a first-hand knowledge of the character that he plays on stage, and is so well-versed with the actual situation in the real life that his depiction of the character becomes extremely natural and convincing as if it is the real thing. Similarly, Lord Ram is so wise and expert that he knows the subtle secrets and even those aspects of a thing that are not apparent and known to all.

Virtue no. 18 = ‘Mana (mind, sub-conscious and heart) that is un-corrupt, holy, pious and steady’—refer: Ram Charit Manas:- (i) Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precedes Doha no. 231 that say—“It is natural for the members of the Raghu dynasty (in which Lord Ram took birth, and therefore had this wonderful character in him) that they do not step on a path that is unrighteous, inauspicious, improper, immoral and unethical. I have a firm belief and faith in my (Lord Ram’s) Mana that it has never thought of coveting any woman to whom one is not related.” (ii) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 92 that says “Lord Ram is as steady and unmoving as the mountain covered by snow (i.e. the Himalayas), and is as grave, dense and deep as the vast ocean”.

Virtue nos. 19 and 20 = ‘Sham’ and ‘Yam’ (self-restraint of the sense organs and their natural urges for gratification), ‘Niyam’ (following rules strictly, and obeying religious sacraments and observances)—refer: Ram Charit Manas:- (i) Ayodhya Kand, the 2nd half of Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 82 says “Lord Ram was true to the vows he had taken, and was steady on his chosen path”. (ii) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 29 says “Lord Ram lived like a true hermit, having completely renounced all his attachments for everything and being fully disinterested in

any material thing of the world and its charms”—that is, the Lord practiced a high degree of self control; he shunned all desires for pleasure and comfort inspite of the fact that he was born a prince and would one day ascend the throne of Ayodhya which was regarded as the most prosperous kingdom of the time. (iii) Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 165 says that “Lord Ram wore clothes made of the bark of the birch tree and leaves (like a renunciate hermit inspite of his being entitled to royal ornaments and attire befitting a king)”. (iv) Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 211 says that—“Lord Ram wore the minimum of clothes, ate naturally grown wild fruits, and slept on the ground on a bed made of leaves and twigs. He lived under the shade of trees, and suffered from the vagaries of Nature by tolerating with equanimity and stoic neutrality the effects of snow, heat, rain and storm (during the phase of his life in the forest as a hermit, without complaining or having any grudge against anyone.”

And finally Virtue no. 21 = ‘Respect of Guru and Brahmins’—refer: Ram Charit Manas:- (i) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 9 which say that “when Lord Ram heard about the arrival of his Guru (sage Vashistha) at his palace, he came forward to receive him at the door, and bowed his head to the Guru. Then the Lord welcomed him (Guru) by worshipping him comprehensively in a ritualistic manner that consists of sixteen steps. (ii) Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 79 says that “Lord Ram payed his respects to and worshipped the feet of Brahmins and his Guru (sage Vashishtha), and then went on his way to the forest”. (iii) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 90 where it is said that “Lord Ram (mentally) bowed his head before the lotus-like feet of Brahmins as he strode ahead on the chariot (that was sent by the Gods, to face the enemy in the battle-field of Lanka)”.]

दो०. महा अजय संसार रिपु जीति सकड़ सो बीर ।

जाकेँ अस रथ होइ दृढ़ सुनहु सखा मतिधीर ॥ ८० (क) ॥

dōhā.

mahā ajaya sansāra ripu jīti saka'i sō bīra.

jākēṁ asa ratha hō'i dṛṛha sunahu sakhā matidhīra. 80 (a).

Listen oh friend (Vibhishan) who has a steady and resolute mind! A warrior (living being) who has a sturdy Chariot (magnificent virtues) as described above becomes invincible for any enemy in this world; he cannot be defeated even if the whole world becomes his enemy; his detractors cannot cause his downfall even if they join hands against him.’ (Doha no. 80-a.)

[Note—In the beginning of this discourse by Lord Ram, Vibhishan was uneasy and full of doubts—refer: Ram Charit Manas, 6/80/1. He was wary of the prospects of fighting a strong enemy like Ravana without a war chariot and other paraphernalia of battle. It becomes virtually impossible to acquire maneuverability and swiftness of movement, so essential for victory on the battle-field, while fighting on foot. But when Lord Ram taught him the principles of Dharma, when he was enlightened about the subtle inner strength of the Atma that comes to a man by the possession of the divine virtues listed by Lord Ram

herein above, Vibhishan became assured of the Lord's victory. This is because he knew that Ravana lacked all of them, and therefore stood no chance against Lord Ram who had all these glorious virtues in him that made the Lord spiritually and morally strong and invincible.

The Lord has said here that a person who possesses this Chariot cannot be defeated by the 'whole world', implying that Ravana, being an individual person, holds no chance when the whole world united against a person who possesses such a fabulous and glorious Chariot of Dharma cannot defeat him.]

सुनि प्रभु बचन बिभीषन हरषि गहे पद कंज ।
एहि मिस मोहि उपदेसेहु राम कृपा सुख पुंज ॥ ८० (ख) ॥

sunī prabhu bacana bibhīṣana haraṣi gahē pada kañja.
ēhi misa mōhi upadēsēhu rāma kṛpā sukha puñja. 80 (b).

When Vibhishan heard these wise words of Lord Ram, he felt exhilarated and contented. He fell down to clasp the holy feet of the Lord and exclaimed in gratitude: 'Oh Lord, you are a fountain of mercy and grace. How fortunate am I that you have given this great wisdom to me on the pretext of answering my concerns regarding the necessity of a chariot during this war.' (Doha no. 80-b)

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SECTION 2

The Upanishads

It is interesting to note that the metaphor of the Chariot has been used in the Upanishads also to describe great metaphysical principles. Refer: (i) Shukla Yajur Veda's Paingalopanishad, Canto 4, verse nos. 3-4; (ii) Krishna Yajur Veda's Kathopanishad, 1/3/3-4, and (iii) Amrit Naad Upanishad, verse 2-3.

In this section, we shall read what the divine Upanishads teach us on this esoteric subject of immense spiritual import.

Let us see what the Paingal Upanishad, 4/3-4 says in this context—

“Verse no. 3 = One should treat one's Atma (soul) as the Lord of the chariot or its honoured passenger, the body as the chariot, the intellect as the expert charioteer, and the mind as the rein with which to control the entire setup (3).

“Verse no. 4 = The sense organs are said to be like the horses of that chariot who try to gallop away on the path which seem attractive to them. [That is, if the horses representing the various sense organs of the body are not properly reined in and controlled by the mind and intellect, then they would start to pull the chariot in different directions, leading to utter chaos and even to the breaking of the chariot and of course that would jeopardize the journey of the passenger. These organs have a natural tendency to swerve towards their respective sensual objects in this world which give them comfort and pleasure, but are detrimental for the spiritual journey of the soul. So they have to be properly reined and controlled.]

But the heart of those who are intelligent, wise, erudite, sagacious, self-realised and enlightened remains unruffled and unaffected by the turmoil below (i.e. by the agitations and restlessness caused by the different tugs and pulls created by the sense organs pulling the chariot-like body in different directions) as if the person is sitting high above in an air plane that is stationed above the world and watching the goings-on peacefully and without getting agitated and nervous about it. [That is, a wise person remains calm and unruffled inspite of the various mischief created by his sense organs which are like horses ever ready to canter away towards their respective objects that attract them. The Atma of an ordinary man who is engrossed in this world is virtually riding a chariot swaying wildly from side to side, as a result of which he is tossed about and the ride becomes very painful and tiring, if at all the Atma is able to complete the journey because the chances are that the chariot would fall apart midway. On the other hand, the Atma of a wise and realised man who has been able to control his sense organs is able to have a comfortable and smooth ride, and it not only reaches its destination but does it fresh and rested.] (4).

[Note--This analogy of the *chariot* explains the situation of the Atma having to pass through this life inside the gross body of the creature, which is like the chariot, due to its

past deeds and their consequences. The Atma has to reach its goal; and the goal or destination is Brahm, which is the realisation of the truth and obtaining final emancipation and salvation.

Another significant observation here is the example of the plane vis-à-vis the chariot. Both the men riding a plane as well as the chariot reach their respective destinations, but the one who is riding the chariot has a greater chance of getting tired and has to face the tossing and swaying of the chariot on rough ground, while the man in the plane has a smooth ride. Further, the man who rides the plane is symbolically 'above' the influences of the mundane world below, while the one who is on land has to be extra careful. This means that those who are wise and enlightened, those who have 'risen above' the mundane world and its problems caused by the sense organs and their wayward nature, are more privileged and exalted as compared to those who have not yet controlled their Indris or their sense organs as well as their Mana or their mind.

This analogy of the chariot is also used in Katha Upanishad, 1/3/3-4 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.

We will note that no chariot can move without a *wheel*. This wheel is treated as a beautiful metaphor for Brahm in the Shwetshwatar Upanishad, canto 1, verse no.4 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition which is quoted here because of its relevance to the chariot. The symbolism is strikingly relevant for our present discussion. This particular verse says—"We know him as a wheel with one rim (circumference), three tyres, sixteen extremities, fifty spokes, twenty counter spokes, six sets of eight factors that strength it, a single yet manifold belt. This wheel is driven along three different paths, and one round of it gives the delusion of two".

Now let us see what are these individual parts or components of this wheel, and what do they stand for.

(a) The *one rim* stands for the 'Avyakta', i.e. that entity which is un-manifest and beyond comprehension but is at the core and form the cause of the rest of the things to have their basis and existence. It also stands for 'Prakriti' which is also called Avyakta because it is not verifiably seen directly but can only be deduced by interpretation.

(b) The *three tyres* are the three Gunas or qualities that form the nature and basic temperament of a man. These are Sata or the best form defined by being righteous, auspicious, noble and proper; Raja which is the medium quality marked by worldly desires, passions and activity; and Tama which is the meanest and lowliest of the three and is characterized by perversions, inertia, ignorance etc.

(c) The *sixteen extremities* are the eleven organs (five organs of perception—eyes, ears, nose, tongue and skin + five organs of action—hands, legs, mouth, genitals and excretory + one mind) and the five elements (space/sky, air/wind, fire/energy, water and earth).

(d) The *fifty spokes* of this wheel are the five misconceptions, twenty-eight disabilities, nine contentments, and eight accomplishments or Siddhis.

[The *five misconceptions* called Vipratipatti are the following—(1) 'Tama' which makes one think that the body is the pure self; the mistaken notion that what is non-self is the self. (2) 'Moha' which is the endearment for or infatuation with the sensual material objects of the artificial world. (3) 'Mahamoha' literally the great Moha is the high of delusions when one thinks that the world is real. (4) 'Taamisra' when one gets angry if the desired objects are not obtained. (5) 'Andha Taamisra' is the blindness that comes in

the wake of failure at fully enjoying the obtained objects of desire. For example, having to leave a meal midway due to an urgent call from the office; it leaves one frustrated and angry.

The *twenty-eight disabilities* or 'A-shaktis' are the following—eleven are related to the eleven organs as stated above, nine are related internally to the Anthakaran which are nine kinds of discontent as opposed to the nine kinds of contentment described below, and eight disabilities which are related to the inability to achieve the eight Siddhis described below.

The *nine kinds of contentment* or 'Tushti' are being satisfied with what one has and not to yearn for more. They are—contentment from the knowledge of Nature (such as the study of sciences), contentment from material gains, contentment from time (because time is a great healing factor and such people derive consolation that the worst of time would pass one day), contentment from good fortune (because many people believe that good luck is round the corner), contentment from renunciation, dispassion and detachment (which is however the best form of contentment), contentment from desisting from activity not from renunciation but because one feels that all activity would bring with it some gain and then it would be difficult to maintain it, so it is better avoided), contentment from being satisfied with whatever one has because one feels that whatever material thing is gained is perishable and would bring in its wake pain and sorrows, contentment from being satisfied with what one has because one thinks that the more one acquires the more the desires go on increasing, and contentment from the thought that no gain is possible without causing even a little harm to others, so it is better not to desire anything at all.

The *eight achievements* or accomplishments are the especial mystical authority and supernatural powers that one possesses. These are—(1) 'Uha' or the intuitive knowledge, skills and powers that one is born with. (2) 'Shabda' or the power of acquiring knowledge and skill just by listening to words instead of actually reading and mugging up of texts. (3) 'Adhyayan' or studying deeply and with concentration to acquire knowledge and skills. (4-6) 'Dukh-Vighaatam' or the abilities to eliminate sorrows and sufferings. There are three sorrows that effect a man—viz. (4) sorrows that originate from external and perceivable sources; they are called 'Ahbhautik', (5) sorrows that come from unknown phenomenal sources such as malignant stars and non-favourable Gods; called 'Adhidaivak', and (6) sorrows that have their origin in the body and the mind; called 'Adhyatmik'. (7) Then comes the seventh Siddhis which is 'Shurid Prapti' or receiving the fortunate company of someone who is compatible and like a soul-mate for the person, as opposed to the company of pervert and tormenting people. (8) And finally, 'Daan' or ability to give which implies that a person has sufficient for himself; it also implies that the person has an inherent noble nature and a renunciate and compassionate temperament.

So these are the so-called fifty spokes of the wheel representing Brahm.

(e) The *twenty counter-spokes* are the ten organs (five of action and five of perception) and their corresponding objects such as sound (ear), colour and shape (eye), taste (tongue), touch (skin), smell (nose), speech (mouth), walking or moving or going to a place (legs), grasping or accepting anything (hands), droppings (excretory), and enjoying sensual pleasures (genitals). These literally act as 'fasteners or belts' that hold or fix the above fifty spokes.

(f) Next comes the *six sets of eight factors*. These are the following—(1) ‘Prakriti-Ashtakam’ or the eight-fold nature of Prakriti; it consists of the five elements (sky, air, fire, water and earth) + mind + intellect + Ahankar (ego, pride). (2) ‘Dhatu-Ashtakam’ or the eight factors that sustain the outer body—outer skin (charma), inner skin (tvak), blood (rakta), flesh (mangsa), fat (medha), bones (asthi), marrow (majjaa) and semen or mucous (shukra). (3) ‘Astha-Aishwariya’ or the eight majesties and glories that are symbolic of the great mystical powers that a man possesses—‘Anima’ or the power to become as small as an atom; ‘Mahima’ or the capacity to become huge and majestic like a colossus; ‘Garima’ or to become authoritative, dignified, assertive and a heavy-weight; ‘Laghima’ or to have humility and simplicity inspite of being powerful and potent; and ‘Prapti’ or the ability to acquire anything desired. (4) ‘Bhav-Ashtakam’ refers to the various eight states of the mind and the corresponding virtues and vices. These are the following—‘Dharma’ or righteousness, probity, propriety, and nobility of thoughts and conduct, as well as its opposite component called ‘Adharma’; ‘Gyan’ or truthful knowledge and erudition, wisdom and enlightenment as well as its opposite component called ‘Agyan’; ‘Vairagya’ or renunciation, detachment and dispassion as well as its opposite component called ‘Raga or A-vairagya’; ‘Aishwarya’ or having material prosperity, lordship, majesty, magnificence, renown and pelf as well as its opposite component called ‘A-aishwarya or non-aishwarya’ or poverty and lack of renown. It is obvious that each of these virtues affects the mental bearing of different persons in different ways. (5) ‘Deva-Ashtakam’ or the eight kinds of celestial beings. These are the following—Brahma the creator, Prajapati the guardian of the visible creation created by Brahma, the Gods, the Gandharvas (heavenly musicians), Yakshas (semi-gods; like Kuber the treasurer of the Gods), Rakshas (the demons), Pittars (spirits of dead ancestors), and Pishach (monsters and ghouls). All these entities have supernatural powers. (6) ‘Guna-Ashtakam’ or the eight qualities. These are Daya or compassion and mercy; Kshma or forgiveness; Anasuya or freedom from jealousy, hatred and ill-will; Shauch or purity and immaculacy; Anaayaasa or freedom from fatigue and indolence; Akirpanya or generosity and magnanimity or lack of miserliness; and Aspriha or lack of craving or yearning for sensual pleasures.

(g) The *one cord* of desire that assumes many forms, and it is called ‘Vishwarupaika Paasham’. The entire world revolves round ‘desire’, whether the desire is noble or Satvic, or pertains to worldly gains or Rajsic, or deals with all that is evil and pervert or Tamsic.

(h) The *three Paths* along which the wheel is driven are represented by—Dharma or the path of righteousness and virtuousness, A-dharma or the path of evil and perversions, and Gyan or the path of knowledge and erudition, of wisdom and enlightenment.

(i) *Each revolution* of the wheel gives to two types of delusions—such as good and bad, sorrows and happiness, etc. These opposite sets of notions are called ‘delusions’ because in actual fact the world where they are felt, the mind and the body which feel them are all delusory and have no truthful existence. The real entity that exists is one, and it is Atma or Brahm. The rest is a delusion.]”

The Katha Upanishad, 1/3/3-4—

“Verse no. 3 = [The following verses use the analogy of the chariot to elucidate the method of reaching the supreme Brahm.]

Oh Nachiketa! You can take the example of the chariot to understand what I (Yam) mean. Regard the Atma of the creature (i.e. the Jivatma) as the owner or the passenger of the chariot; the body as the chariot (vehicle); the Buddhi (intelligence) as the charioteer; and the Mana (mind and heart) as the rein (which controls the horses symbolising the various sense organs of the body)¹ (3)

[Note--¹The sense organs are very restless and fidgety, ever eager to cantor away in different directions like the horses attached to the chariot. If the horses are not put under tight leash, the chariot would topple over. Likewise, if one does not control his sense organs which pull him in different directions, he would fall over the brink. For example, the eye sees one thing and gets enchanted with it, inspiring the mind in turn to yearn for it. This mind then plots and plans how to get access to this thing and acquire it. It then orders the organs of action such as the hand and the leg to attempt to acquire this object. Meanwhile, the eye sees something else more enticing than the first, and changes its priorities. While all this is happening, the ear, the tongue, the nose and the skin wish to have different things simultaneously and pull the mind in different directions. They all want that the mind pay them equal attention, all at the same time. The result is obvious to see—the man is tossed like a leaf on a heaving ocean, his mind wanting one thing now and rejecting it in preference to another the next moment. There are five organs of perception—viz. eyes, nose, ears, tongue and skin, and if each behave like untrained spoilt horses, one can well imagine the disastrous consequences for the man and his peace of mind.

Refer Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, Canto 2, Brahman 5, verse no. 15 and 19.]

“Verse no. 4 = The wise ones say that if we were to treat the sense organs of the body as the horses of this chariot, then the different perceptions and functions of the world which relate to each of these individual organs of perception and action respectively are like the paths upon which these horses prefer to gallop away with the chariot. [That is, the sense objects of the world attempt to pull the respective sense organs towards themselves by offering to gratify their natural urges. As explained in verse no. 3 above, the result is that the man is tossed violently like a plank of wood on a rough ocean.]

Meanwhile, the Atma of the creature (the Jivatma) which lives in this body consisting of the gross sense organs and the subtle mind-intellect complex is called the ‘Bhokta’—i.e. someone who either suffers from the miseries that come his way by getting involved in the world, or the one who enjoys the pleasures and comforts of this world (4).

[Note—This Atma is the true ‘self’ of the creature, and as such it is deemed to be the one which employs this body with all its components to fulfill its desires. In the present case where the example of the chariot is cited, it would mean ‘to reach its destination’. If this Atma or the ‘self’ of the creature is wise and enlightened then its ‘destination’ would be to attain the supreme stature of being one with the universal Brahm and find the final emancipation and salvation for its self. On the other hand, if the Atma is unwise and covered by a veil of ignorance and delusions then it would think that enjoyment of the sense objects of the world is the aim of getting the body. The former Atma is regarded as

the wise owner of the chariot who reaches his destination comfortably and in the least possible time, while the latter Atma is regarded as the stupid owner who does not know how to harness the horses, resulting in his chariot rocking and rolling on the way till it breaks apart midway, throwing him off to the ground and getting injured seriously.

In other words, the Jivatma (the Atma of a creature) is the passenger who would either reach his destination if the chariot (body) moves ahead properly, or would get waylaid, fall down and get injured if the chariot becomes uncontrolled. If the creature decides that it should pursue the pleasures of the world, then it is tantamount to its allowing the horses to run amok and throw the chariot off balance, while if it chooses to reach the high citadel where the Emperor (the supreme Brahm) resides then it would be wise for it to let the intelligent charioteer do the driving and keep the horses under tight leash. The former type of creature is called a deluded worldly creature, while the latter is known as the wise and enlightened creature. A spiritual aspirant is expected to be like the second Jivatma. The first type of Jivatma is the one who has to suffer because pursuing the world creates a chain of other delusions in its wake which have the net affect of trapping the creature in their magical snare from which it becomes difficult for it to extricate itself, while the second type of Jivatma is freed from the clutches of these delusory and entrapping falsehoods and is able to reach the truthful spiritual goal which gives it permanent peace and happiness.

The Jivatma, or a living being having an Atma, has wandered in numerous births and suffered a lot. Finally, he has got a golden opportunity to reach his destination without much trouble by sitting in a chariot represented by the body. The sense organs of the body are like the horses that pull it along. Now, if the Jivatma leaves the running of the chariot to an expert charioteer represented by his intelligent mind and its discriminatory and analytical abilities, he can be rest assured that he would reach his destination comfortably, while if he does not allow this expert charioteer to be at the helm of affairs and lets the horses representing the sense organs pull the chariot as they deem fit, then the chariot is sure to topple over, because the horses begin to pull it in all directions.

How does the wise intellect act as the expert charioteer of the Jivatma? When the Jivatma has become wise about his own welfare, he gives the brief to his wise intellect to act accordingly. The brief is to take him to the destination known as 'Brahm realisation' where there is perpetual peace and happiness. The intellect then takes control of the reins of the mind and heart in its hand and leads the horses represented by the sense organs towards the desired destination. The chariot moves smoothly and without causing any trouble for its exalted passenger.

The sense organs have a natural tendency of gravitating towards the sense objects of this world which are very alluring for them. It is indeed very difficult to pull them away from this world much like it is very difficult to move a horse against its wishes if it is grazing grass and refuses to budge. If either the Jivatma (i.e. the creature who is treated as the passenger in this example) or his charioteer (the intellect) are a little careless or callous towards their own fate and allow themselves to become dependent upon the horses (i.e. allow themselves to become subservient to the impulses of the sense organs), then the consequences would be disastrous for the welfare of the passenger who would never reach his destination happily and comfortably even if he manages to reach there at all. So, if the Jivatma puts his destination in the hands of the wise intellect which in turn

would keep the sense organs restrained by using its sway over the mind and heart as well as the sense organs, i.e. by ‘reining in’ the ‘horses’ respectively, the chariot and the passenger would both reach their destination comfortably and in one piece as it were.]’

The Amrit Naad Upanishad, verse nos. 2-3—

The Amrit Naad Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its verse nos. 2-3 describes how the spiritual aspirant should use the divine word OM as a chariot to reach its spiritual goal of Brahm-realisation and obtaining freedom from the fetters of the body. To quote—

“Verse no. 2 = [This verse describes the vehicle that the spiritual aspirant should use to attain the supreme citadel of self-realisation which is akin to having access to the supreme Brahm. Two versions are presented here.]

A wise and erudite person who embarks upon the spiritual journey of self and Brahm realisation aiming to reach the abode of Brahm called the Brahm Loka¹ should board a chariot or vehicle symbolised by OM² (the monosyllabic ethereal word standing for Brahm), make Lord Vishnu his charioteer³, and fix his attention on the target of Brahm-realisation by emulating Lord Rudra or Shiva⁴ who remains always in a state of Samadhi or a trance-like state of meditation where one enjoys perpetual bliss and ecstasy. [In other words, a wise aspirant who wishes to attain success in obtaining the eternal fount of bliss and eternity represented by Brahm, called Brahm-realisation, should be devoted to Lord Vishnu by leaving his destiny in the Lord’s hand which is symbolised by making the Lord his charioteer. Since mediation is regarded as the medium of attaining spiritual success, Lord Shiva is invoked as the deity because Shiva is the patron God of ascetics. OM is the Mantra universally used in meditation, so this becomes a vehicle for attaining the state of Brahm-realisation.]

There is another way of interpreting this verse. One should ride upon the symbolic chariot of OM, and make Lord Vishnu its charioteer. Astride this glorious and divine chariot, he should investigate and explore the vast kingdom of Brahm, the Lord of creation. That is, the spiritual aspirant should research the actual ‘truth’ in existence behind the façade of illusions and delusions by using the divine Mantra OM and being devoted to Lord Vishnu. While doing this, he should retract his mind from everything else and remain perpetually in a state of Samadhi (which is a trance-like state of complete bliss and detachment) like the one obtained by Lord Rudra or Shiva. [Lord Shiva also happens to be the God of death and conclusion. So it implies that the aspirant always keeps in mind the fact that this life and the rest of the world would surely come to an end one day because everything that has a birth and existence is certainly destined to decay and die one day or the other. This would help him to remain always vigilant and alert against falling prey to the enticements of the deluding world which is mortal and perishable; it would prevent him from going astray from his spiritual path of seeking the Truth which is immortal and imperishable.] (2).

[Note—¹The word ‘Brahm Loka’ refers to the state of existence where the self-realised person becomes one with Brahm. It is the finding of the eternal fount of beatitude and felicity, the attainment of liberation and deliverance of the soul from the endless cycle of birth and death. It is like reaching the citadel where the supreme transcendental Divinity

known as Brahm is attainable. It is to be noted that this Brahm Loka is actually not located somewhere in the hypothetical corner in the universe called the Heaven, but in the spiritual aspirant's own heart where his Atma lives, because this Atma is a personification of Brahm.

²OM is the divine Mantra used during meditation as clearly laid out in Yogchudamani Upanishad of Sam Veda tradition in its verse no. 71. Further, verse nos. 72-89 of this Upanishad describe the metaphysical importance of OM as an embodiment of Brahm. Refer also to verse nos. 20-25 of this present Amrit Naad Upanishad below which emphasize the use of OM as a medium of doing Yoga.

Now let us see what this OM refers to. The word OM is the ethereal divine word representing the supreme transcendental Brahm which is the only and absolute Truth in creation. This word is used as a Mantra or a group of letters combined together to enable the aspirant to symbolically witness the entire spectrum of creation, right from its conception thorough its expansion till its conclusion. The concept of OM has been elaborately described in a separate appendix of this volume.

OM has been treated as the nearest analogue of Brahm which is the only 'truth' in creation and therefore eternal and infinite, because 'truth' has these characteristics. Since the wise aspirant has already become aware that his 'own true self is pure consciousness', and that it is the same as the 'cosmic supreme Consciousness and the universal Truth known as Brahm', he finds a resonance and sync between these two entities. Truth is always eternal and imperishable as compared to falsehood and delusions. Study of the scriptures as advised in the opening lines of this Upanishad inculcates in him the wisdom about the perishable and deluding nature of this world and the eternal nature of his true self. So naturally he would reject something impermanent and go and investigate something that is permanent. With this aim in view, the aspirant relentlessly pursues his goal of finding it without getting distracted by delusions and false charms of this world. This is indicated by the fact that he constantly remembers Lord Shiva, symbolising his constant awareness of the fact that the life would very soon come to an end.

Now, the word OM has three basic sounds represented by the letters A, U and M. These three are called *Matras* which literally means the time taken or marked to pronounce a short vowel in the Sanskrit language; it also means a vowel mark. Matra refers to the basic ingredients and their magnitude in any given entity. It also means quantity and intensity of an ingredient. In the case of creation, there are three basic components—its coming into being, its development and expansion, and its conclusion. These three are symbolically represented by the three letters of OM—viz. 'A' represents the initiation, 'U' the development and expansion, and 'M' the conclusion. This is because to say the letter 'A', one has to open the mouth, signifying life coming into existence. This is evident from the fact that when the child takes birth, the first thing it does is starting to cry, entailing the opening of the mouth. Or when a man wakes up from sleep, he yawns and utters some incomprehensible monosyllables to indicate that the sleep is over. Similarly, to say 'U' one has to cup the lips and the muscles of the tongue are rolled forwards, indicating progress and outgoing nature. Finally, to say 'M' one has to close the mouth, indicating the reversal of the process when the mouth was first opened to indicate the initiation of life. That is, M stands for conclusion of life; it symbolises death.

In the present context, this verse is talking about meditation on the divine word OM with the eclectic view point that the first letter of OM, i.e. 'A' is Lord Vishnu because he is the Viraat Purush from whom the entire cosmos has evolved. Once the creation comes into being, 'U' represents the vast kingdom of Brahma, the patriarch creator of this visible world. A wise and erudite spiritual seeker of the Truth researches this world to find out the truth himself, and this he does by meditation and contemplation. For this purpose he invokes Lord Shiva who is represented by the third letter 'M' signifying the conclusion of creation, or death. Further, Shiva is the patron deity of ascetics and seekers of truth who have renounced the illusionary charms of this world and taken the strict vows of a monk or a friar. Shiva is worshipped as the Lord who symbolises truth and its beauty, an auspicious way of life full of dispassion and detachment from this material world which has a profound impact upon the whole spiritual well being of the creature, including his peace of mind and blissful heart.

For this purpose of meditation, the spiritual aspirant uses the word OM as a vehicle to concentrate his mind and attention on divinity, truth and the eternal source of peace and tranquility, beatitude and felicity known as Brahm. As to why he chooses OM to do meditation to the exception of all other Mantras, the answer is that if one wishes to study, for example, a specialised branch of advanced molecular biology, then he would buy relevant books, go to a relevant college, hear relevant lectures and use relevant knowledge to succeed. It would be highly incredulous and incongruous for him to use physics text book and attend classes on this subject in order to study molecular biology! Likewise, OM is the proper channel, the correct path, the right instrument and the fine-tuned apparatus that can enable him to succeed in Brahm realisation. No other way is as effective and as fruitful as this.

³Let us see the meaning of the symbolism here. Lord Vishnu is depicted as the charioteer here to draw a parallel to his incarnation as Lord Krishna when he had become a charioteer of Arjun during the famous Mahabharat war when the Lord had preached the much acclaimed philosophical treatise known as Gita. Vishnu is regarded as Brahm personified in his macrocosmic form as the Viraat Purush, the invisible, all-encompassing and all-pervading macrocosmic gross body of Brahm. So, when the spiritual aspirant makes Vishnu his charioteer he is literally leaving his spiritual destiny in the hands of the ultimate Lord himself; he is making the Lord his guide and guardian. This ensures that the aspirant would not be tormented by evil forces because the Lord is now responsible for his protection and welfare.

From the metaphysical interpretation of OM, making Vishnu the charioteer is like meditating and contemplating upon the first letter 'A' of OM. Since the aspirant has made OM as his vehicle for spiritual journey to Brahm-realisation, he must choose a charioteer who is well versed with the path leading to enlightenment as well as the destination which is self-realisation and Brahm-realisation along with their eternal beatitude and felicity. Lord Vishnu knows this path well because he has created the cosmos and is the supreme Brahm himself. Lord Vishnu takes the aspirant through the journey, showing him all the way side villages and towns represented by the countless experiences and ideas that the aspirant comes across in his lifetime. The charioteer gives him a running commentary of all these places, symbolising the fact that if one listens to the divine voice of the inner self where Vishnu is supposed to reside as one's Atma or consciousness, then the chances of his falling from his chosen devotional path are remote,

and the progress of the chariot towards its destination of self-realisation and Brahm-realisation would go on smoothly.

The second letter 'U', as we have seen above, represents the expansion of the creation, indicating that the spiritual aspirant is given a wide choice and shown all the pitfalls that come in the way as well as the horrendous consequences of falling from his spiritual goal and getting distracted by the road-side tricksters and cheated by moral imposters. He would then be trapped in the endless cycle of birth and death, and go back to where he has come so far. When the aspirant relies upon his wisdom cultivated by the study of scriptures, he does not allow himself to be laid astray and fall in the trap of such wayside delusions. This ensures that the chariot progresses smoothly onwards towards its final goal.

The last letter 'M' represents conclusion or death. When a man is face to face with the reality of an imminent death, no amount of worldly enticements of material comforts and sensual pleasures would move him, especially if he sees in that death a chance of eternal liberation and deliverance from the cycle of birth and death. Such a man would be totally detached from this world, and turn inwards in search of peace and tranquility. This is the culmination of meditation and marked by a perpetual state of Samadhi. This is why such a person worships Lord Shiva who is a living personification of these eclectic virtues and in a perpetual state of Samadhi. The age old adage that 'one becomes what one thinks' is fully applicable here—the aspirant becomes one like these three icons of auspiciousness, righteousness, truthfulness, divinity and holiness (i.e. Vishnu, Brahma and Shiva) with whom he constantly keeps company; he inculcates their virtues and ultimately loses his own independent identity, being completely infused, soaked and drenched in their diving glory, completely imbued in their spiritual colour.

⁴Lord Shiva and Rudra are two names of the same divinity, while Shiva and Vishnu are both regarded as manifestations of Brahm, and therefore synonymous with each other and with Brahm—refer Skanda Upanishad which is Chapter 19, and Rudra Hridaya Upanishad which is Chapter 26 of this volume. Shiva is regarded as the patron God of ascetics and of those who do meditation. The emphasis in this present Upanishad is on attaining the eclectic state of Brahm-realisation through the medium of meditation as described in the following verses, and therefore it is appropriate to regard Shiva or Rudra as the patron God who is invoked during the journey to Brahm.]

“Verse no. 3 = A wise aspirant should ride the chariot only as long as the path permits so, but as soon as he reaches a point where the chariot is no longer needed or cannot go further, he should disembark from it and move ahead on his own. In other words, till the time the aspirant has not reached a certain point in his stated objective of spiritual enlightenment and self realisation after which he does not need any more support to move ahead in his spiritual pursuit, he should diligently follow the directions laid down by the scriptures and practice various means prescribed by them, one of them being the practice of Yoga (meditation). But as soon that point is reached when he becomes aware of the pure consciousness present in his bosom, he no longer needs a prop or crutches to move ahead in his spiritual journey any more. After a certain point, the progress is automatic and self-propelled. It becomes so powerful a spiritual force that it magnetically pulls the aspirant towards itself, and then there is no longer any need for meditation and contemplation as well as study of the scriptures and listening to religious discourses.

Obviously, when one reaches his goal, there is no point in sticking to the means employed earlier to reach there, because from this exalted citadel of self-realisation and Brahm-realisation where the aspirant has found an eternal wellspring of beatitude and felicity, there is no question of going back to the mortal and perishable world of delusions and miseries, and therefore there would no further need of this ‘chariot’ and to ride on it again any longer (3).

[Note—This is like getting a car started or a heavy stone rolling. Initially it requires a lot of energy to push the two to get moving, but once the start to move they gain momentum and then no more pushing is needed. Another example would be a space vehicle—the earlier part of its journey to outer space, the time of lift off from earth and the time it is in the lower part of the earth’s atmosphere is the most difficult part of the flight because of the exceptional weight of the vehicle, the inertia that has to be overcome, and the high gravitational pull. Once the required height and momentum is gained, the progress becomes easier and requires less energy.]”

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“Go Placidly Amid the Noise and Haste”

Remember what peace there may be in silence. As far as possible, without surrender, be on good terms with all persons.

Speak your Truth quietly and clearly; and listen to others, even the dull and the low-witted; they too have their story to tell and you are the gainer from them if you pick up some nuggets of wisdom from the heap. So, what’s the harm?

Avoid loud and aggressive persons, for they are nothing but vexations for the spirit.

If you compare yourself with others, you may become in vain and bitter. For there will be greater and lesser persons than yourself.

Enjoy achievements as and when they come by, with stoic neutrality; this will help you tide over failures with equal stoic coolness.

Keep yourself interested in your goals and career; disinterest and detachment doesn’t mean doing anything half-heartedly, but doing it with no emotional attachment with its result, either positive or negative. This is the real possession in the changing fortunes of time; this is the stable ground in the shifting sands of time.

Exercise caution and diligence in your affairs, as the world is full of trickery. But let this not blind you to what virtue there is in the world—for the life is full of instances of exemplarily high ideals, and everywhere there are examples of heroism and glory.

Be yourself however. Especially, do not feign what you are not. Be honest, truthful and trustworthy against all odds. You’ll not repent.

Don’t be cynical about love, for in the face of all aridity and disenchantment, it is still the perennial green grass.

Take kindly the council of the years; gracefully surrendering the things of youth. Nurture your inner strength of the Spirit to shield you in sudden misfortunes. But do not distress yourself with imaginations and ghosts. Remember: many fears are born of delusions and hallucinations that come when you isolate yourself from the Holy Spirit. Let not yourself be fatigued by loneliness, as this Holy Spirit is ubiquitously present with you. Remember: it (Holy Spirit) is not a 'ghost'.

Beyond a wholesome discipline, be gentle with yourself and genteel with those around you. Remember: you are a child of the Universe, the Creator's own off-spring. Like the trees and the stars, you too have a right to be here. Like they have a past that makes their present, so also you should have no regrets in your present. What differentiates you from them however is that you can think and plan your future.

And whether or not it is clear to you, no doubt the Universe is unfolding as it should. So cheer up; be at peace with God, whatever you conceive him to be.

And whatever your labours and aspirations are in the noisy confusion of life in this world, keep peace with your Soul.

Be careful; strive to be happy, for your happiness depends directly upon you and nobody else. Remember: happiness is indigenous and not exogenous. Amen!!

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About the Author

Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia left home when he was approximately 29 years of age due to an inner call of his heart that told him to devote his life in the service of his beloved Lord God, Sri Ram. Worldly attractions did not enchant him at all. So, he didn't marry, and after his father's death he came and settled permanently in Ayodhya, the holy town in India associated with Lord Ram.

Presently he works as an honorary manager of a world famous Kanak Bhavan Temple at Ayodhya, and spends his time writing in English so that the world can access the wonderful nectar of metaphysical, spiritual and devotional philosophy that is contained in Indian scriptures for which they are so renowned.

His English Books published separately by a reputed publisher of India, the details of whom can be had by contacting the author on his email given below, include: (i) The series on '108 Upanishads' in five volumes having eighteen parts, (ii) Veda Vyas' 'Adhyatma Ramayan' in two parts, (iii) 'Devi Puran Ramayan', (iv) Valmiki's 'Adbhut Ramayan', and (v) 'Biography of Lord Ram' based on Tulsidas' books.

Genre of Writing: Spiritualism, Philosophy, Metaphysics, Religious, Devotional and Theological.

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“Anthology of Sacred Hymns, Stotras & Mantras of Lord Ram”; (15) “Vairagya Shatkam” of king-sage Bhartrihari; (16) An Anthology of the Sanyas Upanishads-Parts 1 and 2; (17) “Kaag-Bhusund Ramayan” or the “Aadi Ramayan” based on Tulsidas’ Ram Charit Manas; (18) The Legendary Glory of Hanuman; (19) “Narad Bhakti Sutra”—Aphorisms for Devotion for God and the Principles of Love for the Lord; (20) “Shandilya Bhakti Sutra”—Aphorisms for Devotion for God and the Principles of Love for the Lord according to the illustrious sage Shandilya; (21) “Bhakti Sutra Mala”—A Garland of Spiritual Wisdom in the form of an Anthology of Aphorisms pertaining to Bhakti or devotion, love and affection for Lord God; (22) Glory of Lord Ram’s Holy Name, Sacred Mantras, Stotras & Hymns; (23) Saints and Non-Saints: Their Distinguishing Characters and Qualities; (24) A True Guru (Qualities, Importance and Need of a True Teacher, Preceptor, Guide and Advisor); (25) “Sundar Kand” of Ram Charit Manas; (26) The Story of Ravana and the Epic War of Lanka—Told in Slow Motion (based on, and will have the full relevant Text of, Ram Charit Manas, Adhyatma Ramayan, Anand Ramayan, Geetawali Ramayan, and Kavitali Ramayan).

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(C) A full-blown English rendering of Tulsidas’ epic ‘Ram Charit Manas’ is under preparation. It will be a unique Book and an elaborate one, as it would run into many thousands of pages that would endeavour to explain each single verse of Ram Charit Manas in detail from different perspectives, with the aid of explanatory notes and references.

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